



**HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION**

The Human Rights House Foundation and partners of the Human Rights House Network in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia are concerned about the attempts of national authorities to hinder lawyers to defend victims of human right violations in these countries.

We call upon the OSCE and its participating states to monitor the situation of lawyers and to react against repression of this group.

During the year of 2011, lawyers, actively engaged in protection of human rights and their defenders, have been disbarred, threatened and deprived of access to their clients in South Caucasus and Belarus. The policy of persecution and pressure against the active defense counsels has chilling effect on other lawyers.

In Belarus, repression has escalated not only against human rights defenders and their organizations but also against lawyers who defend political opposition, human rights defenders and activists since the presidential elections on 19 December 2010. Seven Belarusian lawyers, who provided legal counsel in the politically motivated cases, have been disbarred since last December 2010¹.

On 14 February 2011, the lawyers **Uladzimir Toustsik, Tamara Harayeva, Aleh Aheyau, Tatsiana Aheyeva and Zarina Zaleuskaya** were disbarred under the same decision of the Ministry of Justice. On 4 March 2011, **Pavel Sapelka**, a well-known lawyer and the member of the Board of the Minsk City Bar, was excluded from the Bar due to the pressure from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus. Lawyer **Tamara Sidarenka** was deprived of her license on 30 August 2011.

Human rights organizations are concerned about two other lawyers² who might be deprived of their licenses in the coming months.

In Azerbaijan, we have seen the similar tendency to hinder lawyers to carry out their work the last months.

Elchin Namazov, a lawyer who was actively engaged in defending opposition and participants of 2 April 2011 protests in Azerbaijan, was disbarred from the Bar Association in September 2011. **Khalid Bagirov**, a lawyer in a number of criminal cases of public interest, was suspended of his membership at the Bar Association for one year in August 2011. On 4 February 2011, the Bar Association suspended the license of **Osman Kazimov** as a defense counsel and referred to the court for him to be disbarred. The court, however, dismissed the charges based on the lack of documentation of alleges violations.

¹ <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16901.html>
<http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16794.html>
<http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16011.html>

² The names of the lawyers are not published for security reasons since the disbarment is not confirmed yet.

Elchin Sadigov, another lawyer, actively engaged in protection of media rights, faces to be brought before the Disciplinary Commission of the Bar Association for alleged propaganda against the government and cooperation with ambassadors of various countries and opposition-minded deputies, including receiving financial support. Another member of the Bar Association **Aslan Ismayilov** received warning about violation of the rules of code of ethics for advocates, which resulted in administrative charges initiated against him.

After the dispersal of assemblies held in Baku on 2 April and 17 April 2011, lawyers **Intiqam Aliyev** and **Yalchin Imanov** were refused of a list of detained people to whom they intended to provide legal defence and were subjected to psychical force and insults by police officers. Lawyer **Alaif Hasanov** was subjected to smear campaign by local authorities in March 2011.

In **Georgia**, human rights lawyers recently also faced difficulties in defending their clients. In some administrative and criminal cases with high state interest, smear campaigns have been used to undermine the work and credibility of some lawyers. Human rights organizations have reported about difficulties to get access to clients after the dispersal of demonstrations on 29 May 2011. At least 5 lawyers were prevented of access to detainees and in some cases they were not allowed to visit their clients in hospitals.

The **Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)** became subject to smear campaign of public authorities, after it published important findings on death of one of the protesters of 26 May 2011 rally dispersal³. On 28 July 2011, **Ramin Papidze**, a lawyer at the Georgian Bar Association, was sentenced to 10 days of administrative imprisonment for alleged misbehavior in the courtroom while he was defending the interest of his clients, accused of inflicting damage during the protests that occurred in Batumi on 21 May 2011.

In **Armenia**, several lawyers, actively involved in defense of human rights, were subject to pressure and threats.

The office of lawyer **Artak Zeynalyan** has been raided twice since December 2010. The lawyer defends nine of the previous political prisoners at the national courts and in the European Court of Human Rights. On 9 August 2011, lawyers **Vahe Hovsepiyan** and **Stepan Voskanyan** were not allowed to meet their defendants, seven activists of the oppositional Armenian National Congress who were arrested in Yerevan that day. In September 2011, **Gayane Khachatryan**, the lawyer of Armenian Helsinki Association was subjected to threats by unknown persons. Her current defendant is accused in murder in a high profile case and human rights organizations claim that high officials are involved in this crime.

³ <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/16913.html>