

We need problem-solvers, not talkers – Pashinyan angered after inspecting government-funded projects in provinces



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has instructed government officials to inspect the course of implementation of government-funded projects across the country and focus on the quality.

Speaking at the Cabinet meeting, PM Pashinyan spoke about a number of problems that he saw during his recent visit to several towns where new schools were being built.

“I see very serious problems in the implementation of our projects after my visits to the provinces, especially in the ongoing projects implemented in schools. In many cases we deal with [poor quality] related to the blueprinting, development and equipment,” he said.

Specifying the problems, the prime minister said that schools have been provided with volleyball nets for the gyms, whereas the courts have no volleyball markings. “Volleyball is a sport with rules. Now, we’ve given volleyball nets to dozens of schools, but you go into the gym, you ask them where’s the volleyball, there is

no volleyball. You touch a hanger in the school and it falls off, wherever you go the water is leaking...” he said, pointing also to poor quality construction.

Pashinyan said that it’s the governors’ job to inspect the construction.

“In some places I have to visit again, and even three times. Wherever I visit three times, you ought to visit thirteen times. Yes, you ought to go there and hang your coat from the hanger, use the sink, and look what’s happening,” Pashinyan told government officials.

The government will not tolerate such poor-quality implementation, beginning from the stage of blueprinting, he said.

“What matters the most...we tell the children that we’ve opened the new school, go and study. But that child, who’s going to hang a coat and the hanger would fall off, what would that child think about the

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Any act of terrorism is unacceptable for Armenia – Deputy FM at Iranian embassy after Kerman bombings



Government officials, foreign diplomats, NGO representatives and members of the public visited on January 5 the Iranian Embassy in Yerevan to express condolences on the deadly Kerman bombings.

The embassy has opened a condolence book.

After signing the condolence book, Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan told reporters that the Kerman bombings showed that countries must continue to carry out a united fight against terrorism.

“The government of the Republic of Armenia, both the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, have conveyed condolence telegrams to their counterparts in Iran regarding the terror attack in Kerman. I’d like to once again reaffirm that any act of terrorism resulting in the deaths and injury of innocent people is unacceptable for the Republic of Armenia,” Kostanyan said.

Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan also expressed condolences to the people

of Iran and those affected by the attack.

“Highlighting the common values and mutual understanding between the two nations, I underscored Armenia’s stance against all forms of terrorism. The Iranian Ambassador and embassy representatives welcomed this gesture of solidarity. During a dialogue we underscored the importance of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and ensuring regional security. Bilateral commitment was underscored for joint work in the direction of strengthening relations and peace and stability in the region. My visit to the Iranian embassy today was an important step to display Armenia’s support to Iran at this difficult time and strengthen the lasting friendship between the two countries,” Kerobyan said.

Ambassador of Iran to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani thanked the Armenian people and government officials for expressing condolences.

“The fact that we stand by one another at difficult times is a testament to our deep friendly and historical relations. Long live Armenia. Long live the Armenian people. Long live Iran. Long live the Iranian people,” the Ambassador said.

The Ambassador said that the Kerman bombings showed that “Iran’s enemies are afraid of Lt. general Qasem Soleimani’s supporters and events dedicated to him.”

Islamic State claimed responsibility on

Thursday for two explosions in Iran that killed nearly 100 people and wounded over 280 others at a memorial for top commander Qasem Soleimani, Reuters reports.

In a statement posted on its affiliate Telegram channels, the Islamic State said two of its members had detonated explosive belts in the crowd that had gathered at the cemetery in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman on Wednesday. The Iranian government declared the bombings a terrorist attack.

The memorial was marking the fourth anniversary of the death of Soleimani, who was assassinated in Iraq in 2020 by a U.S. drone.

Tehran has vowed revenge for the bombings. The twin blasts wounded 284 people, including children.

“A very strong retaliation will be meted out to them by the hands of the soldiers of Soleimani,” Reuters quoted Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber as saying.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has condemned what he called Wednesday’s “heinous and inhumane crime”. Iran’s top authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, vowed revenge for the bombings.

The United Nations Security Council in a statement condemned what it called Wednesday’s “cowardly terrorist attack” and sent its condolences to the victims’ families and the Iranian government.

Armenia’s candidacy was successful in all elections of international organizations in 2023



During 2023, Armenia’s candidacy was successful in all elections of international

organizations, Armenia’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ani Badalyan said in a post on X.

“Our thanks to countries who supported Armenia’s candidacy!

Kudos to all colleagues who worked on respective files,” wrote Badalyan, presenting the attached list of the international organizations where Armenia’s candidacy was confirmed in the elections.

UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) for

2024-2026

UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) for 2024-2027

Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for 2023-2025

UN Committee for Program and Coordination (CPC) for 2024-2026

UNESCO Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict for 2023-2027

state? If they've installed a 150-dram hanger instead of a 3000-dram hanger, the child will think that the money has been shared between everyone starting from

the construction worker up to the prime minister," Pashinyan said.

"I no longer need explanations for the problems. I need solutions to the problems. Please, don't give me explanations,

come and tell me that the problem has been solved. We no longer need officials who simply raise issues, we need officials who solve the issues," Pashinyan said.

2023 Azeri attack in Nagorno-Karabakh killed 223 people, including 5 children – says law enforcement official

223 people, including 5 children, were killed in Nagorno-Karabakh in the 19-20 September 2023 Azerbaijani attack, a senior law enforcement official in Armenia has said.

Argishti Kyaramyan, the Head of the Investigative Committee of Armenia, told First Channel News that the number of those wounded was 244.

He said that the Investigative Committee launched criminal proceedings on ethnic cleansing and the circumstances of the forced displacement of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are being investigated within the framework of that probe.

"223 people, of whom 25 were civilians, were killed as a result of the September 19-20, 2023 Azerbaijani aggression in Nagorno-Karabakh. The death toll includes



five minors," Kyaramyan said.

Another 244 were wounded, including 76 civilians (10 children).

20 people, including 5 civilians, are missing.

Over 20 cases of desecration of bodies were documented.

Over 70 others died on route from NK to Armenia, as well as shortly after arrival. "This is mostly due to the severe

psychological impact that our compatriots went through," Kyaramyan said.

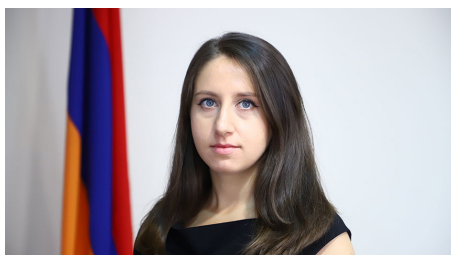
55 Armenians are currently held captive in Azerbaijan but Baku has so far acknowledged only 23 of them, a senior law enforcement official has said.

"At this moment 23 compatriots confirmed by Azerbaijan are being held there, 17 of whom are persons captured

as a result of the 2023 aggression. We have evidence regarding the forced disappearance of 32 persons after the 44-day war, which we have presented to supranational organizations," Kyaramyan said.

Furthermore, even the European Court of Human Rights indicated interim measures regarding 22 of the prisoners, however Azerbaijan denies the fact that these persons have been taken captive.

Three of the world's largest companies to enter the Armenian market, says Deputy Minister



During the press conference held on January 8, Deputy Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia Ani Ispiryan

stated that it was expected for three of the largest companies in the world to open representative offices in Armenia.

"In 2024, we should implement 21 events, as a result of which the investment and business environment should develop," said Ispiryan.

The Deputy Minister highlighted three important points, expressing hope for their implementation in the near future.

"One of them is the opening of representative offices of 3 of the 500 largest companies of the world in Armenia. The second is the entry of the 30 largest and the best global brands into Armenia," said the deputy minister.

During the press conference, the deputy minister underscored the next program focused on stimulating the production of economically complex products.

U.S. doesn't want to see Israel take any steps that would escalate tensions – Miller on situation in Armenian Quarter



The United States has announced that it doesn't encourage the Israeli government to take steps that would escalate tensions in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller was asked at a press briefing to react to concerns by top authorities

in the Armenian Quarter that the Israeli Government was using the conflict in Gaza to push out Armenian Christians from the Armenian Quarter.

"So no specific response to that. But as we have said on a number of occasions, we do not want to see the Government of Israel take any steps that would escalate tensions," Miller said.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem [said](#) it was facing an "existential threat" after a violent attack last week which it attributed to an Israeli-Australian businessman's efforts to acquire a property owned by the patriarchate – the Cows' Garden. The patriarchate had leased the property to the businessman who seeks to

build a hotel there, but then cancelled the agreement and applied to court for validation. Some two weeks after appealing to court, the patriarchate issued a [statement](#) saying the developer who sought to buy some 25 percent of the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem ignored a [letter](#) by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem cancelling the controversial real estate deal and started demolition works, and moreover police demand that all members of the Armenian Community vacate the premises.

Armenian seminarians and clerics were attacked by a violent mob during a vigil held at the Cows' Garden on December 28.

Rome Statute to help Armenia involve international prosecutors to probe war crimes

Numerous legal acts must either be adopted or laws must be amended following the ratification of the Rome Statute, Justice Minister Grigor Minasyan has said.

"We've studied the experience of various countries, particularly Georgia has a similar legislation, an entirely separate law. But we've also studied the experience of four-five leading countries. And the first

step is the development of new legislation and work with international experts," Minasyan said at a press conference.

Asked on the methods of applying the Rome Statute to hold Azerbaijan accountable for war crimes, the minister said: "The process is as follows. There are prosecutorial and investigative instruments and our investigators, by studying the crimes,

gathering the information, also have the opportunity to involve international prosecutors and law enforcement officials, who, upon arriving in Armenia and studying the paperwork, become part of those proceedings. In this case, Armenia is not alone in the investigative processes of the war crimes and involves international bodies conducting proceedings."

Gardman-Shirvan-Nakhijevan Pan-Armenian Union responds to US decision to put Azerbaijan on religious freedom watchlist

The Gardman-Shirvan-Nakhijevan Pan-Armenian Union has responded to the fact that US put Azerbaijan on religious freedom watchlist.

"U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that Azerbaijan has been included in the watchlist based on its involvement in or toleration of serious violations of religious freedom. This decision comes after the establishment of Azerbaijani control over the entire territory of Nagorno Karabakh and the implementation of ethnic cleansing.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which has previously warned about the threat to Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, now

sounds the alarm that there are serious concerns regarding the regulation of religious activities in Azerbaijan.

The response by the Commission on International Religious Freedom is an extremely important step in highlighting the crimes committed against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and providing an adequate response to them.

The Gardman-Shirvan-Nakhijevan Pan-Armenian Union welcomes the efforts that the United States is making to ensure human rights and freedoms. We have repeatedly sounded the alarm about the systematic vandalism based on religious and ethnic discrimination and complete brutality that is currently being carried

out in Nagorno-Karabakh and has been carried out in historical Gardman, Shirvan and Nakhijevan over the past decades," the Union said in a statement.

The Union has called on both the Commission on International Religious Freedom and other international arbitral structures and organizations to address the actions being implemented by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Union also calls on to pursue a fair investigation and appropriate punishment for the genocide carried out in the depopulated areas of Gardman, Shirvan, and Nakhijevan over the past 35 years.

Armenia looks forward to working jointly with Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU – FM Mirzoyan

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has lauded Spain for its activities during its Presidency of the Council of the EU and welcomed Belgium's presidency in 2024.

"My congratulations to José Manuel Albares and outgoing Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU for activities during exceptionally challenging times," Mirzoyan said in a statement on

X. "Appreciated that EU Council Spanish



Presidency advanced our common agenda,

aimed at further strengthening EU's partnership with Armenia based on shared vision."

"Warmly welcoming Belgium's Presidency of EU Council, I wish every success to my counterpart Hadja Lahbib. Armenia looks forward to working jointly with Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU to further deepen & strengthen our partnership with EU to effectively meet aspirations

of our citizens," he added.

Luis Moreno Ocampo releases second report on Nagorno Karabakh genocide

In a new paper former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo analyzes the ethnic cleansing against a group of Armenians living for centuries in Nagorno Karabakh constituting genocide and deportation as a crime against humanity,

"There is a reasonable basis to believe that Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor that started in December 2022 and Azerbaijan's military attack on September 19, 2023, constitute genocide under Article II c) and b) of the Genocide Convention, as well as Article 6 c) and b) of the Rome Statute and the crime against humanity of deportation under Article 7 d) of the Rome Statute," Ocampo says.

In a few days, more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians were forcibly deported from Nagorno-Karabakh, leaving their homes and belongings. On October 30, 2023, Juan Mendez, the first UN Special Adviser on the prevention of genocide, published a report concluding that: "The decision to leave – caused by the attack but also by the nine months of deprivation of food and medicine – exposed the serious mental harm produced in all ethnic Armenians by the official policy and practice of Azerbaijan, which fits the definition of the genocidal act contemplated in Article 2 (b)



of the Convention: causing serious bodily or mental harm in members of the group."

The International Court of Justice confirmed Prof Mendez's factual analysis and the violation of the rights of the ethnic group protected. On November 17, the International Court of Justice analyzed that "...more than 100,000 persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin have found themselves compelled to leave their place of residence and reach the Armenian border since the operation commenced by Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabakh on 19 September 2023."

"What's the difference between crimes against humanity and genocide?" Philippe Sands answered the question, explaining that Hersch Lauterpacht developed the concept of crime against humanity in the Western tradition to protect individuals from massive attacks. Instead, Raphael

Lemkin created the crime of genocide to protect national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups," the report reads.

It includes testimony of Artak Beglaryan, former Human Rights Defender and State Minister of Artsakh, who details his experience as evidence of the serious mental harm suffered by the entire ethnic group as established by the Genocide Convention Article II b).

As a Nagorno-Karabakh leader, Artak Beglaryan was hunted by Azerbaijan forces before and after the September 19 attack. Still, unlike most of the others, he was able to escape in extremely difficult circumstances despite his visual impairment.

As mentioned, more than twenty victims of genocide, including three former Artsakh presidents and five other community leaders, were incarcerated by Azerbaijan. Their captivity is part of the genocide and a message to their community: if you come back to Nagorno-Karabakh, you will be starved, incarcerated, or killed.

"A recognition that genocide was committed will trigger the state parties' obligations to prevent and punish and would help to protect the rights of the victims, particularly the Armenian prisoners taken as hostages," Luis Moreno Ocampo.

Armenian nationals can visit UAE without entry visa starting February 1

The agreement on mutual elimination of visa requirement for the citizens of the Republic of Armenia and the United Arab Emirates will come into effect from February 1, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia said.

As of February 1, Armenian citizens can enter, exit and transit through the UAE without an entry visa or fee. The passport of an Armenian national must be valid for at least 6 months from their arrival date



in the UAE.

Armenian citizens will be allowed to

stay in the territory of the United Arab Emirates for a maximum period of 90 days in each 180-day period.

The validity of the passport refers to the period of validity indicated on the 2nd (Armenian) and 3rd (English) pages of the passport, not the note on the validity in foreign countries (round stamp) indicated on the 4th page of the passport, which is no longer applicable and is not mandatory from January 1, 2024.

2 trillion 221 billion drams in tax revenue collected in 2023 – SRC chief



The State Revenue Committee (SRC) of Armenia collected 2 trillion 221 billion

drams in tax revenues in 2023, which is 296 billion drams more compared to the previous year, SRC Chairman Rustam Badasyan told reporters on January 4.

“The revenue section of the state budget was executed around the figure of 2 trillion 221 billion drams in terms of tax revenues, which is around 296 billion drams more compared to the previous year,” Badasyan said.

He added that the government projects the tax-to-GDP ratio to improve significantly, which, according to Badasyan, means that the shadow economy is being reduced.

Badasyan said that billions of drams have been recovered from shadow circulation in 2023, which in turn positively impacted tax discipline.

Armenian winter tourism popularity on the rise among Arab countries

YEREVAN, JANUARY 5, ARMENPRESS. Armenia is becoming more appealing for tourists especially in the winter season as the sector is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact, officials say.

Armenian Tourism Federation President Mekhak Apresyan told Armenpress that seemingly everything is starting all over again in the tourism sector after the pandemic, because tourism had stopped.

“The sector began to gradually recover after the coronavirus, and eventually we had a very good result, we surpassed even the 2019 figures with the total number of visits,” he said.

Apresyan said that all steps must be carried out simultaneously for the development of winter tourism in Armenia. He said that winter tourism infrastructures must be developed and improved, and

Armenia's tourism opportunities must be properly presented in the global market.

Although winter tourism in Armenia is steadily developing, officials continue to carry out marketing campaigns especially in the direction of countries that don't have such a potential.

“Currently large-scale work is carried out in the UAE, especially in Dubai, in order to draw the attention of local tourists on Armenia in the winter season,” Anahit Voskanyan, the advisor to the president of the Tourism Committee, told Armenpress.

One Way Tour agency concurred that winter tourism is gradually developing in Armenia.

“Russia was leading in the list of countries where most tourists chose Armenia as a tourist destination, but in 2023 December the statistics changed towards



Arab countries, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and others. One of the reasons of this change is the snow, because most of the tourists who've come from these countries are seeing snow for the first time here in Armenia,” One Way Tour marketing director Satenik Abrahamyan said.

Abrahamyan also noted that winter tourism infrastructures should be further developed across the country.

Armenia negotiates with several countries for launching joint production of e-cars

The first 8,000 e-cars to be imported into Armenia this year will again be exempt from VAT and customs duties pursuant to a regulation on quota distribution within the Eurasian Economic Union aimed at promoting the green economy policy and reducing emissions.

Given the positive results of the incentive in 2022 and 2023, the Armenian government extended the regulation for two more years.

3,486 electric cars were imported to Armenia in 2022, a 1,8% and 12,1% growth against 2021 and 2020 respectively, according to Emma Movsisyan, Director of the Department of Trade and Integration at the Armenian Ministry of Economy.

“As of December 1, 2023, the number of electrical cars imported into Armenia was 4,909. This shows that we have significant results in this area. Every year the number of e-cars that are imported and used in Armenia is rapidly growing,” Movsisyan said.

Most of the e-cars are being imported from the United Arab Emirates, followed by the United States, China, and some



quantities from Iran and Georgia.

“In terms of the manufacturing date of the vehicles, we can say that consumers mostly prefer cars of recent years. The overwhelming majority of the imported cars are manufactured in between 2021 and 2023. Both high-class and mid-class cars are imported. Most of the imports are Volkswagen ID.4, Volkswagen ID.6, Honda, Tesla, and in the mid-class segment Nissan LEAF, Chevrolet Volt which cost an average of 8 to 15 thousand dollars depending on the engine power, manufacturing date and other components,” Movsisyan said.

The goal of this initiative is to implement the provisions of the green economy policy adopted by the Armenian government, which seeks to cut diesel fuel

consumption and reduce emissions.

Movsisyan said that adjacent infrastructures are also being developed as a result of the imports, the number of charging stations is growing (already 200), more maintenance shops are being opened, which in turn brings investments and new jobs.

“We’ve adopted a policy to significantly increase the use of e-cars both in the public administration system and in the private sector. We also consider launching joint production with famous carmakers in Armenia in the future. We are currently conducting negotiations with certain countries in this context,” Emma Movsisyan said.

The ministry seeks to apply broader measures in terms of infrastructures. It is currently considering potential components that could also be covered in the zero-customs-duty regulation and thereby promote economic activity in the given sector, as well as the use of e-cars.

Interview by Anna Gziryan

What happened in Nagorno-Karabakh is a heinous crime, Armenia’s Ambassador to Greece says



What happened in Nagorno-Karabakh is a heinous crime, Armenia’s Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Greece, Cyprus, and Albania Tigran Mkrtchyan said in an interview with the *European Conservative* magazine.

“A huge historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage has remained in the depopulated Nagorno-Karabakh, which is under serious threat,” the Ambassador said.

He noted that Azerbaijan still refuses to grant access rights to the UNESCO

fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories to conduct an inventory of the most important cultural values proposed by the UNESCO Director-General in November 2020 as a precondition for the effective protection of the region’s heritage.

Below is the full text of the interview:

The ethnic cleansing of Artsakh has led to the exodus of more than 100,000 people. What is their situation? How is Armenia coping with this humanitarian crisis?

The forcibly displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh are survivors of ten months of blockade and Azerbaijan’s latest military aggression. Many of them have serious health problems as a result of months of malnutrition and lack of proper medical care. Many also have psychological problems. Social problems

are also added to all this, as many of them left their homes in a hurry without taking money and valuables.

In order to address the needs of these displaced people, the government of the Republic of Armenia has already initiated assistance programmes from the state budget. The government of Armenia has approved and adopted numerous decisions aimed at addressing the issues of employment, education, scholarships, and pensions for forcibly displaced refugees. These decisions are being implemented through special programmes of relevant bodies of the government.

Mid-term activities are also being planned to ensure a sustainable livelihood for refugees. The Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are the indigenous population of that area; for more than three

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millennia, they have continuously lived in this part of the world, and we and the international community can neither forget nor ignore this matter. I regret to mention that for months we have been warning from all possible platforms and through every possible official and unofficial channel that Azerbaijan would do everything to subject more than 100,000 Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, the international community did not take tangible steps to prevent it, and the ICJ (International Court of Justice) decisions remained on paper.

Starting from the first day, we have been closely cooperating with our international partners, UN agencies, and different countries. Assistance has been announced by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Union, the U.S. Government through USAID, and United Nations agencies. We are grateful to all our international partners, and the EU and its member states in particular, for humanitarian assistance during these challenging days for Armenia and the Armenians of Artsakh.

And what about the Armenian cultural heritage: the churches, the monasteries, the khachkars (carved, stone slabs bearing a cross)? Has there already been any declaration or practical support from UNESCO to protect this cultural heritage?

A huge historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage has remained in the depopulated Nagorno-Karabakh, which is under serious threat. The crosses of the Stepanakert church domes have already been removed. Unfortunately, we know from experience what happens to the Armenian historical and cultural heritage in the territories under the control of Azerbaijan. Just look at Nakhijevan, the destruction of the mediaeval khachkars of Nakhijevan, as well as the painful events that took place after the 44-day war—the destruction of Kanach Zham (Green Church), St. Ghazanchechots in Shushi, Spitak Khach Monastery (White Cross) in Hadrut, as well as the desecration of a number of gravestones—unfortunately do not inspire optimism. Especially when all this happens in the presence of a decision of the ICJ, obliging Azerbaijan “to take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration directed against the Armenian cultural

heritage, including churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries, and artefacts.”

Even when there is no destruction, the Armenian identity of the cultural artefacts and architecture are distorted. Many monuments of mediaeval Armenian Christian culture, such as the Amaras Monastery (4-5th century), Dadivank Monastery (9th century), Gandzasar Cathedral (13th century), and many other Armenian religious sites, have been confiscated from the Armenians.

The original definition of the crime of genocide, as presented by Raphael Lemkin, gave cultural genocide centre stage. As a legal concept in international law, cultural genocide was devised as a sub-category, or aspect, of genocide—the attempt to systematically and willfully destroy a group—alongside physical genocide and biological genocide. It denoted the destruction of both tangible (such as places of worship) as well as intangible (such as language) cultural structures. This is what we have been witnessing happening in Azerbaijan over the last decades and currently in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan still refuses to grant access rights to the UNESCO fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories to conduct an inventory of the most important cultural values proposed by the UNESCO Director-General in November 2020 as a precondition for the effective protection of the region’s heritage. I really hope that this time international organizations, particularly UNESCO, will really act within their mandate and will be able to prevent new cultural genocides. In this regard, I want to emphasise a significant point. Azerbaijan does not simply destroy historical and cultural heritage. Azerbaijan cleans the Armenian trace from Nagorno-Karabakh because this historical and cultural heritage is the most eloquent evidence that Armenians have lived in Karabakh for thousands of years.

Several of the Artsakh Republic’s leaders have been arrested by Azerbaijan and charged with terrorism. Is there any possibility of returning them to Armenia? Is there an international body supporting the Armenian government in this case?

Talking about terrorism is simply foolish and is as false as other anti-Armenian tricks by Azerbaijan. I think that the return

of Armenian captives, and especially Nagorno-Karabakh leaders, will only be possible only under strong pressure from the international community. Currently, only the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) supports us in this matter, to the extent that it visits the captives and regularly transmits information about their health situation.

On October 4, the Republic of Armenia appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with a demand to oblige Azerbaijan to release the former and current arrested leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh.

What do you think accounts for the silence or apparent disinterest in what happened in Artsakh by the international community and the mainstream media?

What happened in Nagorno-Karabakh is a heinous crime. People were not only subjected to ethnic cleansing but also were deprived of their homeland. The reasons for silence by the international community and the mainstream media are multilayered. First, it turned out that today, unfortunately, for the international community, Azerbaijani oil and gas are more important than Armenians and Armenians’ rights to live in their historical homeland (we cannot heat Europe in winter). But parallel to this, I think it is no less important that the world has found itself in a terrible vortex of changes, and especially negative developments, and the international community and media do not manage to react properly to all the developments.

The world order is reshaping rather rapidly, and as a result, international relations are being transformed on bilateral and multilateral levels. I think the problem comes from the fact that solving problems by use of force has become the norm and is tolerated, and it’s terrible as this has never solved problems. We could find ourselves in front of an open Pandora’s box if we don’t speak out against these crimes. Peace is not established by war, because the latter, the use of force, or even threat of force, are gross violations of international law themselves. You cannot establish order by trampling on the roots of that order. The claim that force can lead to peace of the Azerbaijani leadership is known in the language of logic and philosophy as *argumentum ad absurdum* (argument ➔ page 9

page 8 to absurdity). And it is amazing that the representatives of this country are repeating this claim abroad without understanding how ludicrous such claims sound.

Azerbaijan is now demanding an extraterritorial corridor through Syunik from Armenia, with Turkish support and Russian passivity. Given that it has had *carte blanche* so far, do you think Azerbaijan could try to seize this corridor militarily?

Azerbaijan's rhetoric towards Armenia has continuously been aggressive and belligerent. According to the December 7th statement, Azerbaijan agreed to release 32 Armenian military servicemen, and Armenia, in its turn, agreed to release two Azerbaijani servicemen. There were some other mutual commitments. Moreover, there was a reconfirmation of the intention of the sides to normalize relations and to reach a peace agreement on the basis of territorial integrity and sovereignty. That should mean release of all captives from Azerbaijan, withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from the occupied territories of Armenia (as of now, close to 200 square kilometers of Armenian land is under Azerbaijani occupation), successful completion of delimitation works, and rejection of any claims to extraterritorial corridors.

That should also mean putting behind the propaganda campaign of the 'Grand Return to Western Azerbaijan,' an unfortunate state-sponsored project which questions the very existence of Armenia, promotes the thesis that Armenians are newcomers to the region against all historical evidence. In general, this should mean putting aside the pseudo-scholarship of absurd claims towards Armenia in Azerbaijan. We can't start historical debates now, but we cannot allow anyone to question our history.

For the Republic of Armenia, the preservation of the country's territorial integrity is a red line *en route* to a peaceful resolution of issues. Since Thucydides said that the "strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must," 2,500 years have passed, and the rules of war and peace have changed a lot. Besides, in that same history of the most admirable Greek historian, the strong and the weak often are replaced. There are no perpetual winners nor perpetual losers. History is

a witness to that. But what history has also shown time and again is that peace is attainable when there is an inclination to make concessions and compromise. We need enduring peace, and not perpetual cycles of violence.

In the event of further aggression, do you think the international response would be different?

Taking into account the grave consequences of solving issues through the use of force and sense of impunity for the perpetrators, the international community should take every effort to prevent any kind of escalation and military aggression by Azerbaijan. The progressive world should realize that the conflict in the South Caucasus is a striking example of a clash of value systems: on the one side is democratic Armenia and on the other side is the oil-rich but authoritarian Azerbaijan. Every new failure of democracy will bring new failures to other corners of the world and further aggravate the anarchical international situation. This must stop; the sooner, the better for everyone. Had the Azerbaijani military aggressions of 2016 and 2020 received a proper response, we might live in a different world, not only in our immediate neighborhood but in the Middle East and other parts of the world.

The Armenian side continues to believe that, despite all the difficulties and challenges, there is a real chance of establishing peace between the two countries, which can be implemented if both sides have political will. As demonstrated numerous times before, Armenia proved its readiness to resume engagement in the negotiations, guided by the following principles: mutual recognition and respect of each other's territorial integrity without any ambiguity; future delimitation process on the basis of the most recent administrative maps and borders of the Soviet Union; unblocking regional communications on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and jurisdiction of states; and the principles of equality and reciprocity.

To achieve these goals, the government of the Republic of Armenia has presented the 'Crossroads of Peace' project. This is a plan to connect our regional countries with railways, roads, cables, gas pipelines, power lines, or strengthen existing connections. At the moment, we do not have any functioning road, nor any functioning railway, cable, pipeline, or power line with

either Turkey or Azerbaijan, and we propose to change this situation positively.

The 'Crossroads of Peace' project will also bring benefits to Georgia and Iran, including bilateral as well as in terms of strengthening ties with Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Armenia. The implementation of this project will be beneficial not only for our region but for international trade, connectivity, and stability. And I hope for support not only from regional countries but from the international community in general. We are in front of very important, even historic crossroads.

Russia has failed in its role as an ally in the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) and has aligned itself with Azerbaijan and Turkey. Where does Armenia's relationship with Russia stand?

The CSTO in general has not met Armenia's expectations, to put it mildly. No matter what words of play from various sides are used, it is a fact that the CSTO treaty obligations have not been fulfilled. On the one hand, violation of Armenian territory and occupation of Armenian territories were never acknowledged to be such. Hence, inaction was justified. On the other hand, the 2020 ceasefire statement was violated on several accounts a month after its signature with Azerbaijani transgressions. No practical steps were taken to prevent the aggravation of the situation. Moreover, the attacks on the Lachin Corridor and the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh were undertaken under the nose of Russian peacekeepers, who were supposed to guarantee the safety of the corridor and the population of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. On all those accounts, we saw abysmal failures and attempts to justify those failures.

What new alliances can Armenia forge for the future?

Armenia is developing relations with many countries. We have enhanced partnership cooperation with the EU, the United States, cooperation with India. We are developing relations with the Arab world and Latin American countries. Indeed, our immediate neighborhood is of utmost importance. We have excellent relations with Georgia and Iran, and indeed, we hope to normalize relations with Turkey. Eventually, relations with Azerbaijan should normalize as well.

Why 2024 Should be the Year of Armenia-India Strategic Partnership

Over the past three years, the level of cooperation between India and Armenia has increased at a rapid pace, bolstered by the establishment of a [growing defense and security partnership](#). Given its expanding contribution to Armenia's efforts to increase its defense capabilities and its potential to partner on Armenia's strategic and economic development, India has become Armenia's most important new foreign policy partner.

So far much of the growth in the Armenia-India relationship has been driven by the initiative of India. Armenia should not sit idly by, waiting for India to approach Armenia for the next stage of cooperation. Amid reports that [India's enthusiasm for Armenia has waned slightly](#) after the fall of Nagorno-Karabakh, it is important for Armenia to maintain and strengthen this relationship. Armenia should now be proactive in establishing a strategic partnership with India which would realize the full potential of the bilateral relations.

As a rising geopolitical power that has managed to maintain friendly relations with all major superpowers, India has a great deal of lessons to share on how to navigate the Russia-West confrontation and the North-South divide. It has managed to maintain a balance between the US and Russia, without burning bridges with either one. It has kept diplomatic channels open and productive with China, its neighboring rival. It has also built important know-how in border management and border security as a result of repeated flare ups along its northern frontiers. All of this is important for Armenia to learn and understand as it undertakes [its own foreign policy diversification](#).

Importantly, India has expressed an explicit desire to partner with Yerevan in



the South Caucasus given their aligned strategic interests in the region. India can serve as a geopolitical counterweight to the [“Three Brothers” alliance](#) between Pakistan, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. By engaging with India in bilateral and multilateral formats, such as Armenia-India-Iran and Armenia-India-France-Greece, Armenia gains a strategic ally in a region that otherwise faces Turkish hegemony. At the same time this partnership does not antagonize either the West or Russia.

India has attracted the interest and attention of many countries. It has a particularly strong influence on mid-sized and emerging countries that consider themselves part of the “Global South” – countries that lie outside of Europe and North America and their incumbent power structures. At the most recent Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate held by the Emirates Policy Center, my colleagues at APRI Armenia attended a [dynamic session on India's rising role on the global stage](#). In his panel intervention, explaining how India views itself in today's world, President Samir Saran of the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation think tank, said that

“India is South-West” in its sensibilities. Its combination of emerging country know-how, represented in the Global South, and strong democratic institutions, well-known to the Western world, allow it to play a global “bridging role.” India is exercising that bridging role by becoming a credible global advocate for smaller countries, like Armenia. India has diplomatic and economic leverage, which it has used on Armenia's behalf at the UN Security Council to condemn the September 2022 attacks by Azerbaijan on the Armenian territory.

While existing relationships with other countries run their course, Armenia's bilateral ties with India in every sphere have the potential to flourish, to the benefit of both partners. As Armenia seeks to diversify its foreign policy and acclimate to the chaos of the current world, it should maximize this opportunity to further boost its national development and come up with initiatives that will benefit both countries.

Over the past year, APRI Armenia has included at the

➔ page 12

page 10 core of its research agenda the opportunities that exist for comprehensive engagement between Armenia and India, identifying security, infrastructure, trade, technology, business collaborations, and tourism as key areas to explore.

Though the trends in Armenian-Indian defense cooperation and new arms deals are promising, Armenia should establish a more strategic and comprehensive partnership with India, starting with holistic defense collaboration. As one of a handful of countries with experience [integrating Russian and Soviet-grade weapons with Western equipment](#), India could provide the proper equipment and training necessary to modernize Armenia's defense capabilities while using its existing stockpiles. Moreover, defense cooperation with India should also include partnership on peacekeeping, joint exercises, military training by the Indian army, and advice on logistical and technical reforms by Indian military officials. As a country friendly with both Armenia's traditional and newer security partners, it holds the most potential for revamping Armenia's defense capacities without provoking any of its partners.

In its vision for greater connectivity and transit routes, Armenia should further boost its partnership with India in building up its infrastructure. India has significant experience investing in infrastructure in geographically-significant countries to improve trade routes, such as with its investment in [Iran's Chabahar Port project](#). From land routes like the North-South highway connecting the Persian Gulf and Iran with Georgia and the Black Sea through Armenia, to its envisaged dry port in Gyumri, Armenia would benefit from Indian experience and investment to build out these projects.

Despite an almost doubling in trade since 2020, Armenia and India's bilateral trade volume is still objectively low - only around \$358 million USD in 2022. In contrast, India's trade volume with Azerbaijan was almost five times that of Armenia's at \$1.9 billion USD in 2022. Establishing greater trade volumes and dependencies between Armenia and India is not just economically beneficial for Armenia, but important geopolitically as well. Greater economic ties contribute to increased transit and people-to-people connections, while also enhancing Armenia's economic value to India in the region.

Specifically within the fields of pharmaceuticals, information technology, and renewable energy technology - where India is a leading exporter - Armenia could benefit from imported Indian products. Furthermore, Armenia could replace goods it currently imports from adversarial countries with those from India. Research should be conducted to assess which products (Turkish textiles, Pakistani rice, etc.) can be imported from India most effectively.

There are already collaborative projects happening between Indian and Armenian businesses. Indian businesses and technology companies alike have expressed to APRI Armenia that they are interested in partnering on joint ventures with businesses in Armenia as well as in the Armenian diaspora. This route should be actively pursued, through joint ventures that are based in Armenia and India, rather than in third countries.

Because the absence of a direct flight between Armenia and India hinders larger trade volumes, establishing a direct flight should be the first step towards facilitating bilateral trade. Alongside, Armenia should take actionable steps to boost tourism

with India, [incentivize the Indian film industry to produce more movies in Armenia](#) and better promote Armenia in India through more active marketing. These important individual initiatives, and many more, should be part of an integrated road map for enhanced bilateral relations that will complement already ongoing cooperation in the military field and infrastructure development.

All of this reinforces our original point: that the most important foreign policy relationship for Armenia, now and into the future, is India. Developing these relations should be an all-of-society project, with focused initiatives from government, academia, civil society and even student groups, starting at the primary level. The opportunity for Armenia to survive and thrive in what has been called "The Asian Century" will depend on the projects launched today, which can foster mutual understanding and innovative new directions of interstate collaboration.

Next year, the APRI Armenia team will continue to explore and outline what a strategic and comprehensive vision for the Armenia-India relationship should look like, identifying opportunities in defense, trade, infrastructure, and tourism. With its interests aligned in keeping the Three Brothers alliance in check and pushing forward a Middle Path that does not antagonize the West or Russia, the Armenia-India comprehensive partnership should come to fruition.

In the coming year, India must earn Armenia's resolute focus and a dedicated effort to envision our shared, prosperous future.

Davit Antonyan, APRI Armenia Associate Fellow

Armenian Ambassador honored with the highest Medal of Paris

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has awarded Armenian Ambassador to France Hasmik Tolmajyan with the highest award of the city of Paris, the Grand Vermeil Medal of the City of Paris (Médaille de Grand Vermeil de Paris).

During the ceremony at the City Hall, Mayor Hidalgo emphasized that today France and Armenia are closer than ever, and Ambassador Tolmajyan has made a significant contribution to this by uniting various social and political figures and organizations France around the idea of protection and support for Armenia and the Armenian people, making this issue one of the cornerstones of consolidation of the French society.

Mayor Hidalgo noted that Paris and all of France have been and will continue to stand by the people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and noted that awarding the Armenian ambassador to France with the highest medal of Paris is also a proof of that commitment.

Ambassador Tolmajyan, in turn, expressed gratitude to Mayor Anne Hidalgo and members of the Paris City Council for the award and for sending a message of support and solidarity to the entire Armenian people once again. Ambassador Tolmajyan emphasized that during the last three years, the Armenian people have faced serious challenges, and Armenia highly values and attaches particular importance to the presence of the whole of France, particularly a sincere friend like Paris, by its side during this difficult period.

The Ambassador reminded that the Armenian-French friendship is based on a thousand-year history and common civilizational values, and expressed confidence that it will continue to develop and deepen for the benefit of the peoples of both countries.

Deputies of the French National Assembly, members of the Senate, the Secretary General of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other high-ranking



officials of the department, foreign ambassadors accredited to France, French politicians and public figures, artists, journalists, representatives of the Armenian community were present at the ceremony.

Established in 1911, the Grand Medal of Paris is awarded for significant achievements and actions in matters of universal importance. To date, the award has been bestowed upon figures such as Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, world-famous composer Michel Legrand, world-renowned actors Brigitte Bardot and Jean-Paul Belmondo, as well as others who have made a great contribution to science, culture, literature and politics.

Armenia's stone ambassadors: Khachkars have witnessed the rise and fall of empires, the ebb and flow of faith – Forbes India

Photo: Hamlet Petrosyan

From pagan prayers to Christian crosses, Armenian khachkars have witnessed the rise and fall of empires, and the ebb and flow of faith, travel journalist *Veidehi Gite* writes in an article published by [Forbes India](#).

“Clad in the volcanic garb of tuff and basalt, Armenia’s pastoral architecture eschews the traditional cruciform design, echoing Mount Ararat. Within their walls, a tapestry of artistry unfolds, with painted frescoes and intricate stone carvings narrating Biblical tales. In a world where religion was often a source of conflict, Armenia took a refreshingly progressive approach, becoming the first nation to officially adopt Christianity in 301 AD,” the author writes.



“To spread the word, they didn’t rely on firebrand sermons or imposing cathedrals; instead, they turned to art, creating a unique form of religious expression – the khachkar. In Armenia, where time seems to pause, 50,000 stone tablets with their surfaces chiselled with a Celtic cross, inscriptions, interlocking laces, botanical motifs, and biblical figures whisper

primordial tales, beneath celestial skies,” she continues.

Today, the tradition of khachkar carving lives on, with dedicated artisans in Armenia continuing to breathe life into these timeless masterpieces.

“From the halls of the British Museum to the bustling galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, these stone sentinels have found a home as

an enduring legacy of Armenian culture. So, the next time you travel to a distant corner of the world, keep an eye out for a khachkar. These stone ambassadors may surprise you, standing amidst the unfamiliar sights and sounds, reminding you of the interconnectedness of our world. and the enduring power of art to transcend borders,” *Veidehi Gite* writes.

The Christmas gift from the Galaxy Group of Companies is the restoration of a song extricated by Khrimian Hayrik



“Morning Star, the doors of the Church are open”... With these lines, this unique piece of folklore penned by the Catholicos of All Armenians, Khrimian Hayrik (Father), in 1885, starts. It speaks about the faith and diligence of the Armenian people. In the 1970s, ethnographer and honored artist Hayrik Muradyan recorded it for the archive. Armenians inside the Iron Curtain of the Soviet Union heard this song for the first time - thrilling, simple, and pure. In these challenging times of identity and faith, this work of symbolic significance brought together creative specialists, artists, and musicologists. They dedicated three months to breathe life into the simple and straightforward idea of the “Galaxy” founders - to reinforce and rediscover the profound essence of the Christmas holiday for every Armenian family.

“We believe in the power of Armenian people’s work and diligence. We want our people to be united, believe, and rely on their own strength. This piece holds an important message. It illustrates our collective way of life: working and creating with faith, prayer, and kindness. We earnestly wish for the message and lyrics of this song to resonate in every Armenian household on Christmas,” stated **Artyom**

Khachatryan, Co-Founder and Co-Chairman Galaxy Group of Companies.

A professional communication group was tasked with selecting the song and narrating its story. The creative challenge was clear: find and bring forth a simple song stemming from the heart of the people, one that is positive and depicts the lifestyle of the Armenian people from their own perspectives. The communication company “AxelMondrian and Partners” managed the creative process of the project, while the renowned “Katil” band handled the artistic development of the song.

“This is Armenia’s first and unique project of its kind, providing an academic sound and musical structure to an ethnic folk song. We had numerous melodic songs under consideration, but the selection halted at the patriarch’s work. We sincerely hope for its appreciation and for people to offer their interpretations of this song,” shared **Grigor Davtyan**, co-founder of the “Katil” band.

The song’s performance involved students of the art school named after Saryan, led by Grigor Harutyunyan. Sevada Hambarchyan, the vocalist of the “Katil” band, performed vocals with the choir, overseen by Grigor Kartashyan handling the instrumentation. The music was recorded

for public release under an open license, allowing anyone to use and personalize it. The video series was set amidst the snow-white Armenian mountains, ensuring shots devoid of unnecessary distractions, focusing solely on the song’s magical verses. The creative team promises further developments on the project and encourages playing “Bari Luso” in every Armenian household, fostering faith and unity.

Galaxy Group of Companies stands as a top conglomerate in Armenia, consistently integrating educational, cultural, historical heritage, as well as content creation projects in Armenian within its annual social responsibility programs. Since 1999, the company has engaged in around a hundred diverse collaborations and published various materials and books. The group’s founders are Gurgen Khachatryan, Artyom Khachatryan, and Aram Khachatryan. It encompasses 15 brands, including the telecommunications operator “Ucom” the shopping and entertainment complex “Yerevan Mall,” the French cafe “PAUL,” and the hotel “Courtyard by Marriott.” among others.

Katil is an Armenian indie folk band established in 2017, and recognized for its contemporary adaptations of numerous ethnic songs. Comprising five members, the group has performed notable events such as a solo concert at the Public Radio studio and participated in the Independence Day concert at Zvartnots Cathedral alongside the RA Opera Orchestra. In 2020, they launched their inaugural CD, “Akner.”

AxelMondrian & Partners is an accredited communications firm affiliated with the European network, specializing in Reputation Management, Public Relations, Branding, Marketing Communication, Data Analysis, and associated domains. With a track record of executing innovative projects in Armenia, the company introduces novel solutions and fresh perspectives to the market.

Aurora's Sunrise by Inna Sahakyan included in MovieWeb's 16 Best Animated Movies of 2023

Inna Sahakyan's animated documentary *Aurora's Sunrise* has been included in MovieWeb's 16 Best Animated Movies of 2023.

"Animation has a significant advantage over live-action filmmaking in that it can convey abstract ideas in a way that makes sense, both visually and spacially. Though there's a stigma surrounding animation in the west, with some likening the medium to children's entertainment, we occasionally get a film that demonstrates a level of maturity and emotional depth you simply can't find elsewhere.

"This is best exemplified by *Aurora's Sunrise*, an animated documentary film based on the life of the titular Aurora

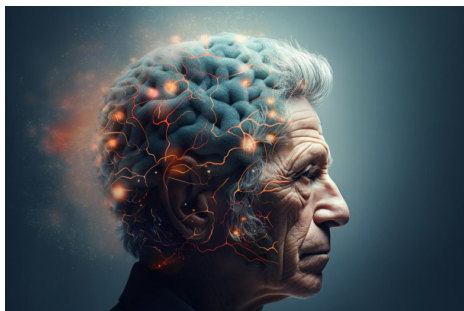


Mardiganian. A survivor of the Armenian Genocide, Aurora's life is depicted with a unique combination of live-action footage and brilliant animation, showcasing her journey from Eastern Anatolia to the streets of Hollywood. Inna Sahakyan directed this melancholic tale, with Aurora

Mardiganian appearing in a handful of snippets taken from the 1919 film *Auction of Souls*.

"The animated portions of *Aurora's Sunrise* illustrate Aurora's journey in a way that simply wouldn't be feasible otherwise. Through the utilization of Armenian symbolism along with interview segments and archival footage, we're given an intimate viewing of Aurora's life against the backdrop of the Armenian Genocide. For those who may not have a full grasp of the Armenian Genocide's impact, *Aurora's Sunrise* presents this tragic event from a unique and informative perspective. *Aurora's Sunrise* is streaming on PBS," MovieWeb said in the review.

Armenian scientists discover means to inhibit enzymes that contribute to Alzheimer's disease

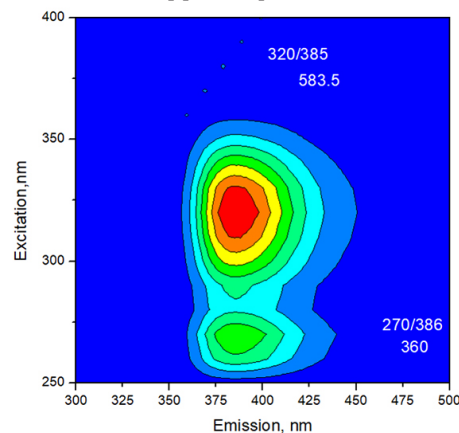


Two new compounds synthesized at the Scientific and Technological Center of Organic and Pharmaceutical Chemistry of the National Academy of Sciences (NAC) – *N*-benzoyl-DL-valinedimethylamino-ethylamine iodometilate (TVA) and 1-(2-diethylaminoethyl)-2-phenyl-4-benzylidene-5-imidazolone (TVS) – have been studied at the NAC Institute of Biochemistry after Hrachya Buniatyan. These compounds inhibit the activities of acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase enzymes, which contribute to the development of Alzheimer's disease.

The optical absorption and fluorescence spectra of amyloid-beta peptides were described. The amyloid-beta peptide appears to play a central role in the pathology of Alzheimer disease. In

particular, it has a toxic effect on neurons in the brain and disrupts intercellular communication.

"The obtained data indicate that the newly synthesized compounds reduce the aggregation process of amyloid beta peptides and destroy the toxic aggregates formed by the peptides. The research also showed that TVA and TVS compounds weaken the neurodegenerative processes and death of hippocampal cells of the rat

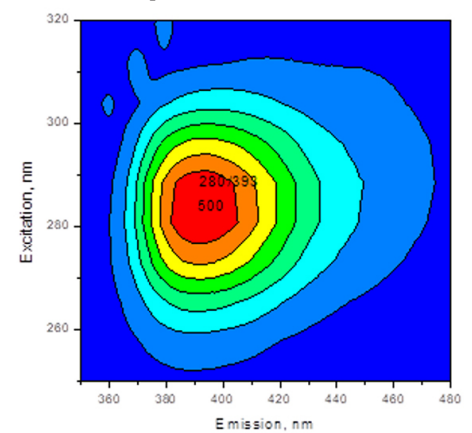


brain due to the effect of amyloid beta peptide aggregates, demonstrating neuroprotective properties," said Alvard Antonyan, head of the scientific group, director

of the Institute of Biochemistry named after Hrachya Buniatyan.

She noted that further preclinical research of these compounds will make it possible to create new drugs for the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

The work was carried out with the funding of the Science Committee of the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport within the framework of



the thematic project "Synthesis of chemical compounds with anti-acetylcholinesterase activity and possible study of the treatment of Alzheimer's disease."

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