

Political Repressions In Armenia Are Continuing Ter-Petrosian Rejects Parliament Probe Of Post-Election Clashes

YEREVAN -- Police in Yerevan tracked down and arrested on Tuesday a longtime associate of opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian who has been on the run since the launch of the Armenian government's post-election crackdown on the opposition.

Samvel Gevorgian ran one of Ter-Petrosian's regional campaign offices during the February 19 presidential election and is better known as one of the leaders of the 1988 movement for Nagorno-Karabakh's unification with Armenia.

A spokesman for Ter-Petrosian condemned his arrest as a "classical example of political persecution." "Political repressions in Armenia are continuing," Arman Musinian told RFE/RL. "With Samvel Gevorgian's arrest, the number of political prisoners in Armenia has increased," he said, referring to several dozen opposition members arrested as part of the crackdown.

Ter-Petrosian Rejects Parliament Probe

Opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian shrugged off through a senior aide on Wednesday the impending launch of a supposedly independent parliamentary investigation into the deadly clashes between his supporters and security

forces that followed Armenia's disputed presidential election.

The conduct of an "independent, transparent and credible inquiry" was one of the key demands addressed to the Armenian authorities by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) in a resolution adopted last April. The European Union and the United States have also stressed the need to establish all circumstances of the March 1 violence in Yerevan that left at least ten people dead and more than 100 others injured.

The authorities have responded to the Western pressure by proposing that such an inquiry be conducted by an ad hoc commission of the National Assembly. The parliament began debating on Tuesday a relevant bill drawn up by veteran lawmaker Victor Dallakian. It is expected to be passed in time for the upcoming PACE session in Strasbourg.

The commission will comprise two representatives of each of the four parliamentary parties as well as an independent deputy, presumably Dallakian. With only one of those parties, Zharangutyun, being in opposition to the government, at least eight of its 11 members will be government loyalists.

The bill also envisages that the

Ter-Petrosian-led opposition and other political groups not represented in the National Assembly will be able to name representatives to the commission. Those representatives will not have voting rights, however. According to Dallakian, international forensic experts will also be invited to take part in the commission's work.

A leading member of Ter-Petrosian's Popular Movement alliance, Levon Zurabian, made clear that the former Armenian president and his opposition allies can not trust a body dominated by government loyalists. "They are setting up a commission most of whose members will represent parties bearing moral responsibility for the March 1 slaughter," Zurabian told RFE/RL. "That commission will always be able to make decisions beneficial for the authorities."

"The main mission of the commission is to cover up crimes committed by the prosecutor's office and the police," charged Suren Sureniants, a leader of the pro-Ter-Petrosian Hanrapetutyun party.

Zurabian said Ter-Petrosian will agree to join the planned inquiry only if his opposition alliance and the govern-

Continued on page 2

Leading Experts On Holocaust And Genocide Sign A Petition To Swedish Parliament

A petition published in 10 languages is addressed to the members of the Swedish Parliament in order to persuade the Foreign Affairs's Commission of the Parliament to allow the recognition of Armenian Genocide of 1915.

An extract of this text indicates: "Today, Sweden is internationally regarded as a champion of human rights. It is incumbent on the Swedish authorities to live up to this reputation and to reject any compromise with negationism and denial. The Swedish Government should attempt to assist Turkey to become a better democracy by facing its history and acknowledging the truth, not by continuing to stagger in the darkness of self-deception and pretense. Today, the data and information about the Genocide of Armenians, Assyrians and Pontic Greeks are so extensive that no serious politician can honestly cite insufficient or inconclusive research as an excuse to avoid recognition. Refusal to recognize established fact based on qualitative and quantitative research may be regarded as being tantamount to denial."

Jailed Opposition Leader Defiant

Aleksandr Arzumanian: "This Is Fabricated Accusation Resulting From A Political Order"

YEREVAN -- Aleksandr Arzumanian former Foreign Minister of Armenian and a close associate of President Levon Ter-Petrosian arrested following the post-election clashes in Yerevan struck a defiant note Friday as he spoke to RFE/RL in a maximum security prison where he is being kept along with other prominent opposition figures.

Arzumanian, who managed Ter-Petrosian's presidential election campaign, insisted that grave accusations brought against him were trumped up for political reasons. He also said that the Armenian authorities can not be serious about their stated readiness to engage in a dialogue with the opposition as long as he and dozens of other oppositionists remain in jail.

Like many of the detainees, Arzumanian was charged with organizing "mass disturbances" and attempting to "usurp power" in the wake of the February 19 presidential election. The charges stem from the March 1 deadly clashes between security forces and thousands of Ter-Petrosian supporters demanding a re-run of rigged vote.

"I stated right from the beginning that this is a fabricated accusation resulting from a political order by the authorities," Arzumanian told RFE/RL



Aleksandr Arzumanian

in the basement jail of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS). "I am persecuted for my political views and that is why I refuse to give testimony or participate in any other investigative activity."

"This case is a bubble. There is not a single fact to substantiate the accusations. They are holding us hostage here until they see what happens next," he said, adding that government "repressions" will not force the Ter-Petrosian-led opposition into submission.

Arzumanian, who had served as Foreign Minister in 1996-1998, backed the ex-president's position. "You can't hold people hostage, ban any public gathering, persecute people and at the same time talk about dialogue," he said. "All this is illegal. This illegalities must end before we can feel that the authorities want to effect any changes."

Armenia's Ombudsman Defends His Report

YEREVAN -- Armenia's Ombudsman insisted this week that he acted within the powers vested in him by the country's legislation when he raised questions over the March 1 melee in his ad hoc report in late April.

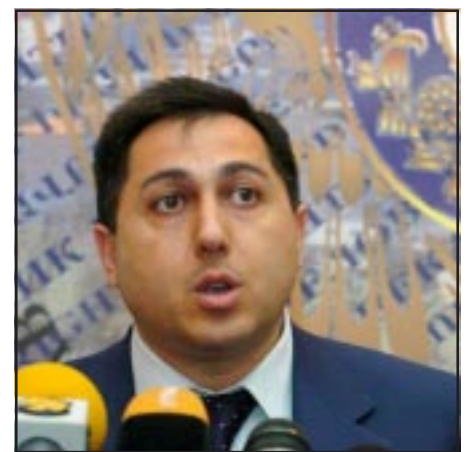
Armen Harutyunyan said speaking during parliamentary hearings last Thursday that accusations from law-enforcement bodies that he had stretched his authority by issuing a "political" report were not legitimate.

Harutyunyan published his 68-page ad hoc report on the February 19 presidential election and the post-election developments in Armenia on April 25. The report also contained criticism of the authorities, which caused objections from the Prosecutor-General's Office and the Ministry of Justice.

The Parliamentary Commission on European Integration Affairs had decided to hold hearings on the Ombudsman's report, inviting all parties concerned.

Harutyunyan insisted in parliament that the arguments contained in the objections of the Prosecutor-General and the Justice Minister are presented out of context and are distorted: "In their reports they even reply to non-existing questions. The impression is that the text of my report is fitted to criticism, and the objections are made in the best traditions of the Soviet times."

Moreover, according to Harutyunyan, there is no precedent in



Armenia's Ombudsman
Armen Harutyunyan

any country that an ombudsman is subjected to such aggressive attacks.

Prosecutor-General Aghvan Hovsepian retorted: "There is no precedent either that an ombudsman makes a political statement."

"You pursued other goals and not the goal of receiving answers to questions that you raised," Hovsepian charged from the parliament's tribune, without elaborating.

Hovsepian's arguments receiving backing from Justice Minister Gevorg Danielyan, who also described the ombudsman's ad hoc report as "political" and said that the problems reflected in it "cannot become a subject for discussion."

And Harutyunyan said that an-

Continued on page 2