INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST EDIK BAGHDASARYAN HONORED

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During the reception following the award ceremony at the U.S. Embassy, Ambassador Yovanovitch noted that, "Due to the unprecedented work of Edik Baghdasaryan, it has been possible to uncover cases of corruption, human rights violations and human trafficking, today's version of slavery. At the "Investigative Journalists Conference" last year in Norway, particular attention was paid to a series of articles that Mr. Baghdasaryan wrote regarding the exploitation of Armenia's natural resources by a former top ranking Armenian government official."
Ambassador Yovanovitch stressed that the defense of human rights is a step by step process in which all must participate and demand transparent governance from their elected officials.

Edik Baghdasaryan stated that he would have preferred not to receive such an award and would like to see a world where such awards didn't exist, "since it is extremely difficult to sit and ponder the fact that people are being persecuted and arrested in your own country merely for their political convictions, when you reflect that 30% of children are malnourished and go to bed hungry. I would really like to underline this last matter and urge our NGO's to pay specific attention to the plight of the children. I would go so far to say that child malnourishment is the biggest challenge facing Armenia today. As proof, let me just point out that 40% of all army conscripts have some sort of

malady. These kids are the ones going without."

The "Hetq" chief editor argued that as a result of this problem the country would be facing much larger challenges 5-10 years down the road. Thus, he urged greater attention to be paid to the fact that many kids cannot enjoy a normal childhood, a normal school life and receive adequate nourishment.

"Sadly, in Armenia today, the same situation holds true when it comes to other rights as well, starting from environmental rights to the right to a decent education. I never blame society for the state of affairs. It is those higher up the ladder that I hold accountable since there are some problems that could be resolved in an hour with the stroke of a pen. There are many such problems awaiting such resolution. The authorities must possess the political will to act in order to change and reform the situation as quickly as possible," Edik Baghdasaryan stated.

He added that it was an unfortunate fact of life that elections in Armenia are a sham and that voters cannot possibly exercise their right to political franchise.

"This is the most basic of issues. It thus behooves us all to seek out those individuals, wherever they may exist, with whom it might be able to change certain things. The attempt must be made," concluded Mr. Baghdasaryan.