



REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF RUBEN VARDANYAN IN BAKU

Introduction

Rubén Vardanyan, businessman, philanthropist, and humanitarian, has dedicated his life to the promotion of human rights and global well-being. His work has shed light on crimes against humanity committed in various parts of the world, providing support and recognition for those fighting for justice. His international impact is unquestionable, making his detention by the Azerbaijani regime a grave injustice.

Career and Humanitarian Commitment

Rubén Vardanyan was born on May 25, 1968, in Yerevan, Armenia. After a distinguished career in the financial sector, he devoted his life to philanthropy and humanitarian activism. In June 2021, he renounced his Russian citizenship and acquired Armenian citizenship, moving to the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in September 2022, where he assumed the position of State Minister on November 4, 2022. However, his term was brief and ended on February 23, 2023.

Detention and Current Situation

In September 2023, during the Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and the subsequent forced exodus of the Armenian population, Vardanyan was detained in the Lachin corridor amidst the forced displacement of 120,000 people. He was charged with fabricated accusations, including financing terrorism, creating illegal armed formations, and illegally crossing the state border. The case file against him was so extensive that Vardanyan complained that neither he nor his lawyer could access the entire dossier. He remains imprisoned in Baku along with 23 other political prisoners, at least eight of whom were captured between September and October 2023. International organizations have condemned this situation, demanding his release.

Aurora Prize and Vardanyan's Humanitarian Legacy

One of Rubén Vardanyan's greatest legacies is the Aurora Prize, a humanitarian initiative that honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the well-being of others. Originally known as the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, it was renamed in honor of Armenian Genocide survivor Aurora Mardigianian. Thanks to this prize, numerous activists have been able to highlight crimes against humanity committed in their countries.



The Case of Syeda Ghulam Fatima

One of the recipients of the Aurora Prize is Syeda Ghulam Fatima, a Pakistani activist who has fought against the debt bondage system in her country. She is the Secretary General of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) Pakistan, an organization working to free enslaved workers in the brick kiln industry. Her efforts have led to the liberation of thousands of people trapped in conditions of modern slavery.

Fatima met Rubén Vardanyan through the Aurora Prize initiative, which provided her with a platform to expose the situation of forced laborers in Pakistan and receive international support. Due to her commitment to justice and human rights, Fatima has expressed her intention to travel to Baku to attend Vardanyan's trial hearings. Her presence aims to denounce the injustice of his imprisonment and exert pressure for his release. However, it is still uncertain whether she will be allowed to enter Azerbaijan and attend the hearings.

Rubén Vardanyan's Hospitality and Generosity

Beyond his humanitarian impact, Rubén Vardanyan is recognized for his hospitality and generosity. He has repeatedly welcomed members of the SOAR Buenos Aires Chapter (Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief), including its president in Argentina, Luciana Minassian, who has highlighted the warmth with which they were received in Armenia on each occasion.

Members of the SOAR Buenos Aires Chapter have been invited to events organized by Vardanyan, such as the Aurora Prize and Future Armenian, the latter being a key platform for analysis and action within the Armenian community. In 2022, Luciana Minassian participated in virtual meetings of the historical committee of Future Armenian and later attended the event organized in March 2023, when Vardanyan was already residing in Artsakh. Following the 2023 war and Azerbaijan's occupation of Artsakh, his unjust imprisonment has become a symbol of political persecution against Armenian leaders.

Statement from SOAR

The SOAR Buenos Aires Chapter expresses its deep concern over the arbitrary detention of Rubén Vardanyan and other political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

We call on the international community and human rights organizations to take immediate action to ensure a fair trial and the release of those detained without due process. Throughout his career, Rubén Vardanyan has demonstrated his commitment to human rights, justice, and peace. His



imprisonment is not only an attack on his person but on all those who work for the well-being of oppressed people.

We urge the International Red Cross, the United Nations, the European Parliament, and other human rights organizations to intervene in this situation and ensure that Rubén Vardanyan receives dignified treatment and a fair trial.

SOAR will remain steadfast in its support for Rubén Vardanyan and all those unjustly deprived of their freedom. We will continue to denounce these human rights violations and work tirelessly for justice and truth.

Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) - Buenos Aires Chapter

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Luciana Minassian
President of SOAR
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Carolina Ouzcouchian
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Syeda Ghulam Fatima
Pakistani human and labor rights activist