

Side event at UN will highlight Armenian hostages held by Azerbaijan

As prisoners go on hunger strike and Azerbaijan bans the ICRC from the country, CSI will bring case of Armenian detainees to Human Rights Council in Geneva.

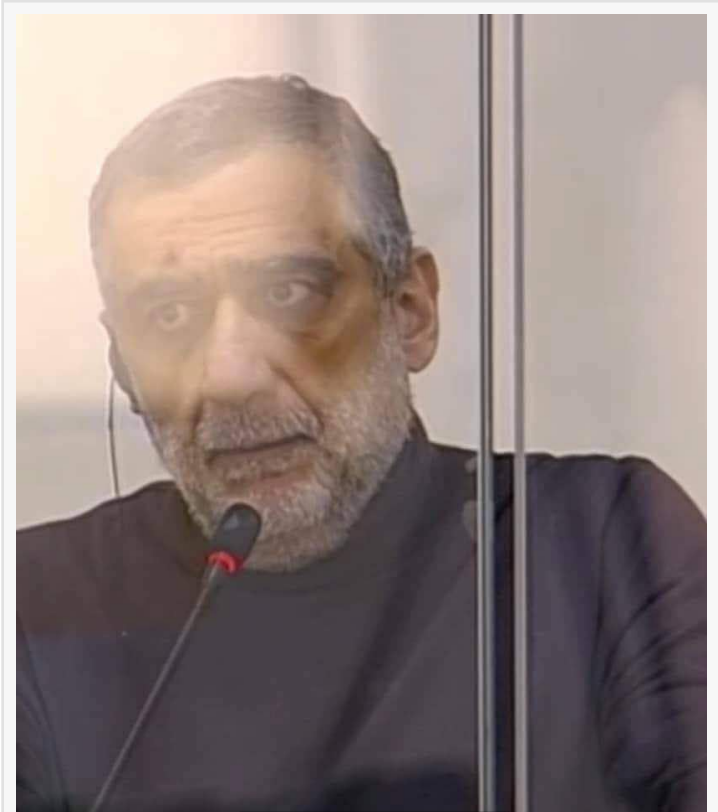
ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, March 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Christian Solidarity International will hold a side event at the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council to examine the cases of Armenians arbitrarily detained by Azerbaijan, the organization announced today.

The event will take place at 12 pm Geneva time on Tuesday, March 18. It will be streamed [live](#).

Sixteen months after an Azerbaijani military operation forced the entire Armenian Christian population of Nagorno Karabakh to flee their homeland, Azerbaijan continues to detain at least [23 Armenians](#) (with eighty more unaccounted for), including POWs, civilian hostages, and members of Nagorno Karabakh's elected government.

Sixteen of these detainees are currently on trial before a military court in Baku, trials from which international observers and media are excluded, and in which observers say the accused have been denied access to impartial counsel and the right to review the evidence against them.

Dr. Joel Veldkamp, CSI's director for public advocacy, said that his organization's event "will highlight the arbitrary and abusive nature of the detention of these 23 Armenians, the irregularity of their trials, the institutionalization of Armenophobia by the government trying them, and the necessity of their immediate release."



Ruben Vardanyan is on Day 23 of his hunger strike in protest against the conditions of his trial in Baku.

Speaking at this event will be Siranush Sahakyan, a human rights lawyer who has represented the families of the detainees before the European Court of Human Rights, Philippe Kalfayan, the former secretary general of the International Federation for Human Rights, and Arpi Avetisyan, an international human rights lawyer specializing in strategic litigation.

The meeting will also feature a video statement from David, Lord Alton, chair of the UK parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights.

CSI's event comes as calls for the release of the hostages are growing. In his remarks to the Human Rights Council on March 3, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk stated, "All those arbitrarily detained in Azerbaijan, including ethnic Armenians, must be released immediately, and fair trial rights must be respected fully." Last May, the UN Committee against Torture expressed its "alarm" at Azerbaijan's "alleged extra-judicial killings, torture, and ill-treatment of national and ethnic Armenians."

It is also a crucial moment for the detainees themselves. On March 2, Azerbaijan announced that the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) – which served as the sole link between the detainees and the outside world – will no longer be allowed to operate in the country. And Ruben Vardanyan, one of the most prominent detainees, is on day 23 of a hunger strike in protest at the conditions of his trial.

In a message recorded from his prison cell on Friday, Vardanyan stated, "My demands remain the same. If there is such a desire to judge me, then judge me professionally, publicly, openly, in accordance with Azerbaijani laws and all legal procedures, along with everyone else, in the presence of international journalists and observers."

Dr. Joel Veldkamp, CSI's Director for Public Advocacy, commented, "Azerbaijan's purpose in detaining these men and putting them on trial on trumped-up and fabricated charges is clear: to demonstrate their impunity, and to legitimize and complete the destruction of the ancient Armenian community of Nagorno Karabakh."

"If peace and human rights are to prevail in the South Caucasus, the international community must hold Azerbaijan to account for its violations, and insist on the release of these men," he concluded.

CSI's side event will take place at 12 pm CET, March 18, in Room XXV of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It will be streamed live at CSI's YouTube channel, and available for viewing afterwards.

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