

Serzh Sargsyan, President, Republic of Armenia

Galust Sahakyan, President of the National Assembly, Republic of Armenia

Donald Tusk, President, European Council

Jean-Claude Juncker, President, European Commission

Martin Schulz, President, European Parliament

Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU Member States

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General, Council of Europe

Pedro Agramunt, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Ilkka Kanerva, President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Michael Georg Link, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

19 July 2016

Statement
by the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
on the Recent Events in Armenia

The Steering Committee appeals to the Armenian authorities to resolve the occupation of the Erebuni police department in Yerevan by a group of armed supporters of the Founding Parliament opposition group without any further loss of life.

Furthermore, we remind both sides that political tensions can only be resolved through dialogue and without recourse to the violence, which has already led to the death of one policeman and injury of four others. We recognise the restraint by the authorities and the skill of the negotiators, which has led to the release by the occupiers of five out of the nine hostages held in the police department.

However, we stress that political dialogue can only be conducted under conditions of rule of law and democratic governance, which respect the will of the people as expressed in free and fair elections. Such conditions can only be put in place if the leadership of Armenia revises its current policies and establishes a regime without political prisoners and with mutual respect between the country's rulers and political opposition.

Currently, it is unacceptable that the authorities should breach fundamental human rights by detaining citizens on a large scale as has happened in recent days in Yerevan's Liberty Square and elsewhere. Some of them were beaten while in detention before being released. Those detained were also deprived of food and water, as well as access to legal aid and communication with their families and friends.

We protest against such repressions, which are not directly related to the resolution of the Erebuni police department siege. Such actions do not only violate basic human rights but also make the peaceful resolution of the present crisis more difficult. Thus, we call on the Armenian authorities to stop such indiscriminate actions in relation to the citizens and to severely punish those members of the security forces who issued these illegal orders and executed them.

Tolerating such actions by the authorities can only deepen the distrust of the citizens towards the institutions of the state engendered by the tragic events of 1 March 2008 and the violence against peaceful demonstrators and journalists on 23 June 2015.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum