
DASHNAK LEADER DEPLORES KOCHARIAN'S ARREST

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13.12.2018

Azatutyun (11 December 2018)

A leader of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) on Tuesday criticized as politically motivated criminal charges brought against former President Robert Kocharian following this springs regime change in the country.

Kocharian was arrested again on Friday on charges stemming from the deadly break-up of post-election protests in Yerevan during the final weeks of his 1998-2008 presidency.

Law-enforcement authorities claim that he illegally used the armed forces against opposition supporters who protested against alleged fraud in a disputed presidential election held in February 2008. They say that amounted to an overthrow of the constitutional order.

Kocharian strongly denies the charges, saying that the current government is waging a political vendetta against him. His arrest was condemned on Friday by the opposition Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) whose top leader, Serzh Sarkisian, succeeded Kocharian as president of the republic in April 2008.

Dashnaktsutyuns Armen Rustamian also saw political motives behind the high-profile case. He said investigators should prove the alleged overthrow of the constitutional order before holding anyone responsible for it.

I dont want to go into legal details, but I can say that the accusation contains political subtexts, Rustamian told reporters. They have come up with an accusation that will lead to a very dangerous situation in the sense that it has not yet been proved whether or not the constitutional order was overthrown.

While criticizing the criminal proceedings, Rustamian made clear that he and his associates do not plan to join street protests against Kocharians arrest.

The first such protest was staged by several dozen angry supporters of the ex-president on Tuesday. They rallied outside Armenian prosecutors headquarters in Yerevan to demand his release from prison.

Dashnaktsutyun was allied to Kocharian throughout his decade-long rule. The latter lifted a controversial ban on the partys activities in Armenia when he came to power in 1998.

Like Sarkisians HHK, Dashnaktsutyun failed to win any parliament seats in snap general elections

held on Sunday.

<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29650589.html>

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