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Analytical Commentary on Arrest of Former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan

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Former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan was detained on 25 August during a morning raid by law enforcement personnel that was timed with a related search of his home and the apartments of his two sons, Levon and Sedrak. After simultaneous raids on several businesses and properties owned by the sons, the former president's eldest son, Sedrak Kocharyan, was also arrested, along with four other individuals.¹

The move is part of a wider criminal investigation by the Armenian Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC) that is focused on the questionable sources and dubious origins of the vast assets, business interests and wealth of the former president and his family, as well as the financial history of the acquisition of businesses and state assets largely covering the decade spanning the two terms of the former president, for the period of 1998-2008.

Questionable Timing

The sudden arrest of former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan and the sweeping raids on many businesses tied to him and his eldest son, Sedrak Kocharyan, can be seen as a "long overdue" move against the personal corruption of the former president. But the timing of the arrest and the raids also suggest a political motive involving Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's personal anger Kocharyan that seems to have been exacerbated by a verbal confrontation between the prime minister and the younger Kocharyan son, current opposition parliamentarian Levon Kocharyan, on the floor of parliament.

For example, given the release of a very long, well-documented and detailed set of criminal and corruption-related charges against the former president and his family, there are questions over the timing, such as why wasn't the arrest made earlier once the evidence was compiled? Regardless, although the move was a welcome step forward in the investigation of the suspicious origins of the immense personal wealth of the former president and his family, these questions only undermine confidence in the legality and transparency of the anti-corruption effort.

And in the broader context, another question arises, as to why Kocharyan, and others, are now under investigation while other equally egregiously and suspiciously wealthy former political leaders not facing the same scrutiny or criminal prosecution? This only fuels a perception of an arbitrary pursuit of anti-corruption based rather than a process relying on the rule of law.

¹ Stepanian, Ruzanna, "Kocharian Arrested After Heated Parliament Exchange," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Armenian Service, 25 August 2026.
<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33837717.html>

Why Now?

Nevertheless, despite such questionable timing, the depth and details of the criminal case against Kocharyan does suggest that it took time to investigate, uncover and compile the complex and often opaque nature of the financial transactions and acquisitions alleged in the case.² And it is also clear that given the prominence of the former president, and his role as a leader of one of the main opposition parties, investigators would be even more pressured to ensure a complete and compelling case before proceeding with the arrests and raids. After all, this is very well the highest profile case in the country's campaign to combat corruption.

No Real Political Repercussions

And in the broader context of the case of Kocharyan, there is little likelihood of any real political repercussions, however. Kocharyan remains a deeply unpopular and largely discredited political figure, further tainted by a degree of public resentment over his illicit wealth, overt corruption and authoritarian tendencies during his eight years of rule in Armenia. And as the case merely maps and mirrors the public perception of Kocharyan's corruption and criminal activities, even concerns that this case represents both political persecution and politicized prosecution, will neither rescue nor restore Kocharyan as a political leader.

There is also little chance of this case emerging as a significant factor in Armenian-Russian relations. Despite the former president's close personal ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin in the past and his present business network in Moscow, as seen by his position on the board of directors of the Moscow-based AFK Sistema corporation since 2009, Kocharyan's previous solicitations of Russian support and political backing have only been consistently rebuffed by Moscow.

Moreover, Kocharyan is very much a *former* client, no longer enjoying direct Russian political patronage. And given Russia's virtual abandonment of the Armenian opposition through several elections, it seems certain that although Moscow continues to maintain pressure on the current Armenian government, Pashinyan remains their preferred interlocutor. There is more risk, in the Russian calculation, to back the deeply unpopular and discredited opposition in Armenia.

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² Ghazanchyan, Siranush, "Anti-Corruption Committee details property and bribery schemes involving Robert Kocharyan," Public Radio of Armenia, 25 August 2026. <https://en.armradio.am/2026/08/25/anti-corruption-committee-details-property-and-bribery-schemes-involving-robert-kocharyan/>