

## Armenia, UK reaffirm the aspiration to build partnership over the coming years



On November 13 in London, following the first meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between Armenia and the United Kingdom, a joint statement was adopted. The full text of the statement is presented below.

### ARMENIA-UNITED KINGDOM STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

#### Joint statement

On the occasion of the official visit to London of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, H.E. Mr Ararat Mirzoyan, the inaugural Strategic Dialogue between the United Kingdom and Armenia was held on 13 November 2023.

This Strategic Dialogue was an opportunity to mark the strong cooperation and friendship between our two democracies. With the increase globally in threats to democratic values, human rights, rule of law and the freedoms we strive to protect our citizens, working together on issues of mutual concern: it is more important than ever not only to build trade and stability,

but also to protect our shared core values. We reaffirmed the aspiration to build our partnership over the coming years.

During the dialogue, the Ministers discussed a range of global and regional issues of mutual concern, and ways in which Armenia and the UK can work together going forward. These included:

- Governance and rule of law, where through its programming in Armenia the UK is supporting the digitalization and streamlining of public services, the improvement of gender equality in the police force, and will soon begin working to support Armenia's border management capacities to tackle security and migration issues.
- Armenia-UK defence cooperation, which continues to expand with increased numbers of

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## Ararat Mirzoyan and Leo Docherty discuss the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan

The Armenian-UK strategic dialogue has launched with a meeting between the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan and the UK Minister for Europe Leo Docherty, held on Nov. 13 in London, the foreign ministry said.

The meeting began with a private conversation and later continued in an extended format with the participation of delegations from both countries.

Discussions during the meeting centered around the agenda of bilateral relations between the two nations.

Various areas of cooperation were addressed, including politics, trade and economics, security sectors, innovations, interpersonal contacts, and the potential for further cooperation.



The parties thoroughly discussed security and stability issues in the South Caucasus, particularly focusing on the normalization process of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Foreign Minister Mirzoyan underscored the significance of progressing in the peace process based on the principles outlined in the statement adopted after

the quadrilateral meeting in Granada in October.

He emphasized the importance of public commitments from Azerbaijan and actively involving international partners in this issue.

FM Mirzoyan presented the “Crossroads of Peace” project developed by Armenia, highlighting the expected advantages resulting from its implementation.

The interlocutors also discussed the forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians due to ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh. They addressed the steps being taken to meet the primary needs and rights of the Nagorno-Karabakh people.

## Armenia, UAE keen to develop defense cooperation

On a working visit to the United Arab Emirates, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan met with Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi, UAE Minister of State for Defense.

The meeting was also attended by Armenia’s Minister of High-Tech Industry Robert Khachatryan.



Issues related to the prospects for developing the defense cooperation between Armenia and UAE were discussed.

The sides expressed their readiness to make efforts to develop cooperation and establish a legal basis for it.

## Poland expresses support to Armenia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty

The government of Poland supports Armenia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty and wants Armenians to live in peace in their internationally recognized territory, Ambassador of Poland to Armenia Piotr Skwieciński has said.

Ambassador Skwieciński told reporters on November 14 that Poland was one of the first countries to provide financial and material support to Armenia to help meet the needs of the forcibly displaced

persons from Nagorno-Karabakh after the “tragic events” in September, when Azerbaijan launched a military attack in NK, causing the exodus of over 100,000 Armenians.

Commenting on the EU Foreign Affairs Council’s decision to start negotiations around visa liberalization with Armenia, the Ambassador of Poland expressed support to the initiative. “As you know, the negotiations around visa liberalization

with Armenia are already in process, and I hope that we will eventually reach this goal and the visa liberalization will become reality,” he said.



page 1 ➡ personnel from the Armenian military and Ministry of Defence, and police (MOIA) personnel receiving English Language training instruction, as well as places on UK senior and junior command and leadership courses, and multi-national peace-keeping and mine-awareness packages. Both parties looked forward to the sixth round of Armenia-UK Staff Talks later this month.

- Trade and economic ties, notably the recently held Armenia-UK Business Forum in London, where Armenia's Minister for the Economy, Vahan Kerobyan and the Minister of State

for Regulatory Reform, Earl of Minto welcomed an audience of Armenian and British businesses to discuss the wide range of trade and investment opportunities between our countries.

The Ministers agreed on the absolute necessity of the establishment of peace and stability in the South Caucasus based on the mutual recognition of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders on the basis of the Alma Ata 1991 Declaration, and the opening of regional connectivity links based on full respect of each countries' sovereignty and jurisdiction.

Minister for Europe emphasized the

UK's commitment to supporting those affected by the long-running conflict, including through £1 million of funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross announced in September.

Finally, both parties looked forward to continuing to enhance the relationship between Armenia and the UK beyond this inaugural Strategic Dialogue, including through the upcoming visit by the Minister for Europe to Armenia, and through the agreement of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which we collectively hope to conclude in the coming months.

## Prime Minister Pashinyan will not attend upcoming CSTO summit



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke by phone on November 14 with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko.

The phone call took place at the initiative of the Belarusian side.

In a readout, the Prime Minister's Office said issues related to organizing the upcoming CSTO Collective Security Council

session in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, scheduled to take place on November 23 were discussed.

The Armenian Prime Minister told the President of Belarus that he will be unable to participate in the session and expressed hope that his CSTO colleagues will treat this decision with understanding.

## The world will never be the same again, PM Pashinyan says at OSCE PA session

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan warned OSCE PA delegates on Saturday that countries ought to plan the future to prevent future crises and clashes.

Speaking at the OSCE PA Autumn Meeting in Yerevan, PM Pashinyan said that the world will never be the same again after the crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza and the ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"It is obvious that after the crises in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza, and the ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, the world will never be the same again, no one doubts this no more. But no one knows what the world of tomorrow will look like," Pashinyan warned.



The Armenian PM said that it is extremely important to plan the future, otherwise crises and clashes could spread.

Speaking about the Armenian-Azeri peace process, the PM said there are both good news and bad news.

He said that the good news is that the main principles for peace are agreed upon, citing the [May 14](#) and [July 15](#) statements by President of the European Council Charles Michel.

The three principles are: reciprocal recognition of territorial integrity and sovereignty, based on the understanding that Armenia's territory covers 29.800 km<sup>2</sup> and Azerbaijan's 86.600 km<sup>2</sup>;

commitment to the 1991 Almaty Declaration as a political framework for the delimitation of border; unblocking of regional connections under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the countries through which they pass. There is

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## Mirzoyan participated in the opening of the RA Embassy in the United Kingdom

“We are not only announcing the opening of the building, but we are laying a new foundation for the deepening of our relations,” said Ararat Mirzoyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia in the United Kingdom, during the official opening ceremony of the new building of the RA Embassy, which was attended on behalf of the UK government by business and Secretary of State for Trade Timothy Minton.



According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan specifically stated in his speech: “we reaffirm our commitment to deepen our political dialogue, our economic and cultural ties.”

“This embassy is a beacon of friendship and cooperation between our peoples, and this building is a bridge that connects not only our governments, but also our

economies, our cultures and our peoples. Today, when we cut the ribbon, we are not only announcing the opening of the building, but also laying a new foundation for the deepening of our relations. We reaffirm our commitment to deepen our political dialogue, our economic and cultural ties. But also, by an interesting coincidence, immediately after this opening

ceremony, we are preparing for a new level of our relations, the launch of a strategic dialogue between the Republic of Armenia and the United Kingdom.”

Ararat Mirzoyan also made a note in the guest book of the embassy, where he specifically noted: “For about three decades, Armenia and the United Kingdom have made efforts to develop bilateral relations. I am sure that the new RA embassy will provide an opportunity to deepen the existing foundations in the coming decades, revealing new perspectives, facing modern challenges and threats.

The location of the RA Embassy in this building in the heart of London demonstrates our willingness to deepen and give new momentum to Armenian-British relations for the benefit of our two peoples.”

## Paris Mayor demands the release of 55 Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan

Paris Mayor demands the immediate release of 55 Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, [Le Point](#) reports.

Anne Hidalgo made the statement during a press conference at the City Hall on November 10. According to the Mayor, who was accompanied in particular by the former prosecutor general of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo and the MEP (PPE) François-Xavier Bellamy, these are political prisoners, including eight former leaders of Nagorno Karabakh, arrested during the 2020 war and more recently in September during Azerbaijan’s large-scale offensive.

“A genocidal process is underway” against the Armenians of

Nagorno-Karabakh, said Anne Hidalgo, who said she relies on a report submitted in July by Luis Moreno Ocampo.

These prisoners, detained in Baku, “have had contacts with their families twice, but nothing since,” lamented Mourad Papazian, co-president of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF). “So, we do not know under what conditions of psychological and physical pressure they are detained today,” he said.

“These hostages need international protection because there is not a single Azerbaijani judge who would free them, no one can contradict President Aliyev,” declared Luis Moreno Ocampo.



François-Xavier Bellamy, for his part, called for an end to the gas agreement between Europe and Azerbaijan, and demanded to seize the assets of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in France.

## EUMA expansion to further strengthen border stability, says Armenian Deputy FM

Armenia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyán has commented on the EU Foreign Affairs Council’s decision to expand the border monitoring mission deployed in Armenia (EUMA).

Hovhannisyán said at a press briefing that the expansion of the European Union

Mission in Armenia (EUMA) was being discussed for a long time.

“There’s a decision to expand the number of observers, strengthen their capacity, which will allow to carry out more active work regarding the monitoring, submit the relevant reports to Brussels and member

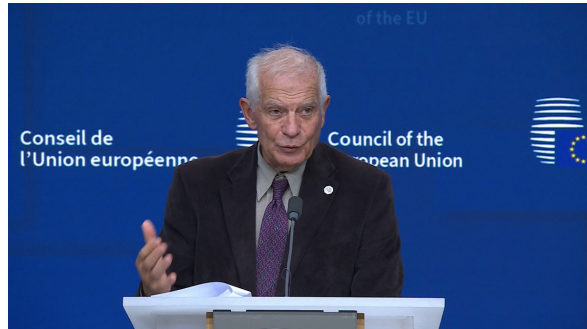
states, something that will definitely further strengthen stability on our borders,” Hovhannisyán said.

The decision on expanding EUMA means that the number of observers will be increased and their capacity will be strengthened, the Deputy FM explained.

## EU will explore an option of visa liberalization with Armenia – Borrell

The Foreign Ministers discussed how to strengthen the cooperation with Armenia and support its democratically elected authorities, its resilience, its security and continuation of reforms in the country, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said at a press conference following the meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels.

“We decided to beef up our mission in Armenia with more patrols in the sensitive areas of the border. And we will explore a possible support to Armenia under European Peace Facility and an option for



visa liberalization for Armenia,” he said.

“We have to be very much vigilant for any attempt of destabilization of Armenia. Our message to Azerbaijan has been clear: any violation of Armenian territorial integrity would be unacceptable and have

severe consequences for the quality of our relations,” the EU foreign policy chief said.

He called for resumption of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on the work done by the President of the EU Council.

“We need a peace treaty to be concluded, and we are committed to continue our mediating role,” Borrell said.

He informed that the EU Foreign Ministers have decided to invite Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to join them on the margins of the next Foreign Affairs Council meeting.

## Azerbaijan rejects Washington-mediated meeting with Armenia

Azerbaijan has turned down a proposed foreign ministerial meeting with Armenia scheduled to take place on November 20 in Washington, D.C. after a State Department official said that ‘nothing will be normal with Azerbaijan after the events of September 19 until we see progress on the peace track.’

“We’ve made clear that nothing will be normal with Azerbaijan after the events of September 19 until we see progress on the peace track. So we’ve canceled a number of high-level visits, condemned the actions... We don’t anticipate submitting a waiver on Section 907 until such time that we see a real improvement,” James O’Brien, assistant



secretary at the department’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, said at a hearing on Nagorno-Karabakh in the House of Representative Foreign Affairs Committee on November 15.

The Azerbaijani foreign ministry falsely accused the State Department official’s

statement of being ‘biased, unproductive, groundless and unacceptable.’

The Azeri foreign ministry, in a statement, in response to O’Brien, said that Azerbaijan “considers the possibility of high-level visits from the United States to Azerbaijan inappropriate as well.”

The Azerbaijani foreign ministry also said that the “unilateral” approach of the U.S. could lead to it losing its role of a mediator. “In these conditions, we don’t find it possible to hold the meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia on November 20 in Washington,” the Azerbaijani foreign ministry said.

## People who left Nagorno Karabakh have the right to return home – Miller

People who have left Nagorno-Karabakh have the right to come home if they wish to do so, and that’s a right that should be upheld, Spokesperson for the US Department of State Matthew Miller said at a briefing.

He declined to comment on the upcoming hearings at the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s Subcommittee on Europe on



“The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

James O’Brien, Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs U.S. Department of State, and Dr. Alexander Sokolowski, Deputy Assistant Administrator at the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia U.S. Agency for International Development, have been invited to testify.

## Armenia, Iran can triple gas-for-electricity volumes, says Ambassador

Armenia and Iran can increase the volumes of the gas-for-electricity project, Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani has said.

“There’s a gas pipeline between the two countries and we extended the gas-for-electricity agreement two months ago”, Sobhani told [CivilNet](#) in an interview. “That was a big and strategic step in the relations of the two countries. This agreement would allow us to triple and even quadruple the imports of electricity from Armenia in exchange for gas. We have very good projects with Armenia. We have the third power transmission line, which I



hope will be completed in the coming months.”

He expressed hope that trade turnover between Armenia and Iran, which stood at 711 million dollars last year, will reach

approximately 1 billion dollars this year.

“There’s also the Agarak-Kajaran 32km road project, which is also a strategically important project, and by far the biggest project signed between the Armenian government and Iranian companies. We’ve always encouraged other Iranian companies to also come to Armenia and make use of the good working opportunities here, produce here and export to other countries. Overall, I can say that our trade and economic ties have good dynamics of development and we will decisively continue this path,” the Iranian Ambassador said.

## Economy Minister briefs Japanese partners on Armenia’s business attractiveness

At the headquarters of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Minister of Economy of Armenia Vahan Kerobyan had a meeting with JETRO Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Norihiko Ishiguro.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Armenia to Japan Areg Hovhannisian and Deputy Minister of Economy Narek Teryan were also present at the meeting.

The parties discussed practical steps aimed at the development of Armenian-Japanese economic relations and



increasing the volume of trade turnover.

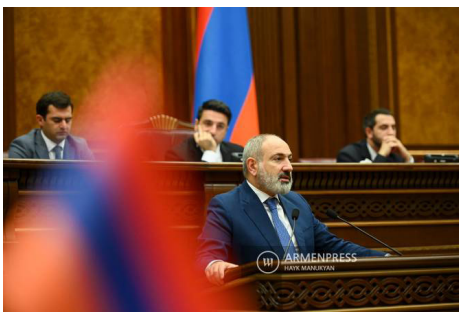
Vahan Kerobyan presented the investment attractiveness of Armenia, the

favorable conditions for doing business and the increasingly liberal legislation, and emphasized the need to raise the awareness among Japanese businessmen about all this.

Norihiko Ishiguro expressed his willingness to provide support to the Armenian side in the matter and to assist Armenia in carrying out joint business projects.

The parties also discussed a number of issues related to Armenian-Japanese trade and economic relations and agreed to pursue the implementation of the agreements reached.

## Prime Minister Pashinyan says 2024 budget draft is ‘historic’



The revenues in the 2024 budget will be doubled compared to 2018, increasing by 1 trillion 334 billion drams (\$3 billion), Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in parliament during debates of his administration’s 2024 budget request.

“We are discussing the 2024 state budget draft and I have to say that in my opinion this is a historic budget of historic times,” Pashinyan said.

“The revenue part of the budget, compared to 2018, is being more than doubled, increasing by 1 trillion 334 billion drams, or 3 billion dollars. The expenditures part is also doubled,” Pashinyan said.

He noted that healthcare spending will be doubled, which means that the accessibility to healthcare for citizens will be doubled as well.

## Finance Minister presents 2024 assistance programs for forcibly displaced persons of NK



Finance Minister Vahe Hovhannisyanyan has presented the assistance programs envisaged under the 2024 state budget

for the forcibly displaced persons of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Hovhannisyanyan told lawmakers during the parliament session that the budget envisages 50,000 drams for each forcibly displaced person for accommodation and utility expenses for January, February and March.

“The additional expenditures for pensions and benefits, requiring additional 30 billion drams, are envisaged. The

additional expenditures for education and healthcare are also envisaged. At this moment the apartment and employment assistance programs are not envisaged under the budget because they could be developed and confirmed in the end of December. Nevertheless, significant amounts will be envisaged in the reserve fund in order not to have financial issues as soon as the programs are finalized,” Hovhannisyanyan said.

## Special Forces of Armenia, Greece and Cyprus hold joint drills



Attica, from November 6 to 10, the General Staff of Greek National Defense informs.

The joint training is part of the [Joint Action Plan](#) between Greece – Cyprus – Armenia for the year 2023, and contributed to the upgrading of the level of mutual understanding and the exchange of know-how between the participating forces, as well as to the development of their capabilities.

The special forces of Armenia, Greece and Cyprus held trainings in Nea Peramou,



## Armenia has sufficient resources for infrastructures of Crossroads of Peace project, says finance minister

The Crossroads of Peace project must become reality not only as a result of Armenia’s actions but also with participation of the region’s countries, Finance Minister Vahe Hovhannisyanyan said in parliament when asked on the government’s planned actions for implementing the project.

“The 2024 budget envisages significant funds for infrastructure development. The budget reflects the projects, the specific work that we plan to implement next year. As you know, Crossroads of Peace must become reality not only as a result of our actions, but also with participation of the region’s countries. When such an agreement

is reached, and this idea advances, we have a reserve fund which includes undistributed funds for capital expenditures. We will have sufficient means to ensure the infrastructures for that project,” Hovhannisyanyan said during parliamentary debates on the 2024 budget.

page 3 also an understanding that both countries do not have territorial claims against each other and are ready to assume obligations not to do so in the future. "And this is the reason why we propose Azerbaijan to reciprocally pull back troops from the administrative borders of the USSR, and to address the exclave/enclave issues. The exclave of Artsvashen, a part of sovereign Armenian territory, has been under Azeri occupation for over 30 years," Pashinyan said.

"The good news is that the main principles for peace with Azerbaijan are agreed upon. This has happened as a result of my meetings in Brussels with the Azerbaijani President under the mediation of the President of the European Council Charles Michel. These agreements are recorded in the May 14 and July 15 statements by Charles Michel following the trilateral meetings," the Prime Minister said.

Armenia has presented its Crossroads

of Peace project to ensure its share of the agreements.

Pashinyan warned however that the bad news is that Armenia and Azerbaijan still talk with different diplomatic languages and very often do not understand each other.

"Of course, there are also objective reasons for this, such as the long-lasting conflict, with certain historical context, thousands of victims, and it is very difficult to look into the eyes of their families, tens of prisoners, and there are no answers to the questions of their families, the prevailing atmosphere of hate for decades and the doubts that malicious intentions are concealed behind constructive statements. Moreover, in some sense what I've just said relates to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. But Azerbaijan, for example, hasn't once publicly mentioned the abovementioned three principles, hasn't reaffirmed

commitment to these principles, which deepens the atmosphere of distrust," Pashinyan said.

He also warned about the "extremely suspicious" Azeri state narrative of misrepresenting Armenia as 'Western Azerbaijan.'

"They are teaching this concept in schools and universities, and in the media. This seems to us as preparations for a new war, new aggression against Armenia, and it is one of the main obstacles for progress in the peace process," Pashinyan said.

The Armenian PM said that Azerbaijan's refusal to release Armenian prisoners is incomprehensible, despite Yerevan's proposal to resolve the matter under the 'all for all' principle.

Pashinyan said that Armenia is committed to the peace agenda and the peace process.

## U.S. developing record of what happened in Nagorno-Karabakh, says State Department official

The United States is developing a record of what happened in Nagorno-Karabakh and is working on support for Armenia, James O'Brien, Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, announced during a congressional hearing on November 15, [RFE/RL's Armenian service](#) reported.

During the hearing on "The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh" held by the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Europe, James O'Brien noted that the subject of investigation is not only what happened in Nagorno-Karabakh during September when the region's virtually entire ethnic Armenian population fled their homes within a matter of days after a lightning military operation launched by Azerbaijan, but also during the months preceding it.

"We have commissioned independent investigators; we have our own



investigators working in the field. There is information available from international non-governmental organizations and other investigators. And as we develop the record of what happened, we will be completely open about what we are finding. I can't put a timeline on this investigation, but we will inform you as we go forward," RFE/RL's Armenian service quoted O'Brien as saying.

"The second thing we are working on is support for Armenia... I am very impressed by the Armenian government's commitment to reforms and diversifying relationships that it has – economic, political, energy and security – particularly in the Trans-Atlantic community. And I think we owe it to the people of Armenia to help them through this difficult situation so that those choices they have made very bravely are able to help them to make them

have a more secure, stable and prosperous future," the U.S. diplomat added.

Speaking on behalf of the Department of State, O'Brien said that Washington insists that Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians have complete access to the territory, on the protection of the property and culture and that they receive adequate information "so that they can make real choice about their future."



## EU reiterates unequivocal support to Armenia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders

The second high-level Armenia-EU Political and Security Dialogue took place on November 15 in Brussels.

Building upon the inaugural meeting of the dialogue held in Yerevan this January, the meeting confirmed mutual interest of Armenia and the EU to further enhance political dialogue and cooperation in the areas of foreign, security and defence policy. The EU reiterated its unequivocal support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity (29,800 km<sup>2</sup>) and inviolability of borders of Armenia and welcomed Armenia's readiness for closer cooperation with the European Union.

During the meeting, the parties touched upon the present challenges to the European security architecture. In this regard, the unacceptability of the use, or the threat of use of force, was strongly highlighted.

The parties stressed the absolute necessity of establishing durable peace and stability in the South Caucasus. In this regard the EU expressed support to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan based on the principles of mutual recognition of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders based on the 1991 Almaty Declaration, border delimitation based on relevant USSR General Staff maps that have been provided to the sides, and the unblocking of regional communications based on respect for the sovereignty and jurisdiction of either country, on the basis of reciprocity and equality. Armenia confirmed its willingness to attend leaders' meeting in Brussels facilitated by President of the European Council Charles Michel. The EU welcomed Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" project concept, as an expression



of commitment of the Government of Armenia to the establishment of peace and cooperation in the region and beyond.

Armenia highly appreciated the fast deployment of the EU civilian CSDP mission (EU Mission in Armenia – EUMA) along the internationally recognized border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the support rendered by the EU Member States to it. The Armenian side also welcomed the EU's readiness to involve third countries in the Mission. The parties discussed the possibility of extension of the Mission, as well as non-lethal support to Armenia through the European Peace Facility. The support to Armenia's participation in regional projects such as the Black Sea Underwater Electricity and Internet Cables was reaffirmed.

The parties also touched upon the issues of mass displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, reaffirming previously stated positions that the rights and security of the Karabakh Armenians including right to return should be ensured.

With regard to the Armenia-Türkiye full normalization process, both parties expressed hope that agreements reached so far, in particular the opening of land border for the third country citizens and diplomatic passports holders, will be implemented in the earliest possible timeframe.

The participants of the Dialogue also discussed the state of relations with countries in the region, wider geopolitical developments, as well as issues relating to hybrid threats and other security challenges.

The next Armenia-EU Political and Security Dialogue will take place in Yerevan in 2024.

The high-level Political and Security Dialogue was co-chaired by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia Vahan Kostanyan and Deputy Secretary General/Political Director of the European External Action Service Enrique Mora.

## State Department signals pause in U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan



Ambassador James O'Brien, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, told House Foreign Affairs Committee members on November 15 “we have not and don’t anticipate submitting a waiver on [Section] 907,” referencing the 1992 U.S. law that restricts U.S. aid to Azerbaijan based on its ongoing aggression against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Amb. O'Brien flatly rejected arguments — often advanced by the Azerbaijani lobby — that enforcing Section 907 would undermine U.S. national security interests, the ANCA reports.

Amb. O'Brien's statements came during the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) Subcommittee on Europe hearing on “The Future of Nagorno-Karabakh”, where Committee members pressed the State Department and USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Dr. Alexander Sokolowski about expanding U.S. aid to the over 100,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian victims of Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing and efforts to stop renewed Aliyev regime aggression against Armenia.

“Over 100,000 ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh are now living as refugees in Armenia. We cannot afford to look away from the region or be distracted by other conflicts proliferating across the globe,” stated Subcommittee on Europe Chair Tom Kean (R-NJ). He went on to call

on State Department and USAID representatives to outline plans for humanitarian assistance to NK refugees and asked them to clarify the Biden Administration's message to Azerbaijani officials to prevent further attacks against Armenia. “I hope our witnesses today will explain how they are communicating to President Aliyev that the use of force against sovereign Armenian territory, including in the Syunik province, would be completely and totally unacceptable,” stated Chairman Kean.

Subcommittee Ranking Democrat Rep. Bill Keating (D-MA) concurred, noting “I strongly believe we must provide humanitarian and economic assistance to displaced people in Armenia and ensure accountability for any potential crimes committed against those fleeing Nagorno-Karabakh or those who are choosing to remain there.”

Speaking of the 100,000 Armenian refugees “uprooted” from NK, Amb. O'Brien told Congress “we insist on the people having complete access to the territory, on the protection of the property, the protection of the culture, and that the people receive adequate information so that they can make a real choice about their future and know that they have the viable opportunity to return and live well in Nagorno-Karabakh if that's what they choose.” Amb. O'Brien announced that the State Department has commissioned independent investigators, and is working with international partners to provide “a comprehensive, thorough, and transparent record of what happened, not just on those days, but for the months before.” No timeline was announced for the presentation of the report.

In an attempt to address Congressional

concerns about a clear US response to Azerbaijan's attack on NK that led to the forced exile of NK Armenians, Amb. O'Brien noted “We've canceled a number of high-level visits [...] We don't anticipate submitting a [Section 907] waiver until such time as we see a real improvement in the situation. All of this is to say we continue to urge peace.”

With regard to the U.S. humanitarian aid for NK's forcibly displaced, Dr. Sokolowski reiterated USAID Administrator Power's commitment of \$11.5 million in U.S. assistance. He also announced that “USAID has focused nearly \$6 million in funding from existing programming at USAID Armenia to respond to the humanitarian crisis.”

Members of Congress were skeptical about the State Department's optimism about Azerbaijan-Armenia peace talks and President Aliyev's commitment to peace in the region.

“I don't see the peace process as going nearly as well as some of the descriptions I've just heard. The meeting in Granada, Spain, the last two meetings, Azerbaijan refused to go. I don't know how you describe that as being positive,” stated Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA). He went on to raise security concerns stemming from proposed economic corridors through Armenia. “Armenians are concerned and feel threatened by that corridor and what it might imply for another grabbing of land by Azerbaijan once it's established.”

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) asked Assistant Secretary O'Brien to outline the specific resources the State Department is prepared to use to ensure Azerbaijan honors a peace deal. “What are you prepared to do, Ambassador

page 10 [O'Brien], to create a carrot and stick to move this agenda? Are you willing to add sanctions for non-compliance?" Assistant Secretary O'Brien stated, "Yes, we are looking at all the tools we have. I'm not going to preview any sanctions decisions, but that's certainly a tool in our toolkit."

Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY) questioned Biden Administration's military aid to Azerbaijan in the face of President Aliyev's ties with Russia and Iran. "Sanctioned Russian and Iranian companies own significant shares in Azerbaijan's gas fields exporting energy to Europe, and Azerbaijan has recently signed lucrative energy deals with both countries," stated Rep. Lawler. Assistant Secretary O'Brien noted they were aware of Azerbaijan's energy deals, and affirmed they are not in US national interests.

"Many of us here in Congress sent letter after letter after letter and supported resolution after resolution to exert pressure and relieve the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, which had been exacerbated since the 2020 war. It looks

like we failed," stated Rep. Brad Schneider (D-IL) in powerful remarks questioning the State Department's assessment of prospects for peace. "The tightening of the stranglehold around Nagorno-Karabakh over the years until the ethnic Armenian population was forced to leave, was not just about counterterrorism, and it was not just about geopolitics," stated Rep. Schneider. He went on to relay the story of the brutal murder of Armenian serviceman Gurgen Margaryan, axed to death by Azerbaijani soldier Ramil Safarov during a NATO exercise in Hungary in 2004. Safarov was extradited back to Azerbaijan in 2012, where he was promoted and rewarded for his actions. "What should be our takeaway from what happened in 2004 through 2012? How should we think of the possibilities of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan in this context," asked Rep. Schneider.

Calling the Margaryan's murder a "reprehensible" set of events, Amb. O'Brien cited the need for "accountability for crimes," and "setting a new path going forward," but stopped short of outlining any clear U.S. actions to achieve the former or to

ensure the latter – placing the onus on Armenia and Azerbaijan. "We are creating a path for them to take and incentives for them to go there."

Noting Turkey's history of genocide against the Armenian people, Rep. Dina Titus cited the close ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan and asked "what kind of damage are they causing now?" Rep. Titus called for end-use monitoring of US weapons sold to Turkey, expressing concern about Turkey's illegal transfer of military parts and munitions to Azerbaijan

Rep. Madeleine Dean stressed the importance of the hearing. "What started as a blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh culminated in the Azerbaijani offensive on September 19 and 20 to regain control of the region. Within 10 days, approximately 100,000 residents of Nagorno-Karabakh, about 80 percent of the population, fled to Armenia. Armenia, the U.S., E.U., and international organizations have stepped in to provide humanitarian assistance for the refugees, but many questions remain as to their future, as well as the future of Nagorno-Karabakh," stated Rep. Dean.

## French report flags Azerbaijani-linked disinformation campaign targeting 2024 Olympics

France's cyber defense unit (Viginum) has unveiled a disinformation campaign emanating from Azerbaijan that aimed to undermine Paris' capacity to hold next year's Olympic Games, a report showed on Monday, [Reuters](#) reports.

According to the report, the campaign ran from July 26-27 on an account of an Azerbaijani individual on social media X, formerly Twitter, with links to the Azerbaijani presidential party.

However, Viginum said it had not been able to link the campaign directly to the Azerbaijani authorities.



According to Reuters, neither the Azerbaijani government nor the presidential party were immediately available for comment. The Azeri embassy in Paris did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ties between Paris and Baku have

been strained in recent months and have worsened since Baku took control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

At the time of the campaign, France had repeatedly criticized Azerbaijani authorities over the blocking of the Lachin corridor, the key road that linked Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

A French diplomatic source said Paris had asked Baku for clarifications on the disinformation campaign. It would also be discussing the matter with X, formerly Twitter, in the coming days, the source said.

## Lemkin Institute condemns 15-year prison sentence handed down to Vagif Khachatryan



The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has condemned the 15-year prison sentence handed down to Mr. Vagif Khachatryan on 7 November 2023 by the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Lemkin Institute exhorts the international community to persuade the regime of President Aliyev into promptly releasing all Armenian persons under its jurisdiction and to refrain from providing any kind of assistance that could worsen the suffering of the victims of the Artsakh genocide or embolden Azerbaijan to perpetrate any unlawful act of aggression.

A resident of the Republic of Artsakh, Mr. Khachatryan was detained at the illegal Hakari Bridge checkpoint on 29 July 2023 while he was being evacuated from his homeland by the International Committee of the Red Cross for urgent medical treatment. This checkpoint was

established by Azerbaijan in the Lachin Corridor in April 2023, four months after Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the same corridor on 12 December 2022. This blockade left the then 120,000 inhabitants of Artsakh without essential goods and services, constituting a textbook case of genocide-by-attrition, as accurately observed by the former prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo.

Mr. Khachatryan's abduction took place before Azerbaijan's military aggression against Artsakh on 19 September 2023, which resulted in massacre and atrocity and the consequent flight of almost 100 percent of its indigenous Armenian population to neighboring Armenia. The aggression, atrocity and forced displacement amount to a very thorough genocide of an ancient, continuous indigenous civilization.

Upon his abduction, Mr. Khachatryan was immediately accused by Azerbaijani authorities of committing war crimes during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War in the 1990s, charges he has repeatedly denied and for which Azerbaijan has offered no

independent evidence.

The Lemkin Institute recalls the ongoing and unlawful imprisonment of the eight high-ranking Armenian officials, as well as the abandonment of dozens and perhaps hundreds of Armenian civilian captives and POWs, as outlined in its aforementioned statement, who might soon share the same fate as Mr. Khachatryan, if not worse. Time and time again, Azerbaijan has shown its repudiation of a law-based international order, including its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

The Lemkin Institute exhorts the international community, which seems to have forgotten the commission of atrocity crimes in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, as well as the looming threat of an invasion of the Republic of Armenia by Azerbaijan, to persuade the regime of President Aliyev into promptly releasing all Armenian persons under its jurisdiction and to refrain from providing any kind of assistance that could worsen the suffering of the victims of the Artsakh genocide or embolden Azerbaijan to perpetrate any unlawful act of aggression.

## Christian Solidarity International urges US to call the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh to account



Christian Solidarity International

Christian Solidarity International (CSI) is urging the United States to put its words into action and call the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh to account.

In a [letter](#) to President Joe Biden dated

November 13, CSI International President Dr. John Eibner says it is time for the U.S. to stand up for the Christian people of Armenia who are existentially threatened by the aggressive authoritarian regimes in Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Referencing President Biden's Oval Office speech on October 20 pledging support to the endangered peoples of Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, Eibner reminds the president that the Armenian people, and specifically the 120,000 Armenian Christians of Nagorno Karabakh, are still waiting for "constructive American action

to stop an ongoing process of genocide" against them.

Last September, Azerbaijan, openly supported by Turkey, finally achieved its goal of ethnically and religiously cleansing the Caucasus region of Nagorno Karabakh of its Armenian Christian population following a nine-month blockade. "In doing so, Azerbaijan and Turkey reached another milestone in the historic process of the Armenian Genocide," writes Eibner.

CSI's international president recalls that, speaking on behalf of the administration only five days

## Armenia signed the Framework Agreement on the Establishment of the International Solar Alliance



On November 16, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia the official signing ceremony of the Framework Agreement on the Establishment of the International Solar Alliance by Armenia was held, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

According to the source, the signing ceremony was attended by Gnel Sanosyan, Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia and the Ambassadors of co-founding countries of the International Solar Alliance - Ambassador of France Olivier Decottignies and Ambassador of India

Nilakshi Saha Sinha.

The Agreement was signed by Deputy Foreign Minister Mnatsakan Safaryan, and the signed original copies were officially handed over to Nilakshi Saha Sinha, Ambassador of India - the Depositary State of the Agreement.

"The Agreement will then undergo an internal ratification process and enter into force on the thirtieth day following the handover of the instrument of ratification by Armenia to the Depositary.

Armenia's accession to the International Solar Alliance is an important step towards combating climate change, developing renewable and green energy resources, ensuring energy access and energy security," reads the statement.

*The International Solar Alliance was established through the joint efforts of India and France towards working together to combat climate change and harness solar energy resources. The concept of the Alliance was developed in 2015 within the framework of the 21st Conference of the*

*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) held in Paris. In 2020 The Alliance made changes to the Framework Agreement, according to which all UN member states have the opportunity to join the Alliance. Currently, 116 states have signed the Framework Agreement of the Alliance, 94 of which have submitted the necessary ratification documents to become full members of the Alliance. The decision-making body of the Alliance is the Assembly, convened once a year at the level of relevant ministers from the member states. The Alliance is headquartered in India.*

*Renewable energy is one of the most important directions of the development of the energy system in Armenia, where solar energy has developed particularly well during recent years. Today, more than 5 percent of the total electricity produced comes from solar plants; the strategic program on energy development foresees by 2030 to increase the share of solar energy in the total to 15 percent.*

page 12 before Azerbaijan's military assault, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Yuri Kim informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "The United States will not countenance any action or effort—short-term or long-term—to ethnically cleanse or commit other atrocities against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh."

Yet this is exactly what has happened, says Eibner. "Your administration did not act in defense of the fundamental human rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Instead, it sacrificed them as valueless expendables in the context of the United States' geopolitical power struggle for ascendancy in the South Caucasus."

In her Congressional testimony, Kim identified the powers whose influence the Biden administration is dedicated to combat: Russia, China and Iran. But she failed to mention Azerbaijan and Turkey

– the neo-Ottoman political, military, and economic constellation behind the ethnic/religious cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh.

Having met with no challenge from the U.S., Azerbaijan and Turkey have now fixed their sights on the Republic of Armenia, whose people are increasingly anxious about their own future, states Eibner.

"A reorientation of American policy to combat the malign influence of Azerbaijan and Turkey is overdue. But it is not too late," he writes, and urges the U.S. to action.

The required action includes pressing for a UN Security Council Resolution calling for the establishment of a secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return to Nagorno Karabakh in safety, the international civil presence can operate, a transitional administration can be established, and humanitarian aid can be delivered.

The U.S. must simultaneously impose severe sanctions against the architects and other enablers of Azerbaijan's religious/ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh; call for the suspension of Azerbaijan's membership of NATO's "Partnership for Peace Program"; and halt all US military aid to Azerbaijan.

The U.S. has the capacity to prevent further genocide in the region, Eibner concludes. "All that is required is the will on your part to lead. The power and prestige of the United States as an upholder of a rules-based world order, anchored in the UN Charter and the international human rights instruments, will be enhanced by such a display of leadership."

Christian Solidarity International is an international human rights group campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity.

## 1489: Armenian documentary on 44-day war wins Best Film at International Documentary Festival Amsterdam



Documentary 1489, directed by Armenian filmmaker Shoghakat Vardanyan, won Best Film in International Competition at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, [Deadline](#) reports.

The film revolves around the disappearance of the director's 21-year-old

brother, Soghomon Vardanyan, who went missing in the early days of the renewed fighting in 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The awards were handed out on November 16.

The award comes with a €15,000 cash prize. The jury members of the International Competition were Emilie Bujès, Francesco Gai Via, Tabitha Jackson, Ada Solomon, and Xiaoshuai Wang.

Jurors called 1489, "A film that acts as a piercing light that makes visible the vast hidden interior landscape of grief and creates a tangible presence from unbearable absence. Cinema as a tool of survival—to allow us all, to look at the things we would rather not see. And ultimately, an unforgettable example of cinema as an act of love."

Palestinian filmmaker Mohamed Jabaly won Best Director in International Competition for his film *Life Is Beautiful*, an account of how he became stranded in Norway while making his earlier

## Armenian Defense Minister attends opening of Dubai Airshow

Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan attended the opening ceremony of Dubai Airshow 2023 at the invitation of the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Minister of Defense, Ruler of



Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Following the official ceremony, the Minister of Defense visited the pavilions of international companies and got acquainted with the products on display.

## Greek defense Minister attends the concert of National Philharmonic Orchestra of Armenia in Athens

Greek Defense Minister Nikos Dendias attended the concert of the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Armenia at Megaron Concert Hall in Athens, Greece.

"It was with great pleasure that I attended with my wife and the Ambassador of Armenia, Mr. Tigran Mkrtchyan the great concert of the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Armenia, for the 120th anniversary of the birth of the leading

Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian," Mr. Denidias said in a post on X.

Under the direction of Artistic Director and Chief Conductor Eduard Topchyan, the orchestra performed a program of works by Aram Khachaturian and Sergei Rachmaninoff.

The concert was a resounding success, with the audience giving the orchestra a standing ovation.



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