

Statement on 15 January incidents

On the 12 January, 2015 a family of 6 was shot dead and a 6 months old child was heavily wounded at their apartment while asleep in town of Gyumri in Armenia. With a suspicion of committing this grave crime a soldier of the Russian military base in Gyumri was arrested by Russian border guards during an attempt of crossing the Armenian-Turkish border some 20km south of Gyumri. Private Valeri Permyakov was later illegally transferred by the Russian border guards to the Russian military base in Gyumri. On the next day, 13 January 2015, the office of the Prosecutor General of Armenia made an official statement that the suspect, private Premyakov is a Russian citizen and is under the jurisdiction of the Russian law enforcement authorities and therefore the issue of handing him over to the Armenian law enforcement authorities is not considered.

Right after this statement on 15 January, 2015 a mass protest started in town of Gyumri, with a clear demand of respecting the international agreement between Russia and Armenia and hand over private Premyakov to the Armenian authorities for further conduct of investigation of mass murder. In support of the protest in Gyumri a peaceful gathering was taking place in Yerevan at the Embassy of the Russian Federation. With a use of excessive force Armenian police has dispersed the demonstration in front of the embassy and arrested several participants.

The peaceful demonstration was later continued at the Prosecutor General's office. The same night at around 22:00 a peaceful gathering was taking place at the Freedom Square with a ceremony of candle lighting in memory of the perished family in Gyumri. The participants of the gathering were also following the developments in Gyumri through a direct video transmission.

At the Freedom Square at around 22:15 a group of unknown people in civilian outfit attacked the participants of the peaceful candle lighting ceremony and with a use of excessive and violent force started grabbing people and taking them to the cars with no any identification signs, driving them to unknown direction (mainly the holders of the Armenian national banner were apprehended).

The other participants of the peaceful action immediately asked the police force present on the spot to intervene as unknown people are kidnapping people from the Freedom Square. Colonel Karen Movsisyan, known for his brutal conduct of people during demonstrations in Yerevan, stepped in and said that those people in civilian outfit are police officers and are doing a special police operation, although they are not presenting any ID. The process of brutal arrest of people continued in the same manner without showing any ID only with a difference that the regular police force also joined in.

Nearly 30 participants of the peaceful candle lighting ceremony including the chairman of the Helsinki Committee Mr. Avetik Ishkhanyan were taken to the police stations at Yerevan Centre and Nork-Marash districts with a use of force and beatings, some of the apprehended later needed medical assistance and certification of wounds inflicted during the arrest. According to the police service of Armenia there was a suspicion based on some information that some of the rally participants may be armed. Later on the police service of Armenia issued a statement that with a suspicion of violation of the law several people were arrested.

The Helsinki Committee of Armenia declares that the Police of the Republic of Armenia has obstructed the peaceful gathering, violated the right of free speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement also right to personal freedom and immunity. The days that followed the events in both cities an attack on activist in Yerevan was committed. The activist is at the hospital with brain concussion. All those participants of the rallies that are on police video recorders are now being

identified and taken or “invited” to police stations. A number of administrative and criminal cases are initiated.

We demand to conduct a due investigation to bring the relevant police officers in charge to justice and to immediately stop the persecution of the participants of the peaceful demonstrations.

Helsinki Committee of Armenia

Journalists’ Club “Asparez”

The Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly

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