

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 73/03 (EUR 54/001/2003, 17 March 2003) Fear for safety/unfair trial/intimidation/prisoner of conscience

ARMENIA Artur Sakunts (m), Coordinator of Vanadzor branch of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA)

Artur Sakunts was released from prison on 25 March after serving a 10-day sentence for disobeying the authorities. He wrote to Amnesty International: "First of all I want to thank you for your support which is dear to anyone being in an illegal arrest. I want to say that without that support we could not win but we really won as the truth is with us. The basis of truth is the protection of human rights and superiority of law ... I also want to mention that with our cooperation and with your support we proved that protection of human rights can't be limited in the frame of a state, it has an international meaning."

Artur Sakunts was arrested after organizing a public meeting to discuss the Vanadzor branch of Helsinki Citizens Assembly's monitoring of the Armenian presidential election held on 19 February and 5 March.

Some 100 people have reportedly been sentenced to short-term imprisonment for disrupting public order after protesting at illegal election practices. Following harsh criticism from both the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who monitored the elections, Armenian president Robert Kocharian admitted that the elections had not met international standards and set up a commission of inquiry to investigate reported irregularities during the election. The commission is supposed to draw conclusions from the election so similar irregularities can be avoided during the forthcoming parliamentary elections in May.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.