

Panama Papers : Mihran Poghosyan (Borossian) avait des comptes offshore

Armenia's Special Investigative Service (SIS) has brought corruption charges against a former senior official who resigned in 2016 after being accused of having secret offshore assets exposed by the Panama Papers.

The SIS said on Monday that Mihran Poghosyan, who used to run an Armenian state agency enforcing court rulings, had abused his powers to enrich himself and companies linked to him.

In particular, it said, Poghosyan appointed his bodyguard and driver to different positions in the Service for the Mandatory Execution of Judicial Acts (SMEJA) after becoming the head of that agency in 2008. In what it called an embezzlement of public funds, the SIS claimed that the two men never reported for work but were paid a total of 44.2 million drams (\$91,000) in salaries.

According to an SIS statement, the state lost another 20 million drams as a result of 32 Chinese-manufactured vehicles which the SMEJA purchased in 2011-2016 from a car dealership "de facto" controlled by Poghosyan.

The statement further accused Poghosyan of giving privileged treatment to another contractor, a real estate valuation firm which the SIS said was founded by shadowy companies set up by Poghosyan "through foreign citizens" in Panama in 2011. It said the SMEJA paid that contractor almost 44 million drams from 2014-2016.

Citing leaked documents widely known as the [Panama Papers](#), the Hetq.am investigative publication reported in April 2016 that Poghosyan controls three

such companies registered in Panama. Poghosyan initially denied the report but resigned as SMEJA chief shortly afterwards. Still, he stopped short of admitting any wrongdoing.

The SIS launched a criminal investigation in connection with the Hetq.am report at the time. But it closed the criminal case in January 2017, saying that it found no evidence of Poghosyan's involvement in "illegal entrepreneurial activity."

Poghosyan had close ties to then President Serzh Sarkisian and his Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). He was elected to the former Armenian parliament on the HHK ticket in April 2017.

The SIS reopened the Panama Papers probe in January this year, more than eight months after the "velvet revolution" that toppled Sarkisian. It summoned the once powerful ex-official for interrogation but he did not show up, citing his absence from Armenia.

An SIS spokeswoman told RFE/RL's Armenian service last week that Poghosyan has expressed readiness to return to the country and answer investigators' questions. His whereabouts remain unknown.

The SIS also announced on Monday that it asked a Yerevan court at the weekend to allow Poghosyan's pre-trial arrest.



sources : Hetq.am , Massis Media