



**HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION**

His Excellency Mr. Charles Aznavour
Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia
to the United Nations Office in Geneva
Avenue du Mail 28
1205 Geneva

Geneva and Oslo, 21 May 2012

Accusations against human rights defenders and their NGOs

Mr. Ambassador,

Armenian human rights organisations, partners and members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders, and the Human Rights House Foundation, have submitted information to the United Nations Committee against Torture for its review of the 3rd periodic review of the Republic of Armenia on its implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 10 December 1984.

Other NGOs, including Civil Society Institute and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), have also submitted information to the Committee.

On 10 May 2012, in his opening speech at the 48th session of the Committee against Torture, the head of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia Mr. Yeghishe Kirakosyan, Deputy Minister of Justice, said that the Committee has published information from civil society on its website that contains anti-Armenian propaganda and hatred speech against Armenia.

We do not know to which submission of NGOs the delegation of Armenia referred to.

In March and April 2012, partners and members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders and trusted Armenian NGOs have been accused of anti-Armenian propaganda. Under false accusations of the kind, as we wrote to authorities of the Republic of Armenia on 15 May 2012 (letter attached), the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Vanadzor (HCAV) and the "Asparez" Journalist Club in Gyumri have been attacked and harassed.

We therefore are extremely worried that authorities nourish the feeling that human rights work in Armenia is anti-Armenian propaganda and attacks against Armenia. The fact that Armenian NGOs cooperate with Azerbaijani NGOs, including in the framework of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders, is part of building bridges towards peace between the people of Armenia and of Azerbaijan.

Therefore, as reminded by the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders after her visit to Armenia, we call upon the authorities of the Republic of Armenia to strongly and "publicly

acknowledge the role and importance of human rights defenders in achieving a flourishing, pluralistic and democratic society.”¹

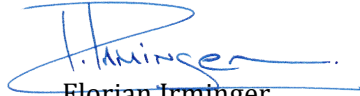
We would like to kindly ask the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office in Geneva to clarify the position of the representative of the delegation of Armenia at the Committee against Torture, including by clarifying what elements allow him to qualify civil society input to the Committee’s work as anti-Armenian propaganda, especially in the report submitted by partners and members of the South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders and the Human Rights House Foundation.

Yours sincerely,



Maria Dahle
Executive Director

Human Rights House Foundation



Florian Irminger
Head of International Advocacy and HRHF Geneva office

- Copies to:**
- United Nations Committee against Torture
 - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
 - United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

¹ Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders Margaret Sekaggya report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, addendum, 23 December 2010, paragraphs 75 and following (UN Doc.: A/HRC/16/44/Add.2).