



REPORT

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN POST-ELECTION LORI REGION

VANADZOR 2008

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POST-ELECTION PUBLIC-POLITICAL PROCESSES

Prime minister of Armenia Serge Sargsyan was recognized as elect-president by the decision of CEC.

Candidates for president Tigran Karapetyan and Levon Ter-Petrosian filed an appeal to the Constitutional Court seeking to invalidate the election results CEC but the Constitutional Court did not change the CEC decision.

OSCE recognized 2008 Presidential election in the Republic of Armenia mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards. But taking into consideration the post-election situation in Armenian OSCE released its 3-rd post election report presenting a number of serious violations.

However, domestic observers assessed that elections were held with many violations that impacted the election results.

Fourth-placed candidate, the Deputy speaker of the National Assembly, Vahan Hovhannisyan retired. At the same time, Dashnaksutyun announced that they are not disputing the final results of elections and wished success to president-elect Serge Sargsyan.

Candidate Arthur Baghdasaryan joined the political coalition and was appointed as Secretary of Security Council of Armenia.

After the elections the public-political situation became very tense and violations continued and completely presented the negative assessment of elections.

The next day just after the Election Day, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, candidate for president, organized a rally with his supporters in "Azatutyun" square of Yerevan. They demanded to annul the elections and organize new elections. Different officials (Deputy Defense ministers) joined Levon Ter-Petrosyan. None of the other candidates joined Levon Ter-Petrosyan's demand.

The post-election process can be divided into 2 parts taking into account the character of authorities' actions:

From 19-29 of February - the government presented 'tolerant attitude' towards the participants of peaceful sit-in strike in "Azatutyun" Square. At that period, administrative resources were used only against the population of regions to prevent their participation in the rallies of Yerevan.

From 1-21 of March – current authorities performed violence against the participants of peaceful sit-in strike and then continued pursuits against political opposition.

President Kocharian declared state of emergency on March 1, 2008. During that period, alternative media outlets were stopped to act and except for information released by public TV, the citizens were deprived of getting information about the events in the country. However, state of emergency was declared only in Yerevan, but by some internal order of authorities regional media stopped their activities, too.



Pressure and pursuits by current authorities against the population of regions February 19-29 and March 1-21

Pursuits for political viewpoints

After the elections pursuits started against the proxies of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Particularly, Sofia Kalantaryan, Levon Ter-Petrosyan's proxy, was accused of inhibiting the work of the election commission. The members of TEC 30/22 complained that during the voting S. Kalantaryan regularly demanded to inform her about the voters and show their passports. She took a photo of one of the voters at the polling station and tried to take his passport. After that, argument started between Kalantaryan and the voter. The chairperson of the TEC had to call the police officers to put everything in order. After their intervention, the proxy voluntarily gave up her mandate. The lawsuit started on March 13. The plaintiff was the prosecutor of Lori region Karen Shahbazyan, which directly affected the course of the lawsuit. The actions of the judge were constrained by the influence of the prosecutor. The court decided to fine Sofia Kalantaryan for 300 thousand AMD. Sofia Kalantaryan is going to appeal the case in the Court of Appeal.

All those employees of state structures, who dared to support the candidacy of Levon Ter-Petrosyan during the elections, were dismissed from their job. Arshavir Ghukasyan, employee of Lori regional administration, was Levon Ter-Petrosyan's proxy. After elections, he was made to submit an application for releasing him from his job. At present, he does not work at the administration any more. In the same way the employee of Lori regional administration, Armen Hovhannisyan, was dismissed, because he was also Levon Ter-Petrosyan's proxy.

The director of the school in Amrakits village of Lori region dismissed one of the teachers, Nairi Aronyan. He did it on the ground that Aronyan did not go to work on February 11-16. He was a member of TEC 32/30. According to RA Election Code, while fulfilling their responsibilities commission members cannot be dismissed from their main job.

Alvard Shirmazanyan, a teacher in Odzun village, was dismissed from her job for being the proxy of Levon Ter-Petrosyan during presidential elections. The school director informed that Lori regional administration demanded to dismiss her. The director told Alvard Shirmazanyan that she had only 2-3 days to submit an application of releasing her from job with her own wish.

Impediment of Assemblies, Participation in them and Freedom of Movement

On February 29, HCA Vanadzor office organized a rally on "The Possibilities of Preventing Election Frauds in Presidential Elections" in Vanadzor 'Artsakh' park. The people from the "team" of Vanadzor mayor tried to interfere with the meeting for several times, and then they disconnected the electricity in the beauty salon from where the current for the speaker was. Arthur Sakunts, the coordinator of HCA Vanadzor sent a message to Vanadzor Police on the case.

On February 21, 2008, Meruzhan Karapetyan, traffic police officer, violated citizens' constitutional right to free movement. He stopped a car on the road Vanadzor –Yerevan, which took passengers to the rally of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and inhibited a journalist's professional work. A message was sent to the Prosecutor's office of Lori Region on this



case. RA Police rejected bringing a criminal case because of lack of corpus delicti in the behaviour of Meruzhan Karapetyan.

In order to inform Vanadzor citizens, HCA Vanadzor decided to organize a rally according to RA law "On Conducting meetings, assemblies, rallies and demonstrations." On March 3rd 2008, HCA Vanadzor applied to the municipality for getting a permission to hold a rally on March 6-8. But the municipality rejected justifying that the rally might jeopardize the health and life of people. HCA Vanadzor appealed the decision in the Administrative court but was rejected. On March 20, 2008 HCA Vanadzor applied to Vanadzor municipality for the second time, and was again refused to hold meetings.

Restrictions for Spreading Information

HCA Vanadzor tried to publish a special issue of "Civil Initiative" newspaper to inform the population about the events. Necessary articles were prepared but this time the director of the printing-house was ordered from Lori regional administration not to print the newspaper.

On March 4, a press conference was held at the office of HCA Vanadzor on "Public Alternative Awareness in the Conditions of State of Emergency." Only one local TV took part in it but did not air the press conference.

Searches

Since February 26, searches have been conducted to find documents or some traces of criminal actions in the houses of those who took part in the rally of Yerevan. However, nothing was found.

On February 26, early in the morning, searches were performed in the apartment of Vanadzor local Meruzhan Harutyunyan and in the apartment of Arsen Harutyunyan's parents.

On March 10, 2008, at 11 a. m., the police officers searched the house of Seryozha Barseghyan, inhabitant of Odzun village of Lori region. The police officers showed Seryozha's wife the decision of the first instance court of Lori region on the search. The policemen found 30 bullets on the roof of the cattle shed near Seryozha's house. During the search, the neighbours present there, noticed that the roof of the shed was damaged. And according to witnesses the bullets were dropped there through the hole on the roof. Seryozha Barseghyan's wife informed that the previous evening, the local police inspector, who was drunk, visited Barseghyan's house. He threatened Seryozha's wife and said: "See, what I am going to do with you. Don't be surprised if something happens with your son who is in the army." In fact, threats were followed by searching.

On March 12th, 2008, in the morning, police officers conducted search in the houses of Levon Ter-Petrosyan's supporters Arsen Siradeghyan, Grigor Hakobyan, Arthur Shahnazaryan, Rubik Voskanyan, Sasun Seyranyan, Arshavir Ghukasyan, Vagharshak Andresyan, Vahagn Martirosyan and Karen Sargsyan.

The house of the owner of the premises hired for the pre-election campaign office of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was also searched. Not only are the actual places of residence of those people searched but also the houses where they are registered.



On March 29, 2008, at about 8:30 in the morning, the Police officers of Vanadzor started to search Armen Balayan's house (address: Vanadzor, Aghayan 59/4, app.31), as well as the adjacent building to his house and "Ararat" shop run by him (address: Vanadzor. Tigran Mets 79).

The judge (S. Mnatsakanyan) of the court of Universal Competence in Lori region gave the permission for the search on March 27, 2008.

The search aimed to find the seven axes of printing machines stolen from "SIM" printing house on March 3-5, 2007. The search did not result in finding any axle, but the police took Armen Balayan's legally registered hunting gun. It is interesting that the police addressed a direct question to Armen Balayan. They asked: "Are you a member of Pan Armenian Movement?"

Criminal Code defines the cases when the investigator has the right to assume that someone has or somewhere there are tools of crime important for the case. According to law searching is done by a court decision. Search conducted by Vanadzor Police from February 26 to March 13 was done with a number of violations.

Pressures on Expression of Citizens' Free Will

In order to support Serge Sargsyan, the employees of all Vanadzor State structures were taken to Yerevan on February 26. As a result the lessons in Vanadzor schools were over earlier than usual. Some departments in Vanadzor municipality did not work at all. The same day the schoolchildren of some Vanadzor public schools organized a march to protect the rights of their teachers who had been obliged to take part in the rally of Serge Sargsyan. They demanded not to mix politics with education. The next day the directors of those schools were called to Lori regional administration and find out the organizers.

Intimidation

On March 1, unknown people set the door of Pan Armenian Movement office on fire. Pan Armenian Movement applied to Vanadzor Police. On February 5, unknown people tried to set the office on fire for the second time.

Facts on Bringing People to Police and Keeping Them Illegally

On March 3, Levon Barseganyan, the head of Gyumri based Journalists' club "Asparez" was brought to Police for organizing unlawful meeting. His lawyer Karen Tumanyan was not allowed to meet him from 13:00-14:00 with the reason that materials were being prepared and he would be allowed afterwards. Levon Barseganyan's 17-year old son, against whom violence had been performed, was brought to police with him.

On March 11, for the second time, 22 year-old Ruslan Avetyan, Sargis Avetyan's son, who took part in the peaceful sit-in in "Azatutyun" square, was brought to police department of Gugark region. The policemen tried to take Ruslan Avetyan's wife, mother and 2 children. This is because Suren Avetyan went into hiding, as he was a participant of the peaceful sit-in strike. Before this, his son was brought to police on March 8 and kept at the police station all day long.



Vanadzor citizen, Rubik Voskanyan, who was the head of Levon ter-Petrosyan's pre-election campaign office in Vanadzor, and who participated in the rally of March 1 was beaten. As far as his state was bad an ambulance was called. He was arrested next day, at about 8:30 in the morning, and taken to Yerevan Center Police without any medical assistance. His lawyer did not manage to meet with the investigator for about a week to be able to perform his advocating actions.

Criminal case has been brought against Ashot Manukyan – head of Vanadzor central office of Levon Ter-Petrosyan – for performing actions directed towards violent seizure of state authority and violation of constitutional order. According to Ashot Manukyan's wife, a police officer changed his testimony under pressure. During the face-to-face meeting of the police officer and Ashot Manukyan with the presence of the lawyer, the police officer said that Ashot Manukyan did not perform any violence against him. At that moment Arsen Beginyan, the employee on special important cases of police, entered. The latter made the police officer change his testimony and insist that Ashot Manukyan hit him.

List of the people brought to police after the events of March 1, 2008

Vanadzor

1. Nazaryan Levon – was brought twice, from the street and his house
2. Sargsyan Karen-on March 3
3. Hakobyan Grigor-on March 3
4. Amirbekyan Kolya-on March 3, at 8:25-15:56
5. Andreasyan Vagharshak-on March 3
6. Arsen Siradeghyan
7. Sasun Seyranyan-on March 7
8. David Karhanyan
9. Grisha Simonyan-on March 12 and he is still in the police station
10. Ruslan Avetyan
11. Vahagn Martirosyan
12. Khosrov Zakaryan-he has been arrested since March 3 for two months
13. Rubik Voskanyan
14. Harutyun Peninyan
15. Hrayr Peninyan
16. Hosep Ter-Petrosyan

Stepanavan

17. Paravyan Hovik-on March 3 and was released on March 4
18. Ayvazyan Anatoli
19. Marikyan Sargis

Alaverdi

20. Papoyan Vazgen
21. Papoyan Tigran
22. Charoyan Tatevik
23. Yeritsyan Suren
24. Shakhkalyan Armen
25. Noninyan Samvel



- 26. Shahnazaryan Artashes
- 27. Matinyan Abgar (the deputy head of police has been beating him for 30 minutes with a rubber truncheon and asked: "Hey, guy, was it you beating the policemen?")
- 28. Grisha Simonyan