



Armenia

10 March 2011

Harassment against political opponents must stop

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its partner organisation the Civil Society Institute (CSI) condemn the recent and repeated, harassment of political opponents and members of their families.

On February 23, 2011 Tigran Postanjyan, the brother of the opposition deputy Zaruhi Postanjyan from the "Heritage" party, was summoned to the National Security Service (NSS) and arrested there. His relatives were not allowed to visit him.

According to the Prosecutor General's office press release from February 21, 2011, a criminal case was instituted under Article 311-1, part 1 (Illegal payment taken by a public servant who is not considered an official) of the Criminal Code¹. It was NSS who was charged with conducting the investigation although part 1 of Article 190 of the Criminal Procedure Code stipulates that the crimes defined by article 311-1 should be investigated by police officers.

On February 25, 2011 the court imposed detention as a measure of restraint on Mr. Postanjyan. On March 2 he was transferred to the Nubarashen penitentiary institution where overcrowding is repeatedly reported. According to his attorney Hayk Alumyan, T. Postanjyan's transfer was a way to put pressure on him.

Our organisations are concerned that the institution of the criminal case is aimed at sanctioning the activities of members of the opposition through harassment of their families. Furthermore, FIDH and CSI repeatedly denounced ongoing abuses in the recourse to pre-trial detention in the Republic of Armenia and the administration of justice in general, and fear that the right of M. Postanjyan to a fair trial will not be guaranteed.

These events occurred in the context of constant pressure by the government on contestatory actions, groups and parties.

On the morning of March 3rd, police forces brutally dispersed a peaceful protest in front of the "Government house" denouncing the municipality's recent decision to ban street vending. The police violently pushed protesters from the building, thereby violating the people's right to conduct peaceful rallies. The deputy chief of Yerevan police Robert Melkonyan directly participated in the confrontation while among the protesters were members of the "Heritage" party, including Zaruhi Postanjyan, Armen Martirosyan and Anahit Bakhshyan.

The Heritage party requested an investigation on the circumstances of this incident and the opening of a criminal case. On March 3, the Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan instructed the police to conduct an internal investigation on the legality of its actions.

FIDH and CSI call upon Armenian authorities:

- to ensure that a transparent, thorough, and independent investigation is launched into Tigran Postanjyan's case;
- to cease taking illegal actions against members of the opposition actors or their relatives;
- to insure that the police comply with the powers they are granted by the law;
- to guarantee the free exercise of the freedom of peaceful assembly.

1 : <http://www.genproc.am/en/125/item/6557/>

<http://www.fidh.org/Harassment-against-political-opponents-must-stop>