

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Karabakh) > Armenia > **Armenian police fine peace activist over anti-war post**

# Armenian police fine peace activist over anti-war post

Friday 18 December 2020, by [Open Caucasus Media](#) (Date first published: 8 November 2020).

**Armenian anti-war activist Georgi Vanyan has said that police have issued him with a fine for a Facebook post calling for dialogue with Azerbaijan.**

Vanyan told *OC Media* that police visited him on Saturday and informed him he faced a fine of ₺300,000–₺700,000 (\$620–\$1,500) and that if he refused to take down the post the fine will increase to ₺1 million (\$2,100). He said he would not pay until he received the reason in writing.

According to him, on Sunday the deputy head of the Ijevan police department visited him and repeated these demands.

In the offending [post](#) published on Facebook on Friday, Vanyan wrote that Armenia ‘had long crossed the threshold of crimes against its own citizens’.

‘Stop this criminal farce that speaks of victory: one does not have victory over a neighbour, one does not trample a neighbour, one does not destroy a neighbour’, he wrote. ‘One talks with a neighbour and keeps talking until they find the ability to speak the same language, until reaching mutual understanding.’

‘The inertia of neighbours to destroy each other is the path to self-destruction’.

‘Forget, give up the criminal deception about a saving power, of a “strategic ally”. In the face of this unrelenting slaughter, forget, put aside the ridiculous search for allies, the shameful hope of alms from the international community in the form of an admission that you are being subjected to genocide’, his post said.

Vanyan told *OC Media* that the reason the authorities were pursuing him was that the state of martial law in the country forbids the public from criticising the actions of the authorities or the effectiveness of those actions.

‘I disagree that there was a violation in my message. I criticised propagandists and called on the authorities not to listen to Nazi ideology’, Vanyan said.

‘Without going beyond the bounds of the law, I try to voice, outline the existing potential for ending the war and the beginning of talks. I write so as to be understood primarily by my compatriots.’

‘The decision to restrict freedom of speech in Armenia was made, as I understand it, with the aim of combating the consequences of the information war.’

‘It makes no sense to criticise the provisions of martial law since the authorities themselves admit that it does restrict human rights. You just have to do everything possible to make it end as soon as

possible, and the shortest path is direct negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which I keep calling for,' he concluded.

Vanyan [said](#) in a Facebook post on Saturday that he had been receiving death threats for years against himself and people close to him, and that someone [shot his dog](#) several months ago.

He accused the Armenian authorities of inaction when he reported the harassment to the police even when a group of men broke into his house demanding that he leave the country.

[Azerbaijani peace activists](#) have also been reprimanded by the authorities for their online behaviour. *OC Media* has spoken to five activists who have been summoned by the State Security Services, with several told to delete posts and abstain from commenting further.

### **A long-time peace activist**

Georgi Vanyan has a longstanding and [controversial](#) reputation in Armenia due to his strong anti-war, anti-nationalist position, as well as his harsh criticism of Armenian mainstream historical and political discourse and the role of Russia in the conflicts in the South Caucasus.

In September, together with Azerbaijani political scientist Zardusht Alizade, he [appealed](#) to the societies of both countries warning against 'another round of bloodshed and destruction, this time on a larger scale, inevitably approaching Armenia and Azerbaijan'.

Over almost 20 years, the 57-year old has served as director of the [Caucasus Centre for Peacebuilding Initiatives](#), which has organised peace-building events in Armenia and Georgia for Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Abkhaz, and South Ossetian activists, journalists, and artists.

Together with Azerbaijani and Georgian civil society activists, he was the initiator of the '[Tekali Process](#)', a long-running peace-building [campaign](#) in the Georgian village of Tekali near the borders of the three South Caucasus countries.

The campaign brought people from the border regions of Armenia and Azerbaijan to Georgia for direct dialogue following the first Karabakh war.

As a former theatre director, he also [organised](#) the 'Tekali Festival of Art and Conflict Transformation' in Georgia, and has attempted to organise screenings of Azerbaijani films in Armenia.

In 2005-2006, he [organised](#) the 'Peacebuilding Comando' tours bringing Azerbaijani writers to towns in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh affected by the war. The tours involved meetings with local communities including school students and war veterans.

The events also included an [exhibition](#) of paintings by young artists from Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia dedicated to the memory of the victims of the conflicts in the Caucasus as well as a screening of Georgian-Abkhazian documentary film '[Karabakh](#)'. This tour was documented in the film '[Open the Border!](#)'.

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