

Press release

Armenia

Death of a suspect at the Charentsavan Police Department

Paris-Yerevan, April 27, 2010 - The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), its member organisation in Armenia, the Civil Society Institute (CSI), the Armenian Helsinki Committee and the Foundation against the Violation of Law condemn the death of Vahan Khalafyan at the Charentsavan Police Department on April 13, 2010.

On April 13, 24-year-old Vahan Khalafyan was taken to the Charentsavan Police Department along with three other young men. They were suspected of stealing clothes worth 1.5 million drams (approximately 2885 €) at the beginning of the month. According to the announcement of the Head of the Police Alik Sargsyan on April 14, they were taken to the police department at 4:50 p.m. Vahan Khalafyan's mother claimed on April 19 that her son had been taken to the police around 10:30 a.m. without any notice.

At around 5:00 p.m., Vahan Khalafyan died at the Charentsavan Police Department as a result of stab wounds. The Police announced on April 14 that he had committed suicide.

A criminal case was launched on April 13, 2010 by the Kotayk Province Investigation Department according to Article 110, part 1 (causing somebody to commit suicide) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia. On April 23, 2010, Moris Hayrapetyan, Officer of the Criminal Investigation Department was charged with this article as well as with Article 309 of the Criminal Code (Exceeding official duties) and was taken to pre-trial detention.

FIDH, CSI, the Armenian Helsinki Committee and the Foundation against the Violation of Law express their deep concern about the death of Vahan Khalafyan. The State should investigate the exact circumstances of this death and bring those responsible to justice.

This is not the first case of a citizen dying at police department in Armenia. As previously reported by FIDH and CSI¹, on May 12, 2008 Levon Gulyan who had been summoned to

¹ <http://www.fidh.org/One-Year-after-Levon-Gulyan-s-Death-No-Answers> and
<http://www.fidh.org/Armenia-Witness-to-a-shooting-dies-in-custody>

the police station as a witness died in the Police Headquarters of the Republic of Armenia and until now no one has been found responsible for his death. Moreover, on February 5, 2010, the Criminal Court of Appeal rejected the appeal of his legal successors against the decision of the Court of First Instance to close the case.

Our organisations are deeply concerned by the seemingly pervasive culture of impunity for crimes committed by or under the responsibility of law enforcement bodies in Armenia.

FIDH, CSI, the Armenian Helsinki Committee and the Foundation against the Violation of Law call the Armenian authorities:

- To conduct an immediate and efficient investigation on Vahan Khalafyan's death;
- To ensure that the perpetrators be brought to trial before a competent, independent and impartial court in accordance with national criminal law and in strict respect of international human rights principles and standards;
- To investigate impartially the responsibility of the high ranking officials who fail to prevent the repetition of such cases which therefore contributes to the culture of impunity.
- To fully conform with the provisions of the European Convention on the Prevention of Torture and the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified by the Republic of Armenia, which clearly imposes to a State an obligation to investigate and prosecute allegations of torture and inhuman treatment.

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