
Human Rights Defenders' Letter To Hillary Clinton

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The Honorable Hillary Clinton Secretary of State of the United States of America

Dear Madam Secretary,

We welcome your visit to Armenia as an expression of the continuing interest of the United States of America in our country. We are encouraged as well by your recent statements in support of civil society organizations in countries like ours.

While we understand that regional developments may be of greater concern to the US State Department than Armenia's internal political situation, we believe that the internal situation, which, as you know, has been tense since the fraudulent presidential election of 2008, is no less important. Moreover, we believe that regional and internal matters are inextricably linked. In order to overcome the deep political and social crisis and establish an atmosphere of civic harmony in Armenia, the following issues must be addressed:

1. All political prisoners must be immediately released and the persecution of people for their political views must be ceased.
2. An impartial investigation into the March 1st killings must be conducted, those found guilty must be punished, and the families of the victims must be granted justice.
3. The decision of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the television station A1+ must be implemented, and the station must be restored to the position it occupied before its unlawful closure.
4. Cases of torture and killing within the police and criminal investigative bodies must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. It is of great concern that in spite of efforts and interest on the part of the media and civil society, these cases, among them the deaths in police custody of Levon Gyulan and Vardan Khalafyan, have remained unresolved, or have been resolved in a manner that the victims or their families have not found convincing.
5. The rights of journalists must be protected. Instances of attacks, beatings, and arson against journalists and media outlets have become common. In order to guarantee freedom of speech, of expression, and of the press, these cases must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

It is our hope that the United States of America, by doing everything in its power and utilizing all mechanisms to press the government, will help civil society to resolve these issues.

Respectfully Yours,

The Armenian Member Organizations of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders

Mikael Danielyan, Armenian Helsinki Association Levon Barseghyan, Asparez Journalists' Club, Gyumri Mickael Shahinyan, Democracy Today Artur Sakunts, Helsinki Citizen Assembly, Vanadzor Artak Zeynalyan, Jurists against Torture Mamikon Hovsepyan, Public Information and Need of Knowledge (Pink

Armenia) Melissa Brown, Shahkhatun (Political Prisoners' Wives) Evelina Gyulxhandanyan, Socioscope Societal Research and Consultancy Center Lara Aharonian, Women's Resource Center Armenia

PS: The letter was delivered by U.S. Secretary of State on July 5, in the meeting with representatives of civil society.

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