

PRESS RELEASE

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SUBJECT: DEATH OF ARMY LT. ARTAK NAZARYAN

Mismanagement and corruption that have taken roots in the Armenian army in recent years have claimed yet another life. Lieutenant Artak Nazaryan, commander of a rifle platoon based in the Tavush region on the border with Azerbaijan, was found dead on July 27, 2010, with a bullet shot through his mouth. Although the medical examiner found indications of life-threatening injuries inflicted on Lt. Nazaryan's body hours prior to his death, the official verdict is suicide.

Policy Forum Armenia mourns the loss of Lt. Nazaryan's life and places the responsibility for this unnecessary tragedy on Armenia's Ministry of Defense for allowing an atmosphere in the army units which has been conducive to this and other suspicious deaths. Unless this behavior is stamped out in clear and certain terms, and the rule of law and disciplinary measures reinstated to prevent such losses, these episodes will continue to shake the already dented reputation of Armenia's army within Armenian society.

Army is the ultimate protector of country's security. Those concerned about Armenia's ability to defend itself against external threats (in a state where demographic trends and corruption are already making it very difficult) must condemn what took place in Tavush and demand a proper investigation of Lt. Nazaryan's death as well as all similar incidents in recent years. We urge the Ministry of Defense to carry out a credible investigation into these attacks on the life and dignity of the Armenian soldier.

NOTE: As this statement was being prepared, news arrived of another incident, which claimed the lives of six servicemen in an army unit located in Artsakh. Time to unite against the sources of such occurrences is now. Given the threats of war looming over the country, there may not be another chance.