

Georgij Vanyan

South Caucasian Puppet Play

Naturally, Georgij Vanyan could have done something different with his life, maybe a career as a successful film and theater director. The 51-year old Armenian also loved the teaching profession.

But there was the permanent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan about the region Nagorno-Karabakh. Time and again, there have been battles about this Christian-Armenian enclave on Muslim-Azerbaijani territory. This spring has seen the last military clashes so far.

To tell the truth, the threads of this South Caucasian Puppet Play

are not drawn in Baku or Yerevan. The Islamic Turkey stands at Azerbaijan's side, while Russia supports Armenia. Depending on whose regional interests are currently piqued, one or the other of these protecting powers kindles the conflict.

And that is why Georgij Vanyan has made it his life's mission to break this South Caucasian cycle of violence. At cultural events organized across the border triangle of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia people do what their governments fear the most: they talk to each other. The reconciliation process named after the events' location in Tekali is supposed to send a clear message to the power elites: "Peace is possible."

As a result, Vanyan has become the Armenian nationalists' enemy. First, he lost his job. Then he was accused of being a traitor to his country. For years, he has been threatened physically and psychologically. For this reason, the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People has invited this brave activist to spend a whole year at the river Elbe. During this time, Georgij Vanyan wants to expand his network in Germany and Europe as well as to find allies for his continued peace efforts after his return home.

We're very pleased.

Editorial



Martina Bäurle

Lots of successes!

Little strokes fell big oaks. For almost two years we fought for the liberation of the Azerbaijani human rights activists Leyla and Arif Yunus. Now, the government in Baku allowed our former guests to leave the country: All the effort has been worthwhile.

To protect voices like theirs and give them a platform has been our mission since 1986. We have been able to save many of them from imprisonment, torture and in some cases even from certain death.

Thirty years of Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People! Nearly 200 individuals we were able to help. Their experiences have given us new inspiration for our work today and in the future.

Lately, oppression, war and poverty have caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Germany. To rebuild their countries they will need the support of a strong civil society, headed by courageous people, who are aware of the values of freedom, democratic reforms and human rights and who are committed to their cause at great personal risk.

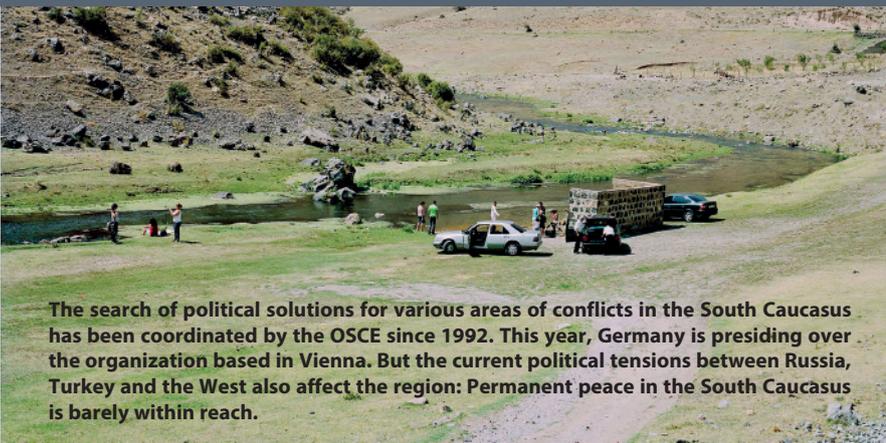
People such as the Moroccan journalist Ali Anouzla and the Armenian film and theater director and human rights activist Georgij Vanyan, the first two of four new guests of the Foundation this year.

It was just because of your generosity that we were able to invite them. Please stay committed to our work, now more than ever!

That is my birthday wish.

Sincerely,
Martina Bäurle

Forgotten Tinderbox



The search of political solutions for various areas of conflicts in the South Caucasus has been coordinated by the OSCE since 1992. This year, Germany is presiding over the organization based in Vienna. But the current political tensions between Russia, Turkey and the West also affect the region: Permanent peace in the South Caucasus is barely within reach.

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He would not let them silence him, Ali Anouzla said while sipping his cappuccino. The strident journalist and publisher from Morocco had only been in Hamburg for a few hours: "But after all these recent problems I am glad to have the chance to think about my future in peace."

Anouzla is one of a dwindling number of highly courageous journalists who still call social injustice and corruption in Maghreb openly by their

names. His criticism of Morocco's role in the Sahara region over the past 40 years has earned him additional enemies. They ruined the daily and weekly newspapers published by Anouzla by intimidating his advertising customers. Unfazed the journalist founded several Internet platforms, which during the "Arabic Spring" became important sources of information in North Africa.

Meanwhile his opponents no longer shy away from any kind of defamation to silence the journalist who was last honored with the "Raif Badawi Award for courageous journalism 2015". Due to pointing out a link published in the renowned Spanish Newspaper "El Pais" in one of his reports on Islamist terrorism, he was accused of having connections with the Maghreb branch of al Qaeda. In case Anouzla is found guilty, he could face many years of imprisonment.

We are happy to know that Ali Anouzla is safe.

News

Finally: Since April, 19, our former guests Leyla and Arif Yunus have left the danger zone. After false allegations, 18 months of imprisonment and scandalous criminal convictions, Azerbaijan allowed the two human rights activists to leave the country and join their daughter Dinara in the Netherlands. Thanks to all those who contributed to this happy outcome.



EVENTS

Tuesday, 7 June at 7 p.m.

Reading with Rosa Yassin Hassan
The Syrian writer reads from her novel „Guardians of the Air“ and „Those Touched by Magic“

In cooperation with Kulturwerk Rahlstedt, Buchhandlung Heymann, Schweriner Straße 8-12, 22143 Hamburg-Rahlstedt

Thursday, 9 June at 7 p.m.

„Press needs freedom“
Panel discussion with the foundation guest and blogger Ananya Azad from Bangladesh and Lars Becker from the Europa-Union Hamburg

In cooperation with students of the Macromedia Academy Hamburg, Gertrudenstrasse 3, 20095 Hamburg

HAMBURG DAYS OF EXILE: WE'RE THERE

Tuesday, 24 May at 11 a.m.

When life and limb are threatened

With the foundation guests Rosa Hassan (Syria), Sihem Bensedrine (Tunisia) and Ali Anouzla (Morocco)

At Hamburg City Hall, for school classes only, registration necessary

<http://www.tagedesexils.de/programm/24-05-2016/>

Monday, 30 May at 7 p.m.

„Peace building in the firing line“

The Armenian director, peace activist and foundation guest Georgij Vanyan about the newly flared up conflict in the South Caucasus

At KörberForum – Kehr wieder 12, Hamburg

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