



The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders unites 30 human rights NGOs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Network seeks to facilitate creation of a safer and enabling environment for human rights defenders in the South Caucasus and to strengthen their voices in the region and internationally.

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders is deeply concerned about the continuous arbitrary detention and harassment of Arshaluys Hakobyan

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The members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders are deeply concerned about the continuous unlawful and ill-grounded detention of an Armenian human rights defender Arshaluys Hakobyan. Hakobyan, a member of Armenian Helsinki Association, was arrested on June 5, 2009 under the pretext of resisting the police during his arrest. The Network members believe that the real reason for Hakobyan's detention is not only connected with his work as an election observer on May 31, 2009 election of the mayor of Yerevan, but, first of all, it is connected with his activities in the field of human rights protection.

This is the first case in Armenia when a human rights defender is detained. It came as a warning sign that the Armenian authorities have now started to exert the pressure on human rights defenders after having clamped down on the political opposition and the critical media.

On June 12 the members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders protested against the unlawful and ill-grounded detention of Arshaluys Hakobyan in the Statement addressing the President of the Republic of Armenia Serj Sargsyan, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia Gevorg Danielyan, Prosecution General of the Republic of Armenia Agvan Hovsepyan. Armenian authorities have remained indifferent to this and numerous other demands by national and international human rights organizations and civil society groups to exempt the human rights defender from unlawful and ill-grounded detention. (The Network statement can be seen here,

http://www.hahr.am/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=178&Itemid=107)

On 31 May, 2009 the Head of the Commission for the Malatia-Sebastia District, Yerevan, prohibited Hakobyan, who was an officially registered observer on the elections, from exercising his mandate at the polling station No. 8/23. By such actions the Head of the Commission violated the Electoral Code of Armenia. Hakobyan was kicked out of the polling station and was threatened by physical punishment. Hakobyan reported about this incident to the Special Investigation Department of the Office of Prosecution General of Armenia and demanded that the violators the Electoral Code are held accountable.

Instead of opening a case about this incident, on June 5, 2009 the police arrested Hakobyan. In the Police Department of Kentron (central part of Yerevan) Hakobyan was abused physically and verbally. "The head of the police department Ashot Karapetyan told me: is it you who is a human rights defender?! You are a 'defender' in the same way as your boss is- and spitted at me in the face," – reported Hakobyan. He also reported that he was beaten up in the police department by the deputy head of the department Araik Petrosyan. The signs of physical abuse are documented by the pictures of Hakobyan taken in the police station (pictures of ill-

treated Hakobyan can be seen here

http://www.hahr.am/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=152&Itemid=105)

Hakobyan remains in prison for three months already under the accusations of resisting to the police. According to Armenian Helsinki Association, during all this time authorities have not carried out any investigative measure to substantiate the allegations of Hakobyan resisting to the police. Neither have they initiated the investigation into the documented facts of ill treatment of Hakobyan in the police department on the day of his arrest. Moreover, until this very date the fact that Hakobyan was kicked out of the polling station in violation of his mandate and Electoral Code of Armenia remains uninvestigated.

The trial of Hakobyan will take place in a few days; if convicted he is facing imprisonment for up to five years.

Representatives of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders will attend the trial of Arshaluys Hakobyan to monitor the compliance of the proceedings with the Constitution of Armenia, in particular with article 18 (the right to defend in court the rights and freedoms engraved in the Constitution) and article 19 (the right to a public hearing by an independent and impartial court) and article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights (the right to a fair trial), which is a binding international human rights treaty on Armenia.

The Members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders call upon all national and international human rights organizations as well and the media:

- To send their representatives at the trial and closely monitor the case of Arshaluys Hakobyan.

The Members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders calls upon the Armenian authorities:

- To uphold and respect the rights and freedoms of Arshaluys Hakobyan as guaranteed by the Constitution and international human rights obligations of Armenia while in detention and during the trial
- To investigate the case concerning the facts of ill-treatment of Arshaluys Hakobyan at the police station
- To investigate the incident which took place at the polling station No. 8/23 on May 31, 2009 in Yerevan when Hakobyan and his colleagues were obstructed to carry out the election monitoring in violation of the Electoral Code of Armenia.

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