

Zhirayr Sefilian Released From Jail

Zhirayr Sefilian, a Lebanese citizen of Armenian descent, was freed on Monday after serving a controversial 18-month prison sentence. A prominent veteran of the Nagorno-Karabakh He pledged to continue to fight for regime change despite facing the possibility of deportation from the country.

Sefilian and another war veteran, Vartan Malkhasian, had been arrested and charged with calling for a violent overthrow of the government in December 2006 just days after setting up a new pressure group opposed to Armenian territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. A Yerevan court found Malkhasian guilty on that count and sentenced him to two years in prison in August 2007. The court cleared Sefilian of the charge but still jailed him for 18 months for illegally possessing a pistol which he had received as a gift from a former commander of the Karabakh Armenian army.

Sefilian and Malkhasian deny the accusations as politically motivated. They both endorsed former President Levon Ter-Petrosian in Armenia's recent presidential election despite his conciliatory line on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Sefilian was greeted by more than a dozen friends and supporters as he left the Vartashen prison in Yerevan early in the morning. "First of all, I want to thank journalists who have spread our word to the people to the dismay of the authorities for the past one and a half years," he said. "I'm optimistic. Everything will be alright."

"Whether [the authorities] keep us in jail for two or twenty years, nothing will change, as far as we are concerned. Let them think about them-



Zhirayr Sefilian

selves."

"We will soon clear our country of those scoundrels," Sefilian told journalists before heading to the Yerablur military where more than a dozen fellow veterans are on hunger strike to demand the release of scores of other Ter-Petrosian arrested in the government's post-election crackdown on the opposition.

The authorities indicated last month their intention to expel Sefilian to Lebanon after he is set free. The Armenian police filed a relevant lawsuit to Armenia's Administrative Court on the grounds that his residency permit has expired. The court refused to consider the application on a technicality on May 27. The police have not filed a fresh suit yet.

Sefilian called the deportation attempt as a "disgrace" and condemned the authorities for refusing to grant him Armenian citizenship. "I don't know if there is any other precedent of a military commander of a particular state not having its citizenship," he said.

Ex-Speaker Hastert Joins A Lobby Firm Representing Turkey

WASHINGTON, DC -- While former Congressman Bob Livingston recently lost his lucrative deal with Turkey to DLA Piper, his colleague, former Speaker Hastert has joined Dickstein Shapiro, a law/lobby firm in Washington, D.C., that has represented "the government of Turkey in connection with the development and financing by private sponsors of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and TransCaspian gas pipeline spanning from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean."

During his tenure as Speaker of the House (1999-2006), Hastert pulled an Armenian Genocide resolution from the House floor following a request by then President William Clinton in 2000. A 2005 Vanity Fair article alleged that Hastert received funds from Turkish groups and nationalists, in exchange



Former House Speaker Dennis Hastert

for political favors in Congress. His spokesman at the time denied Hastert had any knowledge of Turkish groups and had done no favors.

Political Repressions In Armenia Are Continuing

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ing four-party coalition are equally represented in the body conducting it. "This is what the authorities don't accept," he said. "We therefore consider the formation of this commission an imitation process that will rather cover up the events of March 1 than shed light on them."

Ter-Petrosian's demands were backed by Zharangutyun parliamentarians. One of them, Vartan Khachatrian, said that the investigative commission will enjoy the "highest degree of public confidence" only if it consists of "two equal sections." Still, Khachatrian and other Zharangutyun deputies stopped short of ruling out their faction's participation in the commission's work.

Professor Richard Hovannisian Honored In Yerevan

Professor Richard G. Hovannisian, AEF Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA, was honored by the Armenian National Academy of Sciences in a book launch ("shnorhandes") that coincided with celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the heroic battles of May 1918 and the founding of the Republic of Armenia.

Sardarabad Conference

In Armenia for two weeks in May, Hovannisian was a plenary speaker at a two-day conference (May 16-17) at the Sardarabad Memorial Park and Museum on the occasion of the battles in May 1918 which made



Richard Hovannisian during Sardarabad Conference

possible the establishment of a small republic around Yerevan, the re-creation of Armenian statehood for the first time in more than five centuries, and the formation of a nucleus around which it was hoped a free, independent, and united Armenian homeland would emerge.

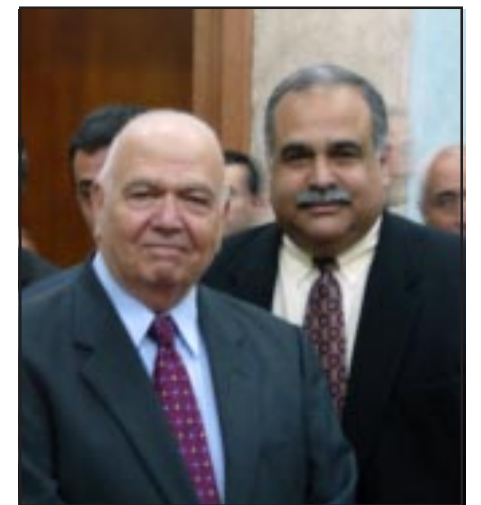
In his presentation, Hovannisian reflected on the battles of Sardarabad, Bash-Abaran, and Karakilisa, as well as certain aspects of the history of the Armenian republic which require further examination. During the conference, he was interviewed by Nune Aleksanian of the state television H-1 and by *Zinuzh*, a program prepared by and intended for the Armenian armed forces.

Academy of Sciences "Shorhandes"

On May 20, Hovannisian was honored in the Presidium of the Armenian Academy of Sciences on the occasion of the publication of the Russian translation of 16 chapters dealing with international relations from his four-volume *The Republic of Armenia* series. This was the culmination of ten years of labor by the initial translator, Gayane Makhmourian, refined by the

meticulous editing of Vartiter Kotcholosian Hovannisian. The overflow gathering was welcomed by President of the Academy, Radik Martirosyan, followed by an effective analysis of the work by History Institute Director Ashot Melkonyan, anecdotes about Hovannisian's research and interactions in Yerevan during the Soviet era by the Academy's Vice President for Armenian Studies, Volodiia Barkhudaryan, and words of commendation by researcher Rem Khazanchyan, Chair of Armenian Studies at Yerevan State University Babgen Harutunyan Ambassador of Ukraine Oleksandr Bozhko, Prelate of the Atrbadakan Diocese (Tabriz) Bishop Nshan Topouzian, Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan of the Ararat Diocese (representing His Holiness Garegin II), and Raffi K Hovannisian, head of the Heritage faction of the National Assembly and founding director of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS).

Joining the many scholars and public figures in attendance were representatives of Georgia, Bulgaria, the



Richard and Raffi Hovannisian

United States, and the European Union, members of the Armenian National Assembly, including education and science committee chair Hranush Hakobian, President of the Writers' Union, Levon Ananyan, and longtime friend Vahak Hovnanian. In his response, Professor Hovannisian reflected on the significance of the Armenian republic and the lessons to be learned from the experiences of 1914-1921. He emphasized the importance of making Armenian history and issues known to non-Armenian scholars, officials, and public through publications such as this 900-page volume in Russian (*Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia Respubliki Armeniia, 1918-1922 gg.*). The "shnorhandes" received extensive television and radio coverage.

Armenia's Ombudsman Defends His Report

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swers to questions of public concern have not been received in any case. "It remains unclear who gave the order to use force. I would not believe that law-enforcers had spontaneously gathered and decided to conduct an operation. And we are being accused of asking this question."

The ombudsman's report also contained criticism of Robert Kocharyan, the outgoing president as of March 1-2. In particular, it said that "the president-

elect [Serzh Sargsyan] and the emerging system of power received a very heavy legacy from the predecessor."

During the hearings that lasted for several hours, ex-Minister of Justice David Harutyunyan (no relation to the Ombudsman), currently an MP representing the governing Republican Party of Armenia, inquired from the prosecutor-general: "Wasn't there a single question in the ombudsman's report on which you could give explanations and not simply raise objections?"