



Обзор прессы

37-й конгресс FIDH, Ереван, апрель 2010

Revue de presse

37ème congrès de la FIDH, Erevan, avril 2010

Press review

37th FIDH Congress, Yerevan, April 2010

Revista de prensa

37º Congreso de la FIDH, Yerevan, Abril 2010

Anglais – English – Inglés/Français – French – Francés/Español – Spanish - Español



NEWS DIGEST

Council of Europe Information office in Armenia

14.04.2010

Armenian and international human rights defenders, participating in FIDH Conference, as well as some NGO leaders yesterday have addressed a Petition to Mr. Dick Marty, Chairman of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe. Signed by 78 people the petition particularly asks that PACE Monitoring Committee urges the Armenian authorities to Ensure an independent and impartial investigation of the events on March 1-2, 2008 and immediately release all political prisoners. Aravot, Lragir.am

<http://www.coe.am/digests.php?date=14-04-2010>

PETITION

Lragir.am

13/04/2010

**Mr. Dick Marty, Chairman
Monitoring Committee
Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe**



The Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe in Resolution 1609, Resolution 1620 and Resolution 1643 has addressed a series of concrete demands to the Armenian authorities in relation to the March 1-2, 2008 events, including an independent, impartial and credible investigation and the release of persons deprived of their liberty on political grounds.

Despite the above-mentioned resolutions, there has been little progress achieved in this respect. As a matter of fact, the government's initiatives to conduct investigations have actually failed and more than a dozen people convicted for their political views still remain in prison.

Acknowledging the role of the Council of Europe in promoting human rights and democracy and taking into consideration obligations of the Republic of Armenia in this respect, we call upon the PACE Monitoring Committee to urge the Armenian authorities to:

Ensure an independent and impartial investigation of the events on March 1-2, 2008;
Immediately release all political prisoners.

Signatures

Mikayel Danielyan, Armenian Helsinki Association, Armenia
Artur Sakunts, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, Armenia
Vardan Harutyunyan, Center for Freedom and Rights, Armenia
Natalia Martirosyan, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Armenian Committee, Armenia
Levon Barseghyan, Journalists Club "Asparez", Armenia
Isabella Sargsyan, "Youth for Democracy" NGO, Armenia
Melissa Brown, Political Prisoners' Wives (Shakhkhatun), Armenia
Edgar Khachartyan, Peace Dialogue, Armenia
Karen Hakobyan, Huys, Armenia
Seda Melikyan, Lawyers for Human Rights, Armenia

Tigran Khzmalyan, filmmaker/Armenia
 Jirayr Sefilyan, former political prisoner/Armenia
 Zhanna Aleksanyan, Journalists for Human Rights
 Amalya Kostanyan, Transparency International anti- Corruption Center
 Michael Ellman, London, UK
 Khalid Ikhir, Association Nigérienne des Droits de l'homme (ANDDH)
 Torres Francois, France
 Wrabayi Ru, Rwanda
 Nehmi Joumaa, Association Libanaise des Droits de l'Homme (ALDHOM), Liban
 Klio Papapantoleon, Hellenic League for Human Rights, Greece
 Roger Bouka-Owoko, Observatoire Congolais de Droits de l'Homme (OCDH), Republic of Congo
 Saray Thun, Cambodian Human rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodia
 Zoran Pusic, Civic Committee for Human Rights, Croatia
 Chia- Fan Lin, Taiwan Association for Human Rights, Taiwan
 Gianmarco Cesari, Lega Italiana dei Diritti dell'Uomo (LIDU), Italy
 Anahit Aharonyan, CSI volunteer, Armenia
 Elsa Ballauri, Albanian Human Rights Group (AHRG), Albania
 Assane Seck, Rencontre [Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme](#) (RAODHO), Senegal
 Dr. Kek Pung, Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), Cambodia
 Omar Salazar Asociacion servicios de promocion laboral (ASEPROLA), Costa Rica
 Wesam Ahmad, Palestine
 Youth Human Rights Movement, Russia
 David Zahumenský, League of Human Rights (LLP), Czech Republic
 Gloria Cano Asociacion pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), Peru
 Vilma Nuñez de Escorcia, Centro Nicaraguense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH), Nicaragua
 Elsie Monge, Comision Ecumenica de Derechos Humanos (ECDHU), Ecuador
 Cynthia Gabriel, Malaysia
 Yolanda Herrera, Asamblea Permanente de los Derechos Humanos de Bolivia (APDHB), Bolivia
 Dan Van Raemdonck, Ligue des droits de l' Homme (LDH), Belgium
 Abdujalil Boymatov, Human rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), Uzbekistan
 Makichyan Garnik, Armenia
 Libyan League for Human Rights, Libya
 Debbie Stothard, ALTSEAN-Burma, Thailand
 Alfredo Arpaia, Lega Italiana dei Diritti dell'Uomo (LIDU), Italy
 Joan Nyanyuki, Kenya
 Erick Krakpo, L'Organisation pour la Compassion et le Développement des Familles en Détresse (OCODEFAD), Central African Republic
 Vanida Thephsouvanh, Mouvement Laotien pour les Droits de l'homme (MLDH), Laos
 Amir Suliman
 Md. Nur Khan, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh
 Karine Bonneau, FIDH
 Jose Flores, Comision de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (CDHG), Guatemala
 Atef Aresh, Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), Jordan
 Mariana Pena, Argentina
 Musa Abu Hashhash, B'Tselem, Israel
 Thuan Gregory, CoE expert
 Alexandra Pomeon, FIDH
 Noeline Blackwell, Free Legal Advice Centers (FLAC), Ireland
 Ruzanna Gharayan, lawyer, Armenia
 Anahit Khachatryan, Armenia
 Laura Hein, Italy
 Levon Babamyan, Armenia
 Adrian Ramirez, Liga Mexicana por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (LIMEDDH), Mexico
 Ekaterina Sokirinskaia, Memorial, Russia
 Ibuchukwu O Ezike, Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Nigeria

Furkat Tishaev, Memorial, Russia
 Sedrak Baghdasaryan, Victims of State Needs NGO, Armenia
 Fatimata Mbaye, Association Mauritanienne des droits de l'Homme (AMDH), Mauritanie
 Raphaël Kpande-Adzare, Ligue togolaise des droits de l'Homme (LTDH), Togo
 Thompson Adebayor, Liberia Watch for Human Rights (LWHR), Liberia
 Dr. Hussain Shaban, Iraq
 Dr. Ezzedine Saeed, Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC), Yemen
 Dr. Arquimedes Joao Francisco, [Liga Mocambicana dos Direitos Humanos \(LMDDH\)](#),
 Mozambique
 Yasmine Cabral, Guinea-Bissau
 Mohamed Zyad, Pays Bas
 Justine Atukwasa, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Uganda
 Marissa Mercado, Spain
 Dobian Assingar, Ligue Tchadienne des droits de l'Homme (LTDH), Chad
 Damien Cousin, France

BOTTLE FILLED WITH HOT WATER

Armtown

13/04/2010



Indeed, the location (RA capital city Yerevan) of the FIDH 37th conference, the demand of the president of the organization addressed to the RA government to immediately release the political prisoners of Armenia, objective investigation of the events of March 1, 2008, reopening of the A1+ were indeed pleasant facts. The meeting of the human rights defenders with the parents and relatives of the victims of the March 1 and the relatives of the political prisoners proceeded in a quite exciting environment. And if we add to this the active participation of the conference participants in the ANC rally then we can definitely agree with Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who said that the energetic background of the rally was unprecedented. This was done for the opposition. It was originally evident that the title of this conference – protection of human rights, wouldn't be pleasant for the authorities. The material of the discussion was even more unpleasant – the state of human rights in Armenia and the RA judicial system. Besides this, the oppositionists, who were present at the conference, introduced the guests to the reality of the human rights status and justice system of Armenia with their replicas and speeches. And after all that they'd still freely walk in the hall. This was making the authorities nervous because the situation wouldn't allow them to immediately punish them by humiliating their human rights, hitting them and cursing. During the conference of the human rights watchdog the government did what it had the option to do. They were weakened and tried to count the benefits instead of loss. The 37th FIDH conference organized in Yerevan, wasn't it? Therefore, Armenia is the only country in the region, where the high level of democracy allows these people to gather, even participate in the opposition rally and even stand on the podium. And then the media outlets would mention that 400 human rights defenders have arrived in Armenia to partake in the conference. And for Armenia 400 human rights defenders are first of all tourists. And this means 400 hotel numbers, sightseeing, lunch, dinner, supper. And finally publications in various magazines of the world... However, it is not necessary to be in the government to understand that the mentioned meetings of the human rights watchdog, the 37th conference were merely events to inspire the society with hope and good mood. But to assume that this conference can efficiently affect the release of the political prisoners, reopening of the A1+ or the investigation of the death cases of March 1 is mildly said unrealistic. First of all the A1+ will soon celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ban of the channel. Relevant international structures and even the European Court demanded that the A1+ should be reopened. As we see, the leadership of the country doesn't rush to abide with its obligation because it turns out that the international human rights watchdogs and the European Court don't have much of reputation in our country. The court litigations of political prisoners and particularly Nicol Pashinyan proceeded with evident violations of the law and occurred in front of the representatives of embassies and human rights watchdogs. This time as well various international organizations convinced Serzh Sargsyan to

release the political prisoners. All these prisoners are still imprisoned. The opinions and claims of the international organizations regarding the investigation of the March 1 events are outdated because the government of Armenia has already promulgated that the March 1 page is closed. There are human right watchdogs in Armenia as well. It means there are organizations, which are entitled to protect our rights. But protection of human rights in our country resembles an artificial plant with a red plastic flower. At any rate, even if Armenia needs such conferences then those don't need to proceed in participation of human rights defenders. We need conferences in participation of psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists and philosophers. It means when a man is hurting the rights of another man and enjoys it then this is no more a legal issue. Same does the government to its people. The reason of that is the inadequate understanding of the situation; in other words, absence of philosophy. As these issues were not the theme of the 37th conference of FIDH then perhaps there is no need to be so thrilled about the fact that there were so many human right watchdogs gathered in one spot. In general, the activities of human rights organizations in our country remind us of a service that is recently being offered to customers of Holiday Inn. The hotels offer free of charge services to customers, a person who'd warm up your bed. According to the short statement that appeared on the Internet the press secretary of the Hotel network simplified this, "It is the same thing as to have a hot bottle of water in your bed." So how does this process take place? Five minutes prior to entering the bed at your request the hotel administration sends to your room someone with sterile clothes, which covers the whole body including hair. That person comes to your bed and stays inside for 5 minutes and warms up the bed with the body. Then that person disappears. And after that you enter the warm bed and fall into baby sleep. The maid warms up the bed but for only the first five minutes. In order to keep the warmth the whole night you need to use the warmth of your body.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/168/20100413/7265>

ANTOINE BERNARD, FIDH

Caucasian Knot

11.04.2010



Antoine Bernard, FIDH Executive Director in the interview to Caucasian Knot tells about ways and methods of struggle for democratic freedom. He assesses events in the Northern Caucasus, and in Armenia where the International Forum was held from April 6 till 8.

FIDH FORUM PARTICIPANTS WORRY THAT FREQUENTLY UNDER PRETEXT OF WAR ON TERROR HUMAN RIGHTS ARE RESTRAINED

Caucasian Knot

09.04.2010



Dictator regimes make use of war on terror as a pretext for neutralizing human rights activist and political opponents. Struggle against terrorism is used for destruction of democratic freedoms. This was a conclusion made by the participants of the Congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) within the discussion on the topic of observance of human rights in the context of fighting terrorism. Moderator of the session Alirio Uribe, Secretary General of the FIDH from Colombia, said that terror acts committed in various regions of the world evidence absence of political strategy in the war on terror. "We need not just punishments; the strategy should cover plenty of aspects: propaganda, policy, economy and ideology. It's quite a serious issue; and we all should undertake development of this strategy," said Mr Uribe.

One of the speakers - Dan van Radmonk from Belgium noted that until now there is no clear definition of the terms "terrorism" and "extremism", and it is a huge problem. "The legal aspect of this terminology should be elaborated," said Mr Radmonk. He drew attention to the fact that tougher rhetoric of counterterrorism result in tougher phenomenon as such. Besides, according to his story, the rights of a person accused of terrorism are encroached on everywhere; they cannot find advocates, because the lawyers who try to defend them are accused of and criticized for complicity to terrorists both by state bodies and the society as a whole.

"It is interesting that Tony Blair said in due time that terror act is an ideal occasion to push the government to pass the laws, which it had long wanted but could not pass. Thus, if a foreigner appears in one of EU countries without documents, he or she will be automatically equated to a terrorist," said George Pierre Dubois, head of the French League of Human Rights.

Amal Basha, chairperson of the Forum of Arab Sisters from Yemen, said that Yemen is the most corrupted country in the world. "In our country war on terror is used for fighting against political opponents and journalists. The country was turned into prison; we have thousands of political prisoners.

Here, in Armenia, people stand for liberation of 14 political prisoners; we have them in thousands. Meanwhile, our leaders reject any facts about political prisoners," she said. A woman human rights defender from Uzbekistan, whose name was not disclosed and whom the "Caucasian Knot" correspondent was not allowed to video, said that in her country NGOs, including human rights ones are outlaws.

"Our organizations are not registered, and, as a matter of fact, our activity is considered as criminal. Now, under the slogan of the war on terror, the government has restricted the work of NGOs. Under this pretext, bank accounts of many NGOs were closed; in particular, after the Andizhan events about 200 NGOs were stopped," the Uzbek woman said. According to her story, in Uzbekistan, like in other countries with dictator regimes, the war on terror is a pretext for fighting against political opponents: under the motto of war on terror the government has thrown thousands into prisons; many of them were accused of religious extremism.

Sheron Hom, a Chinese woman human rights defender, leader of the Human Rights in China, expressed a similar point of view. "In our country, they began the war on terror in order to toughen the control over NGOs and journalists. Many international organizations, including the United Nations, don't want to notice human rights violations because of possible great investments into China. Under the lee of war on terror many laws control the financial flows received by NGOs. Under the shelter of this war, human rights activists are thrown into prisons," she said. Aziza Abdirasulova, head of the

Centre for Defence of Human Rights of Kirghizia, said that in 2009 in her country four persons accused by the court of terrorism were executed. However, in the course of judicial investigation their guilt was not proved: neither act of terror committed by them, nor keeping weapons and nor murdering any law enforcers. "It was just an imitation of war on terror," Ms Abdirasulova has noted.

See earlier reports: "At FIDH forum, human rights activists from "Memorial" share experiences of working in Chechnya," "FIDH President urges to release Armenian political prisoners," "In Armenia, some human rights activists refuse to take part in FIDH forum."

<http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/13011/>

“STRAGGLE AND INCONVENIENCES ARE NOT ONLY BETWEEN THE STATES”

Aysor.am

09.04.2010

The FIDH 37th Congress-Forum was followed by the joint declaration of the Armenian and Turkish delegates, after which they gave their assessments.

Yavuz Alatas the member of International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), who is in Armenia today, expressed his gratitude for the Armenian hospitality and mentioned that for 25 years he has kept straggling for defending the human rights in Turkey.

“The Armenian – Turkish relations are in a difficult condition again, we want to open the doors which the official sides have closed. We want to sit with our friends face to face and to put bridges between the two nations. It is a historical event, but it’s also a work which has its difficulties as the straggle and the inconveniences are not only between the states,” Alatas said.

He stated that during the last period the nationalist movement in Turkey becomes wider, that is the reason why parallel with the speeches of the officials the civic word is needed, the speaker said.

“We would like to sit around the table to discuss all the historical events, especially those concerning 1915. We need a new kind of psychology, atmosphere, we should be able to overcome the ideas that are between us,” the speaker said.

This statement made by Alatas is significant in reality: “It is not important whether it comprises all our wishes or not, the important is the fact that this is the first step.”

<http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2010/04/09/alatas-armenia-turkey/>

ARMENIAN, TURKISH NGOS CALL ON AUTHORITIES IN BOTH STATES TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS

PanArmenian.net

09.04.2010

PanARMENIAN.Net - The 37th Congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) pays tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide and salutes the efforts of its member organizations in Armenia and in Turkey (Civil Society Institute (CSI, Armenia), Human Rights Association (IHD, Turkey) and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT, Turkey)) and brings its full support to the joint Declaration that they have concluded in the context of the 37th FIDH Congress, including perspectives for actions identified in the following Declaration:

“We strongly believe that the protection of human rights throughout Turkey and the South Caucasus is key in the process of peace-building, reconciliation and good neighborly relations between all countries in the region, in order to ensure the safety, wellbeing and dignity of people across borders.

We call on both countries and societies in Armenia and Turkey to join their efforts and to create the necessary environment and processes to compensate for any negative consequences of human rights abuses committed in the past, including discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion etc, and to adhere to the standards of human rights protection as defined by international instruments. As an essential component to ensure respect for human rights throughout the region, we call for freedom of expression in all countries, and for the abolishment of any laws and practices that prevent free speech, including those imposing constraints on the Armenian-Turkish dialogue, such as Article 301 of the Criminal Code of Turkey.

We urge the political parties of the government and of the opposition in Turkey and Armenia to fulfill their duties to take every necessary step to normalize relations between the two countries and societies. This includes the imminent need to implement the bilateral Protocols on the normalization of diplomatic relations and the opening of mutual borders. Progress in this direction and the process of democratic transformation in Turkey will create a favorable environment for addressing the painful issue of the Armenian Genocide.

We denounce all forms of hostility fed by militaristic ambitions and structures among nations in the region.

To ensure sustainable peace between Armenia and Turkey and the prevention of mutual hostility in the future, we call on the two governments to ratify and implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

With the aim of building bridges between the two societies, we call on both countries to implement inclusive policies and to abolish exclusive approaches in every sphere of life.

We call on the governments and civil societies of both countries to promote equal and just treatment in every sphere of life, including media, education, administration, legal practices, and public life.”

http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/society/news/46778/Armenian_Turkish_NGOs_call_on_authorities_in_both_states_to_normalize_relations

THE TURKISH DELEGATE CRITICIZES AZERBAIJAN'S BEHAVIOR

Aysor.am

09.04.2010



We denounce all forms of hostility fed by militaristic ambitions and structures among nations in the region. This is one of the main points of the FIDH which was accepted hours ago in the 37th summit of the FIDH by the Armenian and Turkish delegates.

Do the Turkish include in the above mentioned point also the hostile and warlike statements of Azerbaijan? Yavuz Alatas the member of International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), who is in Armenia today and who has made the joint declaration mentioned that it is more than 40 years that he protects the human rights, and then he added: “If Azerbaijan makes warlike statements we condemn also Azerbaijan.”

But Alatas also mentioned that the border quarrels and the land demands have caused the human rights violations in the region.

“Our words are directed to Armenia too: it has put the borders under discussion and it can become a cause for the war, and it is an issue to be criticized. We also condemn Turkey for losing so big sum of money for getting more arms. We prefer those means to be used for better goals,” the Turkish delegate said.

<http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2010/04/09/fidh-turkey-azerbaijan/>

DECLARATION BY FIDH MEMBER ORGANISATIONS IN ARMENIA AND IN TURKEY

Lragir.am

09.04.2010

FIDH's 37th Congress pays tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide and salutes the efforts of its member organisations in Armenia and in Turkey (Civil Society Institute (CSI, Armenia), Human Rights Association (IHD, Turkey) and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT, Turkey)) and brings its full support to the joint Declaration that they have concluded in the context of the 37th FIDH Congress, including perspectives for actions identified in the Declaration.

Declaration by FIDH member organisations in Armenia and in Turkey

We strongly believe that the protection of human rights throughout Turkey and the South Caucasus is key in the process of peace-building, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations between all countries in the region, in order to ensure the safety, wellbeing and dignity of people across borders.

We call on both countries and societies in Armenia and Turkey to join their efforts and to create the necessary environment and processes to compensate for any negative consequences of human rights abuses committed in the past, including discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion etc, and to adhere to the standards of human rights protection as defined by international instruments.

As an essential component to ensure respect for human rights throughout the region, we call for freedom of expression in all countries, and for the abolishment of any laws and practices that prevent free speech, including those imposing constraints on the Armenian-Turkish dialogue, such as Article 301 of the Criminal Code of Turkey.

We urge the political parties of the government and of the opposition in Turkey and Armenia to fulfill their duties to take every necessary step to normalize relations between the two countries and societies. This includes the imminent need to implement the bilateral Protocols on the normalisation of diplomatic relations and the opening of mutual borders. Progress in this direction and the process of democratic transformation in Turkey will create a favourable environment for addressing the painful issue of the Armenian Genocide.

We denounce all forms of hostility fed by militaristic ambitions and structures among nations in the region.

To ensure sustainable peace between Armenia and Turkey and the prevention of mutual hostility in the future, we call on the two governments to ratify and implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

With the aim of building bridges between the two societies, we call on both countries to implement inclusive policies and to abolish exclusive approaches in every sphere of life.

We call on the governments and civil societies of both countries to promote equal and just treatment in every sphere of life, including media, education, administration, legal practices, and public life.

<http://www.lragir.am/engsrc/society-lrahos17460.html>

FIDH PRESIDENT DOES NOT BACK ARMENIAN OPPOSITION

A1+

09/04/2010

Before her departure from Armenia Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) does not want to make an impression that she supports the Armenian National Congress (HAK).

During a press conference following the 37th FIDH Congress Mrs. Belhassen said she had highlighted the necessity of the release of Armenian political prisoners and disclosure of ten murders of March 1, 2008, at her meetings with Armenian leadership.

During the meetings Armenian authorities did not deny that Armenia encounters problems in the sphere of human rights and they are willing to address them.

During a meeting with President Serzh Sargsyan, Souhayr Belhassen spoke about Armenia's involvement in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

"Serzh Sargsyan informed me that Armenia is not ready to join the Rome Statute at present. During the meeting we also referred to the events of March 1, their consequences, the murder of ten victims and political prisoners," said the FIDH President.

"We also spoke about freedom of speech and state of mass media in Armenia. This is very important as we convey our message to the public through media," she added.

<http://a1plus.am/en/politics/2010/04/9/souhayr-belhassen>

TURKISH DEFENDERS CONDEMN AZERBAIJAN'S BELLICOSE STATEMENTS

Panorama.am

09.04.2010



“We condemn all the ways and expressions of enmity raised by bellicose claims of some structures of the region’s states,” the resolution of the Armenian and Turkish Leagues adopted at the International Federation of Human Rights 37th Congress reads.

At a press conference following the end of the Congress today, while reporters were trying to make it clear whether it goes about Azerbaijan as well since the country regularly makes bellicose statements, the

President of Turkey’s Human Rights Foundation (TIHV) Yavuz Onen said they condemn any bellicose ones generally. “If Azerbaijan is bellicose and makes bellicose statements, of course, we condemn Azerbaijan as well,” he said.

According to him, all border disputes lead to the violation of human rights. Yavuz Onen said they also condemn the discussions over the current borders of Armenia, those bringing about wars.

“We also denounce Turkey’s policy to spend huge sums on arms while the same amounts could be spent for the welfare of people,” TIHV President said.

<http://panorama.am/en/politics/2010/04/09/turkis-lawyers/?sw>

HUMAN RIGHTS CONGRESS URGES RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN ARMENIA

Hetq.am

09/04/2010



On April 6, at the opening ceremony of the 37th International Federation of Human Rights Congress (FIDH) in Yerevan, FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen issued a call on behalf of the Congress for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Armenia. Today, the FIDH, a non-governmental organization based in Paris, also adopted a resolution paying tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

The FIDH also welcomed the efforts of its member organisations in Armenia and in Turkey (Civil Society Institute (CSI, Armenia), Human Rights Association (IHD, Turkey) and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT, Turkey).

In part, the declaration reads: “We strongly believe that the protection of human rights throughout Turkey and the South Caucasus is key in the process of peace-building, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations between all countries in the region, in order to ensure the safety, wellbeing and dignity of people across borders.

We call on both countries and societies in Armenia and Turkey to join their efforts and to create the necessary environment and processes to compensate for any negative consequences of human rights abuses committed in the past, including discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion etc, and to adhere to the standards of human rights protection as defined by international instruments.

As an essential component to ensure respect for human rights throughout the region, we call for freedom of expression in all countries, and for the abolishment of any laws and practices that prevent free speech, including those imposing constraints on the Armenian-Turkish dialogue, such as Article 301 of the Criminal Code of Turkey.

We urge the political parties of the government and of the opposition in Turkey and Armenia to fulfill their duties to take every necessary step to normalize relations between the two countries and societies. This includes the imminent need to implement the bilateral Protocols on the normalisation of diplomatic relations and the opening of mutual borders. Progress in this direction and the process of democratic transformation in Turkey will create a favourable environment for addressing the painful issue of the Armenian Genocide.”

FIDH also reiterated its call for an independent and effective investigation into the events of March 2008 and the disproportionate use of force by the security services. FIDH further expressed concerns about the electoral process and obstacles to freedom of the media.

“We have expressed these concerns repeatedly over the last months to the Armenian authorities at the highest levels – and this morning once again in person to the President of the Republic, as we promised to the families of victims and political prisoners with whom we met yesterday”, declared Souhayr Belhassen. “All these issues are of utmost concern to the FIDH Congress, which today launches a solemn appeal to the authorities. We hope that we will receive concrete responses to all of our concerns. We will persist until we obtain them”, she added.

“The release of all political prisoners and holding to account those responsible for the ten deaths of 1 March are two of the essential conditions for the effectiveness of the justice system in Armenia”, concluded Artak Kirakosyan, representative of FIDH’s Armenian member-organization, Civil Society Institute.

<http://hetq.am/en/society/29969/>

FIDH MEMBER ORGANISATIONS IN ARMENIA AND TURKEY ISSUE A JOINT DECLARATION

Armradio.am

09.04.2010



FIDH's 37th Congress adopted a resolution, saying it pays tribute to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide and salutes the efforts of its member organisations in Armenia and in Turkey (Civil Society Institute (CSI, Armenia), Human Rights Association (IHD, Turkey) and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT, Turkey)) and brings its full support to the joint Declaration that they have concluded in the context of the 37th FIDH Congress, including perspectives for actions identified in the Declaration.

The FIDH member organization in Armenia and Turkey concluded a joint declaration in the context of the 37th FIDH Congress. The declaration reads:

“We strongly believe that the protection of human rights throughout Turkey and the South Caucasus is key in the process of peace-building, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations between all countries in the region, in order to ensure the safety, wellbeing and dignity of people across borders.

We call on both countries and societies in Armenia and Turkey to join their efforts and to create the necessary environment and processes to compensate for any negative consequences of human rights abuses committed in the past, including discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion etc, and to adhere to the standards of human rights protection as defined by international instruments.

As an essential component to ensure respect for human rights throughout the region, we call for freedom of expression in all countries, and for the abolishment of any laws and practices that prevent free speech, including those imposing constraints on the Armenian-Turkish dialogue, such as Article 301 of the Criminal Code of Turkey.

We urge the political parties of the government and of the opposition in Turkey and Armenia to fulfill their duties to take every necessary step to normalize relations between the two countries and societies. This includes the imminent need to implement the bilateral Protocols on the normalisation of diplomatic relations and the opening of mutual borders. Progress in this direction and the process of democratic transformation in Turkey will create a favourable environment for addressing the painful issue of the Armenian Genocide.

We denounce all forms of hostility fed by militaristic ambitions and structures among nations in the region.

To ensure sustainable peace between Armenia and Turkey and the prevention of mutual hostility in the future, we call on the two governments to ratify and implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

With the aim of building bridges between the two societies, we call on both countries to implement inclusive policies and to abolish exclusive approaches in every sphere of life. We call on the governments and civil societies of both countries to promote equal and just treatment in every sphere of life, including media, education, administration, legal practices, and public life.”

<http://www.armradio.am/news/?part=pol&id=17224>

ARMENIAN AND TURKISH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE UNITED

Hra.am

09/04/2010

On April 9, in the end of the 37th Congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), member organizations from the Armenian and Turkish leagues came up with a joint press conference. The topic was Armenian-Turkish relations from the viewpoint of human rights and civil society of both countries.



Before the press-conference the Armenian and Turkish leagues of FIDH adopted a statement about Armenian -Turkish relations.

"The statement is a result of our joint work. It became possible due to cooperation with our partners the Caucasus Media Institute, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, head of the European Integration Karen Bekaryan, Institute of Civil Society and Regional Development and our Turkish partners: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly of Turkey," mentioned Artak Kirakosyan, Board Chairman of the Civil Society Institute.

"It seems that we should present different sides and attitudes, but it is not so, we adopted the statement not as opponents but defenders of human rights, as supporters of brotherhood and peace," announced Turkish human rights defender Yusuf Alatas.

"We wanted to come to Armenia because Armenian-Turkish relations are again at risk. We want to open the doors which are closed by the official parties. We want to sit with our Armenian colleagues, embrace each other and think about human rights defense in our countries," stressed another Turkish human rights defender Yavuz Onen.

He said to the presents that Turkish human rights defenders, who are today in Yerevan, including himself, for 25 years have struggled for human rights.

"Currently, when the nationalistic movement takes roots in Turkey, the struggle of democrats, liberals and human rights defenders turns to be more difficult."

On the question regarding the phrase "Armenian Genocide" used in the statement, Yavuz Onen answered:

"We do not have a special document on this question in our organization. It is a very delicate topic, and it can danger the current relations. It requires new psychology. We need to face our history and for this we need new psychological approach. We want to have a new bridge for brotherhood."

Artak Kirakosyan, Board Chairman of the Civil Society Institute noted in this regard:

"Those things that we can applaud at and think of as heroic in the statement of the Turkish human right defenders, can turn dramatic for them in Turkey. More important is that after death of Hrant Dink, thousand citizens of Turkey went to street with posters "we are Armenian, we are Dink". Another important step was the signature collection of the Turk intelligentsia, in which the word sorry was used."

The Turkish human rights defenders said that Hrant Dink was their friend: "When Hrant Dink was killed in Turkey, democracy and human rights were killed with that."

FIDH President Souhayr Bellhassen also answered questions of Armenian journalists, mentioning that she raised the necessity of the release of political prisoners and investigation of cases of the 10 deaths on March 1 at all meetings with high ranked officials of Armenia.

According to her, the Armenian authority do not reject that there are human rights issues in Armenia. In her opinion, there is also a will to solve these issues.

FIDH President mentioned that she met all the sides, listen to everybody to keep the balance. In this relation, the Armenian partner of FIDH- Civil Society Institute- assisted her.

"We do support neither the government nor the opposition, we are on the third side- the civil society, and our purpose is to strengthen and develop this lawyer worldwide."



<http://hra.am/en/point-of-view/2010/04/09/briefing1>

ACTIVISTS RALLY IN SUPPORT OF ARMENIAN 'POLITICAL PRISONERS'

Hurriyet Daily News

08.04.2010

YEREVAN, Armenia - Daily News with wires

Organizers of an international human-rights conference in Yerevan joined thousands of protesters Tuesday to demand the immediate release of jailed opposition supporters, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported on its Web site.

Leaders of the International Federation for Human Rights, or FIDH, and their invited guests from around the world chanted "Freedom!" in Armenian and made victory signs to the crowd during a surprise appearance at a rally timed to coincide with the start of the three-day forum.

"My dear friends, the entire FIDH is with you," FIDH Chairwoman Souhayr Belhassen told a crowd of several hundred people. The presence of the human-rights activists and their rousing speeches gave a major boost to the opposition Armenian National Congress, or HAK, and its leader, Levon Ter-Petrossian.

"Freedom-loving people of Armenia, know that you are not alone," said Nobel Prize-winning Iranian activist Shirin Ebadi, who described the more than a dozen imprisoned Armenian opposition members as "political prisoners."

FIDH leaders, Ebadi and other conference participants were cheered as they left the hillside square in downtown Yerevan, a traditional venue for street gatherings.

"In effect, the International Federation for Human Rights and our rally have united today," Ter-Petrossian said in a speech following the FIDH members' appearances.

<http://www.hurriyetaailynews.com/n.php?n=activists-rally-in-support-of-armenian-political-prisoners-2010-04-08>

IRANIAN NOBEL LAUREATE URGES ARMENIA TO RELEASE 'POLITICAL PRISONERS'

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

08.04. 2010

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi says she hopes Armenian officials will listen to international human rights activists pleas and release a dozen jailed opposition activists, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Ebadi spoke to RFE/RL on April 7 following a visit to a Yerevan prison and its hospital. She said she is glad the Armenian authorities kept their promise -- given to her personally by President Serzh Sarkisian on April 6 -- to allow her to visit the prison.

However, Ebadi said she could not meet the prisoners in their cells or prison hospital inmates within the medical premises of the hospital, and instead saw them in special visitor rooms. She said such meetings kept her from seeing what conditions the prisoners live in.

Ebadi was in Yerevan for a two-day conference by the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) that was attended by some 300 rights activists from around the world.

She also was among a group of international activists who attended the rally of the main opposition Armenian National Congress on April 6. The rally, which was organized by the alliance led by opposition leader and former President Levon Ter-Petrossian, focused on the issue of people the opposition considers political prisoners.

Opposition parties say at least a dozen of their leaders and activists are political prisoners. Officials deny holding any political prisoners and say those opposition activists who are in prison were convicted because they broke the law.

But Ebadi, like other delegates from the FIDH conference, described the imprisoned oppositionists as political prisoners when they addressed the opposition rally.

Ebadi dismissed suggestions by journalists that hosting the FIDH conference in Yerevan would send the wrong message about Armenia's human rights record.

"When the FIDH decided to hold its meeting in [Armenia], your country enjoyed a better situation than the other countries in the region," she said. "When we decided to hold our meeting here, we didn't say or believe there are no human rights violations here."

A lawyer and former judge, Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her efforts to promote democracy and human rights in Iran.

"There are numerous journalists who are in prison in Iran right now," Ebadi added. "We cannot hold meetings like this in my country."

http://www.rferl.org/content/Iranian_Nobel_Laureate_Urges_Armenia_To_Release_Political_Prisoners/2006727.html

AT FIDH FORUM, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS FROM "MEMORIAL" SHARE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN CHECHNYA

Caucasian Knot

08/04/2010



Within the section "Role of regional systems of human rights defence in strengthening national justice systems" of the 37th Congress of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), which is now on in Yerevan, human rights activists from the "Memorial" shared their practical experience of defending human rights in Chechnya.

As reported by the author under nickname Yerevanets, who writes in the blog of the "Caucasian Knot" and who visited the above section as a listener, the work there "passed peacefully." In his report named "Chechnya and

Armenia", the above author shares his impressions about the reports made by activists of the HRC "Memorial" Ekaterina Sokiryanskaya and Kirill Koroteyev, noting that their presentations allowed "to get an idea of what human rights activists are doing in Chechnya, so to say, from inside." "Some episodes from their stories were already known, but the majority of facts were new," writes the author about the work of the section. "For example, I heard for the first time about the bombardment in 1999 of Shami-Yurt village, after which the general who gave the order to bomb the peaceful village was nominated for advance in office."

"By the way, Mr Koroteyev presented a curious fact," writes the blogger. "It's universally known that to be eligible for the ECtHR, a complaint should exhaust all the domestic instances. In Chechnya this issue was 'settled' radically - courts simply refuse to accept cases on kidnappings and murders to consideration."

The listener of the section and a resident of Yerevan also notes that the processes underway in Chechnya look very much like the work of "the militia, prosecutor's office and the courts" in Armenia." In his other note "Incident at FIDH Forum" the author writes about the report of Artak Zeinalyan, "defender of the interests of the massacre on March 1, 2008, in Yerevan." "He's a nice guy: he managed to present - briefly and fully - the whole today's situation in Armenia and raised the issue not only of the victims, on whose murders not a single case was initiated within 2 years, but also of the political prisoners and litigations on them. His presentation was welcomed by long applause of the audience," wrote the visitor of the forum.

See earlier reports: "FIDH President urges to release Armenian political prisoners," "Ombudsman of Armenia refuses to take part in FIDH forum," "FIDH calls Armenian authorities to release political prisoners."

<http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/13006/>

"THE 10 MURDERS ARE A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS"

A1+

08/04/2010

"We demand the immediate release of all political prisoners from the Armenian authorities," these were the words that ended the 37th conference of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) in Yerevan.

The conference was summed-up by vice-president of the FIDH, advocate from Belarus Ales Bialitatski who assured that the situation is the same in almost all post-Soviet countries from the angle of human rights.

"During our meetings with the Armenian authorities, our organization also demanded that the authorities reveal the 10 murders on March 1 because the murders of 2008 March 1 in Armenia are the result of the 2008 elections," Mr. Bialiatski told "A1+".

He recalled that the FIDH was the first organization that gave an evaluation in the aftermath of the events of 2008. "I am certain that our announcements on the release of political prisoners and revealing the 10 murders will not go unanswered. We will also keep those issues in the center of the Armenian authorities' attention through a number of other international organizations and I think the Armenian authorities will approach these issues with understanding."

The vice-president of the FIDH assured "A1+" that the conference would proceed differently, if political prisoners were released before the conference. "It would be possible to avoid many issues."

Ales Bialiatski recalled that if the state court instances are not able to reach justice and are dependent on the authorities, it will be possible at international instances.

"There have been precedents. Armenia is a member of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights can take decisions on issues existing in Armenia."

Tomorrow at 12 p.m. the heads of the FIDH are scheduled to give a press conference devoted to Turkish-Armenian relations and violations of human rights in those relations. During the conference, many advocates condemned Turkey for the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

<http://a1plus.am/en/politics/2010/04/8/fidh>

THERE IS FACT OF MURDER BUT NO ONE IS GUILTY

Hra.am

08/04/2010



The last session of the forum of the International Federation of Human Rights is taking place at one of the halls of Marriot Armenia hotel where supporters of ANC and human rights activists hold another of their actions of protest to remind the guests one more time about political prisoners in Armenia.

Vardan Harutyunyan, representative of the Committee of Political Prisoners and Politically Persecuted Persons that organized the three day actions says that their

actions have yielded results:

"Participants of the forum came and took part in the opposition rally. They raised the problem of political prisoners before the authorities."

Vardan Harutyunyan is one of the human rights activists who refused to participate in the forum.

"If it wasn't for all this noise, pressure of boycotts, activism of non-boycotters, the results would have been different. We attained our aim. The noise raised was pressing on them and it worked."

Meanwhile another silent protest action took place in front of the Government building: inhabitants of development zones and parents of soldiers killed in army in time of peace gathered there. They presented their protests to the President of the International Federation of Human Rights.

Vachagan Hakobyan, Chairman of the "Protection of the Ownership Right" NGO says they presented to FIDH a video film about their problem. "Yesterday one of our groups was received by the vice-mayor of Yerevan Kamo Areyan who was displeased with the visit and told them to find those who took their property and get it back from them. He said there was no money in the budget and told them not to come again. Beglaryan delayed with an answer for a year then said he was not competent. We won't get anything with these authorities in power," Hakobyan says.

Gohar Sargsyan, mother of a killed soldier, added that they presented stories of their sons' murders to the President of FIDH. "This state has violated rights of our sons because today we have only their tombstones, the fact of murder but no one guilty. She said she would pursue that those really guilty were punished."

<http://hra.am/en/hr-reviews/2010/04/08/protest>

PRISON IS NOT THE PLACE WHERE A JOURNALIST SHOULD BE

Hra.am

08/04/2010



One of the participants of "Justice, new challenges-the right to an effective remedy before an independent tribunal" Iranian human rights activist, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi visited Nikol Pashinyan, chief editor of "Haykakan Zhamanak" newspaper, at the "Nubarashen" penitentiary institution. She also visited Sasun Mikayelyan, Sarkis Hatspanyan, and Zhora Sapeyan.

"Prison is not the place where a journalist should be" said the Iranian human rights activist after the meeting with Nikol Pashinyan, mentioning that she met the journalist not in the cell, but in the room for visitors. "All of the political prisoners, whom I met today, told me that unfair verdicts were made. I was not allowed to meet them in the cells; I met all of the prisoners in the room for visitors. I have brought them a flower" said Shirin Ebadi to the journalists. The human rights activist stated that if there are 14 political prisoners in Armenia, in Iran there are 1000 and more.

"And I have been provided with an opportunity to meet detention places in Armenia, it is almost impossible in Iran", said Ebadi, pointing out that President Serj Sargsyan gave her an opportunity to have free access to detention places.

"During our meeting he said that detention places are open and you can visit anybody at any time", Ebadi told the journalists, stating that the president had not used "political prisoner" term during the talk, and continued that the people who are in the prisons are imprisoned not for their political activities, but for violation of the law".

During the meeting with the representatives of the opposition the Iranian human rights activist inquired about their criminal cases in details "I have been political prisoner myself and I am particularly interested in the destiny of the political prisoners. I have been protecting rights of the political prisoners for about 20 years. Wherever I go, I pay particular attention to the destinies of the political prisoners".

Shirin Ebadi gave a positive reply to the question on whether she thinks that after FIDH 37th Congress and her visit to the detention places, Armenian authorities would release the people who were imprisoned because of post-electoral events.

"Yes, it is possible, as a number of participants of the Congress joined rally participants and

demanding to release political prisoners". Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi considered human rights situation in Armenia "comparatively better" among other post-soviet countries.

"We have come here to help Armenia record a real improvement in the justice system", said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President, at the press conference.

We should also mention that many human rights activists in Armenia have boycotted the Congress.

"It is their, our colleagues' position, and we welcome any position", said Chief of the Board of Civil Society Institute Artak Kirakosyan.

FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen was hosted by RA President Serj Sargsyan. He wished successful and efficient work to the participants of the Congress and expressed hope that they would have an opportunity to learn about history and traditions of our country.

<http://hra.am/en/point-of-view/2010/04/08/shirin>

“THIS CONFERENCE COULDN’T FORCE ANYTHING TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES”

Panorama.am

08/04/2010

“This is an ordinary conference organized in other countries also. This time, the organizers decided to hold it in Armenia. This conference isn’t authorized to force anything to our authorities. PACE adopted resolution have nothing changed in our country, though we were to implement them,” Michael Danielyan, the president of “Helsinki committee” told at news conference talking about FIDH conference in Armenia.

It’s worth mentioning that the participants of the assembly demanded from the Armenian authorities to release the political prisoners as soon as possible.

Arthur Saqunts, the president of “Helsinki Assembly” NGO, Vanadzor, said he agreed with M. Danielyan and stated that the international organizations can’t have significant influence on a country, which is a Council of Europe member but doesn’t implement its duties. ”In this case what favor could the assembly do,” he said.

<http://www.panorama.am/en/society/2010/04/08/danielyan/>

FIDH OPINION NOT IMPORTANT FOR JUSTICE MINISTER

Tert.am

07.04.10

Justice Minister of Armenia Gevorg Danielyan is not content with what the President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Souhayr Belhassen, said in Yerevan relating to human rights record and the fact that those guilty for the killing of 10 Armenians during the March 1 events were not disclosed.

Belhassen had particularly said that there has recently been progress in Yerevan in terms of human rights, adding that though "there are still issues to worry about," calling on authorities to set, what she called, the political prisoners free.

"I do not attach much importance to what questions have been posed and by whom, as I am authorized to answer only to the queries of international state institutions. As what concerns the international unofficial institutions, naturally, I can respond to them, though I cannot consider it as an official stance," said he.

Danielyan also mentioned that similar statements are being made by Armenian non-governmental organizations too, "but that does not mean that we agree with them and should speak with them about those issues."

<http://tert.am/en/news/2010/04/07/fidh/?sw/?sw>

POLITICAL PRISONERS IN ARMENIA UNDENIABLE FACT, FIDH PRESIDENT STATES

NEWS.am

04/07/2010



Political prisoners in Armenia are an irrefutable fact, Ms. Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), stated in Yerevan on April 7.

She pointed out that at her meeting with RA President Serzh Sargsyan she urged the Armenian authorities to release all the political prisoners, particularly the persons arrested after the events in Yerevan on March 1, 2008.

In her interview with RFE/LR, Ms. Souhayr Belhassen pointed out that she discussed the problem with the leader of the opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC) Levon Ter-Petrosyan. She also visited the political prisoners and met their families.

T.P.

<http://news.am/en/news/18496.html>

ACTIVISTS RALLY IN SUPPORT OF ARMENIAN 'POLITICAL PRISONERS'

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

07.04. 2010



YEREVAN -- The organizers of an international human rights conference in Yerevan joined thousands of protesters on April 6 to demand the immediate release of jailed opposition supporters, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Leaders of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and their invited guests from around the world chanted "Freedom!" in Armenian and made victory signs to the crowd during a surprise appearance at a rally timed to coincide with the start of the three-day forum.

FIDH Chairwoman Souhayr Belhassen told the crowd of several hundred people, "My dear friends, the entire FIDH is with you."

Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Prize-winning activist from Iran, echoed that demand just as emphatically, describing the more than a dozen imprisoned Armenian oppositionists as "political prisoners."

"The freedom-loving people of Armenia, know that you are not alone," she said.

FIDH leaders, Ebadi, and other conference participants were cheered as they left the hillside square in downtown Yerevan -- a traditional venue for street gatherings.

Their presence and rousing speeches were a major boost for the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) and its leader, Levon Ter-Petrossian.

"In effect, the International Federation for Human Rights and our rally have united today," Ter-Petrossian said in a speech following the FIDH speeches.

In the lead-up to the FIDH's annual conference, some opposition supporters expressed concern that the Armenian authorities might exploit the event to improve their image abroad.

Sarkisian was initially due to open the FIDH gathering with a keynote speech, but he canceled it for unknown reasons and left Constitutional Court Chairman Gagik Harutiunian and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian to welcome the participants from more than 140 countries.

Both Harutiunian and Danielian were heckled by several opposition and civic activists as they came to the podium. Some participants applauded when one man shouted "Shame on you!" at Danielian.

"Take this as a manifestation of the development of civil society and let me start my speech," Harutiunian told the audience. He expressed hope that the event will contribute to the development of "a judicial system enjoying public trust" in Armenia.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Activists_Rally_In_Support_Of_Armenian_Political_Prisoners/2005682.html

ARMENIAN PRESIDENT CANCELS ADDRESS AT HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

07.04. 2010

YEREVAN -- Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian has canceled a keynote address he was to deliver at a conference by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in Yerevan, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

No reason was given for the cancellation.

The two-day FIDH conference -- which began on April 6 -- brings together more than 300 human rights campaigners from 140 countries, including prominent Iranian rights activist and Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi.

Armenian Constitutional Court Chairman Gagik Harutiunian and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian are scheduled to speak at the conference.

Some Armenian human rights groups who were invited to participate in the event have threatened to boycott it because they said the FIDH is reluctant to discuss the fallout from the controversial February 2008 presidential election and subsequent deadly street clashes in Yerevan.

FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen honored on April 5 the eight demonstrators killed in the unrest. She assured the victims' relatives that the Paris-based group will strive to have the "criminals" responsible for their deaths brought to justice.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_President_Cancels_Address_At_Human_Rights_Conference/2005432.html

LEVON TER-PETROSSIAN GREETES DEMONSTRATORS

Armtown.com

07.04.2010



The vicinity of Armenia Marriott hotel was overcrowded today morning. Scores of people with photos of political prisoners and victims of the deadly clashes of March 1, 2008, gathered in front of the hotel which hosted a congress of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). On seeing foreign delegates the demonstrators cried out "Freedom to Political Prisoners." They were more elated after seeing Armenia's first President Levon Ter-Petrossian who had come to meet with Štefan Füle, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy. "The meeting was devoted to the EU-Armenia partnership. The parties referred to issues of

bilateral interest including Karabakh conflict resolution, Armenian-Turkish relations, the state of human rights and political prisoners in Armenia," Levon Zurabian, coordinator of the Armenian National Congress (HAK), said after the meeting. Later Mr. Füle went up to the demonstrators and exchanged thoughts with them. "The recent developments in the country show that FIDH delegates are seriously disposed towards Armenia's home situation. They promised to raise the issue worldwide and assist us. They came at the invitation of the Armenian authorities but spoke against their actions," said Aram Manukyan, member of Armenian Pan-National Movement (HHSh). Remind that participants in the FIDH congress attended HAK's rally of April 6 and demanded an immediate release of the political prisoners.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/a1p/20100407/201004074/>

MEETING WITH NIKOL PASHINYAN

Armtown.com

07.04.2010

A meeting between a human rights defender, Nobel Prize holder Shirin Ebadi currently in Armenia within the frameworks of the FIDH conference and the political prisoner Nikol Pashinyan is taking place. Earlier, the human rights defender met with other political prisoners - Sasun Mikaelyan, Sargis Hatspanyan and Zhora Sapeyan.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/Ira/20100407/17434/>

WITH THE CALLS TO THE GOVERNMENT

hra.am

07/04/2010



More than 300 representatives from the member organizations of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) participate at the Forum in Yerevan "Justice: New challenges". Among the participants are heads of well-known organizations in the field of human rights, human rights defenders, a Nobel prize winner.

All the participants valued such a representative congress and expressed a hope that the congress discussion will contribute to the solution of issues in Armenia. In front of the Philharmonic Hall, where the opening ceremony took place, also a protest action was organized.

The opposition and some human rights organizations called the attention of participants to the issue of Armenia.

Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President, at the opening ceremony called to the government to release political activists imprisoned as a result of March 1 events and to organize effective investigation of the circumstances of the death of 10 people. The Federation also expressed its concerns about the impediments to the election process and free media.

"We continuously express this concern during the last months and hope to receive concrete answers," said Souhayr Belhassen.

All speakers at the opening ceremony expressed hope that discussion of the forum will contribute to the solution of local issues.

Stephan Fuele, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, European Commission stressed that the respect for human right and rule of human rights are the condition for the partners who want to build close relations with the European Union. He added that the respect for human rights should be demanded not from the international organizations but stipulated by the national interest.

Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Yanesh Lenarchich, in his speech said that independent judicial system is the cornerstone of the human rights defense but this phrase is often used not in its real sense but as an imitation.

Gagik Haroutyunyan, Chairman of the Constitutional Court of RA talked about the increased tendency of declaring legal acts as anti-constitutional as a result of investigation of the Constitutional Court.

"The decisions of the Constitutional Court are an important source," said Gagik Haroutyunyan. Gevorg Danielyan, Minister of Justice of RA talked about judicial reforms.

On the question " Can the Forum contribute to the situation of the human rights defense in Armenia?" Avetik Ishkhanyan, Head of Helsinki Committee of Armenia, replied positively:

"I think that holding a Forum in Yerevan by such a competent organization is very important. I do not agree with those who think that the Forum should not take place in Armenia if human rights are violated here."

Talking about the protest actions, the human rights defender said that he also sees political manipulation in this. "It is their right, I would not judge on it, but it is still the area of the political fight."

Artak Kirakosyan, Chairman of the Board of Civil Society Institute, FIDH member organization in Armenia, also said that it is normal if the protest action take place during the Forum.

"It demonstrates that this is a real Forum on human rights. It would be strange if it took only an academic character. I think that issues should be raised both inside and outside of the Forum."

The Forum will continue its work for two more days. Different questions on justice and challenges will be topics of plenary discussion.

Lousine Manoukyan

<http://hra.am/en/point-of-view/2010/04/07/souhayr>

Old slogans, new surrounding: Armenian oppositionists bolstered by presence of FIDH at their rally

ArmeniaNow.com

07/04/2010



Opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan (right) with a Nigerian participant of the FIDH congress

By [Siranuysh Gevorgyan](#)

ArmeniaNow reporter

The presence of delegates of the 37th congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) being held these days in the Armenian capital made the April 6 rally of the Armenian opposition different from the previous ones as speakers at the event mostly repeated their longstanding accusations and demands to the authorities. Thousands of supporters of the main opposition Armenian National Congress (ANC) who gathered in downtown Yerevan Tuesday evening cheered the human rights activists from different countries who attended the event and were calling in their speeches for “Armenian political prisoners to be released immediately”. FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen even chanted in Armenian A-za-tu-tyun (Freedom). “We are all here, with you, because we want freedom for the prisoners,” stressed Belhassen. Armenia’s first president and current ANC leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan, whose supporters staged nonstop street protests following a disputed presidential election in 2008 leading to deadly clashes with security forces and arrests of dozens of opposition activists, this time spoke mainly about “the unprecedented panic being observed in the government camp and the process of internal bickering and self-torture that started in this connection” as well as “the imminent reality of a disastrous resolution of the Karabakh issue.” (The Armenian authorities deny that any of the opposition members arrested, tried or convicted on charges stemming from their roles in the March 1-2, 2008 unrest had been prosecuted for their political views.) According to Ter-Petrosyan, despite the seeming urgency, at the moment it is pointless to talk about the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, since it depends “solely on the solution to the Karabakh problem or essential progress in this settlement.” “And the Minsk Group cochairmen have a consensus that essential progress today is understood as the immediate withdrawal from five districts [surrounding Karabakh and currently held by Armenian forces] and their return to Azerbaijan, and leaving the rest key issues indefinite and subject to solutions

in the future, issues like, in particular, the deployment of peacekeeping forces or observers, the regime of the Lachin corridor and Karabakh's ultimate status. That is, the Armenian side makes essential, tangible concessions, and in return it gets empty promises without guarantees, unless we consider [as such] the partial de-blockading of communications and the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border," said Ter-Petrosyan. According to Ter-Petrosyan, President Serzh Sargsyan now faces a dilemma: to sign the proposed deal on Karabakh and draw anger from his own people or decline it in order to gain time and thus draw the anger of the international community. "The paradox of the situation is that in both cases he [Sargsyan] is certain to lose power," said Ter-Petrosyan. "If he signs it, he will be toppled by the domestic forces, and if he declines it, he will be toppled by the international community that will use a rich collection of compromising materials against him," he added, repeating his longstanding claims that Sargsyan has vulnerable legitimacy as president. The opposition leader predicted in this regard that Sargsyan would use the option of signing "to get at least the guarantees from the international community regarding his personal immunity and property." The increased price of natural gas since April 1 was also a matter over which the Tuesday rally participants criticized the government. ANC representatives stated that earlier that day together with more than 6,000 families they submitted a lawsuit to the Administrative Court in order to invalidate the decision of the Public Services Regulatory Commission that had approved the 37.5 percent increase in the natural gas tariff. ANC coordinator Levon Zurabyan said that stormy developments were expected in Armenia in April and that's why the opposition considered it wrong to announce the day of the next rally in advance. The rally ended with a march.

http://armenianow.com/news/22093/armenian_opposition_rally

ARMENIAN PRESIDENT CANCELS ADDRESS AT HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

RFE/RL

07/04/2010

YEREVAN -- Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian has canceled a keynote address he was to deliver at a conference by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in Yerevan, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

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Armenian Constitutional Court Chairman Gagik Harutiunian and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian are scheduled to speak at the conference.

Some Armenian human rights groups who were invited to participate in the event have threatened to boycott it because they said the FIDH is reluctant to discuss the fallout from the controversial February 2008 presidential election and subsequent deadly street clashes in Yerevan.

FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen honored on April 5 the eight demonstrators killed in the unrest. She assured the victims' relatives that the Paris-based group will strive to have the "criminals" responsible for their deaths brought to justice.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_President_Cancels_Address_At_Human_Rights_Conference/2005432.html

ATTACK ON WOMEN

Hra.am

07/04/2010

On April 7, around 5 P.M. violence was used against citizens Isabella Sargsyan and Lala Aslikyan near Erebuni hotel. They had attached a poster in English "Freedom to 14 political prisoners" on the hotel wall. At the time the forum organized by the International Federation of Human Rights was going on in the hotel.

Lala Aslikyan tells that at first 4 people approached them (they didn't know them) and two of them started to push her and Isabella demanding to tear the poster off the wall.

"They were standing so close to us that I even asked them to step back; they were so close I couldn't even see their faces," Lala said. "Then two of the men started to push us, hit Isabella at the head, and the girl that came with them was quickly tearing the poster off the wall."

Lala said the girl had a badge but she couldn't manage to read it because of the mess.

Half an hour after the incident they applied to the Kentron police to report on what had happened.

After noticing the A1+ camera, the hotel security service officers ran away and closed themselves at the neighbouring room closing the camera with their hands. A1+ site informs about that.

The incident happened before the eyes of several FIDH human rights activists one of whom, a woman, told in English the security service officers that were trying to close the door on her face: "You shouldn't have behaved like that."

By the way, young members of Armenian National Congress who on the occasion of the holiday of April 7 wanted to present flowers to the FIDH women human rights activists on behalf of political prisoners and relatives of the March 1 victims were not allowed in. "Not with Sasoun Mikaelyan's picture," the hotel security service employees told the youth. Only after the interference of Armenian representatives of FIDH the youth were allowed in the accompaniment of security officers to get into the conference hall and present flowers to the women.

As to the question what the reason of such attitude of Erebuni hotel employees towards representatives of opposition was, employees of the same hotel recommended to find out who the real owner of the hotel was.

P.S. Today President of Armenia congratulated women and mothers of Armenia but employees of law enforcement bodies could not avoid their adopted mode of action and used violence against two young and nice women.

<http://hra.am/en/point-of-view/2010/04/07/aslikyan>

07.04.2010

Today Ms. Shirin Ebadi, a Noble Prize winner lawyer and prominent human rights activist from Iran, was hosted in the UN Office in Armenia. She is in Armenia to attend the 37th Congress of the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). A lawyer and former judge, Shirin Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her efforts to promote democracy and human rights, particularly for women and children, in Iran. She became the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the award.

Welcoming the well-known human rights activist, Ms. Dafina Gercheva, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia, noted with delight that it is an honor for the UN in Armenia to host such a prominent guest whose activities are aimed at protection of human rights and promotion of democracy which are at the core of the UN mandate.

At the request of the UN colleagues, Ms. Ebadi gave an expose on the human rights situation in Armenia, briefed on her meetings in Yerevan, within the framework of the 37th Congress of the FIDH, and shared her experience of the meetings with the UN and the EU high officials on human rights issues on various occasions.

Ms. Ebadi started her activities as a campaigner for protection of women and children's rights as they are the most vulnerable layers of the society. Being the founder of the first NGO in Iran dealing with protection of children's rights, Ms. Ebadi is also a strong advocate against death penalty.

The "Center for Defense of Human Rights," an NGO leaded by Ms. Ebadi, mobilized attorneys, journalists and social workers, who on a voluntary basis, were actively involved in human rights protection activities.

During the Q&A session, Ms. Shirin Ebadi presented her views on further promotion of human rights and democracy across the world and on the role of the UN and other international organizations in these efforts.

<http://www.undp.am/?page=LatestNews&id=582>

IRANIAN DISSIDENT VISITS JAILED ARMENIAN OPPOSITIONISTS

Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty

07.04.2010

Iran's most prominent human rights campaigner, Shirin Ebadi, on Wednesday visited several jailed members of the Armenian opposition and renewed her calls for the immediate release of all "political prisoners" in Armenia.

Ebadi met with opposition newspaper editor Nikol Pashinian, former parliament deputy Sasun Mikaelian and two other opposition figures on the second day of an annual congress held in Yerevan by the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). All of them except Pashinian are kept in a prison hospital in Yerevan.

Prison authorities initially allowed journalists to be present at her conversations with the oppositionists. But they withdrew the permission at the last minute.

"I was not allowed to meet them in their prison cells. I met all of them in a special meeting room," Ebadi told RFE/RL's Armenian service in an interview. "I gave them a bunch of flowers."

"All the political prisoners whom I have visited today said the prison sentences given to them were unfair," she said.

While deploring their imprisonment, Ebadi again made the point that Armenia compares favorably with Iran and other countries of the broader region in terms of human rights and civil liberties.

"I was told that there are 14 political prisoners in Armenia," said the 2003 Nobel Prize winner. "Unfortunately, there are more than 1,000 of them in Iran. And while in Armenia I was able to visit prisons, that is practically impossible to do in Iran."

Ebadi was allowed to visit the prison hospital as well as Yerevan Nubarashen jail the day after she, the FIDH chairwoman, Souhayr Belhassen, and other conference participants joined an opposition rally held in the Armenian capital. In emotional speeches delivered at the protest, they demanded that the Armenian authorities free all of the individuals whom the opposition regards as political prisoners.

Speaking to RFE/RL's Armenian service on Wednesday, Belhassen stressed that their extraordinary intervention was not a show of support for the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) and its agenda. "We are not a political party," she said. "We are organizations protecting human rights. Therefore, the purpose of our participation in that rally was the release of the political prisoners."

Belhassen added that she and other conference organizers voiced the same demands when they were received by President Serzh Sarkisian earlier on Tuesday. "My message to him was the release of the political prisoners, an investigation into the circumstances of the deaths of people in March 2008, freedom of speech, administration of justice and, in this context, exclusion of torture," she said.

Ebadi noted that Sarkisian personally assured her at the meeting that she can meet any of the jailed oppositionists. She said Sarkisian insisted that none of them was arrested and sentenced for political reasons.

David Avetisian, a senior judge at Armenia's Court of Cassation, likewise denied any political motives behind their prosecution. "I don't think that there are political prisoners who ended up in jail as a result of judicial acts taken by our courts," he told RFE/RL. "They were sentenced for committing concrete crimes."

Avetisian spoke to RFE/RL after a speech at the FIDH congress that was interrupted by angry shouts an opposition supporter present in the conference hall. "The gentleman's speech testifies to the fact that the right to free speech is respected in our country," he told the audience.

“It testifies to the fact that you have no shame,” the protester, Vardges Gaspari, shouted back. Iranian-born Gaspari was arrested following the March 2008 violence in Yerevan and spent several months in detention.

Another opposition activist participating in the forum, Isabella Sargsian, vehemently protested after a security guard tore up her poster demanding the release of the oppositionists. The incident occurred while she was collecting signatures in support of the demand. Sargsian said she will lodge a complaint to the police.

<http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/2005639.html>

FIDH PRESIDENT URGES TO RELEASE ARMENIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

Caucasian Knot

06.04 2010

The crimes committed on March 1, 2008, in Yerevan should not remain unpunished; they should be solved, and political prisoners should be set free. This was stated today at a press conference by Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), who added that her delegation came to Armenia not to hang awards.

According to her story, Armenia saw some progress in the sphere of human rights. She expressed gratitude to Armenian leaders for giving a chance to hold the forum: "The FIDH does its work by cooperating with the authorities. Without such dialogue any serious work is impossible."

The head of the FIDH said that the focus of the forum to take place in Armenia on April 6-8 will be on the situation in the system of justice and the problem of human rights. "Our priority care is the functioning of the system of justice and how it may affect the prisoners and, first of all, political prisoners. In Armenia, it refers to those imprisoned after the events on March 1, 2008, when ten persons were lost. Among the convicts there were people accused only on the basis of policemen's evidences," said Ms Belhassen.

As to the plans of the FIDH in the issue of releasing political prisoners and solving the crimes committed on March 1, 2008, the human rights defender has noted: "Our work began not today. I'm not for the first time in Armenia. Our organization was the first to publish a report on the events on March 1. I've come here not just to shake hands with high-ranking officials."

"We've reminded the authorities of Armenia that they should not keep silent, but make everything to solve the crimes. There's no doubt that this evil deed should not remain unpunished. We've not come here to ladle out honours; we hope to boost solving crimes and release political prisoners," Ms Belhassen has stated.

She said that on April 5 members of the FIDH delegation met families of political prisoners. "They gave us all the details of the present situation. I want to assure you that these cases will not only be announced - this is the least that I can do, but we'll do everything possible to gain practical results in this issue. Our priorities are in release all political prisoners and, certainly, in inquiry and punishment all the March 1 culprits," said the President of the FIDH.

She also noted that being a journalist, she is first of all worried with the freedom of speech in Armenia.

Artak Kirakosyan, chairman of the FIDH partner organization - the Civil Society Institute - also said that the most important task for today is release 15 political prisoners. Besides, as he said, those guilty of 10 deaths should be brought to responsibility. Mr Kirakosyan believes that changes in the judiciary are impossible overnight, but the only consolation for today is a very professional team of lawyers, who act strictly within the bounds of the law, unlike the prosecutor's office and the police.

Let us remind you that today Yerevan opens the 37th Forum of the International Federation of Human Rights with the main topic "Justice: Efficient Right to defence Before Independent Court. New Challenges". The event has gathered more than 300 delegates from 140 countries of the world. The forum will last till April 8.

<http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/13000/>

RIGHTS ADVOCATES DEMAND RELEASE OF ARMENIAN ‘POLITICAL PRISONERS’

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

06/04/2010



Organizers of an international human rights conference in Yerevan joined on Tuesday thousands of Armenians in demanding the immediate release of opposition supporters remaining in prison, sparking jubilant scenes at a rally held by the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK).

Leaders of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and their partner campaigners from around the world chanted “Freedom!” in Armenian and made victory signs to the crowd during a surprise appearance at the rally timed to coincide with the start of the three-day forum.

“My dear friends, the entire FIDH is with you,” the FIDH chairwoman, Souhayr Belhassen, said in an emotional speech. “We want freedom for the prisoners.”

Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Prize-winning activist from Iran, echoed that demand just as emphatically, describing the more than a dozen imprisoned oppositionists as “political prisoners.” “The freedom-loving people of Armenia, be aware that you are not alone,” she said. “Human rights advocates from 151 countries have joined you to disseminate your voice of protest around the world.”

“I myself used to be a political prisoner and demand that all political prisoners be set free without any conditions,” Ebadi added before unfurling with Belhassen an HAK banner with photographs of the jailed oppositionists.

Armenia -- Opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian (R) greets a Nigerian participant of an international human rights conference in Yerevan, 06Apr2010

Ebadi and the FIDH leaders, joined by some conference participants, left the hillside square in downtown Yerevan, a traditional venue for street gatherings, to rapturous applause. Their presence and rousing speeches were a major public relations coup for Armenia’s leading opposition force and its top leader, Levon Ter-Petrosian.

“In effect, the International Federation for Human Rights and our rally have united today,” Ter-Petrosian said in an ensuing speech. “We have held a joint conference.”

“That shows that we are not and could not have been alone because all the political prisoners, all freedom-loving people of the world are with us just as we are with those people,” he said.

In the weeks leading up to the FIDH’s annual conference, the HAK and some local human rights groups sympathetic to it claimed that the Armenian authorities might exploit the event to burnish their image abroad. Ter-Petrosian personally met Belhassen at the weekend to urge the FIDH to highlight the “deplorable” situation with democracy and human rights in Armenia.

Several dozen mostly young HAK activists picketed the conference venue to warn the Paris-based group against ignoring the opposition demands. Twelve of them wore mock prisoner uniforms and were chained together to symbolize the country’s remaining “political prisoners.” Others carried pictures of ten people killed in the 2008 post-election clashes in Yerevan.

Belhassen again sought to dispel the opposition fears at a news conference that preceded the opening session of the three-day forum. Speaking on behalf of its 300 or so participants, she called on the authorities to free all “political prisoners.”

Belhassen also called for a thorough and objective investigation into what she called a disproportionate use of force against thousands of opposition protesters in Yerevan in March 2008. “We will continue to press our questions until receiving answers,” she said.

President Serzh Sarkisian acknowledged the existence of “numerous problems” with human rights protection in Armenia when he met the conference organizers, including Ebadi, later on Tuesday, before they joined the HAK protest. But his reaction to the FIDH calls was not immediately known.

“We are guided by the principles of viewing everything in comparison,” the presidential press service quoted Sarkisian as telling them. “If those problems are more numerous today than they were several years ago, then our work requires a serious review. But if there is progress, then that means our efforts are being made in the direction.” No further details of the meeting were reported.

Sarkisian was initially due to open the FIDH gathering with a keynote speech. However, he cancelled it for unknown reasons, leaving it to the Armenian Constitutional Court chairman, Gagik Harutiunian, and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian to welcome the participants from over 140 nations.

Both Harutiunian and Danielian were heckled by several Armenian opposition and civic activists present in the conference hall as they took the floor. Some of the foreign participants applauded when one man shouted “Shame on you!” at the minister.

“Take this as a manifestation of the development of civil society and let me start my speech,” a visibly calm Harutiunian told the audience. He expressed hope that the event will contribute to the development of “a judicial system enjoying public trust” in his country.

Ter-Petrosian, meanwhile, again predicted the impending downfall of Armenia’s current leadership. Addressing his supporters, Ter-Petrosian claimed that Sarkisian is now faced with a “fateful” dilemma: to accept what he termed a pro-Azerbaijani settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict proposed by international mediators or to put himself at odds with the international community.

“The paradox of the situation is that in both cases Serzh Sarkisian will undoubtedly lose power,” he said, urging the president to resign and call snap national elections.

Ter-Petrosian also claimed that President Robert Kocharian’s perceived attempts to return to active politics are a further indication that the current Armenian administration is in serious trouble. Kocharian does not think that Sarkisian will weather the storm and is keen to “save his skin,” he said.

Citing the need to “spare the country upheavals,” the HAK leader also implied that his opposition bloc will continue to stick to his cautious stance.

<http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/2004417.html>

06/04/2010



Interview with President of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Souhayr Belhassen before the start of the Congress

Yesterday you had meetings with relatives of victims of March 1 event and and wives of political prisoners. What impact the meeting had on you and what perspectives do you see regarding this issue?

The meetings yesterday were extremely emotional and I saw many dramatic moments. I again felt that the victims were 20-30 year old, and the pain of these people is still with them. I understand that the only thing which will comfort these people is justice, which finally should be found and it is the justice we should reach. I want to confirm that FIDH will do all possible that March 1 events are revealed.

Why did you initiate these meetings? What are you going to do, what will be your first steps after these meetings?

I have a commitment: in every country I visit, the first thing I do I want to meet prisoners, political prisoners and their families, and this is the reason I met them in Armenia. Another reason is that it is the government who let us to have meetings with prisoners or victims of torture. Our voice reaches the point faster, and we succeed in releasing people from the prison. I do not have much time to meet all and the idea was to meet with their families, to listen to them and to understand and document once more that they should be immediately released. When I say to make our voice to be heard I mean also the Congress which starts today in Yerevan, where more than 300 participants will be and this question will be raised in front of human rights defenders from different countries to deliver the message.

In your last declaration you urged the government and expressed a hope that you will see Armenia without political prisoners when the Congress starts. However, as you see they are still kept in prison. Will you raise this issue again in your meeting with the President today?

Absolutely. I will certainly talk with him about this restating our demand to release political prisoners, and to reveal circumstances of the death of victims of March 1 events, about justice and freedom of speech situation in Armenia.

The relatives of victims of March1 and political prisoners have expectations from the Congress. What expectations do you have in this term, especially after the meeting with the President? Do you have concerns about effectiveness of the Congress in this term?

In any case we cannot predict what will happen and what the President will do, but we should use this opportunity to do our work. At the meeting there will be highly respectable participants and their voice will raise a big resonance. The pressure of the Congress will be high, I am not alone in this case. A significant number of human rights defenders are with us, and our pressure will be huge. This is what we can do.

Before your arrival local human rights organizations, citizens and public activists had applied to make changes in the agenda of the FIDH Congress. The media also continuously referred to this issue. What kind of changes were made?

The agenda was known for a long time, and in preparation of the agenda we consulted with our partner Civil Society Institute. Of course, some changes were made, because every agenda is preliminary and it had amendments. And because many well-known people would have speeches at the Congress, we had amendments, some people refused to have a speech and some people were included in the agenda.

I mean the local human rights defenders, about whom was the main issue. It is known that only Artak Kirakosyan, the Chairman of the Board was provided with that opportunity.

It is very important for us that Artak Kirakosyan has the first speech. It means that the first opportunity of the speech is given to a human rights organization. He will talk from the human rights position and will put his seal. I want to re-confirm and remind that the Congress is open to all. People can be registered and confirm their participation, and the opportunity for speech and discussion is provided on the following days of the forum.

What is your opinion about refusal of the RA Ombudsman to confirm his speech in the forum. Moreover, he said that the Congress had a negative impact already: «Before we had several organizations that worked together and now their union is broken.»

Recently I had several meetings with the Ombudsman, including in Paris. His only request was that he has a speech not at the plenary sessions but at the opening ceremony. This was his direct demand to give him a speech at the opening ceremony. However, the agenda was very rigid, and we did not have such an opportunity.

In your opinion, what was the reason that the human rights forum caused so much rising and talks? The main protest was that mostly the government representatives will speak at the Forum?

I believe that it is normal, because it is a very big event. It would be strange if it caused indifference. This is a positive and not negative signal. It is principal for us to work with authorities, because it is them with whom we can raise issues and who can solve these issues. We do not have any other opponent. However, we give an opportunity to civil society and in some cases, their weak voice will become very loud in the framework of the Congress.

On the one hand, the protests are heard, and on the other hand, people have great expectations from this Congress, especially those who had meetings with you and became inspired by you. It seems that their hopes increased in terms of expectations.

There is always hope. If we had no hope, what we have to do here? I want us to be realistic. The fact of the Congress being held in Yerevan already makes a pressure. I hope that we would not be disappointed and our pressure will reach its result.

Interview by Zhanna Alexanyan

<http://hra.am/en/interview/2010/04/06/forum>

FIDH 37TH CONGRESS-FORUM KICKED OFF IN YEREVAN

Aysor.am

06.04.2010

The FIDH 37th Congress-Forum, entitled ‘Justice, the new challenges. The right to an Effective Remedy Before an Independent Tribunal’, was kicked off today in Armenian capital city of Yerevan, gathering together nearly 300 participants.

“The Forum will be the occasion for debates, exchanges of experience and analyses on various themes related to the right to an effective remedy before an independent jurisdiction, at national level as well as accessing regional and international justice systems. A special focus will be given to the new challenges to build on FIDH and its member organisations’ expertise and impact on future strategies of action,” said in the statement by FIDH.

“This forum will represent a unique opportunity for debate and exchange of experiences and analysis relating to the fight against impunity, access to justice for victims of human rights violations and prevention of the most serious crimes”, declared Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President.

Mrs. Souhayr Belhassen said at the press conference, that the Forum is being held in Armenia as processes of human rights’ protection are in better conditions here in Armenia, in comparison with other post-soviet republics. In addition, Forum’s holding in Armenia has links with the 95th anniversary of the 1915 Genocide of Armenians in Turkey.

“Bringing together so many personalities around this issue shortly before the commemoration of the first genocide of the 20th century, takes on a strong symbolic importance in our eyes, in particular in the context of continued dialogue between Turkey and Armenia”, Mrs. Souhayr Belhassen said adding that the FIDH Survey Report on Armenia-Turkey relation will be issued in the near future.

This forum will take place in Armenian capital Yerevan from 6 to 8 April; it is organised in partnership with the Civil Society Institute (CSI), FIDH member organisation in Armenia. Artak Zeinalian, a member of the Armenian National Congress and a member of Political Council of the ‘Republic’ Party of Armenia, is reported to represent Armenia at the Forum.

<http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2010/04/06/fidh-armenia/>

ARMENIAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES ICC PROSECUTOR LUIS MORENO-OCAMPO

Panorama.am

06/04/2010



Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan received today Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of Hague (ICC), who has arrived in Armenia to participate in the 37th Congress of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), President's press office reported.

Greeting the guest, President Sargsyan said: "It's very important for us to host in our country people with rich experience in the field of defense of human rights and condemnation of crimes against humanity, especially considering that recently there have been many discussions on one of the greatest crimes against humanity – the Armenian Genocide."

Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo noted that their activity is targeted at the protection of human rights, and prevention of further genocides is one of the primary tasks.

The Armenian President and the ICC Prosecutor discussed the perspectives of how the Court could help Armenia to be more protected.

<http://www.panorama.am/en/law/2010/04/06/prsident-haaga/>

CAN PEACE PROTESTERS BE KILLED?

Armtown.com

06.04.2010

FIDH Head met with the relatives of March 1 victims

On April 5, at the initiative of the FIDH head Souhayr Belhassen, a meeting with the relatives of the March 1 victims took place.

The relatives told Mrs. Belhassen the details of the events noting that their sons died during a peace protest. They noted that despite two years passed after the events, they are not revealed and asked whether peace protesters can be killed.

Souhayr Belhassen said she understands the sorrow of the parents of the victims and noted that their work is to reveal the truth even if it will not soften their pain. She said they came here to be with those who suffer and are killed and to punish those who kill. Belhassen noted that 300 representatives of the world are going to visit Armenia to study this issue and promised to raise all the issues that concern the parents.

Relatives of the victims were accompanied by the HAK representative Arakel Semirjyan, representatives of March 1 victims Vahe Grigoryan and Artak Zeynalyan, as well as representatives of Civil Society Institute Artak Kirakosyan and Arman Danielyan.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/lra/20100406/17411>

AN APPEAL FROM THE 37TH FIDH CONGRESS

Armtown.com

06.04.2010



Yerevan, 6 April 2010 - At the Opening Ceremony of the 37th FIDH Congress, FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen issued a call on behalf of the Congress for the immediate liberation of all political prisoners in Armenia. FIDH also reiterated its call for an independent and effective investigation into the events of March 2008 and the disproportionate use of force by the security services. FIDH further expressed concerns about the electoral process and obstacles to freedom of the media. "We have expressed these concerns repeatedly over the last months to the Armenian authorities at the highest levels - and this morning once

again in person to the President of the Republic, as we promised to the families of victims and political prisoners with whom we met yesterday", declared Souhayr Belhassen. "All these issues are of utmost concern to the FIDH Congress, which today launches a solemn appeal to the authorities. We hope that we will receive concrete responses to all of our concerns. We will persist until we obtain them", she added. "The release of all political prisoners and holding to account those responsible for the ten deaths of 1 March are two of the essential conditions for the effectiveness of the justice system in Armenia", concluded Artak Kirakosyan, representative of FIDH's Armenian member-organisation, Civil Society Institute.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/a1p/20100406/201004064/>

FIDH PRESIDENT: ARMENIAN CAPITAL HAS TURNED INTO HUMAN RIGHTS CAPITAL TODAY

Panorama.am

06.04.2010

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan received Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), who has arrived in Armenia to participate in the 37th Congress of the Federation. President Sargsyan highly appreciated the cooperation between FIDH and Armenia and welcomed the decision to hold the Federation's congress in Armenia, President's press office reported.

The President noted Armenia still has a number of issues to be solved in the field of human rights defense, but it's obvious that they cannot be solved within a day.

Mrs. Belhassen expressed gratitude to Serzh Sargsyan for Armenia's efforts to conduct the congress on a high level. She said the organization of the forum in our country is a historic event, noting that "the Armenian capital has turned into human rights capital today."

Belhassen said Armenia is in an advantageous position in the region in terms of the defense of human rights and today the whole region is signified through Armenia.

The FIDH President voiced hope that the cooperation with Armenia would continue to develop, improving the activity of the Armenian structures called to protect human rights. At the same time she noted that Armenian authorities never fail to respond to her various requests.

President Sargsyan wished success and productive activity to the participants of the congress and voiced hope that during these days they would have an opportunity to learn about our history and traditions.

<http://www.panorama.am/en/politics/2010/04/06/suer-belasan/>

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<http://www.panorama.am/en/law/2010/04/06/prsident-haaga/>

RIGHTS ADVOCATES DEMAND RELEASE OF ARMENIAN 'POLITICAL PRISONERS'

Armtown.com

06.04.2010

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Leaders of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and their partner campaigners from around the world chanted "Freedom!" in Armenian and made victory signs to the crowd during a surprise appearance at the rally timed to coincide with the start of the three-day forum.

"My dear friends, the entire FIDH is with you," the FIDH chairwoman, Souhayr Belhassen, said in an emotional speech. "We want freedom for the prisoners."

Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Prize-winning activist from Iran, echoed that demand just as emphatically, describing the more than a dozen imprisoned oppositionists as "political prisoners." "The freedom-loving people of Armenia, be aware that you are not alone," she said. "Human rights advocates from 151 countries have joined you to disseminate your voice of protest around the world."

"I myself used to be a political prisoner and demand that all political prisoners be set free without any conditions," Ebadi added before unfurling with Belhassen an HAK banner with photographs of the jailed oppositionists. Armenia -- Opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian (R) greets a Nigerian participant of an international human rights conference in Yerevan, 06Apr2010Ebadi and the FIDH leaders, joined by some conference participants, left the hillside square in downtown Yerevan, a traditional venue for street gatherings, to rapturous applause. Their presence and rousing speeches were a major public relations coup for Armenia's leading opposition force and its top leader, Levon Ter-Petrosian.

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"That shows that we are not and could not have been alone because all the political prisoners, all freedom-loving people of the world are with us just as we are with those people," he said.

In the weeks leading up to the FIDH's annual conference, the HAK and some local human rights groups sympathetic to it claimed that the Armenian authorities might exploit the event to burnish their image abroad. Ter-Petrosian personally met Belhassen at the weekend to urge the FIDH to highlight the "deplorable" situation with democracy and human rights in Armenia.

Several dozen mostly young HAK activists picketed the conference venue to warn the Paris-based group against ignoring the opposition demands. Twelve of them wore mock prisoner uniforms and were chained together to symbolize the country's remaining "political prisoners." Others carried pictures of ten people killed in the 2008 post-election clashes in Yerevan. Belhassen again sought to dispel the opposition fears at a news conference that preceded the opening session of the three-day forum. Speaking on behalf of its 300 or so participants, she called on the authorities to free all "political prisoners."

Belhassen also called for a thorough and objective investigation into what she called a disproportionate use of force against thousands of opposition protesters in Yerevan in March 2008. "We will continue to press our questions until receiving answers," she said.

President Serzh Sarkisian acknowledged the existence of "numerous problems" with human rights protection in Armenia when he met the conference organizers, including Ebadi, later on Tuesday, before they joined the HAK protest. But his reaction to the FIDH calls was not immediately known.

"We are guided by the principles of viewing everything in comparison," the presidential press service quoted Sarkisian as telling them. "If those problems are more numerous today than they were several

years ago, then our work requires a serious review. But if there is progress, then that means our efforts are being made in the direction.” No further details of the meeting were reported.

Armenia -- Opposition stages protest action outside FIDH International Congress in Yerevan, 06Apr2010Sarkisian was initially due to open the FIDH gathering with a keynote speech. However, he cancelled it for unknown reasons, leaving it to the Armenian Constitutional Court chairman, Gagik Harutiunian, and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian to welcome the participants from over 140 nations.

Both Harutiunian and Danielian were heckled by several Armenian opposition and civic activists present in the conference hall as they took the floor. Some of the foreign participants applauded when one man shouted “Shame on you!” at the minister.

“Take this as a manifestation of the development of civil society and let me start my speech,” a visibly calm Harutiunian told the audience. He expressed hope that the event will contribute to the development of “a judicial system enjoying public trust” in his country.

Ter-Petrosian, meanwhile, again predicted the impending downfall of Armenia’s current leadership. Addressing his supporters, Ter-Petrosian claimed that Sarkisian is now faced with a “fateful” dilemma: to accept what he termed a pro-Azerbaijani settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict proposed by international mediators or to put himself at odds with the international community.

“The paradox of the situation is that in both cases Serzh Sarkisian will undoubtedly lose power,” he said, urging the president to resign and call snap national elections.

Ter-Petrosian also claimed that President Robert Kocharian’s perceived attempts to return to active politics are a further indication that the current Armenian administration is in serious trouble. Kocharian does not think that Sarkisian will weather the storm and is keen to “save his skin,” he said.

Citing the need to “spare the country upheavals,” the HAK leader also implied that his opposition bloc will continue to stick to his cautious stance.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/rfe/20100406/2004417/>

RIGHTS ADVOCATES DEMAND RELEASE OF ARMENIAN ‘POLITICAL PRISONERS’

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

06.04.2010

Organizers of an international human rights conference in Yerevan joined on Tuesday thousands of Armenians in demanding the immediate release of opposition supporters remaining in prison, sparking jubilant scenes at a rally held by the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK).

Leaders of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and their partner campaigners from around the world chanted “Freedom!” in Armenian and made victory signs to the crowd during a surprise appearance at the rally timed to coincide with the start of the three-day forum.

“My dear friends, the entire FIDH is with you,” the FIDH chairwoman, Souhayr Belhassen, said in an emotional speech. “We want freedom for the prisoners.”

Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Prize-winning activist from Iran, echoed that demand just as emphatically, describing the more than a dozen imprisoned oppositionists as “political prisoners.” “The freedom-loving people of Armenia, be aware that you are not alone,” she said. “Human rights advocates from 151 countries have joined you to disseminate your voice of protest around the world.”

“I myself used to be a political prisoner and demand that all political prisoners be set free without any conditions,” Ebadi added before unfurling with Belhassen an HAK banner with photographs of the jailed oppositionists.

Ebadi and the FIDH leaders, joined by some conference participants, left the hillside square in downtown Yerevan, a traditional venue for street gatherings, to rapturous applause. Their presence and rousing speeches were a major public relations coup for Armenia’s leading opposition force and its top leader, Levon Ter-Petrosian.

“In effect, the International Federation for Human Rights and our rally have united today,” Ter-Petrosian said in an ensuing speech. “We have held a joint conference.”

“That shows that we are not and could not have been alone because all the political prisoners, all freedom-loving people of the world are with us just as we are with those people,” he said.

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<http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/2004417.html>

FIDH PRESIDENT ADDRESSED ANC RALLY

Technology excellence

06/04/2010

April 6, part of International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) congress attendees joined the ANC rally near Matenadaran.

Currently, the participants of 37th FIDH congress mount the rostrum, including foreigners, NEWS.am correspondent reports. One of them addressed the demonstrators declaring that will be consistent in struggle for release of political prisoners in Armenia.

At the moment, the President of International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) Souhayr Belhassen delivers a speech the ANC rally, demanding the release of all political prisoners in Armenia. She underlined that FIDH stands by demonstrators' side in demand to discharge oppositional prisoners, using the phrase "political prisoner" and then in Armenian and English chanting "Azatutyun" (Freedom) and "Freedom now".

<http://www.tx.am/2010/04/06/fidh-president-addressed-anc-rally/>

INTERNATIONAL WATCHDOG HONORS ARMENIAN UNREST VICTIMS

Armtown.com

05.04.2010



A renowned international human rights organization pledged help uncover the full truth about the 2008 post-election violence in Armenia on Monday ahead of its annual congress to be held in Yerevan this week.

Souhayr Belhassen, president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), paid homage to eight Armenian opposition supporters killed in the unrest and assured their relatives that the Paris-based group will strive to have the “criminals” responsible for their deaths brought to justice.

“We have come here because we defend the truth, we defend justice, we defend all those who died for freedom,” Belhassen told them at a meeting in Yerevan. “Your children did not die for nothing. Your children will make this country move forward.”

The two-day FIDH conference will get underway on Tuesday and bring together more than 300 human rights campaigners from 140 countries of the world. Among them is Shirin Ebadi, a prominent Iranian activist and Nobel prize winner.

President Serzh Sarkisian was initially due to open the forum with a keynote address. However, he has cancelled the address for unknown reasons. The participants will instead hear speeches by Gagik Harutiunian, chairman of the Armenian Constitutional Court, and Justice Minister Gevorg Danielian.

The event has already been marred by a boycott threatened by some Armenian human rights groups invited to take part in it. Their leaders have accused the FIDH of being reluctant to discuss the lingering fallout from Armenia’s February 2008 presidential election and deadly street clashes sparked by it.

Armenia -- Relatives of March 2008 unrest victims meet Souhayr Belhassen, president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Yerevan, 05Apr2010The opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) has also expressed concern, claiming that the Armenian authorities have convinced the FIDH to hold the conference in Yerevan in an effort to burnish their image abroad. Belhassen met the HAK’s top leader, Levon Ter-Petrosian to discuss those concerns on Sunday.

In a short statement, the HAK cited Ter-Petrosian as telling her that failure by the FIDH conferences to adopt a “principled position” on the “deplorable” situation with democracy and human rights in the country would “deeply disappoint” Armenians. That would also be “a big present to Armenia’s dictatorial authorities,” he said.

Belhassen sought to dispel such fears as she met with the parents and other close relatives of Ter-Petrosian supporters killed in vicious clashes with security forces in central Yerevan on March 1-2, 2008. “One should not see us only shaking the hand of the president of the republic,” she said. “We have come to also tell how justice should be administered in this country.”

The FIDH will raise the matter “at the highest level” and will stand by the victims’ relatives “until the end” in their quest for the punishment of officials responsible for those deaths, continued Belhassen. “This congress will be held here for you as well, so that the whole world hears about the fate that awaited your children” she said. “I ask you to remain mobilized and hope that the truth will be known one day and the criminals will be punished one day.”

The Armenian authorities have arrested and prosecuted dozens of opposition supporters on charges stemming from the March 2008 “mass disturbances.” Also, several police officers have received suspended prison sentences for excessive use of force against protesters demanding a re-run of the

disputed election. Nobody has been prosecuted yet for causing the deaths of the eight protesters as well as two police personnel.

“We have made sure that dictators, heads of state have been tried by courts, either in their own countries or by international courts,” declared the FIDH president. But she did not specify whether her organization thinks Sarkisian or his predecessor Robert Kocharian should be held personally accountable for the casualties.

Both men have justified the use of lethal force, saying that the 2008 violence was part of an opposition attempt to stage a coup d’etat. Ter-Petrosian and his allies strongly deny, however, trying to seize power by force.

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/rfe/20100405/2003197/>

Situation In Armenia ‘Not That Bad,’ Says Iranian Dissident

armtown.com

06/04/2010



Armenia -- Shirin Ebadi, a prominent Iranian human rights advocate and Nobel Prize winner, at a news conference in Yerevan, 6 April 2010.

Hasmik Smbatian

The situation with human rights in Armenia is not as bad as one might think, Iran's most prominent dissident and Nobel Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi, said on Tuesday, defending the holding of an international conference in Yerevan.

Ebadi is among some 300 campaigners from around the world attending the annual conference of the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Speaking at a joint news conference with FIDH leaders, she dismissed suggestions that

the forum could sent a wrong message to the world about the Armenian authorities' human rights record.

"When the FIDH decided to hold its meeting in this country, your country enjoyed a better situation among the countries in the region," explained Ebadi. "When we decided to hold our meeting here, we didn't say or believe that there are no violations of human rights here.

"We do know that there are violations of human rights going on in this country. However, when we compared it with other countries in the region we decided that this place is not as bad as other countries."

"We will all work together to make the situation better," she added.

A lawyer and former judge, Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her efforts to promote democracy and human rights, particularly for women and children, in Iran. She became the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the award.

The worldwide recognition has put Ebadi at loggerheads with Iran's clerical leaders, especially after last June's disputed presidential election. The Iranian authorities closed in 2008 a leading non-governmental organization she founded in 2001.

Ebadi argued that when it comes to human rights protection Armenia compares more favorably with Iran and other countries of the region and Central Asia. "A few years ago, I was in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan and what I saw there was that people who wanted to travel to the capital of their country needed to get a special permit," she said.

"I also had a friend, a journalist from Kazakhstan, who had written an article and in order to silence him, they killed two of his daughters in front of him. I have also been in Baku and Tashkent and I know that their situation is similar."

"There are numerous journalists who are in prison in Iran right now," added Ebadi. "We can not hold meetings like this in my country. Even I don't have the power to be active in Iran."

<http://www.armtown.com/news/en/rfe/20100406/2004091/>

WE ARE WITH THOSE WHO SUFFER

www.hra.am

05/04/2010



On April 5, at the initiative of the President of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Mrs. Souhayr Belhassen a meeting with relatives of the March 1 victims was held at the Civil Society Institute.

The relatives told Mrs. Belhassen the details of the events noting that their sons died not as a result of clashes, but were shot dead during a peaceful demonstration in the center of the capital.

Vachagan Farmanyan, father of one of the victims, Armen Farmanyan, noted that despite the fact that two years passed after the events, the murders have not been revealed.

"Prosecutor's office, law enforcing bodies do nothing in that direction; on the contrary they try to close the March 1 page. My son had no weapon, no iron bar, no gasoline. Is it right to kill peaceful demonstrators?"

Samvel Harutyunyan's father told that his son was found 3 days after the March 1 events, on March 4th in the hospital in unrecognizable state and died after 41 days.

"By Christian religion today is a Memorial Day and we were supposed to go to the cemetery, but we have come here with a hope that you will give a fair solution to this issue," Samvel Harutyunyan's father said.

Gor Kloyan's parents noted that Gor was their only son who left two children after him one of them only 40 days old.

"I can't understand till now why my son didn't return home that day. He was not armed," Gor Kloyan's mother said.

Serviceman Tigran Abgaryan's mother appealed to Mrs. Belhassen with tears in her eyes:

"My son was only 18 years old, serving in police forces. He was unconscious for 40 days; he turned 19 in the hospital. If my son had died on the border or on the battlefield I would think that he died for his motherland. I had sent him to defend his country. Who killed my soldier in the center of the town?"

Alla Hovanisyan, mother of Tigran Khachatryan who died as a result of use of "Cheryomukha 7" special device said:

"That device - Cheryomukha 7, was used by 4 policemen but they continue to work in the police system and haven't even been questioned as suspects."

Davit Petrosyan's mother is confident that deaths of his son and other victims are not a result of clashes:

"Two people even if they clash in the street would not die. There were troops, tanks, armed policemen in the town on that day."

After listening to the parents of the victims the President of International Federation for Human Rights Mrs. Souhayr Belhassen said:

"I am a mother, also a grandmother and when you mention the ages - 18, 13, 28, 35, I understand how deplorable it is for you as parents. You live with the sorrow in your heart and still you have to be helped with justice and truth. True, it is your pain, but it is our work to find the truth and reveal it. It is our work here and in the world. I understand it will not ease your pain but I realize that disclosing the case will help you."

Mrs. Belhassen emphasized that in countries with similar situations their organization managed to have those guilty punished, up to presidents. And if they did not stand trials in their own countries, that happened at international tribunals.

"Believe me, that with such huge experience we have not come here just to shake hands with some people. We have come to show our experience and to demand that justice is administered. We could not speak out about these important issues without coming here. We have come to say that we are with those who suffer, who are killed. We work for those who died for their own dignity," President of International Federation for Human Rights emphasized.

Mrs. Belhassen mentioned that after the March 1 events representatives of their organization have 5 times visited Armenia.

"Believe me, we do not visit Armenia just for nothing, we always want to have some tangible results. Tomorrow 300 representatives of different countries will be in Armenia and the story of your sons will be presented to them. It is good that I heard this story just from you because parents never exaggerate anything. I officially promise that I will raise the issues you are concerned with at all high instances accessible to me."

Relatives of the victims were accompanied by the ANC representative Arakel Semirjyan, representatives of March 1 victims Vahe Grigoryan and Artak Zeynalyan as well as representatives of Civil Society Institute Artak Kirakosyan and Arman Danielyan.

<http://hra.am/en/point-of-view/2010/04/05/fidh>

SOUHAYR BELHASSEN: I AM COMMITTED TO MY MISSION

Hra.am

05/04/2010



On April 5, at Civil Society Institute, the president of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Souhayr Belhassen met wives of political prisoners. The meeting was organised at the initiative of Ms. Belhassen on the eve of the Congress Justice: New challenges - The Right to an effective remedy before an independent tribunal .

In the beginning of the meeting Souhayr Belhassen mentioned that she is convinced that the wives of political prisoners understand who are they and how they can help.

"I hope that you also understand that if we came here-400 people- to meet, it is not to shake hands with high-ranked officials but to help lawyers and people, who became victims of injustice."

Belhassen noted that as a result of FIDH intervention more than 1000 persons were released, and this included also the first president Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who was kept as a political prisoner in Moscow.

"We never can think about somebody's freedom sitting in the limited circle. If we invite high ranked officials to the forum, it is to provide an opportunity to apply to them directly. Thus, it was not occasional that we wanted to meet you before the forum and to pass your words to meeting participants. All this is done for freedom of your husbands, colleagues and sons, and there is a purpose that with us is the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and many other lawyers.

Ms. Anahit Kirakosyan, the wife of a political prisoner Ashot Manoukyan suggested to Ms. Belhassen that a member of FIDH come tomorrow to Vanadzor to see how people are constrained to come to Yerevan to participate in the demonstration which will take place at the time of FIDH Congress.

Marine Haroutyunyan, the wife of a former prisoner Grigor Voskerchyan expressed her concern that some human rights defenders boycott the Forum.

"I am very concerned that people who really defend human rights

will not participate in the Forum. I am concerned that Mikael Danielyan, who is a long-time human rights defender refuses to participate in the Forum."

According to Artak Kirakosyan, the chairman of board of Civil Society Institute (CSI), they always had a clear position that political prisoners should be released.

"We used every opportunity to raise this issue and we are glad that this issue will be raised not only at the meetings on the official level but also with lawyers from different countries.

Souhayr Belhassen added that at her last meeting she was in Armenia and met with Sasha Davtyan.

"Our intervention to some extent helped to release him, and I do not need explanation how the process with the governmental bodies goes on. Armenia is not the only place with bad situation with human rights.

Melissa Brown, a wife of ex-minister of Foreign Affairs and former political prisoner Alexander Arzumanyan, said that she met FIDH representative two years ago, and now she is concerned that Gagik Haroutyunyan and Gevorg Danielyan are given a chance being invited to the Forum.

"They will appear on the television, smiling and shaking hands, which will be used against us. We are not Myanmar and Zimbabwe, but they force us to move in this direction step by step," said Melissa Brown.

Souhayr Belhassen assured that they thought of all possible options that the state can shift from the bad path towards the good path.

"Now Armenia is on the path which can ended badly or well. We wanted to come to this country to fight together that it does not take the bad direction and this is a critical moment for fight", she said.

Artak Kirakosyan added that they tried to use the optimum of the forum to address the issue of political prisoners and human rights and do not politicise their work.

Sevak Saghatelyan, son of a political prisoner Moushegh Saghatelyan approached Ms. Belhassen saying that she said nice words and that many people say nice words." I do not believe that you can do anything with legal means to release political prisoners. I hope and believe that you are committed to your mission on defending human rights and will do everything you can."

Souhayr Belhassen in her reply to Sevak Saghatelyan said that she is committed to her mission and because of that she is here.

<http://hra.am/en/hr-reviews/2010/04/05/meeting>

SUPPORT TO RELATIVES OF VICTIMS

Hra.am

05/04/2010



While relatives of the March 1 victims were meeting the President of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Souhayr Belhassen at the Civil Society Institute, activists supporting victims' relatives held an action in front of the CSI building.

The meeting with the relatives of the victims was organized at the initiative of FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen before the Congress-Forum "Justice: New Challenges - the Right to an Effective Remedy before an Independent Tribunal," to kick off in Yerevan on April 6.

Armenian National Congress activist Aram Manukyan says that Souhayr Belhassen's courageous initiative affords ground to believe that "this international organization is freer than other European bureaucratic structures."

"We as supporters have come to Mrs. Belhassen with the parents of 10 victims and the text they prepared," he said. "Two years have passed but there is no progress in investigating the case of any of the murdered. Human rights activists are always crazier and more courageous and we hope that they will raise their voice at international structures."

Women participants of the action were holding pictures of the ten victims while relatives and their attorney Artak Zeynalyan were talking inside with Souhayr Belhassen.

Though one of the participants, Ofelia Margaryan, is persistently struggling with other activists, she is confident that nothing will come of it this time either.

"If for so long mothers are being beaten in the streets, what else can one expect from the authorities. I don't believe in anything," she said.

Violet Ghazaryan said that March 1 will always be an open wound for them that is rubbed salt into on every occasion.

<http://hra.am/en/events/2010/04/05/victim>

FIDH CALLS ARMENIAN AUTHORITIES TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS

Caucasian Knot

26.03.2010

In the run-up to the Congress of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), to take place in Yerevan on April 6-8, the Federation has appealed to the authorities of Armenia to release all the country's political prisoners.

Souhayr Belhassen, President of the FIDH, has addressed the authorities of Armenia with an appeal to hold an effective investigation into the events on March 1, 2008, including, the inquiry into the murder of ten citizens.

"Release of political prisoners will be evidence that Armenia advances towards supremacy of the law. Armenia has human rights problems; and there are also serious problems in the sphere of justice, which essentially hamper the supremacy of the law in Armenia. We hope that the Congress will start its work in the Armenia, which is free of political prisoners," runs Ms Belhassen's statement.

Let us note here that some Armenian human rights activists had stated that they would not take part in the Congress. Thus, Vardan Arutyunyan, chairman of the organization "Centre of Law and Freedom", refused to take part in the event, where, according to his story, "the floor would be given to authors and executors of illegal litigations, which followed the 2008 March events."

Arthur Sakunts, head of the Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Civil Assembly, also refused to attend the Congress, having motivated his decision by the fact that the agenda did not assume presentations of human rights activists, and the possible final document would take into account only the viewpoints of state officials of Armenia.

<http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/12937>

BELHASSEN HEADS FIDH DELEGATION TO ARMENIA

Aysor.am

25.03.2010

Delegation of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), including Federation's President Mrs. Souhayr Belhassen, Executive Director Antoine Bernard, Chief of the Department for Foreign Affairs Isabelle Sheban, and Chief of the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Alexander Kulaev, is arriving in Armenia's capital of Yerevan today.

Within the framework of the preparation works for 37th FIDH Conference, which is scheduled to be launched in assistance with the Civil Society Foundation on April 6-10, delegates are reported to hold several meetings, and a conference on March 26 – the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Conference's participants are expected to deliver a report on implementation of justice in Armenia and the 2008 Report of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. The 26 March conference will be attended by more than 250 participants, who have already confirmed their attendance.

FIDH delegation will complete its working visit to Armenia by March 28.

<http://www.aysor.am/en/news/2010/03/25/fidh/?sw>

STATEMENT OF FIDH PRESIDENT SOUHAYR BELHASSEN ON THE EVE OF THE 37TH CONGRESS OF FIDH

Lragir.am

24.03.2010

Paris, March 24, 2010 – The preparation of the FIDH 37th Congress and Forum organised by FIDH and its partner organisation CSI in Erevan, Armenia on April 6-10 Forum 2010 continues. More than 250 participants have already confirmed their presence and many other confirmations are expected soon. FIDH, together with CSI, Helsinki Committee of Armenia, the Collaboration for Democracy Centre and the Foundation against Violation of Law published a briefing paper on the administration of justice last Friday.

«I am very pleased that we published the briefing paper on the administration of justice together with our colleagues from Armenian NGOs » declared FIDH president Souhayr Belhassen today. «This paper clearly reflects the spirit of our work. The point is to attract the attention of the authorities to the serious problems that exist today in the administration of justice and which significantly hinder the Rule of Law in Armenia, as well as to draw the attention of authorities to issues related to the situation of human rights in Armenia. In this document, we issued essential recommendations and sincerely hope that the Forum will be an occasion to move forward and have these recommendations implemented. We thereby reiterate the recommendations presented in this paper and in the position papers we have published over the past years. In particular, we hope that the Forum will be launched in an Armenia where there are no longer any political prisoners. It is also of utmost importance that credible and effective investigations on the cases of the ten people who were killed in the March 2008 events is opened.»

«Releasing political prisoners and conducting such investigations would be a true sign of moving towards effective Rule of Law in Armenia.», concluded Souhayr Belhassen.

<http://lragir.am/engsrc/society17283.html>