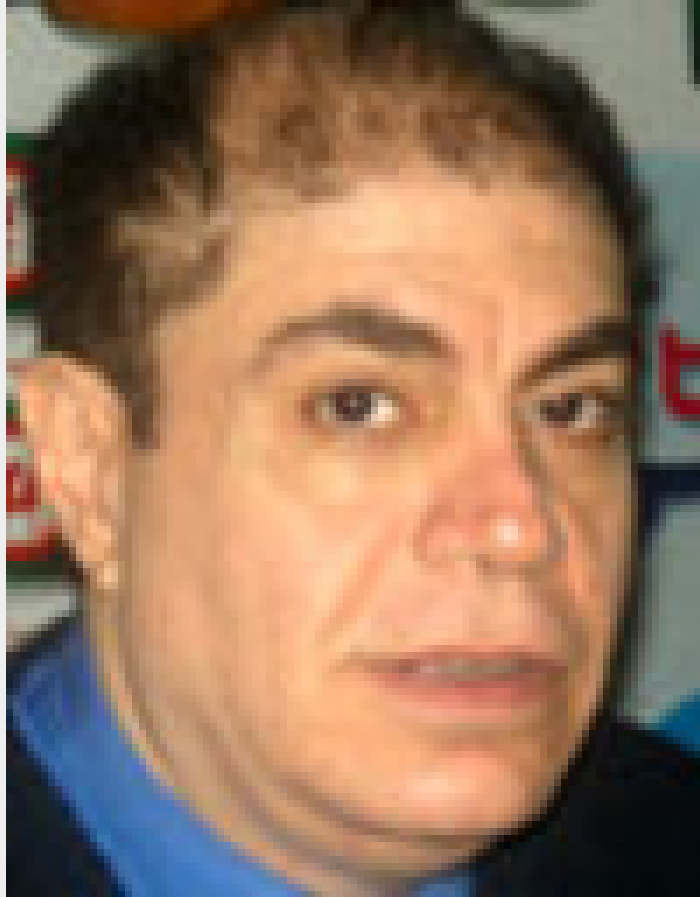


KEGHART EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ACTIVIST JUST RELEASED FROM JAIL IN ARMENIA

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By Dikran Abrahamian, 9 January 2010



Avedis Kalayjian, an anti-Serzh Sargsyan activist, has temporarily settled in Paris, following his release from Armenian jail. Born 45 years ago in Syria, he lived in France for a while before migrating to Armenia in 2002. A year later he was granted citizenship. He describes himself as a devout Christian and a patriot--Tseghagron. On Jan. 2 Keghart.com interviewed him by telephone from Canada.

When asked about his political experience, he stresses his membership in the Socialist Party of France. "I had 10 years of practical experience in politics", he says. Kalayjian is also the author of Turco-Turanic Expansionism and 70 Martyred Nations ("Թուրք-թուրանական ծավալապաշտութունը և 70 նահատակ ազգեր").

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In 2004 he joined the ruling Republican Party of Armenia. "I was active for five years, but resigned in January 2009 because I could not tolerate the fraudulent practices, especially during the Presidential election," he says.

"I was planning to go public on April 13, and expose Serzh Sargsyan. He led the country to the brink of abyss with his anti-national, anti-Christian and anti-democratic stance. They knew that I had intimate knowledge of incriminating details about many officials and ultimately Sargsyan," Kalayjian says.

When asked whether he went ahead with his plan, Kalayjian says, "No. On March 15 some people I know warned me that they were concocting criminal charges against me. They advised me to temporarily leave the country."

He didn't leave. "I was firm in my beliefs and in what I knew. I wanted to share my knowledge with the people," he says.

"On April 6 I was taken into custody. Frivolous charges were laid against me. I was accused of planning to assassinate the President on his way to the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, and organizing a

revolt. For a few days I was with other political prisoners, but then they moved me to a jail for common criminals in Nubarashen."

Kalayjian says, "I was in jail for eight months. The trial started in June 2009, but the authorities were not able to prove their accusations. I went on hunger strike on Oct. 22. In a few days my health deteriorated, necessitating medical intervention. But all along I remained steadfast. I did not give in, and I kept praying to our Lord. I was let go on Dec. 4." He credits pressure from Diaspora in contributing to his release.

What does he think his real "crime" was? "The Republican Party had deviated from its ideology. I was an opposition from within, especially after the tragedy of March 1. Authorities acted against the Armenian people by throwing patriots, freedom fighters, and political personalities into jail. Their sole "crime" was being in opposition. I spoke out and that was **my** crime."

What does Kalayjian plan now? "I shall continue the struggle. I shall continue fighting the Turks and Serzh. They are anti-national, anti-people and anti-democratic. They have no experience in democracy and they cannot become democrats. Their regime is Stalinist. I plan to hold a press conference soon and tell people who they are and how they have ruined Armenia."

