

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ARMENIA: APPEAL CASES

2 May 2001¹; AI Index: EUR 54/006/2001; public

Cases: Nairi

Unanian, Karen
Unanian, Aleksan
Arutiunian, Arutiun

Alleged ill-treatment of detainees arrested in connection with the October 1999 shootings in the Armenian parliament

On 27 October 1999 a group of five armed men, including Nairi and Karen Unanian, burst into the chamber of the Armenian parliament, the National Assembly, and opened fire on senior officials. A total of eight men died, including the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, and the latter's two deputies. The armed men took hostages, but surrendered the following day. A number of arrests of alleged accomplices followed, including Aleksan Arutiunian, Arutiun Arutiunian, Nairi Badalian and Musheg Movsisian. At the time, Nairi Unanian, the alleged leader of the group of armed men, told the press that the reason of the shootings was to draw attention to "the miserable situation of the Armenian people. The people are starving. In Armenia, there is no positive movement or evolution at all."

Photo: Nairi Unanian in the courtroom; © Haykakan Zhamanak (Armenian Times)

A number of men arrested in connection with the October 1999 shootings allege that they were ill-treated in detention in order to extract information. Reportedly, while in pre-trial detention some of the detainees were on occasion prevented from seeing their lawyers, and most of them were reportedly not allowed to be visited by their families during this time. Worrying in themselves, the allegations of ill-treatment and lack of access are of even greater concern considering that some of the accused in this case may face a death sentence if convicted.

At the time of the shootings Amnesty International expressed its condolences over the murders to President Kocharian. However, since then the organization has continued to urge that all stages of the proceedings connected with the shootings be conducted according to international fair trial standards, which Armenia has undertaken to uphold. The organization has also urged the Armenian authorities to conduct comprehensive and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in this case as well as to make the results public and, if the allegations are sustained, to bring anyone identified as responsible to justice. Amnesty International has not received a substantive response, but press reports have quoted officials as saying that their investigations found no evidence to support the allegations.

Alleged ill-treatment of Nairi and Karen Unanian

36-year-old former journalist **Nairi Unanian** and his 26-year-old brother **Karen Unanian** were part of the group of armed men who burst into the Armenian parliament on 27 October 1999 and opened fire on senior officials. Nairi Unanian is said to have been the leader of the group. After their arrest on 28

¹ Please use this "Appeal Case" sheet as the basis for your letter-writing until further notice.

October 1999, both men were brought to the investigation-isolation prison of the Ministry of National Security in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Both men allege that they have been beaten, have faced threats and "psychological pressure" from the investigators to give false testimonies, including the naming of alleged accomplices, some of whom were subsequently arrested. In May 2000 Nairi and Karen Unanian wrote to President Robert Kocharian and withdrew all of their charges against **Aleksan Arutiunian, Arutiun Arutiunian, Nairi Badalian, and Musheg Movsisian** on the grounds that they had been extracted under duress.

Alleged ill-treatment in detention of former Presidential Advisor Aleksan Arutiunian, Deputy Executive Director of Armenian Television Arutiun Arutiunian, former journalist Nairi Badalian and former member of parliament Musheg Movsisian

Aleksan Arutiunian, Arutiun Arutiunian, Nairi Badalian, and Musheg Movsisian were arrested between November 1999 and January 2000 under charges of involvement in the October 1999 shootings in Parliament. All men allege that they were beaten and faced threats from the investigators while in custody. In addition to that, Musheg Movsisian and Arutiun Arutiunian report that they were drugged while in detention in order to make them confess and testify against other defendants. All four men were released in the first half of the year 2000 and criminal charges against them were dropped. However, it is not known whether criminal cases have been opened against any of the alleged perpetrators.

"They made me stand outside in freezing temperatures in the winter without warm clothing. I was doused with water. They chained me to a metal chair while some 10 people beat me, knocking out some of my teeth. Also, they made me stand against a wall for extended periods of time without sleep. Officials threatened to rape my wife and sister if I didn't give 'the necessary testimony'," reports **Nairi Badalian**.

Photo: Musheg Movsisian;
© Ruben Mangasarian

"I was severely beaten by police when I was held in prison. They hit me with batons on the soles of my feet and tried to drug me in order to make me confess," reports **Musheg Movsisian**.

"When I was brought to the Military Procurator's office on 6 March 2000, I was given coffee after which I began to feel dizzy, nauseous, and had problems with my eyesight. I was then questioned and brought printed sheets of paper to sign which I refused to do. I was still suffering from the symptoms three days later," reports **Arutiun Arutiunian**.

Some of the defendants reportedly lodged complaints against their treatment with the authorities. However, Amnesty International has received a number of reports that raise concern at the impartiality and the procedures according to which the authorities dealt with these complaints. **Arutiun Arutiunian**, for example, lodged a complaint against the military procuracy in charge of the investigation on 8 March 2000. On 15 March 2000 the Procurator General of Armenia rejected Arutiun Arutiunian's complaint alleging ill-treatment, for lack of evidence. However, commenting on the decision, a spokesperson for the Procurator General's office is said to have stated that Arutiun Arutiunian had not been visited by any of the prison's medical professionals, or needed medical attention, since his arrest on 5 January 2000 (in spite, it appears, of him having staged a hunger strike).

Musheg Movsisian's lawyer, Kromvel Grigorian, had requested a forensic medical examination which was granted on 23 December 1999 by the Military Prosecutor's office that is in charge of the

investigation. The subsequent report was said to have concluded in mid-January that Musheg Movsisian was in good health and showed no signs of ill-treatment. Kromvel Grigorian requested a second examination of his client, however, claiming that the first examination had been incomplete in the absence of necessary specialists. The request was turned down by the head of the investigatory group at the military procuracy. A complaint lodged by **Musheg Movsisian** alleging that official tried to drug him on 29 February 2000 as a means of extracting testimony was turned down by the Procurator General.

Recommended actions:

Please send politely worded letters in English, Russian, Armenian or your own

<u>President</u>	<u>Procurator General</u>	<u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u>
<p>Robert KOCHARIAN Amnesty International Respublika Armenia; 375019 g. Yerevan; pr. Marshala Bagramiana, 26; Prezidentu RA; KOCHARIANU, R. ARMENIA had expressed its condolences over the murders of President Kocharian, but is still concerned at alleged fair trial violations including reports of torture in custody;</p> <p>Fax: + 374 1- 50 72 50; 52 17 96; 15 11 52</p> <p>Salutation: Dear President</p>	<p>Aram TAMAZIAN Respublika Armenia; 375010 g. Yerevan; ploshch. Shaumiana; Prokuratura RA; Generalnomu prokuroru; TAMAZIANU, A.; ARMENIA</p> <p>Salutation: Dear Procurator General</p>	<p>Vartan OSKANIAN Respublika Armenia; 375010 g. Yerevan; Pravitelstvenny dom 1; ploshch. Respubliki Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RA; Ministru OSKANIANU, V.; ARMENIA</p> <p>Fax: + 374 1- 50 72 50; 52 17 96; 151 042</p> <p>Salutation: Dear Minister</p>

Send copies of our letters to the
 to launch

- the Ambassador of Armenia to your country (if there is one)
- the Director of investigation-isolation prison of the Ministry of National Security in Yerevan where Nairi and Karen Unanian are kept:

Respublika Armenia
 g. Yerevan
 SIZO
 Sovetashenskoye shosse 20
 Direktoru ARUTYUNYANU, S.
 ARMENIA

- the Military Procurator in whose office Musheg Movsisian and Arutiuan Arutiunian were allegedly drugged to extract a confession:

Respublika Armenia
 g. Yerevan;
 Voyennaya prokuratura RA;
 Voyennomu prokuroru
 JANGIRIANU, G.;

ARMENIA

PLEASE SEND ANY REPLIES FROM THE ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. (South Caucasus and Central Asia Research and Campaign Team; Amnesty International; 1 Easton Street; London WC1 X ODW; United Kingdom)