

Conscientious objectors contribute to the well-being of people in need

HRWF (11.05.2015) - There are no more Jehovah's Witnesses for conscientious objection in the detention facilities of Armenia.

After making amendments to the Law on Alternative Service in June 2013, the National Assembly granted them the possibility to apply for a civilian service the supervision of which was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to a non-military authority.

By the decision of the Republican Committee, which is in charge of the implementation of the civilian service, JW serve for the Ministry of Emergency Situations or for municipalities, as assistants in medical establishments or orphanages, orderlies, yard cleaners or kitchen workers,.

Robert Hakobyan and Gnel Sargsyan, both 20, now care for elderly people six days a week from 9am to 6pm, getting USD 40 per month as a financial compensation.

Sergey Movsesyan, 21, and his brother clean the streets and the yard of a psychiatric hospital.

They belong to the second or the third generation of Jehovah's Witnesses and they can rely on the moral support of their families during the 36 months of their civilian service.

The young men are happy. "Everyone treats us well from the administration to the elderly," they said. "We are not detained, we are free, our parents are never far, we are useful to old or handicapped people and we bring them some happiness."

In the evening, they can share again their family life and on Sunday, they can practice their religion with their coreligionists.

They serve their society and they hereby contribute to a better image of their religious movement which for many years has been the victim of prejudice and misrepresentation in public opinion by the media and activists of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Head of Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs Department, Vardan Astsatryan, is satisfied with the young men and the directors of the institutions where they perform their civilian service appreciate their work.