

Paris,
December 22, 2009

**THE LIES AND CYNICISM OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA SHOW
THE INJUSTICE TOWARD VAHAGN CHAKHALYAN**

Statement of Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France

The Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France strongly denounces the outrageous lies of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Grigol Vashadze before the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of France on November 25.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, responding to questions asked by the French MP Francois Rochebloine on Vahagn Chakhalyan's case and the conditions of his trial, lied about the reasons of conviction of the Javakheti political activist and the fairness of the trial.

By declaring that "the Georgian citizen of Armenian origin" was convicted for cooperating with a third country, implying Russia, Grigol Vashadze unconsciously or unwittingly provided evidence that Vahagn Chakhalyan is a victim of police conspiracy and unfair trial.

The CCAOF reminds that Javakheti political activist was sentenced on April 7, 2009 by the District Court of Akhalsikhe (Georgia) to 10 years' imprisonment for "illegal possession of arms" as well as for "participation in mass demonstrations disturbing public order" and "hooliganism". The sentence was upheld by the Court of Appeals in Tbilisi on October 30, 2009.

Regarding the assertion that Chakhalyan has "two or three" lawyers of different origin and that the Georgian law does not allow foreign lawyers to participate in courts trials in Georgia, but allows simple defense advisor, it is apparent that Grigol Vashadze again demonstrated willingness to mislead his listeners.

The CCAOF reminds that Vahagn Chakhalyan has three lawyers, two are Georgian and one is Armenian. In addition, the minister intentionally fails to indicate that the law prohibiting foreign attorneys to participate in trials was adopted on June 24, 2009. The request for authorization by the French lawyer was filed in November 2008. The Ministry of Justice of Georgia has drafted and the Georgian Parliament has ratified in haste a legislative amendment prohibiting access of foreign lawyers to court in violation of Article 6 paragraph 3c of the European Convention on Human Rights, and Article 42 of the Constitution of Georgia. This abuse was confirmed and denounced by the Ombudsman of Georgia. An appeal to the Constitutional Court of Georgia has been filed by the Chakhalyan's lawyers and is under examination.

If the CCAOF previously questioned the motivation of the Georgian authorities in Chakhalyan's case, due to the obvious and deliberate violations of the rights of Javakheti political activist to a fair trial and violation by the Georgian authorities of their international obligations, now all doubts are dispelled.

In addition to the flagrant violations of the right to a fair trial, the cynicism and falsehood recently demonstrated by the Georgian minister prove that the alleged charges that led to conviction of Vahagn Chakhalyan are completely unfounded.

Therefore, the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France demands:

- From the Georgian authorities - to immediately release Vahagn Chakhalyan and restore all his rights.
- From the European Commissioner for Human Rights- to take up this case.
- From the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe- to send a mission to Georgia to study the actual implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- From the President of the French National Assembly- to protest to his Georgian counterpart for the apparent lack of respect demonstrated by the Minister Grigol Vashadze to the legislative body of the French Republic.