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# Report

## On Death Cases in RA Armed Forces

VANADZOR

2011

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**DESCRIPTION OF DEATH CASES OF SERVICEMEN IN THE RA ARMED FORCES**

Between January 1 and September 15, 2011, 24 death cases have been registered in the RA Armed Forces. According to research conducted by Helsinki Citizens' Assembly- Vanadzor the cases are the following.

- 8 occurred due to violation of a cease fire regime,
- 6 resulted from violations of subordinate (statutory) relations,
- 4 are due to accidents,
- 4 suicides,
- 1 case is due to violation of security rules
- 1 death occurred in unknown conditions and there are no details about it.

Below is the statistics of death cases for 2011.

Month	Reason							Total
	violation of a cease fire regime	violation of security rules	suicides	violations of subordinate (statutory) relations	accidents	Health reasons	*unknown conditions	
January	1							1
February				2				2
March	3							3
April	3		1		1			5
May	1							1
June			1	1				2
July		1		1	2		1	5
August			2	1				3
September				1	1			
October								
November								
December								
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>

It should be noted that criminal cases were filed on 8 of the death cases. 7 of them are in pre-trial phase and one case is in trial phase .



### A. Death Cases Due to Violation of a Ceasefire Regime

- On January 20, 2011, at approximately 18:00 pm Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Defense Army serviceman, **Hovik Sukiasyan**, was killed due to a violation of cease fire regime at the Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan borderline.
- On March 4, 2011, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Defense Army Serviceman, **Grigor Shakhkryanb**, born in 1991, was killed due to a violation of a cease fire regime in the north-eastern part of the border line between the NKR and Azerbaijani armed forces (Upper Chaylu).
- On March 10, 2011, Defense Army term serviceman, 19-year-old **Artur Aghababyan**, was killed as a result of a violation of a cease fire regime by the enemy from a trench located at Nagorno-Karabakh in Kourapatkino Village.
- On March 17, 2011, Defense Army term serviceman, 19-year-old **Aharon Hayrapetyan**, died from a fatal gunshot fired by the enemy from one of the trenches located near the Nagorno-Karabakh Askeran Region as a result of violation of a cease fire regime.
- On April 28, 2011, Defense Army Serviceman **Vazgen Karlen Bakhshyan**, born in 1992, died from a fatal gunshot wound from enemy fire from one of the trenches located near the Martuni District of the Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan border line as a result of a violation of a cease fire regime.
- On April 29, 2010, **2 serviceman** of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Defense Army, conscripts from the Martuni Military Commissariat, were killed due to a violation of a cease fire regime at the Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan border line. The names of the deceased serviceman are unknown.<sup>6</sup>
- On May 11, 2011 **Arayik Balasanyan**, born in 1978 was shot in the head and on the way to hospital he died at about 19:20. According to the locals of Kyuratagh village he was a contract soldier but according to official data he was a civilian.

### B. Death Cases Due to Violation of Subordinate (statutory) Relations

1. **Gevorg Kotsinyan** - On February 6, 2011, regular soldier **G. Kotsinyan**, born in 1992, died as a result of an incident in # 25918 military unit, located near the Dashkestan/Ara Mountain/ settlement in Hadrut, an area of Nagorno-Karabakh. A criminal case was filed pursuant to Point 2, Part 2 of Article 359 of RA Criminal Code: "Violation of fundamental laws of the RA Criminal Code by military servicemen interrelations conditioned by subordination and degradation of individual's dignity and honor or neglect parallel with violations or persecutions, carried out 2) by a group of individuals as well as according to Point 6 and 14, Part 2 of Article 112 of RA Criminal Code: "Deliberately inflicting severe damage to health..., which was implemented by 6) an individual or a group of individuals, 14) unintentionally causing victim's death".
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On February 11, 2011, the Investigation Service of the RA Ministry of Defense note that regular soldiers, Taron Suvaryan and Vahe Aghajanyan, were detained, and charged according to Point 2, Part 2 of Article 359 of RA Criminal Code: "Violation of fundamental laws of the RA Criminal Code on military servicemen interrelations conditioned by subordination and expressed by degradation of an individual's dignity and honor or disrespect parallel with violations or persecutions... carried out by an individual or a group of individuals as well as Point 6 and 14, Part 2 of Article 112, of RA Criminal Code: "Deliberately inflicting severe damage to health..., which was implemented by individuals or a group of individuals, unintentionally causing the victim's death". Junior Sergeant, Margar Davtyan, was arrested in this case, and is charged under Point 2, Part 2 of Article 359, as well as under Point 2, Part 2 of Article 38-359 of the RA Criminal Code(supporting the crime), Point 6,9,14, Part 2 of Article 112, and Part1 of Article 375 on "Exceeding authorities and command negligence". Detained Senior Lieutenant Armen Rafayelyan is charged under Part 1 of Article 375.

A forensic medical examination of Gevorg Kotsinyan's body, along with supporting forensic; psychiatric, chemical, medical examinations, and examination of trace and soil evidence, have been conducted. A number of eyewitnesses have been interrogated.

The Minister of Defence announced that the death occurred due to violation of interpersonal relations, argument and beating, which was proved during the autopsy.

Apart from official data, the representative from HCA Vanadzor, and a correspondent of "Azatutyun"/RFL Radio Station, visited Gevorg Kotsinyan's relatives to clarify some details related to the case.

According to these data, at first, the Military Commissariat noted that the young man's death was as a result of a heart attack or stroke. G. Kotsinyan's uncle, who had been present during the autopsy, stated that various injuries were noticed on Kotsinyan's body. As a cause of death, cardiac arrest was stated; however, the following findings were also recorded: hemorrhage around the soft tissues of the chest, the left lung, the right kidney, soft tissues of the right waist area, cardiac hemorrhage, and dislocation of the clavicle.

The conclusion was indisputable that Kotsinyan had been severely beaten, which also insist the relatives of the soldier.

At this moment the case is in the trial phase. The first court session took place in Stepanakert on July 27, 2011.

- 2. Torgom Sarukhanyan** - A death case of a soldier at one of the military units of Stepanakert was recorded on February 12, 2011. 21-year-old **Torgom Sarukhanyan** died as a result of self-induced gunshot wound. He had been in the military service for one and a half years.

A criminal case was filed on the incident pursuant to Part1 of Article 110 of the RA Criminal Code: "Causing somebody to commit suicide, or make an attempt at a suicide, by indirect willfulness or negligence, by

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means of threat, cruel treatment or regular humiliation of one's dignity."<sup>11</sup>

The Investigation Department of RA Ministry of Defense arrested three servicemen from the same military unit: Junior Officer Vihlem Yengibaryan, Junior Sergeant Hrant Karapetyan, who are charged under Part1 of Article 375 of the RA Criminal Code: Abuse of power and transgression of authority.

Robert Badalyan is suspected of violation of the soldier's statutory rules and for instigating Yengibaryan and Karapetyan in their actions.<sup>12</sup>

However, Torgom Sarukhanyan's relatives do not agree with the official version. Lena Sarukhanyan, Torgom Sarukhanyan's mother, claims that her son had been killed while he slept. His mother recalls that the day before her son's death, he had called her and wanted to tell her something. She also recalls that Torgom had never complained about his service but only mentioned that some were jealous of him. Torgom Sarukhanyan's relatives state that signs of trauma had been identified on his body, particularly on his face. Lena Sarukhanyan does not believe that her son left a letter asking not to blame anyone for his death and to eliminate an autopsy. In his mother's words, her son would not have left such a letter. She believes it was made up to prevent an autopsy and reveal the fact of murder.<sup>13</sup>

Currently the case is in the pre-trial phase.

**3. Tigran Hambardzumyan** - On June 29, 2011 **Tigran Hambardzumyan**, soldier of RA MoD 54809 Kapan military unit was found in the nearest forest without the skin, the soft tissues on the head and neck.

A criminal case was filed on the incident pursuant to Part1 of Article 110 of the RA Criminal Code: "Causing somebody to commit suicide, or make an attempt at a suicide, by indirect willfulness or negligence, by means of threat, cruel treatment or regular humiliation of one's dignity."<sup>11</sup>

According to official data a razor was found near the body and there was a a wound with depth of 1.5-2 cm on his arm.

Anyway, the first version was circulated was that Tigran went to the forest to sleep and the wolves tore the head and neck.

The second version was that Tigran committed a suicide and then the wolves tore his head and neck.

However, the relatives do not believe the official version and according to the information and details about the soldier provided by the relatives to the HCA Vanadzor representatives, T. Hambardzumyan was killed. The relatives insist that Tigran had problems with one of the officers.

The case is now under pre-trial. The military Police is conducting investigative actions by interrogating the other soldiers.

**4. Eduard Alaverdyan** - On July 29, 2011 regular soldier **Eduard Alaverdyan** was killed from a gunshot under his jaws during the shift in Hadrut, Nagorno Karabakh.

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A criminal case has been filed and on August 10, 2011 regular soldier Sahak Asilbekyan was detained with the charge of the provisions of the first part of article 359 of RA Criminal Code: Breach of relations, prescribed by the statute rules, between servicemen not subordinated to each other, expressed in humiliation of the person's honor and self-esteem, persecution or violence.

The case is in pre-trial phase.

5. **Aghasi Abrahamyan** - On August 26, 2011 regular soldier **Aghasi Abrahamyan** died in the military hospital in Stepanakert. Aghasi Abrahamyan was beaten severely and was left to die at the military unit of Yeghnikner on August 26. Aghasi Abrahamyan was beaten in the military unit and then was left lying at the medical station of the military unit helpless for 10 hours, then he again underwent violence. He got no medical aid. There very numerous injuries on Agasi's body.

A criminal case was brought on the case and as a result of preliminary investigation one officer was remanded in custody and one serviceman was arrested. The serviceman is charged with violation of rules of conduct with servicemen.

Later on September 5, 2011 arrest was used against the soldier as a precautionary measure by this upholding the petition of the investigator.

Then on September 6, two other officers were detained.

This case attracted too much public attention. On September 1 public action was organized by NGOs, relatives of killed soldiers and all interested citizens in support of an army without murders and murderers which will be an ongoing event.

6. **Hayk Mkrtchyan** - Early in the morning of September 7, death was reported at the military unit of Askeran, NKR. According to Defense Ministry source, Hayk Mkrtchyan, 19, from Echmiadzin was killed. No details are available.

On September 7, the ministry of defense of Armenia informed in regard to the death of Haik Vasili Mkrtchyan, 19, passing his military service in the defense army of NKR that Haik Mkrtchyan died from gunshots made in the result of violation of the rules of handling a gun by Lendrush Nazlukhanyan, who has been detained. At first a criminal case was brought under Article 373 of RA Criminal Code (Breach of rules for handling weapons, ammunition and items dangerous for others). Then a criminal case has been brought under first part of Article 1 of the Criminal Code (Murder is illegal willful deprivation of one's life punished with imprisonment for 8 to 15 years.)

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### C. Accidents

1. On April 6, 2011, an accident was recorded on the Kapan- Shvinadzor –Meghri highway. Contract soldier of the Russian Federation Frontier troops, 27-year-old **Aram Tarverdyan'** car rolled down the canyon and he died at the scene of the accident.<sup>14</sup>
2. On July 22, 2011 the car with soldiers had an accident as a consequence of which **1 contract serviceman and 1 regular soldier** died.  
12 soldiers got injuries.
3. On September 12, 2011, at about 03.20 a car accident took place in Myasnikyan street in Yerevan. Armenian soldiers – V. Khachaturov and Rafayel Aloyan - serving in a military unit in Etchmiadzin were in a car. After the accident they were taken to Hospital 1, where **V. Khachaturov** died. The employees of the Ministry of Defence and Military Police came to the accident site and 10 minutes later they left. It is said that hookah was found in the car.

### D. Suicides

1. On April 21, 2011, a suicide case was registered at a military unit located near Balahovit Village. On April 21, at approximately 22:50 pm soldier **Artur Geghami Ghazaryan** (called up from the city of Hrazdan), was injured as a result of self-inflicted gunshot wound and died on the way to hospital.

A criminal case was filed on the incident at the RA MoD #4 Garrison Investigation Department pursuant to Part 1 of Article 110 of RA Criminal Code on causing somebody to commit a suicide. Nobody has been arrested so far.<sup>15</sup>

According to Artur Ghazaryan's relatives, Artur was on military shift at around 22:50 pm, and when there was no one around, shot himself and left a message in his hand which said: "Please, do not blame anyone for this." The Hrazdan Military Commissariat employees first notified Artur's uncle about the incident and then the latter told his brother, Gegham Ghazaryan.

Artur's uncle was present during the autopsy, according to which, there were no signs of torture on his body. The gunshot wound perforated his body: the bullet went through his intestines, damaged his gallbladder, and broke his spinal cord. Artur Ghazaryan's relatives don't believe he would have committed suicide as he had no reason to do it.

One of his acquaintances states that Artur Ghazaryan was a very quiet and reserved person and did not have problems with his family or at the military unit.

2. On June 26, 2011 a regular soldier in Margi military unit in Syunik region made a suicide by falling down from a rock.

But according to non-official information he had problems in the military unit and it is said that he has been killed.

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3. On August 19, 2011 a case of suicide was recorded in one of the military units of Goris. **Vardan Sevyan**, a 19-year-old soldier entered the tent during the camp gatherings and shot himself in the head and got a deadly wound. And according to the Ministry of Defence he left a note where he said that he could not live without her beloved girl. A criminal case has been filed and the preliminary investigation is carried out on the version of suicide. Nobody has been detained yet.

**However the relatives do not accept this version and his mother and sister are sure he would never do that.**

The case is in pre-trial phase.

4. On August 29, 2011, 19-year-old **Artur Grigoryan's** body was found in one of the districts of Yerevan, who was found lying unconscious with cut veins. According to non official data, Artur committed this action for religious reasons – his mother is from the religious organization “Jehova’s witnesses.”

A criminal case has not been filed yet.

#### **E. Death Cases due to Violation of Security Rules**

A death case was recorded in the army on July 15, 2011 as a consequence of violation of security rules. The 23-year-old Khachatur Tadevosyan violated the order of treating the weapon and injured the 19-year-old Kolya Mesropyan who died. A criminal case has been filed by article 373 - Breach of rules for handling weapons, ammunition and items dangerous for others.

According to official sources Khachatur Tadevosyan was arrested.

#### **F. Death Cases in Unknown Conditions**

On July 15, 2011 Andrey Harutyunyan, born in 1977, died in unknown conditions. The soldier was called-up from NK Martuni Military Commissariat.

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