

EU Leader Calls Azerbaijani Checkpoint at Lachin Corridor Counterproductive



The European Union's foreign affairs chief, Josep Borrell, said Azerbaijan's checkpoint installed at the Lachin Corridor runs counter to efforts to build trust between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan's unilateral decision to install this checkpoint completely contradicts efforts to build trust between the parties," said Borrell, who was asked on June 12 by a European Parliament Member Francois Xavier Bellamy about the EU inability to condemn Baku for its action.

"The Court of Justice has condemned the blockade by Azerbaijan, but this state terrorism has not led to any sanctions by the Council, and the Commission seems unable to properly condemn this very serious violation of the fundamental rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh," Bellamy said during a discussion in the European Parliament entitled "Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Lachin Corridor."

"There are territories, border areas with Armenia, from

where it can be seen what is happening in the Lachin Corridor, but the corridor itself is outside the jurisdiction of the mission and their area of responsibility. Now we are trying to find a solution for this specific problem," Borrell said.

According to Borrell, the current situation in the Lachin Corridor certainly raises the concern of the international community, but the EU does not have access to the checkpoint located in the corridor, therefore it is deprived of the opportunity to carry out a full observation.

"The EU is interested in the establishment of peace in the South Caucasus, and for this purpose it implements initiatives of a humanitarian nature, as well as contributes directly to the negotiations aimed at peace. We are also involved in finding missing persons during the conflict and keeping the conflicting parties away from new clashes," Borrell said.

In response to Bellamy's question, Borrell • page 3 said that efforts are underway to resolve the

Azerbaijan preparing new ground for ethnic cleansing in Artsakh – Armenia MFA Washington "deeply concerned" that 2 workers of U.S.-affiliated company in Armenia were wounded from Azeri gunfire

Disagreements with Azerbaijan over unblocking are technical issues, says Speaker of Parliament Turkey's Erdogan reveals plans to open consulate in Shushi

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Azerbaijan preparing new ground for ethnic cleansing in Artsakh -**Armenia MFA**

Armenia has serious concerns that the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan, despite all its own obligations, is preparing the ground for fresh aggression and ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

For a long time, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan has been spreading daily fake news about ceasefire violations by the Defense Army of Nagorno-Karabakh in the

zone of responsibility of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Ministry said.

It noted that the information materials released by the Russian peacekeepers, indicate ceasefire violations only by Azerbaijan.

"Taking into account the well-established experience of Azerbaijan to ensure "informational support" before carrying out new acts of use of force and to artificially ascribe responsibility for future actions to the other party from the outset, the Republic of Armenia has serious concerns that the military-political leadership



of Azerbaijan, despite all its own obligations, is preparing the ground for fresh aggression and ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh," the Foreign Ministry

The Ministry calls on the peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation to strictly follow the observance of the ceasefire regime and investigate all the incidents voiced by Azerbaijan, publicly presenting the entire situation on the ground.

"At the same time, the Republic of Armenia reiterates its position on the necessity to send an international fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh, which

also can provide reliable and unbiased information both about the situation in the line of contact between the sides and about the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, the latter resulting from Azerbaijan's disruption of the functioning of the Lachin corridor through setting up an illegal checkpoint in violation of the regime established under

November 9, 2020 Statement, blocking natural gas and electricity supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh as well as targeting by the Azerbaijani servicemen of citizens carrying out agricultural works and their machinery," the statement reads.

"The Republic of Armenia is convinced that addressing the issues of rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh within the framework of an international mechanism through the Baku-Stepanakert dialogue is urgent and should not be delayed, and calls on the international community to support this process," the Ministry concluded.

Armenian Defense Minister, Iran Ambassador discuss regional security issues



Armenian Minister of Defense Suren Papikyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Iran to Armenia, Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri, who is completing his diplomatic mission in Armenia.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the progress and prospects of Armenian-Iranian cooperation, exchanged views on regional security issues.

At the end of the meeting, Minister Papikyan thanked Ambassador Zohouri for strengthening Armenian-Iranian relations and increasing the effectiveness of cooperation during his tenure in Armenia, wishing him success in his future work.

Lawmaker rules out extraterritorial corridor through Armenia

Armenia will never negotiate around providing a corridor to Azerbaijan through its territory, a lawmaker said on June 14.

Sargis Khandanyan, the Chair of the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee, told reporters that the topic on the "Zangezur corridor" wording is closed

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for Armenia.

"The topic of the made up "Zangezur corridor" wording is closed for the Republic of Armenia. This is obvious, as well as acceptable and understandable also for the parties who are mediating in the negotiations," he said, ruling out a corridor through Armenia's territory. He said Armenia will never negotiate around such issue.

Khandanyan added that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's statements cause concern because they aren't conducive to the negotiations process.





Disagreements with Azerbaijan over unblocking are technical issues, says Speaker of Parliament

The contradictions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over unblocking are technical, Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan has said.

"There is a common understanding over this issue, but there are technical disagreements. The main red line in Azerbaijan's position is that they argue that their citizens, while traveling from Baku to Nakhijevan, are not moving from Azerbaijan to a third country and in their perception this implies a facilitated option. Our stance is that we are in favor of unblocking of all roads, and if we talk about peace we shouldn't put forward strong preconditions and cause tension, or create a war situation, because in such situation that road would be meaningless. It would be good if the Azerbaijani side understood this all," Simonyan told reporters.

Simonyan also commented on clause 9 of the 9 November 2020 trilateral statement which says that Russian border guards shall exercise control over transport connection from Azerbaijan to Nakhijevan. He said that Armenia has its sovereign territory where laws of Armenia are enforced.

"If at some point Armenia were to consider outsourcing any of its functions to the bodies of another country, then that

would be its own internal issue, but at this moment there is no decision or discussion on that issue," Simonyan said.

He added that Armenia displayed its will and emphasized that it will not grant any extraterritorial corridor through its territory.

"It seems that this has been understood, that no such thing was planned or talked about. Although some tried to manipulate and claim that Prime Minister Pashinyan had promised something. It is obvious that there is no such thing, because even the President of Russia spoke about this, and it's clear that this wording is no longer present in the Azerbaijani rhetoric," the Speaker said.

The Speaker of Parliament also denied the Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev's claim that Russia will control the roads to Nakhijevan in Armenian territory. Simonyan said there is no such decision and that the negotiations are ongoing as the parties try to bring their positions closer.

"If Azerbaijan wants the Russian side to control the entry, then Armenia could also want some representation of a third country to control the entry to Azerbaijan, because border unblocking is a mutual process. If the Azerbaijanis should travel



to Nakhijevan through Armenian territory, it means that the citizens of Armenia shall also be able to travel to Russia or any other country through Azerbaijani territory. The conditions must be the same, and our position over this issue is unequivocal," Simonyan said.

Speaker Simonyan ruled out anything being imposed upon Armenia because Armenia's authorities are legitimately elected. "If the authorities of Armenia were not elected authorities, then perhaps there could be coercion. Armenia is having big successes in its democracy levels, and from now on the world is viewing this all as an attack on democracy. Yes, we have our mistakes, and not everything is perfect, but the progress is obvious, the government's will to resolve and correct the existing problems is obvious. This all can't go without a response," he said.

Page 3 conflict and the parties have also expressed readiness to continue negotiations.

Borrell emphasized that a very important meeting between the French President, the German Chancellor, the President of the European Council and leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan took place in Moldova recently.

The meeting mentioned by Borrell did not result in a condemnation by EU leaders of Azerbaijan for its illegal breach of agreements and threats to the lives of Armenians in Artsakh.

Yet the EU's foreign policy chief invoked statements made following recent meetings between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan as signs of progress.

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Borrell referred to announcement by Pashinyan and Aliyev to recognize each other's territorial integrity, as well as Pashinyan's later remarks where he said that Armenia has accepted Artsakh as a constituent part of Azerbaijan as a signal to Azerbaijan to pay more attention to the rights and security issues of the people of Karabakh.

"We hope that the message of the Armenian side will be an incentive, pushing the negotiation process to a positive direction," Borrell said.

The EU's top diplomat also said that the EU mission in Armenia is part of the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but it cannot completely replace the process. The only solution, he said, is within the diplomatic sphere.

"The conflicting parties have expressed

their desire to continue the negotiations, and the next meeting will be held in Brussels, from which the EU has high expectations," Borrell said.

He noted that the socio-economic situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is quite serious, which is why the EU has implemented various initiatives in the last two years to provide humanitarian support to the local residents, explaining that 70 million euros have already been allocated for this purpose.

Borrell said that the humanitarian support was aimed at solving health problems, including providing medical equipment and providing social support to people affected by the conflict. Borrell emphasized that there is still a lot to be done in that area.

Washington "deeply concerned" that 2 workers of U.S.-affiliated company in Armenia were wounded from Azeri gunfire



The United States has reacted to the June 14 Azerbaijani cross-border shooting targeting a steel plant construction site in

the Armenian village of Yeraskh.

In a twitter post, United States Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said Washington was "deeply concerned" that two civilian workers of the U.S.-affiliated company sustained injuries from "gunfire from the direction of Azerbaijan."

"We are deeply concerned that two civilian employees of a U.S.-affiliated company in Armenia sustained injuries from gunfire from the direction of Azerbaijan. We reiterate our call for restraint along the borders as the parties work toward a

durable and balanced peace," Miller said.

The steelworks construction site targeted by the Azeri forces is a \$70 million Armenian-American project in Yeraskh. The steelworks, often referred to as a "metallurgical plant", is expected to produce 180,000 tons output annually after being launched.

On June 14, two workers at the construction site of the plant were shot and wounded by Azerbaijani forces. The victims are nationals of India. Both were successfully operated on and are in moderate condition.

Steel manufacturer determined to continue construction of plant in Yeraskh despite Azeri shootings

The construction of the smelter plant in Yeraskh is temporarily halted but will resume after clarifying several technical issues with authorized bodies, GTB Steel CEO Tiran Hakobyan told reporters.

GTB Steel is building the steelworks in Yeraskh which came under Azerbaijani gunfire on June 14. Two construction workers were wounded in the shooting.

"Of course we are worried about the incident, but there's no panic. We are in the sovereign territory of Armenia, we are resolute in our activities, we will not stop and we will continue to work," Hakobyan said.

The fact that equipment and workers are targeted means that Azerbaijan seeks to disrupt the construction of the plant, he added.

"The reason is clear; they don't want Armenia to become economically stronger, while our factory will have a rather large



investment in the Armenian economy. After completing construction the plant will produce approximately 200-250 thousand tons of rebar annually from black steel, and Armenia will be the main consumer. We view Middle Eastern countries as a market as well," Hakobyan said.

GTB Steel is co-owned by American companies, with only one of the beneficiaries being Armenian – Grigor Ter Ghazaryan. Building the plant in Yeraskh was Ghazaryan's idea.

"We had offers to build the plant in various parts of Armenia. We came to Yeraskh at the desire of Grigor Ter Ghazaryan, one of our co-owners, because it's very important for the border zone to develop. Everyone knows that we have tax privileges, we are exempt from VAT, but we've refused this privilege and we are paying VAT," he said.

200 workers are employed at the construction site. 70 of them are citizens of India

Indian embassy staffers have visited the two Indian workers at a hospital who were wounded in the June 14 Azeri shooting.

"Since the plant is a technological one, we use the skills of our Indian partners in some issues. We were working normally before these shootings began," he said, adding that none of the workers want to quit.

Armenian, Azerbaijani FMs to meet in Washington in near future, PM says

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan are expected to meet in Washington in the near future, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at a government sitting on June 16.

"I hope that certain progress recorded during the previous meeting in Washington will develop," he said.

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PM Pashinyan emphasized that especially after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to recognize each other's territorial integrity, attempts to create tensions in different sections along the border are unacceptable and incomprehensible.

"Now it is necessary to take the next

step – to fix the basis of demarcation and start the actual demarcation and demarcation works," he said.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said earlier the talks in Washington were postponed at the request of the Azerbaijani side.





Azerbaijan has launched ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh with total blockade, warns Armenian Prime Minister

Azerbaijan's actions once again confirm Armenia's concerns that Azerbaijan is carrying out a policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on June 16.

"The installation of an illegal checkpoint in the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, the disruption of power and gas supply to Nagorno Karabakh, which is ongoing for six months, have extremely escalated the humanitarian situation in Nagorno Karabakh, and if Azerbaijan was ensuring some passage through Lachin Corridor last month for its propaganda purposes, through the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers, starting yesterday this passage was also shut down and even the supplies of essential food products to Nagorno Karabakh have been suspended.



That is, Nagorno Karabakh has no food supply from the outside world. The passage of citizens requiring urgent medical treatment is also banned. These actions once again confirm our fears that Azerbaijan is carrying out a policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh. However in this case this is no longer a fear but already the launch of actions. What is this if not ethnic cleansing? The food,

gas, electricity supplies to the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh are cut off, farmers carrying out agricultural work are targeted with automatic gunfire, the possibility of movement is blocked even for critically-ill patients," Pashinyan said.

The Armenian Prime Minister said that Armenia should increase international awareness not only among governments and organizations, but also societies.

Pashinyan reiterated that dialogue between Baku and Stepanakert within the framework of international mechanisms is extremely important for ensuring the rights and security of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh. "We must hope that concrete steps will be taken in this direction," Pashinyan said.

US House Human Rights Commission to hold hearing on safeguarding the people of Artsakh



The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the US House of Representatives will hold a hearing on safeguarding the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

A blockade of the Lachin corridor to Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan has entered its 7th month, and on April 23 Azerbaijan opened a military checkpoint on the corridor that is inconsistent with the provisions of the 2020 ceasefire agreement that ended the last war.

A number of international efforts are underway to mitigate the risk of a new full-blown war, including by officials at the US State Department. One major issue is what is required to adequately

protect the rights and safety of ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, where Azerbaijan seeks to assert control.

This hearing will examine the measures required to adequately safeguard, during this period of blockade and negotiation, the vulnerable population, and offer recommendations for US policy.

The hearing will take place on June 21 and will be hosted by Members of Congress Christopher H. Smith and James P. McGovern.

Turkey's Erdogan reveals plans to open consulate in Shushi

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on June 12 his country is ready to open a consulate in Shushi.

Erdogan made the comment during a visit to Azerbaijan at the start of his third term in office following presidential elections last month.

"We are ready to open our consulate whenever you wish," Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency quoted Erdogan as telling

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Azerbaijani President Ilham Alivev and other officials at the start of bilateral talks.

He said opening of the consulate would be a message to "the world and especially to Armenia."

Shushi was captured by Azerbaijani forces as a result of the 44-day war of 2020. Turkey actively supported Azerbaijan in the war.







Inflation to continue slowdown, says researcher

(Armenpress) - Inflation is slowing as the year-on-year inflation (May 2023 compared to May 2022) comprised 1,3% in the consumer market, while a 1,8% decrease was recorded compared to April. The inflation rate is expected to continue slowing down in the next months, according to Hayk Bejanyan, an expert at the Amberd Research Center.

Food and non-alcoholic drink prices decreased 2,1% in May of this year compared to May of 2022. Food prices alone dropped 2,3%.

But liquor and tobacco prices grew 7,8%, while clothing and footwear prices grew 6,2%.

Flour and other cereal prices dropped 12%. Egg prices grew 18,9%. The price

of butter and sugar dropped 2,9% and 6,6% respectively, while the meat price grew 5,8%. The price of vegetable oil grew 3,3%.

Bejanyan believes that the inflation rate will continue to slow down in the next months.

"Last year we had a rather high inflation indicator. And as a result of this year's relatively stable international, stable economic developments, this year's inflation pace is expected to be lower on the high base of last year. This forecast is substantiated when we see the trend of decrease, which is regularly dropping monthly, and not displaying an independent behavior. We will continue to witness this process during the year,' Bejanyan said.

The currency exchange rate also plays an important role in the formation of inflation.

Furthermore, the expert doesn't predict a decrease in the consumer demand; on the contrary, it was preserved and has gotten more active due to more inbound tourists. The preserved demand was also one of the reasons behind the stabilization of the inflation environment.

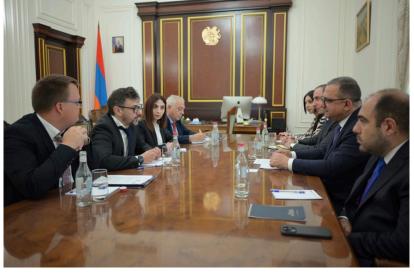
"The inflation rate will continue to slow down in the next months, and the average inflation indicator at yearend will be close to the target level, in my opinion," the expert added.

The inflation in April was 3,2% and in March 5,4% compared to the same period of 2022.

Armenia, Siemens Energy keen to develop cooperation

Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan had a working meeting with Maxim Zubov, Sub-Region Vice President for Turkey and Central Asia at Siemens Energy.

Armen Berberyan, representative of the Armenian branch of the company, as well as the Minister of High-tech Industry Robert Khachatryan and Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Hakob Vardanyan were present at the meeting.



Deputy Prime Minister Khachatryan emphasized the intensification of activities of the prestigious company like Siemens in Armenia.

The interlocutors discussed the promising projects implemented by the company in Armenia, especially in the field of high technologies and energy infrastructure. At the end of the meeting, the parties confirmed their willingness to continue to develop cooperation.

Government to provide 35 billion drams in agriculture subsidy in 2023 – economy minister

The Government of Armenia plans to carry out 35 billion drams in subsidy in the agricultural sector this year, Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan said on June 13.

"If we look at 2006-2010, the total support to agriculture was just 1 billion drams

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in four years," Kerobyan told lawmakers in parliament. "We are now talking about 30 billion drams annually. I categorically disagree with the opinion claiming that the farmers are left on their own. Tens of thousands of farming businesses are using

our programs. The agriculture in Armenia is now undergoing structural changes, the traditional agriculture is being replaced by high output agriculture," Kerobyan said, adding that the changes will be seen in statistical figures some time later.







IMF Executive Board completes the first review under the Stand-By Arrangement with Armenia

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the first review under the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with Armenia, ARMEN-PRESS was informed from the website of the IMF. The completion of the review enables access of SDR 18.4 million (about US\$24.5 million), bringing total access to SDR 36.8 million (about US\$49 million). The SBA was approved by the IMF's Board on December 12, 2022 (see Press Release No. 22/429). The Armenian authorities continue to treat the arrangement as precautionary. The Executive Board's decision on the first review was taken without a meeting. [1]

Armenia's economic activity was very strong in 2022, with real GDP growing at 12.6 percent, driven by robust consumption and external demand, and fueled by large foreign exchange and migrant inflows from Russia. The growth momentum has continued in 2023Q1, led by expansion in construction, service, and trade-related sectors. The current account deficit plummeted to 0.9 percent of GDP for the year, benefiting from strong tourism income and remittances. Foreign direct investment and other investment inflows also increased, reflecting primarily capital inflows from Russia. Gross reserves increased to US\$4.1 bn. The dram appreciated by over 20 percent against the US dollar in 2022.

Inflationary pressures started to ease in late 2022-early 2023. Headline inflation

declined to 3.2 percent (y-o-y) in April 2023, mainly on account of base effects and rapidly easing food and transportation prices. But core inflation remains above headline at 4.3 percent (y-o-y) in April 2023. Double-digit nominal wage growth and service price growth are sources of significant underlying inflationary pressures.

The fiscal position improved significantly in 2022. The headline fiscal deficit narrowed to 2.1 percent of GDP in 2022 on account of robust revenues and spending under-execution. Central government debt dropped by 14 percentage points of GDP to 46.7 percent of GDP, due to deficit reduction, high nominal growth, and exchange rate appreciation.

The program is broadly on track. All end-December quantitative performance criteria (QPCs) and indicative targets (IT) were met, and good progress was made toward the completion of structural benchmarks (SB). The end-March structural benchmark requiring the adoption of a decree clarifying the mandate, reporting, transparency, and viability requirements for the Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) was completed as a prior action for the review.

The economic outlook for 2023 is generally positive, although risks remain substantial. GDP growth is projected to decelerate but strong momentum, consumption and investment are expected to keep it at 5.5 percent in 2023. With services trade

and remittances normalizing, the current account deficit is expected to widen in 2023. Inflation is expected to stabilize at the CBA's target of 4 percent within a year. The outlook is subject to elevated risks stemming from a challenging external environment, including regional tensions, tighter global financial conditions, and a slowdown in major trading partners.

Macroeconomic policies need to prevent overheating of the economy in the short term, while supporting inclusive and resilient growth in the medium term. To elaborate:

Should growth and revenues be stronger than projected, building fiscal buffers is a priority. At the same time, revenue mobilization efforts should continue, including by broadening the tax base and tackling informality.

Decisive and pro-active monetary policy tightening has been successful in containing inflationary pressures, but monetary policy needs to remain vigilant and data dependent. Financial sector risks related to the real estate sector require close monitoring by strengthening supervisory tools.

To unlock Armenia's long-term growth potential, continued progress with implementation of structural reforms is needed,including by boosting trade links and diversification, enhancing access to finance, completing governance reforms, and improving climate change resilience.

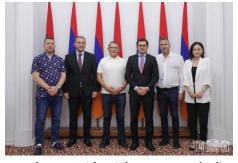
Vice Speaker of Parliament meets executives of foreign hotel and aviation businesses to discuss possible projects

On June 15, the Vice President of the National Assembly Hakob Arshakyan received Hossam El Shaer, Founder and Chairman of Sunrise Resorts and Cruises, Sky Max Holidays, Amr Azab, General Director Skymax Holidays and Yossi Yosef, Director of ISR Air Air Company.

Hakob Arshakyan welcomed the guests and attached importance to their visit to Armenia.

The interlocutors discussed the opportunities of construction of new hotel

The Noyan Tapan Highlights



complexes, residential quarters and adjacent infrastructures in Armenia, Arshakvan's office said in a readout.

In this context, the increasing flow of the tourists visiting Armenia and the foreigners moving to Armenia was taken into consideration.

The business executives said that Armenia is economically attractive for making investments.

The member of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs Tsovinar Vardanyan and the Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan also attended the meeting.





The Parliament approves the 2022 state budget implementation report

The National Assembly of Armenia adopted the draft decision on approving the annual report on the implementation of the 2022 state budget of the Republic of Armenia.

ARMENPRESS reports, 65 MPs voted in favor of the decision on approving the report, 11 voted against it. Seyran Ohanyan, head of the "Armenia" faction, announced that the faction will vote against it. The other opposition faction, "I have honor" did not participate in the vote.



The parliament started discussing the budget implementation report in the plenary session from June 14. On June 15, after the speeches of the ministers and deputies, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made a final speech.

A revenue forecast of 1 trillion 947 billion AMD had been made for 2022, revenues increased by 110 billion AMD during the year. And the planned expenses were 2 trillion 184 billion, increased by 103 billion

AMD. As a result, the planned deficit decreased by 6.5 billion AMD.

Armenia and Italy to cooperate in road infrastructures

Armenia and Italy have signed a memorandum of cooperation in the area of road infrastructures.

The agreement was signed between Gor Avetisyan, the CEO of the Road Department Foundation of Armenia, and Aldo Isi, the CEO of Anas S.p.A., the Italian company dealing with the construction and maintenance of Italian motorways and state highways.

Avetisyan and his staffers visited Italy together with the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan to get acquainted with

Italy's road infrastructures, strengthen



partnership in the sector and exchange experience.

Anas CEO Aldo Isi said the signed

document is an important opportunity for cooperation and exchange of engineering skills between the two countries.

Avetisyan said that Armenia is eager to study the best global experience in road construction and maintenance. He highlighted continuous training of specialists as a prerequisite for the development of the sector.

The memorandum envisages training of specialists, regular introductory visits to contribute to the improvement of road infrastructures, as well as joint seminars, meetings and other projects.

Armenian Parliament approves draft on 6-month military service for females at first reading



Armenia will introduce a system of

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voluntary military service for female citizens. The Parliament approved the draft at first reading on June 15.

According to the bill, females aged 18-27 are eligible for 6-month military service. After submitting the application, they will have the right to refuse from the service until the day of conscription.

According to Defense Minister Suren Papikyan, the females will receive 1 million AMD in compensation after completing the military service. In case of early demobilization due to health issues, the amount will be divided into six months and multiplied by the number of months actually served.

After the expiration of the 6-month period, women will have the right to apply for the "Defender of the Motherland" and sign a five-year contract to continue the service.





International community should take a very concrete stance against such behavior. Mirzoyan on Azerbaijan's aggression



Parallel to the peace negotiations, Armenia and the international community should take a very sharp stance against Azerbaijan's encroachments on Armenia's borders, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said during the question-and-answer session with members of the government in the National Assembly, referring to the observation of Sergey Bagratyan from the Civil Contract Party that processes are taking place parallel to the peace negotiations, and there is no explanation for the public why Azerbaijan should shoot at the Armenian positions in Yeraskh while going for peace.

"It's no secret that Azerbaijan is constantly trying to use force to change, disrupt the course of the negotiations, and in the end impose on Armenia the solutions it wants. This is not the first manifestation, and I'm sure it won't be the last either. Another issue is that we, Armenia, and

the international community should take a very sharp stance towards this kind of behavior, or we negotiate with good will to find mutually acceptable solutions, or, if it is through the use of force, then this kind of policy is at least unacceptable for us. We hope that it is also unacceptable for the international community," said Mirzoyan.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized that in this particular case and in many previous cases it refers to the internationally recognized borders of Armenia. Those borders must remain inviolable. The minister emphasized that the territorial integrity of Armenia must be restored, and the international community must play a role in this matter.

There is a new nuance in the case of the latest Azerbaijani aggression in the direction of Eraskh. "It was previously announced that a metallurgical plant is being built there. According to preliminary estimates, this factory will significantly contribute to the economic development of Armenia during its operation. And here the Azerbaijani side first came up with fabricated environmental accusations, while we fulfill all our international obligations, including in the environmental context, and this is also about this particular

factory. This is not an empty statement, but a verified one. And Azerbaijan presented false environmental accusations, after which the Armenian side denied it. And after the announcement of the position of the Armenian side, the Azerbaijani side is trying to disrupt this plan again simply by using force. This is not only an encroachment on the borders of Armenia, not only a violation of the ceasefire, but also by making baseless accusations and giving false justification, an attempt is being made to disrupt a program that can contribute to the economic development of Armenia," said the Foreign Minister.

Mirzoyan stated that the leadership of Azerbaijan has repeatedly undertaken an additional obligation in the presence of other actors not to resort to the use of force. That way of working is unacceptable for the Armenian side, it should be unacceptable for the international community as well.

Earlier, it became known that on June 14, around 11:45, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan opened fire in the direction of the metallurgical plant being built with foreign investments in Yeraskh, as a result of which 2 foreign citizens were injured.

International community's silence could lead to new Azeri aggression against democratic Armenia, warns senior diplomat

The international community's silence or absence of unequivocally targeted measures on Azerbaijan may cause new aggressions against democratic Armenia, Ambassador-at-large Edmon Marukyan warned after the latest Azerbaijani shooting which targeted civilian infrastructure in Yeraskh.

"Azerbaijan opened fire at the vehicles and infrastructures of a plant being built in the sovereign territory of Armenia by a US-Armenian investment. Intensive fire continued for three hours. This is an outrageous behavior going against all efforts

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carried out towards the peace process and a gross violation of all commitments on non-use of force or even threat of use of force. We strongly condemn this provocative behavior and call for our international partners to take measures against Azerbaijan, including sanctions and direct calls for refraining from such destructive approach. The silence of international community or absence of unequivocally targeted measures on Azerbaijan may cause new aggressions against democratic Armenia," Marukyan tweeted.

"This is an indiscriminate use of force by Azerbaijani armed forces in the sovereign territory of Republic of Armenia, which must be condemned by all international actors interested in peace as stability of the entire region," Marukyan added in a separate post.



Flemish Parliament of Belgium calls for opening of Lachin Corridor, withdrawal of Azeri forces from Armenian territory



On June 13, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Flemish Parliament of Belgium adopted a resolution, calling for the immediate opening of the Lachin Corridor which has been blocked by Azerbaijan and for the withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia.

The Lachin Corridor, a vital lifeline connecting Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh with the Republic of Armenia, has been subject to a blockade by Azerbaijan. This blockade has caused a humanitarian crisis for the native Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh and hindered their access to essential supplies, humanitarian aid, and economic opportunities.

The Flemish Parliament recognizes

the urgency of this issue and urges Azerbaijan to immediately lift the blockade, ensuring the free flow of goods, services, and individuals through the corridor, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) said in a press release.

Furthermore, the resolution highlights the need for the immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia. It emphasizes that the presence of foreign military forces within a sovereign nation's borders is a violation of international law and undermines the principles of sovereignty. The resolution urges the EU to call on Azerbaijan to end its hostile policy against the Armenian people and ensure the rights and security of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh which is facing a threat of genocide.

The initiator of the resolution, member of the Flemish Parliament Allessia Claes from the party N-VA commented:

"I am very pleased that the Committee on Foreign Policy of the Flemish Parliament approved our resolution on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, including the closure of the Lachin corridor and the

humanitarian situation. We stand united in condemning the ongoing war and calling on all parties to move ahead in fruitful discussions towards a lasting peace."

Karl Vanlouwe, a member of the Parliament from the NVA and co-signer of the resolution stated:

"This resolution is the result of many conversations with the Armenian community and a hearing with Flemish journalist Jens De Ryck that we hosted last week in the committee in the Flemish Parliament. He gave an exposition of the devastating conflict in the Caucasus. The current blockade of the Lachin corridor is a true humanitarian crisis. It must stop now."

Elaborating on the resolution the EAFID president Kaspar Karampetian said:

"We highly appreciate the work of the Flemish MPs in particular those Members who have been playing a leading role and tirelessly speaking up against the Azerbaijani aggression as well as its policy of ethnic cleansing in Artsakh /Nagorno Karabakh." Karampetian concluded emphasizing, "The right to self-determination of the native Armenian people of Artsakh equals to their right to life which must be defended relentlessly."

The Azerbaijani side prevents the entry of citizens with Armenian registration to Artsakh

The Azerbaijani side deliberately obstructs the entry of the people with Armenian registration to the Republic of Artsakh at the checkpoint illegally installed on the Hakari bridge of the Goris-Stepanakert highway (Lachin Corridor).

As the "Facebook" page of the Human Rights Defender of Artsakh informs, according to the data collected by the HRD staff of Artsakh, at least three similar cases have been recorded since the checkpoint was installed: two women and one child were prevented from entering. In all recorded cases, although the citizens had Armenian registration, they always lived in the Republic of Artsakh, and their families also live in Artsakh.

"These persons went to the Republic of Armenia for treatment under the blockade, and now, after solving their

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health problems, they cannot return to their homes. It is noteworthy that the Azerbaijani side allowed their exit from Artsakh, arbitrarily and illegally prohibiting their entry.

As a result of the harassment by Azerbaijan, the rights of these persons were violated not only to move freely, but also to reunite with their families.

The Human Rights Defender emphasizes that the checkpoint illegally installed by Azerbaijan on the Hakari bridge in Lachin Corridor from April 23 and other measures hindering the free movement of people, vehicles and goods on that road violate not only the well-known international norms of human rights, but also the provisions of the tripartite declaration of November 9, 2020, in particular, point 6, which envisages the safe and uninterrupted movement of people, vehicles and cargo

through the Lachin Corridor.

Azerbaijan is trying to mislead the international community with various propaganda videos, showing that the corridor is not blocked and the free movement of people is ensured. "The existence of such a checkpoint, the use of passport, cargo and other types of control measures by Azerbaijan already mean obstacles to uninterrupted movement, causing significant risks not only of security, but also bearing the risk for other arbitrary disruptive measures at any time. According to the HRD of Artsakh, the recorded cases once again prove the inability of the Azerbaijani state prop-aganda and the systematic and consistent policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh.







Pashinyan Refuses to Resign, Despite Precipitous Decline in his Popularity

BY HARUT SASSOUNIAN, PUBLISHER, THE CALIFORNIA COURIER

Two polls were conducted in Armenia recently, giving the people a chance to express their views on various issues, including the sharp decline in Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's popularity.

The first survey was conducted January 23-March 4, 2023 by the Center for Insights in Survey Research, a project of the Washington, D.C.-based International Republican Institute. This scientific survey, based on a random sample of Armenia's population, was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Question: "Do you think Armenia is heading in the right direction or wrong direction?" 52%: wrong direction (up from 11%-14% in 2018 when Pashinyan first came to power); 36%: right direction (down from 72%-73% in 2018).

Question: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the pace of democracy in our country?" 17%: satisfied; 46%: dissatisfied; 35%: no change.

Question: "How much interest do you have in politics?" 43%: very much or somewhat interested; 57%: not at all or somewhat not interested.

Question: "How would you evaluate the prevailing mood of the Armenian population?" 44%: future will be better or somewhat better; 55%: insecurity, worry, fear for the future, total disappointment, and disbelief in any improvement.

Question: "Which politician or public person do you trust the most?" 64%: none; 14%: Nikol Pashinyan; 3%: Ararat Mirzoyan; 2%: Robert Kocharyan; others 2% each.

Question: "Which political party or alliance, if any, you would vote for if national parliamentary elections were held next Sunday?" 47%: would not vote or refused to answer or don't know; 17%: Civil Contract; 5% Armenia Alliance; 4%: Public Voice party; 2%: Prosperous Armenia party; 2%: ARF Dashnaktsutyun; others 1% each.

Question: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following institutions?" Armenian Apostolic Church, 54%: very or somewhat satisfied; 40%: very or somewhat dissatisfied; Prime Minister's office, 38%: satisfied (down from 82%-85% in 2018); 61%: dissatisfied (up from 13-17%

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in 2018)

Ouestion: "How do you feel about the direction of each of the following spheres during the past six months?" Freedom of speech, 56%: improved a lot or somewhat improved (down from 73%-83% in 2018); 18%: regressed a lot or somewhat regressed (up from 3%-6% in 2018); 26%: no change (up from 19% in 2018). Foreign policy, 37%: improved a lot or somewhat improved (same as 2019); 33%: somewhat regressed or regressed a lot (up from 17% in 2019); 26%: no change (down from 39% in 2019). Armenia's policy on Artsakh, 10%: improved a lot or somewhat improved (down from 32% in 2019); 69%: regressed a lot or somewhat regressed (up from 18% in 2019); 18%: no change (down from 45% in 2019). Direction of fight against corruption, 43%: improved (down from 82% in 2018); 22%: regressed (up from 2% in 2018); 32%: no change (up from 14% in 2018).

Question: "What do you think is the biggest success of the government in the last 6 months?" 43%: none; 21%: don't know or refused to answer; 6%: development of diplomatic relation; other minor issues.

Question: "What do you think is the biggest failure of the government in the last 6 months?" 21%: don't know or refused to answer; 15%: closure of Lachin Corridor; 9%: overturning the Artsakh issue; 8%: national security of Armenia and border issues; 7%: loss of territories; other minor issues.

Question: "What are the things Pashinyan's government must achieve in the next 6 months?" 23%: improvement of army conditions; 22%: protection of Armenia's national security and borders; 16%: creation of jobs; 15%: establish peace; 13%: opening of Lachin Corridor; 13%: Pro-Armenian settlement of the Artsakh issue.

Question: "To what extent is corruption a problem?" 73%: very large or somewhat large problem; 25%: somewhat small, very small or no problem.

Question: "How do you evaluate the relationship between Armenia and...?" 96%: France (very good or somewhat good); 91%: Iran; 88%: United States; 86%: European Union; 84%: China; 80%: Georgia; 50%: Russia; 44%: Ukraine; 23%: Turkey; 4%: Azerbaijan. The relationship between Armenia and Russia has gone down from

87%-92% in 2018 to 50% good in 2023. The relationship between Armenia and Turkey has gone up from 1%-11% in 2018 to 23% good in 2023, while 75% of Armenia's citizens (down from 85% in 2018) consider the relationship bad.

A second poll was carried out in May 2023 by the Marketing Professional Group, affiliated with Gallup International. This is a scientific survey based on a random sample of Armenia's population.

Question: How do you evaluate Nikol Pashinyan's recognition of Artsakh as a part of Azerbaijan? 3.8%: definitely positive; 5.4%: rather positive; 63.4%: not positive; 18.5%: rather not positive; 8.9%: no answer.

Question: Do you think it is possible for Artsakh Armenians to exist as an ethnic minority in Azerbaijan? 2.8%: yes; 5.6%: rather yes; 77.7%: no; 8.7%: rather no; 5.1%: no answer.

Question: "Which of these judgments do you agree with?" 32.8%: Pashinyan is trying to conduct a balanced policy with the West and Russia; 20.5%: Pashinyan is trying to integrate Armenia with Europe, the West and NATO circles; 14.7%: Pashinyan is aiming to bring Armenia closer to Azerbaijan and Turkey; 12.9%: Pashinyan's actions are directed to push Russia out of Armenia; 19%: no answer.

Question: "Given Armenia's internal and external challenges, is it necessary to hold extraordinary parliamentary elections and form a new government?" 41%: definitely necessary; 18.9%: rather necessary; 12.2%: rather not necessary; 19.5%: not necessary; 8.5%: no answer.

Question: "Turkey expressed its displeasure at the placement of the Nemesis statue in Yerevan and as a first step closed its airspace to Armenian flights. Do you think the Armenian government or city officials should give in to Turkish pressures and dismantle the memorial dedicated to the Nemesis heroes?" 82.5%: definitely no; 7.7%: rather no; 2.6%: definitely yes; 3.5%: rather yes; 3.5%: no answer.

Question: "Did you participate in the 2018 revolution?" In the 2023 survey, 62.6%: no; 37.4%: yes. In the 2018 survey, 91%: yes; 9%: no.

Question: "Is it right for protesters to block streets and movement of cars?" In the 2023 survey, 44.5%: yes; 50.8%: no. In the





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2018 survey, 87.1%: yes; 8.7%: no.

Question: "Five years have passed since the revolution: In the meantime, how well were your expectations realized?" In the 2023 survey, 3.8%: fully realized; 21.5%: partially realized; 18%: partially not realized; 52.1%: not realized. In the 2018 survey, 14.4 %: fully realized; 64.2%: partially realized; 7.6%: partially not realized; 10.9%: not realized.

Question: "Evaluate Prime Minister Pashinyan's performance." In the 2023 survey, 5.4%: fully positive; 13.4%: rather positive; 24.2%: rather negative; 47.1%: negative; 10%: no answer. In the 2018

survey, 45.4%: positive; 46.2%: rather positive; 3.9%: rather negative; 2.4%:

We all have our personal opinions, but it is important to know what the citizens of Armenia think about these issues. There are major changes in their perceptions from 2018 to 2023.

ARFI executives travel to United States for presentation of opportunities, advantages of Armenia's crowdfunding platform



ARFI, the first investment crowdfunding platform in Armenia, plans to hold several meetings and events on June 14-23 in Los Angeles and New York City in the

United States to present the platform's advantages and opportunities.

ARFI PR manager Hasmik Harutyunyan told ARMENPRESS that ARFI is more than just a crowdfunding platform, describing it as a "reliable broker" linking companies in Armenia with investors from all around the world.

"ARFI gives an exclusive chance to make investments from around the world in SMEs operating in Armenia, new IT startup projects and become part of it. ARFI opens new opportunities for entrepreneurs in Armenia," she said.

ARFI will participate in the 3rd Orion Investment Summit due to take place on June 19-22 in New York City.

A meeting with the Armenian-American community members is expected on June 23 in Los Angeles.

ARFI CEO Edgar Evoyan and ARFI Chairman of the Board Sergey Grigoryan will also meet with Glendale city councilors Ardy Kassakhian and Elen Asatrian, as well as the Chairman of the Armenian-American Business Council Alec Baghdasaryan in Los Angeles.

Museum of Molokan Heritage opens in Fioletovo, Armenia

The "Chaybushka" Molokan Heritage House-Museum has opened in the village of Fioletovo, Armenia. The museum presents the history, cultural values and the lifestyle of Molokans. The opening ceremony was attended by a number of guests from the European Union Delegation to Armenia, GIZ Armenia, Lori Governor's Office, the Molokan community in Armenia and others.

The creation of the museum was supported by the European Union and the Federal Republic of Germany within the framework of the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)" project implemented by the GIZ.

The opening of the museum is a testament to the strong connection of the Molokans and their desire to preserve and present their unique lifestyle, traditions, customs and stories.

Guests of the event had the opportunity to get acquainted with carefully designed museum exhibits, which are presented in the form of photographs, clothes,

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handicrafts and other interactive exhibits.

The founder of the museum, Anatoly Mikhailov, noted: "I had this dream for a long time. I always wanted to talk about our culture, our customs. I invite everyone to the village of Fioletovo to get away from the bustle of the city, get in touch with the history of the Molokans, enjoy the purest mountain air and taste natural products."

EU4Business ITTD Team Leader Wilhelm Hugo noted; "This is a very important cultural heritage and we appreciate your openness to allow tourists to see all these gems."

Antonis Tsamoulis, the cooperation

officer of the European Union Delegation to Armenia (EU), said; "We are grateful for the opportunity to discover the hidden sides of Armenia, which are very interesting. The EU were happy to support you. I am personally very glad to get to know the Molokan community in Armenia."

The Fioletovo village was founded in 1838-40. Until 1936 the village was called Nikitino. Fioletovo is located 14 km away from Dilijan and 25 km away from Vanadzor, in Gugark region of the Lori province of Armenia. The inhabitants are Russian-Molokan denominations exiled from Tsarist Russia. Before the collapse of the USSR, there were 30 Molokan villages in Armenia, and now the village of Fioletovo is the only one where only Molokans live. Molokans, mixed with Armenians and other representatives of different nationalities, also live in the village of Lermontovo, neighboring Fioletovo, as well as in the capital city of Armenia Yerevan, also in Dilijan, Vanadzor, Gyumri and other towns of the country.





Eminent astronomers and astrophysicists in Yerevan for 5th **International Zeldovich Conference**



The 5th International Zeldovich Conference in Yerevan has brought together astronomers and astrophysicists from all over the world.

The conference named after physicist Yakov Zeldovich is dedicated to the modern achievements of astrophysics and related fields and the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia.

The Fifth Zeldovich meeting, organized by the International Center for Relativistic Astrophysics Network (ICRANet) will continue through June 17.

The topics covered at the meeting will include:

- · multimessenger astrophysics;
- early universe, large scale structure, cosmic microwave background;
- neutron stars, black holes, gamma-ray bursts, supernovae, hypernovae;
- gravitational waves;
- quantum and gravity.

Narek Sahakvan, director of the ICRANet Center of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, said: "This year's meeting is of particular importance. The conference features eminent scientists who will present the latest results obtained by leading observatories and satellites. We are especially happy to organize the conference this year, as it coincides with the 80th anniversary of the founding of the National Academy of Sciences of

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as an important platform for international cooperation. He noted that the organization of this prestigious international conference is an important step for the development of the field of astrophysics not only in Armenia, but also in all participating countries.

Russian scientist Marat Glifanov accepted the Marcel Grossmann Award on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Space Research. The award was presented by ICRANet Director Remo Ruffini for the Spektr-RG/eROSI-TA satellite.

During the conference, scientists will present reports on the most up-to-date trends in modern astrophysics. Also, the latest results of large-scale scientific



the Republic of Armenia. During the past 80 years, our academy has promoted and carried out basic and applied research in various scientific directions."

National Assembly's Vice-Speaker Hakob Arshakyan noted that Armenia is historically rich in scientific achievements and discoveries, especially in the fields of astrophysics, mathematics and physics. He emphasized the participation of Armenian scientific institutions in similar programs, emphasized the role of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences in the field.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahe Gevorgyan highlighted the role of ICRANet experiments such as James Webb Space Telescope", eROSITA, Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope, MAG-IC, CTA, IceCube, IXPE, LHAASO, HXMT and others, will be presented.





Armenian-French project among winners of 2023 European Heritage Awards

The European Commission and Europa Nostra on June 13 announced the winners of the 2023 European Heritage Awards/ Europa Nostra Awards.

The annual EU prize for cultural heritage rewards 28 best initiatives and personalities from 20 European countries representing the latest developments and priorities related to heritage policy and practice in Europe.

The Armenian-French joint project 'Scientific-Archaeological Studies for the Preservation of Ererouyk' is among the winners of the 'Research' category. Ererouyk is an early Christian and medieval complex, located in Shirak province of Armenia. It consists of remains of a 6th-century basilica, ancient mausoleum and cemetery, ancient village and dam. The researchers succeeded in dating the basilica and conducting a detailed analysis of its carved decoration. Through comparative research, the project also highlighted the particularities of Armenian Christianity and funerary customs.

This research project was carried out between 2009 and 2021 by the Laboratory of Medieval and Modern Archaeology in the Mediterranean of Aix-en-Provence (LA3M), France, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, and the Shirak Regional Museum in Gyumri, Armenia, alongside several experts of different nationalities.

Annual missions lasting almost a month were carried out every autumn, complemented by a programme of analysis, elaboration and interpretation of the data collected at the associated institu-

tions. Ererouyk was conceived as a training site for local and international students; and a full-day conference was organized each year at Aix-Marseille University to present the progress of the research to students and the public.

Among the concrete results achieved,

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the researchers succeeded in dating the basilica and conducting a detailed analysis of its carved decoration. Through comparative research, the project also highlighted the particularities of Armenian Christianity and funerary customs. Also notable is the assessment of the place and role of the site of Ererouyk in the life of the region and in particular in its relationship with the city of Ani. The publication of numerous papers gained the recognition of the international scientific community and provided concrete elements for the study of the basilica, allowing for the design of a conservation project respectful of its authenticity. The results of this comprehensive research project raised the visibility of the site at a European level, contributing to its listing among the 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2016 by Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute.

This project serves as an outstanding example of how the collaboration between experts of different nationalities and the implementation of a rigorous historical and scientific method can provide new insights and knowledge on cultural heritage sites.

"The extensive documentation

generated from this research is crucial for the future preservation of Ererouyk. The cooperation between France and Armenia is commendable; future efforts will focus on enhancing the on-site presentation, with funding support from the French Embassy; this aspect of the project is particularly encouraging", the Awards' Jury commended.

"The challenging circumstances and context the site finds itself in also serves as a testament to the perseverance and dedication required to undertake research in such circumstances. Notably, the development of an intriguing glossary of Armenian architectural terms further showcases the project's commitment to international cooperation and its valuable contributions to the field of research and architectural understanding", the Jury concluded.

he award ceremony will take place on 28 September in Venice, at the European Cultural Heritage Summit 2023.

The Grand Prix laureates and the Public Choice Award winner (vote online) will be announced during the ceremony. These are chosen from this year's winning projects and are both entitled to receive €10,000 each.





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