
ARMENIA'S EX-PRESIDENT SAYS CHARGES AGAINST HIM ARE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

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Armenias former president Robert Kocharyan announced his return to active politics on Thursday saying in an interview with the Yerkir Media TV channel that the charges brought against him were politically motivated.

Kocharyan was released from pre-trial custody on August 13 after being accused of violating Armenia constitutional order in March 2008, when in a post-election standoff eight civilians and two police officers were killed. The polls were declared to have been won by then prime minister Serzh Sargsyan. The decision angered the opposition, led by the first Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who set off 10 days of nonstop protests that led to the crackdown on March 1, in which 10 people were killed and more than 200 injured.

Kocharyan was released from custody on August 13 after Armenias Court of Appeals ruled that he could not be prosecuted for the post-election violence. The ruling was backed by Article 140 of the Armenian Constitution, which says that during the term of his or her powers and thereafter, the President of the Republic may not be prosecuted and subjected to liability for actions deriving from his or her status.

The ruling of the Court of Appeals was denounced by the Special Investigative Service, which described it as illegal, saying that the Court of Appeals overstepped the bounds of its authority. It said also that it will ask the Prosecutor General to appeal the decision at the Court of Cassation.

In the interview Kocharyan said he could be arrested again, but argued that the case against him, if taken to the European Court of Human Rights, would clear him of any wrongdoing.

Kocharyan also accused the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of having no economic strategy, saying that its anti-corruption campaign can not replace economic management of the country

I have seen no action or a document which would tell us what this government is going to do to develop the economy, he said.

Kocharian also claimed that during his tenure in power, there was not a clearly structured corruption pyramid, otherwise it would not have been possible to demonstrate high rates of economic growth.

"Fuel was supplied by 16-17 companies. Supplies of gas and electricity generation are natural

monopolies, and nothing can be done about it. In other sectors, monopolies never existed, and no one had monopoly rights," he said.

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