

## Press Release

January 16, 2025

### **Ruben Vardanyan Speaks Out from Prison Cell in Baku, Azerbaijan Center for Truth & Justice Demands International Overseers**

**Los Angeles, CA** - Ruben Vartanyan and 17 other Christian Armenian hostages will face sham secret trials scheduled to begin on January 17, 2025, in Baku Military Court. Ruben Vartanyan has been illegally held in custody for 470 days, 340 of which have been in solitary confinement, and is facing 44 fabricated charges. CFTJ has requested that Azerbaijan allow international legal [experts to observe](#) the trials. CFTJ's request for access remains unanswered.

Ruben Vardanyan, (DOB 5/25/1968) is a businessman and philanthropist who served as State Minister in Nagorno-Karabakh from November 2022 to February 2023. On September 29, 2023, after the military offensive on the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, which resulted in the [forcible displacement of 120,000 Armenians](#), he was unlawfully detained by Azerbaijan's State Security Service and transported to prison in Baku. He is one of eight former officials from Nagorno-Karabakh who remain illegally [detained](#) in Azerbaijan.

*Freedom House* ranks Azerbaijan in the top 10 of the most repressive countries in the world.

#### **Ruben Vardanyan's Statement made on January 16, 2025:**

"I would like to address the global community, to those who care about what is happening in our region, those opposed to religious persecution worldwide and those who wish for a lasting and genuine peace.

I, Ruben Vardanyan, have been detained at the Detention Center of the State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan since September 27, 2023 – more than 470 days in total, including 340 days in solitary confinement and 23 days in a punishment cell. I would like to make an official statement before the start of the trial. If you are reading these words, it means that I have exhausted all other means to convey the truth about what is happening here.

A court hearing of my case is scheduled for January 17 at 3:00 PM. I have been informed that I am facing 42 charges, some of which carry sentences up to life imprisonment. However, I have not been granted the opportunity to fully review the official indictment. My lawyer and I were merely allowed to skim through 422 volumes of the case files, all written solely in the Azerbaijani language, which I do not understand, within a very short timeframe – from December 9, 2024, to January 8, 2025. I only received the list of charges in Russian on January 8, 2025.

Moreover, pressure has been exerted on me, my lawyer, and my interpreter to force us to backdate and sign documents, including falsified protocols and records of interrogations that never took place.

I officially declare: I have given no testimony since the day of my arrest, except during the first interrogation, where I only stated my name and surname. Let me reiterate: all protocols bearing my signature are falsifications. These documents do not exist in reality. My lawyer and interpreter were coerced into signing these documents.

I once again reiterate and state my complete innocence and the innocence of my Armenian compatriots also being held as political prisoners and demand an immediate end to this politically motivated case against us.

Despite our innocence and the political motivation of this trial, it is most likely that the prosecutor will ignore my plea and pursue a trial against us, in which case I demand and ask for your support in ensuring that I am afforded the following:

1. Allow me and my lawyer adequate time and opportunity to prepare for my defense. In particular, provide us with the opportunity to thoroughly review the case materials in a language I understand.
2. Eliminate all procedural violations and falsifications. Specifically, deem inadmissible all falsified documents and records of interrogations that never took place, as I have not provided any testimony since the day of my arrest.
3. Make my trial, and those of the Armenian political prisoners, public. I insist on the most open trial possible, with the participation of international journalists and representatives of humanitarian organizations.

4. Consolidate my case with the cases of the others accused. More than 400 of the 422 volumes in my case concern episodes from the general case of which only 6 are specifically related to false accusations against me. Separating my case into a separate proceeding is an artificial and unfounded decision.

I bear no anger or hatred. On the contrary, I genuinely empathize with all those who violate laws, moral principles, and the teachings of the Quran and other holy texts.

I am convinced that true peace will only be possible when the leaders of the countries involved in the conflict, with the support of their societies, can come together to lay flowers on the graves of all those who perished in this war.

I promise to do everything possible to ensure this happens during my lifetime. As the great Mahatma Gandhi said, the only way to save the world from self-destruction is to live by the principles of nonviolence, truth, and love. Through compassion for all people, regardless of their skin color, nationality, or religion, we can achieve true peace.

Thank you all for your support! I love and thank you all for your kindness toward me. Know that I am standing strong and believe that the truth will prevail.

Ruben Vardanyan”.

**About the Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ):**

CFTJ is a human rights organization dedicated to amplifying the voices of victims of war crimes, displacement, mass atrocities, and genocide. CFTJ is home to over 600 testimonies from victims of war crimes.

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