

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says important progress was made at Armenian-Azerbaijani talks.



U.S. - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, Washington, June 27, 2023.

Closing the talks, Blinken said the two sides had made “further progress” on “the objective of reaching an overall final agreement in the weeks and months ahead” on Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway region under effective Armenian control.

“I think there’s also a clear understanding on everyone’s part that the closer you get to reaching an agreement, in some cases the harder it gets because by definition, the most difficult issues are left for the end,” Blinken said.

Blinken saluted the “candor, openness, directness” between Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov, who traveled to the US capital for the second time in as many months for talks.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov

held bilateral negotiations on June 27-29 at the George Schultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Virginia. While in Washington they met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

The Ministers and their teams continued progress on the draft bilateral “Agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations”. They reached an agreement on additional articles and advanced mutual understanding of the draft agreement, meanwhile acknowledging that the positions on some key issues require further work.

Both Ministers expressed their appreciation to the US side for hosting negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and their commitment to continue their negotiations.

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USA interested in peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan: Ambassador Kvien

On June 27, the head of the “Civil Contract” faction of the National Assembly, Hayk Konjoryan, received the US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Kristina Kvien.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the National Assembly, the parties discussed the prospects and plans for further deepening of Armenia-US inter-parliamentary relations.

The key role of the Armenian parliament and the US Congress in the issue



Hayk Konjoryan highlighted the involvement of the US in the peace process, expressing hope that progress will be made in the negotiations to be held in Washington today.

Ambassador Kristina Kvien emphasized that the United States is very interested in the establishment of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which is ev-

idenced by the active involvement of the US in the negotiation process.

Armenian Prime Minister meets with Europol Executive Director



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has

met with Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle in Yerevan.

During the meeting the Armenian Prime Minister attached importance to close cooperation and its further development between Armenian law enforcement agencies and Europol, the prime minister's office said in a readout.

PM Pashinyan attached importance particularly to partnership in combating

crime and corruption, as well as exchange of information.

Catherine De Bolle was pleased to note the level of cooperation with Armenian partners and expressed confidence that the discussions taking place during her visit will raise bilateral partnership to a new level. Various issues of mutual interest were discussed at the meeting.

Azerbaijan launches artillery attack, air strikes in Nagorno Karabakh, 4 dead

4 Nagorno Karabakh servicemen were killed when Azerbaijani forces began bombarding Nagorno Karabakh positions with artillery and drone strikes in the early hours of Wednesday, June 28 the Nagorno Karabakh Ministry of Defense said in a statement.

“On June 28, starting from 1:30 a.m., the units of the Azerbaijani armed forces opened artillery fire in the direction of Martuni and Martakert, using UAVs as well.

There are 4 casualties from the Armenian side. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Artsakh will make an additional statement,” the ministry said.

The ministry added that the recent continuous disinformation campaign launched by Azerbaijan falsely accusing the Nagorno Karabakh army of violating the ceasefire was aimed at creating an “information base” for this aggression.

“The Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan,

continuously spreading disinformation in previous days as if the units of the Defence Army violate the ceasefire, and, in particular, on June 27, by disseminating a false statement about the wounding of the Azerbaijani AF serviceman by the Armenian side fire, created an informational basis for another provocation. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Artsakh will make an additional statement,” the Nagorno Karabakh ministry of defense added.

After fresh round of talks with Azerbaijan, Armenian foreign ministry reveals key issues that still require work

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that the positions on some key issues require further work. Both Ministers expressed their appreciation to the US side for hosting negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and their commitment to continue their negotiations.

Armenian foreign ministry spokesperson Ani Badalyan told reporters on June 30 that the issues that still require work are the delimitation issues and the withdrawal of forces from the border, as well as the rights and security of the Nagorno Karabakh people.

"One of the issues pertains to the delimitation issues, which implies commitment around the 1975 map.



The other relates to the withdrawal of forces from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. And one of the issues pertains to duly addressing the issues of rights and security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh under an international mechanism," Badalyan said.

Pashinyan hails PACE resolution as highly important document for increasing international attention on Nagorno Karabakh

The Azerbaijani policy of escalation and depopulation of Nagorno Karabakh is becoming more and more visible for the international community and the adoption of Resolution 2256 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) serves as the most recent evidence for this, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the Cabinet meeting on June 29.

Pashinyan quoted the resolution's clause 15 as stating that PACE is extremely worried by the hostile and threatening rhetoric used against Armenians at the highest level of Azerbaijan's leadership and urges Azerbaijan to repudiate such rhetoric and take steps to tackle both hate speech, including by public and high-level officials, and hate crimes.

Clause 8 of the resolution states that

the current situation is not sustainable and may well lead to the Armenian population being forced to leave their homes and communities if there is no resolution to the conflict.

In this context, PACE urgently calls for addressing the issues of the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh through dialogue between Baku and Stepanakert and a neutral international involvement in any peace implementation mechanism to be put in place.

PACE also stated that the Azerbaijani blockade of Lachin Corridor constitutes a violation of the 9 November 2020 trilateral statement, recorded the fact that gas and power supply into Nagorno Karabakh is interrupted and called on Azerbaijan to

immediately restore the supplies and comply with the ruling of the ICJ on opening the Lachin Corridor.

Pashinyan highlighted the fact that PACE is assessing the situation in Nagorno Karabakh as a humanitarian and human rights crisis, and calls for an immediate deployment of a fact-finding mission and addresses the Committee of Ministers.

"The resolution adopted by PACE is a highly important document in terms of increasing international attention around the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh and the Armenian Foreign Ministry will be consistent in keeping the provisions of the resolution in the agenda of the Committee of Ministers, the executive body of the Council of Europe," Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan, Erdogan discuss normalization and land border opening deal

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke by phone today with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

PM Pashinyan congratulated President Erdogan on Kurban Bayramı (Eid al-Adha), while the latter conveyed congratulations

on upcoming Vardavar, the holiday celebrating the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ, to the Armenian leader, the Prime Minister's Office said in a readout.

The Armenia-Turkey normalization process was discussed. In this context, the

course of implementation of the agreement on opening the land border for diplomatic passport holders and citizens of third countries was discussed.

We are present in Syunik and will continue to support Armenia by implementing various projects. EU Ambassador



Germany's cooperation with many countries covers specific areas, the primary of which is the protection of fundamental human rights. Germany is also involved in the settlement process of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The EU office implements private projects in Armenia with the participation of the German side convinced that the joint work can give the expected result and make the parties stronger, during the discussion organized at the Armenian-German Goethe Center "Changes in Germany's foreign and development policy. How are they interesting for Armenia?", EU Ambassador to Armenia Andrea Wiktoria said during the discussion.

"We are present in Syunik and will continue to support Armenia by implementing various projects," the Ambassador said.

According to her, the EU member states build the pan-European policy with joint efforts, investing their abilities and potential, therefore, many elements present in Germany's foreign policy can be seen in the common European policy. Supporting partner countries is a mandate given to the EU Office. European initiatives are actively implemented in Armenia as well. One of

them, as mentioned by the EU Ambassador, is the big project implemented in Syunik region, through which the necessary investments are provided.

Merle Spellerberg, a Bundestag member, in turn noted that the changes taking place in Germany's foreign policy are turning points and are related to geopolitical processes and the use of energy reserves. Germany's foreign policy today is also focused on environmental problems caused by global climate changes, which are related to all regions of the planet. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of large-scale developments, traditional issues related to civil society, democracy and comprehensive security are still at the core of Germany's policy.

Addressing the Armenian-German relations, Ara Margaryan, head of the European Department of the Armenian MFA, said in particular that we have always had a stereotypical approach to Germany's foreign policy, but the figures of the new generation are guided by modern standards and a new worldview, which can be applied in internal Armenian conditions, when we are already talking about the guidelines of our policy.

"Recently, we have witnessed new developments, the impulses of which were given by the visits of high-ranking officials. The visits of the Armenian Prime Minister, President and Foreign Minister are worth mentioning, which reflected the deep nature of Armenian-German relations and once again became an opportunity to further expand bilateral relations," said

Margaryan.

According to him, the Armenian side greatly appreciates the personal efforts of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz aimed at the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. In that context, the five-sided meeting with the mediation of the Chancellor, European Council President Charles Michel, French President Emmanuel Macron and the participation of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev within the framework of the European Political Community Summit held in Moldova was quite effective.

According to the representative of the Armenian MFA, Germany is not only one of the key countries of the EU, but also has a great weight in the whole world, therefore it can use its authority and potential to bring us closer to comprehensive peace and stability. Since 2018, Armenia has been carrying out radical reforms and in this process feels Germany's unconditional support and willingness to help Armenia in the future, which will undoubtedly contribute to the future prosperity of the Armenian people.

"Armenia develops not only bilateral relations with Germany, but also considers it as an important partner in terms of promoting Armenia's integration in the EU and playing a significant role in making vital decisions. In the context of the current geopolitical changes, Armenia and Germany can face the emerging challenges with joint actions," concluded Margaryan.

U.S. 'deeply disturbed' by loss of life in Nagorno Karabakh - State Department spox on unprovoked Azeri attack

The United States is 'deeply disturbed' by the loss of life in Nagorno Karabakh, U.S. State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel has said regarding the June 28 unprovoked Azerbaijani attack on Nagorno Karabakh which killed 4 Nagorno Karabakh troops.

Patel said there's been no change in the schedule of the Armenia-Azerbaijan ongoing foreign ministerial talks in Washington D.C.

"We are deeply disturbed by the loss of life in Nagorno-Karabakh, and we offer



our condolences to the families of all of those who were killed. These latest incidents underscore the need to refrain from hostilities and for a durable and dignified peace. The U.S. is committed to assisting the parties in achieving this goal, and

Secretary Blinken is directly engaged in the peace process. Direct dialogue is key to resolving issues and reaching a durable and dignified peace. Yesterday's meetings with the foreign ministers were constructive, and we continue to build on those discussions today and tomorrow as the peace talks continue. So there's no change in the schedule," Patel said, adding that the U.S. will continue to work on this.

The Azerbaijani military bombarded Nagorno Karabakh positions on June 28 with artillery and drone strikes, killing four troops.

Azerbaijan accuses Macron of pro-Armenian bias



Azerbaijan has accused French President Emmanuel Macron of pro-Armenian bias.

“The anti-Azerbaijani statements of French President Emmanuel Macron at a meeting with the Armenian community in Marseille are unacceptable,” Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement on

June 29.

It said “Macron’s biased statements prevent the establishment of peace and tranquility in the region.”

The Foreign Ministry called Macron’s words that he is trying to put pressure on the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev “a figment of his imagination.”

“Attempts to put pressure on the president of Azerbaijan never brought results,” the Ministry said, accusing Macron of being “an instrument in the hands of the Armenian lobby of France.”

French President Emmanuel Macron [met with the influential Armenian circles in Marseille](#) during his visit.

“I am the only one who has a clear position and message on the Karabakh issue,” said the French President, adding that he has put pressure on Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

“Do not doubt my determination regarding Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia as a whole. I will continue to make efforts, even if I am almost the only one in the international family with this agenda. You also know that France sent its military attaché to its embassy in Armenia for the first time, and that means something, right? We have to do everything in our power, as much as possible,” Macron stated.

Armenian Ambassador briefs British MP Shailesh Vara on latest developments around Artsakh

Armenian Ambassador to UK Varuzhan Nersesyan met with Shailesh Vara, member of the UK Parliament (Conservative Party).

The parties discussed the Armenian-British bilateral cooperation agenda. The Ambassador highlighted the significance of the Armenian-British strategic dialogue, announced by Leo Docherty, Minister for Europe, during his visit to Armenia in May.

Ambassador Nersesyan emphasized the importance of parliamentary



diplomacy, noting that this year it is very active as the Armenia-UK friendship group and the delegation led by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia visited

the UK.

The Ambassador briefed the interlocutor about the latest developments unfolding around Nagorno-Karabakh and the settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, Azerbaijan’s aggressive policy, the consequences of the illegal closure of the Lachin Corridor, the occupation of the sovereign territory of Armenia, Turkey’s support to Azerbaijan, and the issue of Armenian PoWs.

Ambassador Nersesyan presented the current stage of Armenia’s democratic reforms.

Pashinyan lauds economic activity



Armenia continues to be positioned in a dimension of high economic activity, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the June 29 Cabinet meeting.

“I am pleased to note that Armenia

continues to be positioned in the dimension of high economic activity. The 2023 May economic indicators have been published. And I have to note that we recorded 13,7% economic activity compared to May of last year. Industry grew 5,3%, construction grew 18,4%, trade grew 28,6% and services grew 12,3%,” he said, adding that the economic activity index of last year’s May was also high, at 10,8%.

The total deposit portfolio in Armenian banks amounted to 5 trillion 147 billion 288 million drams in May 2023, Nikol Pashinyan said, describing the figure as a historic record.

“The total deposit portfolio in the banks of the Republic of Armenia amounted to five trillion one hundred forty seven billion two hundred and eighty eight million drams in May of 2023, which is a record number in the history of Armenia. The previous record was set in April, and it is improving. We’ve had a growth of 12 billion 841 million drams compared to last month. These are the deposit accounts where citizens keep their money. I have to note that compared to May 2018 the deposit portfolio has nearly doubled and is higher by 2,5 trillion drams or 96,7%,” Pashinyan said.

Economic stability encouraged investments in Armenian bonds – economist

In contrast to the existing accumulating risks in the world, the favorable economic developments and the formation of a sustainable economic environment in Armenia contribute to these risks being assessed very low for the country, economist Hayk Bejanyan told ARMENPRESS.

The said that the economic development, financial flows and the inflation environment has led to a very high level of profitability of Armenian bonds. Finance Minister Vahe Hovhannisyanyan earlier said that foreign investment funds are

interested in Armenian government bonds.

In April 2023 the volume of Armenian bonds held by foreign investors reached 146 million dollars, compared to the 20 million dollars of 2021 July-August. The share of non-residents in AMD government bonds buyers grew from 0,9% to 3,5%.

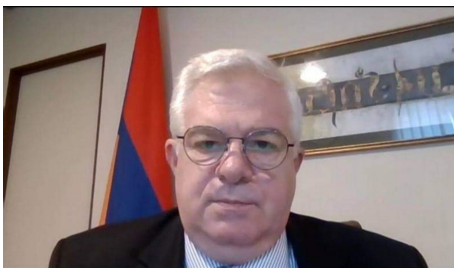
Investors always look into the risk and reward while making transactions, according to Bejanyan. These two factors led investors access the Armenian financial market, especially for long-term maturity

bonds, because these types of bonds allow avoiding currency risks and minimizing losses. That’s why bonds in drams have become so attractive for investors.

Nevertheless, this interest is still in small volumes.

“The main precondition for continuous development of financial flows is stability. Right now we have a situation which is beneficial for foreign investors, and these flows will continue as long as the favorable conditions will be in place,” the expert said.

Armenia’s economic attractiveness presented to Japanese businessmen



Armenia’s economic attractiveness and favorable investment environment were presented to Japanese businessmen at the first-ever Armenian-Japanese business forum held on June 30.

During the online forum, Armenia’s Ambassador to Japan Areg Hovhannisian thanked the organizer of the event – “Rotobo” – for their efforts.

The Ambassador expressed hope that the forum would become a cornerstone for the development and expansion of Armenian-Japanese trade and economic relations and contribute to raising the recognition of Armenia in Japan.

First Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry of Armenia Gevorg Mantashyan,

Deputy Minister of Economy Arman Khojoyan, Senior Manager of Investment Promotion and External Relations of the “Investment Support Center” Sergey Javadyan presented the favorable fields for investment and opportunities of doing business in Armenia.

About 90 Japanese companies and joint ventures participated in the meeting.

The participants of the forum were also welcomed by the Ambassador of Japan to Armenia M. Fukushima.

Tiffany's, Hermes, Cartier and Patek Philippe chose diamonds cut in Armenia as industry booms

The diamond industry is booming in Armenia, with several companies engaged in negotiations on opening production plants in the country. An Indian diamond producer recently opened a plant in Armenia.

Precious and semi-precious stones, precious metals and related products were the most exported goods in the past few months in Armenia (508 million 61,2 thousand USD – a 3,9% growth compared to the previous year's same period).

Ministry of Economy Head of the Strategic Sector Division Arevik Margaryan said the growth in exports is mostly associated with diamonds and jewelry products. The growth is related with both the geopolitical situation and the activities of the diamond producers in Armenia.

"The Indian VDA Diamonds company registered in Armenia in July 2022, and they began production in July this year in Abovyan," she said, adding that the company has invested 10 million dollars in the Armenian city.

7-8 companies are actively engaged in diamond production in the country.

ADM Diamonds, an Armenian producer, is working with innovative technologies and is considered a regional leader in making fancy-cut diamonds.



Diamonds are mostly exported to CIS and EEU countries, with some volumes also to other countries. In 2022 Armenia exported over 34,8 billion drams of diamonds to EEU countries compared to the 2021 figure of 17,3 billion. Exports to other countries amounted to 727 million drams, which is close to the 2021 number.

The economy ministry official says that Armenia's high-quality professionals ensure high-quality product. "Tiffany & Co., Cartier, Patek Philippe, Hermes and other brands are buying diamonds cut in Armenia. For example, the Armenian Arevak and Shoghakn companies are the official suppliers of diamonds to Tiffany & Co and other leading brands. They ensure quality," Margaryan said.

New investments will be made in the

sector soon, according to the official. Other Indian companies are now conducting negotiations on opening plants.

"They take into account our professional potential. For example, one of the companies has plants also in Russia and they noticed that there are highly qualified Armenians among the workers. So they decided that Armenia would be more convenient for opening a new plant. Our economic situation is also beneficial for

them, as well as the government's support programs such as the infrastructure-for-investments, the economic modernization project and the customs duty exemption for imports of equipment, which await new investments," Margaryan said. In addition, jewelry and diamond production is officially a strategic direction in the government's list of primary areas of industrial development.

Most of the gold jewelry is exported to Russia, Kazakhstan, other CIS countries, as well as the U.S., the UAE, Turkey, Belgium and other countries.

In 2022, Armenia exported 2,1 billion dram worth of gold jewelry to EEU countries. Exports to other countries stood at 1,5 billion drams.

Anna Grigoryan

UK FCDO Director General of Economics, Science and Technology visits Armenia

Mr. Kumar Iyer, Director General, Economics, Science and Technology at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, will visit Armenia on 29-30 June to discuss with Armenian authorities issues of common interest.

During his visit, Mr. Iyer will meet with Armenian Government officials and representatives of financial entities. The discussions will focus on Armenia's upholding of



international sanctions and how the UK

can support in this regard.

Furthermore, Mr. Iyer will have the opportunity to witness Armenia's flourishing tech scene as he visits educational and business centres. He will also pay a visit to Tsitsernakaberd Memorial in Yerevan.

The visit of Mr. Kumar Iyer underscores the commitment to deepening bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and Armenia.

EU condemns Azerbaijani ambassador's 'totally unacceptable' threat regarding Armenia trip - OC Media

The EU has condemned an apparent threat to members of the European parliament by Azerbaijan's ambassador to the EU, Vagif Sadigov.

Sadigov, who also serves as the country's ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, tweeted on 23 June in response to a visit by a delegation of MEPs to Armenia which travelled close to the border with Azerbaijan.

An EU spokesperson told [OC Media](#) that they were aware of the tweet.

'We condemn such behaviour which is totally unacceptable for an Ambassador accredited to the EU', the spokesperson said.

Sadigov tweeted an image and description of an Azerbaijani-produced sniper rifle with the following caption:

'They know what they are doing to protect themselves. The Istiglal IST-14.5 anti-materiel sniper rifle produced in Azerbaijan has the effective firing range of about 3,000 m. Guys, keep clear of Azerbaijani state border...'



Nathalie Loiseau, an MEP who chairs the European Parliament's Security and Defence Subcommittee and who led the delegation to Armenia, reacted angrily to Sadigov's tweet on Monday.

'Is this a threat towards Members of the European Parliament? Does it really come from an [Azerbaijani] «diplomat»? To what level has Azerbaijan's diplomacy fallen?', she tweeted.

'Disrespecting an ICJ decision and taking 120 000 human beings hostage, there is nothing to be proud of. Is it what makes you lose your nerves? We, Europeans with strong values, aren't impressed. We will

continue to support peace and respect for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.'

Arif Shahmarli, who served as Azerbaijan's ambassador to the EU from 2000–2007, and to the Council of Europe from 2006–2012, also condemned Sadigov's actions.

'It is ridiculous and unacceptable for an educated and experienced diplomat like Vagif Sadigov to write such a tweet, it is a pity', Shahmarli told OC Media.

'Personally, I regret this kind of behaviour, because these kinds of steps will not bring good things to Azerbaijan. On the contrary, it is an action that will be used against Azerbaijan at a time when peace negotiations are ongoing.'

'The fact that he uses the Azerbaijani-made İSTİGLAL sniper rifle in his rhetoric on Twitter is similar to President Aliyev's rhetoric, in my opinion', Shahmarli said. 'Maybe this was an ordered post.'

'It seems that Azerbaijani diplomats have already switched to harsh rhetoric', he added.

U.S. Sanctions Official Visits Armenia

(RFE/RL) - A senior U.S. official met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on June 29 for talks that were expected to focus on Armenia's compliance with Western sanctions imposed on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

The U.S. Embassy in Armenia said earlier in the day that James O'Brien, the sanctions coordinator at the State Department, has arrived in Yerevan to discuss with Pashinyan and other Armenian officials "cooperation on U.S. sanctions" and "express appreciation for Armenia's continued commitment to upholding U.S. sanctions."

An Armenian government statement on Pashinyan's talks with O'Brien did not mention the issue. It said the two men spoke about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkish-Armenian relations and "various issues of mutual interest."

O'Brien arrived in the Armenian capital from Tbilisi where he held similar talks with Georgian leaders earlier this week.



U.S. officials pressed the Armenian government to prevent Russia from evading the sanctions through Armenian companies during a series of meetings held this spring. Pashinyan said on May 22 that despite its "strategic" relations with Russia Armenia "cannot afford to be placed under Western sanctions."

A few days later, Pashinyan's government announced that Armenian exporters will now need government permission to deliver microchips, transformers, video cameras, antennas and other electronic equipment to Russia. The Armenian Ministry of Economy, which proposed the measure, cited the need to prevent

the use of such items by foreign defense industries.

The Armenian Central Bank essentially confirmed on June 7 reports that local commercial banks have frequently blocked payments for such supplies wired by Russian buyers in the past few weeks.

According to government data, Armenia's exports to Russia almost tripled in 2022 and nearly quadrupled in January-April 2023. Goods manufactured in third countries and re-exported by Armenian firms are believed to have accounted for most of that gain. They include consumer electronics and other hi-tech goods and components which the Western powers believe could be used by the Russian defense industry.

The increased trade with and other cash flows from Russia are the main reason why the Armenian economy grew by 12 percent in 2022.

Armenian Lawyers on Strike over “Police Violence”



(RFE/RL) - Dozens of court hearings in Armenia were cancelled on June 26 as lawyers went on strike to show support for their colleagues allegedly beaten up by police officers.

One of the lawyers, Karen Alaverdyan, claims to have been subjected to “undue physical force” after trying to stop several policemen kicking and punching his client at the police headquarters of Yerevan’s central Kentron district earlier this month.

Armenia’s Investigative Committee effectively denied the allegations on June 13, saying that Alaverdian himself shoved and even hit the officers in a bid to free the criminal suspect. They had to briefly detain the lawyer, the law-enforcement agency said, adding that he was rightly

charged with “hooliganism” and obstruction of legitimate police actions.

Armenia’s Chamber of Advocates voiced support for Alaverdyan and demanded a proper investigation into the incident. The national bar association organized the one-day strike to protest against what it sees as an official cover-up of the incident. Dozens of its members marched to the Kentron police headquarters to demand the sacking of its chief officer.

“We believe that if the police service does not react strongly to this case it will implicitly take full responsibility for this situation,” said one of the protesters.

Two other lawyers claimed to have been ill-treated at another Yerevan police station in February while representing a teenage criminal suspect. Their allegations were likewise denied by the police and the Investigative Committee.

The chairman of the Chamber of Advocates, Simon Babayan, decried the fact that the police have not even suspended or taken other disciplinary action against any officers accused of assaulting the lawyers. He said prosecutors and investigators

dealing with those incidents must also face disciplinary proceedings.

The Office of the Prosecutor-General announced, meanwhile, that it has assigned the probe of Alaverdyan’s alleged beating to the National Security Service. Alaverdyan welcomed that decision, saying he hopes that the incident will now be investigated in earnest.

“This problem is not so much about me or my client as about addressing the causes of all this and reviewing state mechanisms for countering torture,” the lawyer told journalists.

Human rights activists say that ill-treatment of criminal suspects remains widespread in Armenia despite sweeping law-enforcement reforms promised by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government.

As recently as on June 22, a man in Yerevan claimed that the Investigative Committee chief, Argishti Kyaramyan, personally tortured and threatened to kill him following his arrest on June 17. A spokesman for Kyaramyan denied the allegations.

Theoretically, war could have been avoided, but refusal from Armenian vision of settlement of the Artsakh issue was a mandatory condition – PM

Theoretically, there was a chance to stop the conveyor of the 2020 war, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said as he testified at the National Assembly’s ad hoc commission investigating the circumstances of the 2020 war.

However, he said, a mandatory condition for avoiding the war was the refusal from the Armenian vision of settlement of the Karabakh issue.

“At that moment, we could say we were abandoning the vision of seeing Nagorno-Karabakh out of Azerbaijan and going that way, which, of course, does not guarantee that the war could have been



avoided,” PM Pashinyan said.

He also referred to the “crossroads of the war.” “One of the crossroads was related to clarification related to the Lachin corridor, which were not done either in Kazan or during later negotiations. Some discussion should have taken place there,”

PM Pashinyan said.

“The next crossroads of war was the process of the involvement of the so-called Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno Karabakh, the next was the possible process of delimitation and demarcation as part of a peace treaty. I mean I am not saying that there was no theoretical chance of avoiding war, but that theoretical chance required a mandatory condition of abandoning the Armenian vision of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution which could have created a theoretical possibility of avoiding such developments,” Pashinyan said.

Armenia, EU agree to strengthen cooperation



On 27-28 June 2023, the 4th Meeting of the Armenia-EU Partnership Committee established under the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Extended Partnership Agreement (CEPA) took place in Brussels. The delegation of the Republic of Armenia headed by Mr. Paruyr Hovhannisyan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia, participated in the meeting. As a result of the discussions, the following Joint Press Statement was adopted:

“On 27-28 June 2023, the Armenia-EU Partnership Committee, established under the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), met for the fourth time in Brussels. This meeting gave the opportunity to the EU and Armenia to discuss the implementation of the CEPA and touch upon other areas of bilateral cooperation.

Armenia and the EU agreed to strengthen their cooperation, emphasizing the EU’s active engagement in the South Caucasus, and to pursue their efforts for the implementation of the CEPA, recognising the progress made so far. The EU welcomed Armenia’s continued commitment to reforms in line with common values, in spite of the difficult security context of the region. The EU stands ready

to continue assisting Armenia on the path of the CEPA implementation and in addressing socio-economic challenges, including through the substantial Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) as well as its flagship initiatives.

The Partnership Committee reviewed developments related to the rule of law, in the fields of justice sector, law enforcement, fight against corruption, and the respect for human rights. The EU appreciated the progress in these fields. Yet, the EU recalled the importance of continuous improvement of the independence and efficiency of the judiciary and the fight against corruption, in order to increase citizens’ trust in public institutions. The EU emphasized the need to make additional efforts in eliminating discrimination on all grounds and encouraged Armenia to involve civil society in public consultations on legislative proposals.

The Partnership Committee also reviewed the progress on issues related to transport, energy, environment, climate action and disaster risk management. Armenia and the EU will continue their cooperation to enhance safety at the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant. While acknowledging Armenia’s efforts

on renewable energies, energy efficiency and environmental protection, the EU encouraged Armenia to set more ambitious emission reduction targets as part of its Nationally Determined Contribution.

The meeting was also an opportunity to review the cooperation in the field of customs and economic development. The EU underlined the importance of customs cooperation to prevent the circumvention of the EU sanctions on Russia through the territory of Armenia. The discussion also took stock of developments in employment and social policies. As regards education, the EU welcomed the adoption of Armenia’s comprehensive Strategy covering the whole education spectrum, as well as its ratification of the Creative Europe Agreement.

The Partnership Committee also touched upon the possibility of launching a visa liberalization dialogue (VLD). In this regard, the EU noted that while the technical requirements for the VLD launch have been sufficiently met, this also requires a political decision. The EU continues encouraging Armenia to bilaterally engage actively with Member States on this topic.

The partners also discussed the regional dynamics and the state of play of the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process that takes place in the context of increasingly challenging security situation. The Armenian side provided an update on the blockage of the Lachin Corridor. Armenia and the EU shared concerns on the risks of a humanitarian crisis. The EU and Armenia welcomed the establishment of the EU Mission in Armenia.

Finally, the discussions highlighted the constructive engagement of Armenia in the Eastern Partnership.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Luc Devigne, Deputy Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia at the European External Action Service and Mr Paruyr Hovhannisyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.”

Russian-Israeli Blogger's Bold Efforts To Support Armenia and Artsakh

BY HARUT SASSOUNIAN, PUBLISHER,
THE CALIFORNIA COURIER

I just read a very important article in the Armenian Mirror-Spectator in which Aram Arkun interviewed Russian-Israeli blogger Aleksander Lapshin who is currently on a tour of Canada and the United States. He already met with Armenians in Toronto, Canada, on June 3, and New York City on June 11. He also met with the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists to brief them about the dire situation in Artsakh.

Lapshin was born in Russia and moved to Israel when he was 13. His wife is from Moldova and moved to Israel 14 years ago. However, she is still waiting for approval to become a citizen of Israel since 2017.

During his many visits to Armenia, he travelled three times to Artsakh from 2011 to 2016. Azerbaijan's government issued a warrant for his arrest and asked Belarus to send him to Baku for "illegally crossing Azerbaijan's border" from Armenia. Belarus extradited him to Azerbaijan in 2017 where "he was sentenced to three years in prison, but was given a pardon in September and flown to Israel after what he describes as an attempt by four masked men in prison on his life. The Azerbaijani government, however, claimed that he had tried to commit suicide," Arkun reported.

Lapshin said that Israel's Security Agency repeatedly urged him to stop supporting Armenia because "Azerbaijan is our ally." He was also advised to withdraw his complaints against Azerbaijan from the European Court of Human Rights and United Nations. Lapshin replied: "No, no way. I will go to the end and I will win."

On May 21, 2021, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in Lapshin's favor in his lawsuit against Azerbaijan for attempted murder, torture and illegal imprisonment. However, Azerbaijan has

refused to pay him the compensation of 30,000 euros. "Meanwhile, the United Nations Human Rights Committee adopted a resolution on July 19, 2022 condemning the Belarusian authorities for illegally arresting Lapshin and extraditing him to Azerbaijan," The Mirror wrote.

Lapshin told the Mirror that because of his criticisms, he cannot visit Russia and the former Soviet countries, 'except Armenia,' but added, "I just said except Armenia, but who knows? Armenia is under huge Russian influence."

"Lapshin continues to pursue his own case against Azerbaijan's violations of human rights but is committed also to helping Armenia. He understood, he said, that 'it would be better for me, my family and for our safety, to just leave it aside and continue our old life.' However, he continued, 'I just cannot abandon what I do in favor of Armenia and Artsakh because I have many friends in Armenia. Some of them were killed during the second Karabakh war. I actually love this country, so I feel in Armenia like my second home,'" Arkun reported. "Lapshin added, 'Look, six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. A lot of Armenians actually supported Jews and saved their lives. So, I feel the same.'"

Lapshin told the Mirror: "Of course I do not receive any support from the government of Armenia.' Furthermore, the fact that Armenia, facing an existential threat, is trying to sign a peace agreement with both Azerbaijan and Turkey, seems to create complicated motivations. 'Even some of the politicians in Armenia tried to convince me to leave it aside, for some political reasons. What I do against Azerbaijan, somehow, in some ways, is against the national interests of the current Armenian government...So I feel a bit alone in this fighting, but this time, fortunately, I have a lot of friends, both Armenian friends, and American and European friends, who actually support me.'"

"While in Armenia, Lapshin met several former prisoners of war who had been raped in [the Baku] jail and tried to convince them to go with him to the US and Europe to testify about this, but, Lapshin said, they felt uncomfortable about talking about such experiences openly due to Armenian social norms or culture," Arkun reported. The former Armenian prisoners of war told Lapshin: "there were strict warnings from Armenian intelligence services for them not to communicate with journalists or human rights activists. One can speculate that if true, this is due to the precarious current situation of Armenia, which is doing anything in its power to avoid a new war of aggression by Azerbaijan."

Lapshin told the Mirror that members of the U.S. Jewish community do not support his human rights activities for Armenia. They told him: "Why do you need to deal with Azerbaijan, because Azerbaijan is actually the ally of Israel. Okay, you had a bad experience with Azerbaijan, but still, you have to think globally. This is realpolitik. What you do against Azerbaijan is against the national interest of Israel."

Lapshin regretted that the American "Armenian community is so divided and weak." "There is mistrust of the Armenian government and each other, he said, and this situation made him feel emotionally depressed," Arkun reported.

"If someone wants to invite me for meetings with human rights activists or politicians even on the state level I will be more than happy [to oblige]," Lapshin told Arkun. After Toronto and New York, he is going to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Las Vegas, Seattle, Portland, Dallas, Miami, and probably Chicago, as well as Vancouver, Canada. Later this year, he plans to visit Armenia again. However, he added, due to the unstable political situation, "I can never know if I am going to be allowed to enter Armenia."

Exhibition dedicated to 105th anniversary of the first Republic of Armenia inaugurated at UN Office in Geneva

On June 26, the Permanent Mission of Armenia inaugurated an exhibition dedicated to the 105th anniversary of the first Republic of Armenia. The exhibition was organized in the United Nations Office in Geneva within the framework of the session of the Human Rights Council. The exhibition was entitled “Women in State Building”.

The stands presented the role played by Armenian women in the social, political, religious, cultural and educational spheres during the first Republic of Armenia and in various other historical periods.

The Permanent Representative of Armenia, Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyan, Director General of the UN Office in Geneva Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director of the UN Library and Archives Mr. Francesco Pisano delivered remarks at the opening ceremony. The speakers referred to the importance of empowering the women and ensuring equality of rights worldwide, presented episodes about the significant contribution of Armenian women in state building.



Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyan introduced prominent Armenian women who made an important contribution to the development of the statehood, referred to the medieval Armenian legal texts to this end and dwelled upon the role and

rights of Armenian women during the first republic. He also presented the achievements registered in Armenia in terms of empowerment of women.

Ambassador Hovhannisyan concluded his speech by drawing the attention of the audience to the statue of Mother Armenia depicted on the invitation card of the exhibition. He emphasized that it symbolizes the woman who protects the heart of Armenia, the capital Yerevan. She stands as an unwavering symbol of sovereignty, strength, peace and endurance.

Ambassadors of a number of countries, diplomats, officials of the UN Office in Geneva, representatives of the Armenian community were present at the exhibition. At the conclusion of

the opening ceremony the guests tasted Armenian wines.

The exhibition was created, compiled and displaced last year in New York with the efforts of the Permanent Mission of Armenia at the United Nations headquarters.

Armenian, French Ministers discuss organization of events dedicated to Aznavour's 100th birth anniversary

On a visit to Paris Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Zhanna Andreasyan held a meeting with French Minister of Culture Rima Abdul-Malak.

Reference was made to a number of issues related to cultural heritage, particularly the preservation of the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Urartian exhibition expected to open in the Louvre,



the upcoming exhibitions of the works of Martiros Saryan and Minas Avetisyan in

France, as well as joint film production and opera theater tours.

The organization of events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Charles Aznavour was also touched upon.

The parties discussed a number of issues aimed at intensification of the exchange between the artists of the two countries.

In the fall, Rima Abdul-Malak is expected to visit Armenia.

International community has a responsibility to act and protect the people of Artsakh, Armenia's envoy tells UN

At this time of existential threat to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, the international community, represented by its most collective institution- the United Nations, has a responsibility to act and to protect, Armenia's Permanent Representative to the UN Mher Margaryan said at the UNGA Plenary Debate on "The Responsibility to Protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity."

He reminded that since 12 December 2022, a vital transportation corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia has been essentially disrupted, leaving a population of 120,000 people cut off from the outside world in conditions of a deteriorating humanitarian crisis.

"The ongoing blockade of the Lachin Corridor, in violation of the existing legal obligations, and the order of International Court of Justice continues to endanger the lives of innocent civilians, contrary to the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law, which clearly prohibits the targeting of civilian populations, imposition of collective punishments and the use of starvation as a method of warfare," Ambassador Margaryan said.

"It has been over 6 months now that Armenia appealed to the United Nations to dispatch an interagency mission to assess

the humanitarian, security and human rights situation of the affected population in Nagorno-Karabakh, in line with the humanitarian principles. We have also been consistently requesting that a UNESCO fact-finding mission be deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent areas in order to help preserve the vast and unique cultural heritage of the region," he noted.

"The continued violations of the fundamental human rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and the denial of international humanitarian presence on the ground reveal the intent to inflict maximum harm on the population by creating unbearable conditions for life – a clearly detectable warning sign of a pre-meditated genocidal policy," he stated.

"The international community can no longer look the other way when faced with the clearly detectable warning signs of genocide, when grave and systematic human rights violations are routinely perpetrated. The United Nations, its respective bodies and structures as "duty bearers" have yet to meet their obligations vis-à-vis the "rights holders", the ordinary people, women, children, the elderly, the most vulnerable, who remain entrapped confronted with the genocidal policies of Azerbaijan," the Ambassador added.

He stressed that the international

community has a shared responsibility to prevent and protect populations from atrocity crimes and to ensure that grave violations do not go unchecked.

"Impunity for violations of the international norms and principles has emboldened Azerbaijan to resort to new provocations and military escalation. Their armed forces continue to violate the ceasefire regime, targeting civilians carrying out agricultural works, as well as border communities, in an attempt to terrorize, inflict psychological pressure and deprive the population of the means of subsistence," Mher Margaryan stated.

"Armenia is fully committed to efforts to effectively address and combat impunity, including through the mechanisms of the international criminal jurisdiction. We also support the process elaboration and adoption of a universally accepted treaty on preventing and punishing of crimes against humanity," he said.

"We will continue to work with all international partners and the UN system in order to uphold the principle of the responsibility to protect as a critical framework for preventing atrocities, promoting human rights and upholding peace, security, and justice," the Permanent Representative concluded.

Armenia calls on CoE Committee of Ministers to react to PACE resolution on Nagorno Karabakh

Armenia has called on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to take concrete steps to address the issues raised in the PACE recommendation and react to the human rights crisis in Nagorno Karabakh caused by Azerbaijan.

The Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe Ambassador Arman Khachatryan delivered a speech at the Committee of Ministers meeting, addressing the illegal Azerbaijani blockade of Lachin Corridor, the gross violations of the ceasefire in Nagorno Karabakh and ongoing provocations. He presented the latest attack by Azerbaijan which left four Nagorno Karabakh soldiers dead.

Azerbaijan is attempting to commit ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh

through the blockade, the gas and power supply cutoff, hate speech and threats, the ambassador warned.

Khachatryan presented the Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which warns that the current situation could lead to the population of Nagorno Karabakh leaving their homes, calls for a direct dialogue between Baku and Stepanakert and urges an immediate deployment of a fact-finding mission of the CoE.

A PACE recommendation on Lachin Corridor addressed to the Committee of Ministers is pointing out the humanitarian and human rights crisis facing the Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh resulting

from Azerbaijan's unilateral actions. The Armenian representative called on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to take concrete steps to address the issues raised in the PACE recommendation and react to the premeditated human rights crisis in Nagorno Karabakh caused by Azerbaijan.

An exchange of views took place during the meeting with PACE President Tiny Kox and Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović. The Armenian ambassador stressed the importance of the involvement of PACE and the Human Rights Commissioner in addressing the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh resulting from the blockade of Lachin Corridor.

Arménie, la route de la vie: French intellectuals raise awareness about Artsakh blockade

Renowned French artists raised their voice in support of Armenia and Artsakh at a special evening organized on June 28 at Salle Gaveau in Paris.

The event was titled *Arménie, la route de la vie* (Armenia, Road of Life).

It was organized by the Armenian Embassy in France, the Representation of Artsakh and the Friends of Artsakh Group to raise awareness on the blockade of the Lachin Corridor.

Over twenty French artists read emotional letters written by Armenians of Artsakh and presented their existential challenges and struggle to the audience.

Salle Gaveau, a 1000-seat hall, was fully seated.

Artists participating at the event included Ariane Ascaride, Valérie Karsenti, Gwendolyn Gourvenec, Mélanie Bernier, Camille Claris and others.

Writer Sylvain Tesson, *Le Figaro* Editor-in-Chief Jean-Christophe Buisson, Pascal Bruckner and other scholars and writers also delivered remarks. Filmmaker Robert Guédiguian also delivered a speech.



The scholars expressed solidarity with the Armenian people and called on the international community to take practical steps to eliminate the blockade of the Lachin Corridor and guarantee the right of the Armenians of Artsakh to live with dignity and safely in their homeland.

Armenian Ambassador to France Hasmik Tolmajyan thanked the artists and scholars for their unprecedented unity and solidarity in support of Armenia and Artsakh.

The Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Zhanina Andreasyan, French lawmakers

and government officials were also in attendance.

The Lachin Corridor has been blocked by Azerbaijan since 12 December 2022.

The United Nations' highest court – the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – ordered Azerbaijan on February 22 to “take all steps at its disposal” to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. Azerbaijan has been ignoring the order ever since.

Lachin Corridor is the only road linking Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the rest of the world.

Bordeaux inaugurates Armenian cross-stone



An Armenian cross-stone was inaugurated on June 25 at a public park in central

Bordeaux.

The ceremonial inauguration was

attended by Bordeaux Mayor Pierre Hurmic, the Armenian consul-general to Lyon Narine Nikolian, officials from Nouvelle-Aquitaine, members of the Armenian community of France and the representative of the Diocese of France of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Nikolian thanked the French government for recognizing the Armenian Genocide and supporting Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh), and noted the historic decision by President Macron on [pantheonizing](#) Missak Manouchian.

The cross-stone is dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide, the martyrs of Nagorno Karabakh and the Armenians who died for France.

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