

STATEMENT BY THE CHILDREN OF RUBEN VARDANYAN

October 2, 2023

As the four children of Ruben Vardanyan we respectfully call upon the world leaders, advocates for human rights, and the media to urgent help to free our father from illegal detention in Azerbaijan. We are concerned about his health and arbitrary treatment and have not been able to communicate with him since his capture. We fear for his wellbeing and risk to his life.

Over a year ago, our father made the difficult decision to live with the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) exactly because he wanted to protect their safety and their rights. He felt so strongly about it that he left everything behind and lived in hardship alongside them under blockade, siege and war.

After the last aggression by the Azerbaijani government on September 19, resulting in mass forced displacement and humanitarian disaster, he was specially singled out and detained. We do not want him to become yet another victim of the political tension in the region, especially as his mission has always been to reduce this exact same tension and find a peaceful solution to a long-term conflict.

Our father is a humanitarian and has never been involved in any military activities. He co-founded the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, one of the biggest humanitarian foundations, exactly to promote peace and human rights around the world. For this same reason he invested heavily in education and cultural preservation for the region over the past decades, including the restoration of churches and a mosque in Shushi. As an active and visible Armenian humanitarian leader he now finds himself victim of a long-term political conflict and an opaque justice system.

We are extremely worried for his health and we fear for his safety.

We are encouraged by the support of many who have reached out but cannot rest until our father and other Armenian prisoners are released. With every day that goes by the risk that he might never join our family again increases exponentially.

As his children we call upon you to stand for the rights of our father, and all wrongfully detained Armenians and to call for his urgent, safe, and unconditional release. No people should be detained or prosecuted for their beliefs, religion, or nationality. We pray for our father's safe return to us and urgently ask for your help.