

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ARMENIA: APPEAL CASES

October 2001¹; AI Index: EUR 54/010/2001; public

Further information on Appeal Case sheet EUR 54/005/2001 (2 May 2001)

Alleged ill-treatment at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and subsequent anonymous intimidation of journalist Vahagn Ghukasian

Freelance journalist Vahagn Ghukasian is said to have been beaten by officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for around two hours on 6 June 2000 to punish him for the publication of an article on the October 1999 shootings in the Armenian parliament. Moreover, around the time of the publication of a series of articles by him on the same subject in May and June 2001 he is said to have received threatening phone calls and his workshop was burnt down. AI is concerned at allegations that the ill-treatment and intimidation were designed to punish him for exercising his right to freedom of expression, and that the intimidation may also have been designed to stop him from pursuing further his complaint of ill-treatment against an official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Photo: Vahagn Ghukasian; © Private

On 27 May 2000 Vahagn Ghukasian published a brochure entitled "Observer's version" about the investigation into the events of 27 October 1999 in the Armenian parliament. Vahagn Ghukasian told AI that he explains in the brochure his opinion that an official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whom he names, should not be participating in the investigation into the shootings, and gives his reasons for that.

On 6 June 2000 Vahagn Ghukasian was reportedly summoned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Two officers are said to have ill-treated Ghukasian and only stopped when they learnt that prior to his departure for the Ministry, Vahagn Ghukasian had left a message with a reporter of the *Aravot* newspaper, telling her where he was going. The Interior Ministry official mentioned in the brochure threatened to hold Vahagn Ghukasian at the Ministry, and open a criminal case against him. When Ghukasian asked what for, the official is said to have responded: "For carrying drugs or rape. Any street prostitute will testify that you raped her". The names of both officials are known to Amnesty International. Later officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs reportedly searched Ghukasian's home and confiscated floppy discs containing the text of his brochure. On 9 June Vahagn Ghukasian went to polyclinic No. 19 in Yerevan where it was diagnosed that he had scratches and bruises on his chest, his right hand and his forehead.

About one year later, on 20 May 2001, Vahagn Ghukasian reportedly got a phone call, one day after the publication of the first of three articles in *Haykakan Zhamanak* newspaper in which again he wrote about the events of 27 October 1999. The anonymous caller allegedly warned him not to 'play

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

with fire', and demanded that he stop his writing activities. On 24 June, the day after the publication of the third article, his workshop was burnt down. The workshop was Vahagn Ghukasian's main source of income for himself and his family. The anonymous telephone calls allegedly continued after this incident, threatening that if Vahagn Ghukasian continued to 'stick his nose into other people's business' his house would be burned down.

Vahagn Ghukasian told AI that he thought that the destruction of his workshop was either aimed at punishing him for the publication of his articles, or was meant as a warning not to give evidence to the Procurator's office against one of the Interior Ministry officials who had reportedly ill-treated him in June last year.

Recommended actions:

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

- calling on the Armenian authorities to investigate allegations of a campaign of intimidation of Vahagn Ghukasian beginning in May 2001, including threatening phone calls and the burning down of his workshop on 24 June 2001, and meanwhile to ensure that he and his family are afforded all appropriate protection. *To stress your point you can add that this would be in line with Article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which obliges each state party to ensure that the complainant and witnesses are protected against all ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of his or her complaint or any evidence given;*
 - expressing concern at allegations that Vahagn Ghukasian was ill-treated by two law enforcement officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 6 June 2000;
 - urging the authorities to open a prompt and impartial investigation into these allegations with the results made public and those found responsible brought to justice;
 - stating that impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations such as ill-treatment by law enforcement officers would send a wrong signal to society;
 - To stress your point remind the authorities of their obligations to prohibit torture under international human rights treaties such as the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
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Whom to write

<u>President</u>	<u>Procurator General</u>	<u>Foreign Minister</u>	<u>Minister of the Interior</u>
Robert KOCHARIAN Respublika Armenia; 375019 g. Yerevan; pr. Marshala Bagramiana, d. 26; Prezidentu Respubliki Armeniya; KOCHARIANU, R. ARMENIA Fax: + 374 1- 52 15 81; 52 17 96; 15 11 52 Salutation: Dear President	Aram TAMAZIAN Respublika Armenia; 375010 g. Yerevan; ploshch. Shaumiana; Prokuratura RA; Generalnomu prokuroru; TAMAZIANU, A.; ARMENIA Salutation: Dear Procurator General	Vartan OSKANIAN Respublika Armenia; 375010 g. Yerevan; Pravitelstvenny dom 1; ploshch. Respubliki; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RA; Ministru OSKANIANU, V.; ARMENIA Fax: + 374 1- 50 72 50; 52 17 96; 151 042 Salutation: Dear Minister	Lt-General Haik HARUTIUNIAN Respublika Armeniya; 375015 g. Yerevan; ul. Nalbandian, d. 130; Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del RA; Ministru HARUTIUNIAN, H.; ARMENIA Fax: + 374 1 - 52 03 10 Salutation: Dear Minister

Send copies of your letters to:

- Chairman of the Human Rights Committee at the Office of the President, Paruir AIRIKIAN

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375077 g. Yerevan 77
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Komitet po pravam cheloveka
pri Prezidente Respubliki Armeniya
Predsedatelyu AIRIKIANU P.

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- the Ambassador of Armenia to your country (if there is one)

KEYWORDS: TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT1 / HARASSMENT / JOURNALISTS / FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION / IMPUNITY / PHOTOGRAPHS

**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 WC1X ODW; United Kingdom)**