**Press Release**

**March 1, 2016**

**On 7th court hearing of Avetisyans family murder case**

On February 26, 2016, the General Jurisdiction Court of Shirak Marz (Region) held the 7th outgoing hearing on Avetisyans family murder case on the territory of the Russian military base № 102.

At the hearing, the Court questioned witnesses of the case, driver at border guard outpost Ara Atoyan, Deputy Commander of Border Troops Sergey Merzlikin, Deputy Head of Gyumri Border Troops Detachment of Russian FSS in Armenia Alexander Kruglov and senior officer of the detachment Igor Braga.

In his testimony, S. Merzlikin mentioned that upon learning at night of January 12, 2015 that a soldier had deserted the military base, he took the best hunting dog and started search operations. The dog found Permyakov’s traces and helmet in the area of the military base and followed them till it reached a private house in Gyumri and found Permyakov’s footprints there. The witness thought that Permyakov failed to orient himself there.

According to the testimony of witness S. Merzlikin, next day, at midnight as he contacted Khachatryan, Captain at Bayandur outpost, he learnt that they had spotted a person in civilian clothes looking like Permyakov. They got the impression that Permyakov intended to pass to Turkey.

Then Permyakovin was taken to his office and after the necessary actions handed over to military base Commander Ruzinski.

In response to questions of the legal representatives of Avetisyans’ successors, the witness said that it was the institution from where Permyakov deserted rather than he who was under obligation to inform the Armenian law enforcement agencies.

S. Merzlikin also stated that during the identification procedures, there were Armenian law enforcement officers in his office; however, neither the Chief of Police of Shirak, nor that of Gyumri were among them. Then he added that they started the search operations without Armenian law enforcement officers as the dog could not “work” effectively in the presence of many people.

As for S. Merzlikin’s statement about having learnt from a TV broadcast that Permyakov was suspected of the murders, the lawyers objected to that statement referring to the testimonies of other witnesses stating that they knew that Permyakov was suspected of murders. S. Merzlikin replied that in the dark he could not be certain that the person arrested was Permyakov and his identity was established only during the identification operations.

According to the testimony of the witness, in response to his question why he had committed the murders, Permyakov replied that it was not him who had committed them and then continued to answer the questions and mentioned that he had hidden himself not too far away and concealed his weapon; also, he added that a taxi driver brought him some food.

According to the testimonies of Alexander Kruglov, Deputy Head of Gyumri Border Troops Detachment of Russian FSS in Armenia, on January 13, at 12:15 am, he was informed by phone that the runaway serviceman was arrested near Bayandur outpost. He turned to S. Merzlikin for more detailed information and then by his order visited the area of detention.

A similar testimony was provided by senior officer of the detachment Igor Braga stating that he learnt of Permyakov’s desertion on January 12, 2015, at 9 am and of his being suspected of murders – at about 1 pm from the press.

The next outgoing hearing of the General Jurisdiction Court of Shirak Marz (Region) is scheduled for March 4, 2016, at 12 pm.