

# Armenia joins Summit for Democracy Declaration with reservations, says Azerbaijan’s acts of aggression not reflected



Washington, DC. - President Joe Biden speaks alongside Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a Summit for Democracy virtual plenary, March 29, 2023

Armenia has joined the Declaration adopted at the end of the plenary session of the second Summit for Democracy with a reservation.

The Republic of Armenia refrained from the following Paragraph, saying the Paragraph does not reflect all conflicts and crises in comprehensive and inclusive manner and fails to address the fact of Azerbaijan’s acts of aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia and occupation of the certain parts of the sovereign territory of Armenia: “We reiterate our firm resolve to support countries and people around the world that adhere to the values of freedom and

democracy, against direct or indirect attempts or threats to undermine them. We recognize the fundamental principles of the UN Charter that all states shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state and shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means. We recognize the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense of States consistent with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. We underscore the need to reach, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the principles of the UN Charter. ➡ page 3

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## Armenia and Greece sign military cooperation plan for 2023



The Greece-Armenia Military Cooperation Program for 2023 was signed on Tuesday by the Director of the Directorate of International Relations of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff (GEETHA), Brigadier Vasilios Tsami, and the Director of the Department of Defense Policy and

International Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia, Mr. Levon Ayvazyan, [Greek City Times](#) reports.

The program for 2023 includes 21 activities, of which 15 will take place in Greece and 6 in Armenia:

Joint training of Special Forces – Special Operations Forces.

Co-training on Electronic Warfare.

Participation in the Multinational Training Centre for Peace Support Operations.

Exchange of experiences and lessons in Air Defence Systems.

Staff exchange and visits to schools and multinational schools, as well as seminars.

Staff meetings and talks on matters of mutual interest, with special emphasis on the field of Military Intelligence.

The signing of the Program confirms the strong military ties of the two countries and further strengthens the operational capabilities and the level of interoperability of their Armed Forces, contributing to the strengthening of the role played by Greece and Armenia in ensuring stability and security in the wider region.

## Armenian FM discusses regional developments with the Ambassador of Spain

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan received Marcos Gómez Martínez, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Spain to the Republic of Armenia (residence in Moscow).

The interlocutors commended the positive dynamic of the development of relations between Armenia and Spain and exchanged views on the prospects of deepening the political dialogue. The opportunities of expanding the bilateral cooperation in a number of spheres, including economy and information technologies, were discussed. Given the fact that Spain will assume the Presidency of



the EU Council starting from July, different topics of the Armenia-EU partnership were touched upon, including the deployment of the EU Civil Monitoring Mission in Armenia.

During the meeting the interlocutors exchanged views on topics related to

regional security and stability. Minister Mirzoyan touched upon Azerbaijan's actions, including the recent aggressions against the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, the rhetoric at the highest level and the illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan, emphasizing that such actions of Azerbaijan do not contribute to Armenia's efforts to establish lasting peace in the region. Ararat Mirzoyan stressed the importance of lifting the blockade of the Lachin corridor as well as the importance of sending an international fact-finding mission to the corridor.

## US concerned over Azerbaijani military movements

The US is concerned over Azerbaijani military movements, Vedant Patel, Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the Department of State, said at a daily briefing.

"Assistant Secretary Karen Donfried spoke with Foreign Minister Bayramov and expressed concern over Azerbaijani military movements. She emphasized the US's commitment to Armenia-Azerbaijan

peace negotiations," the Spokesperson said.

"As the Secretary has also spoken about this quite repeatedly, direct dialogue is key to resolving this issue and reaching a lasting peace. There is not a military solution to this conflict. We'll continue to facilitate discussions between Armenia and Azerbaijan bilaterally as well as with

partners, and as well as throughout multilateral organizations as well," he added.





## Route of Lachin corridor changes

As a result of the agreement reached between the authorities of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh in August 2022, the route of the Lachin Corridor was changed with the launch of a new road, the Prime Minister said.

“But since the road connecting the Lachin Corridor to the Republic of Armenia was not completely ready, a temporary route was launched that entered the territory of the Republic of Armenia through the Kornidzor Bridge, then again into the territory of Azerbaijan, then again into the territory of the Republic of Armenia. According to the agreement reached, this route was supposed to operate until April 1, 2023,” the Prime Minister said.

According to PM Pashinyan, on March 29 Armenia informed the Azerbaijani side that, according to the agreement, after the Kornidzor bridge the road will continue only through the territory of Armenia, and that the border guard troops of the Republic of Armenia will take over the protection of the state border of the Republic of Armenia in that area.

He emphasized that the border guard troops will be stationed at the state border




of the Republic of Armenia in the same positions where the units of the Ministry of Defense were stationed until now.

PM Pashinyan said the Azerbaijani side tried to present the situation as another “blockbuster.”

“This approach is at least not constructive. No change in the Armenian positions has occurred as a result of all this, with the difference that we intend to protect the area in question, unlike before, through

Border Guard troops. In other words, the change that takes place is as follows: from the same positions along the state border of the Republic of Armenia, the units of the Ministry of Defense will withdraw according to the plan, and units of the Border Guard troops will be deployed in their place. We made the same proposal to Azerbaijan as well, so that the same would happen on Azerbaijan’s side. I hope that this process will take place without provocations,” Nikol Pashinyan stated.

page 1  *We deplore the dire human rights and humanitarian consequences of the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, including the continuous attacks against critical infrastructure across Ukraine with devastating consequences for civilians, and express our grave concern at the high number of civilian casualties, including women and children, the number of internally displaced persons and refugees in need of humanitarian assistance, and violations and abuses committed against children. We are deeply concerned by the adverse impact of the war on global food security, energy, nuclear*

*security and safety and the environment. We demand that Russia immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and call for a cessation of hostilities. We also call for the parties to the armed conflict to adhere to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. We call also for the complete exchange of prisoners of war, the release of all unlawfully detained persons and the return of all internees and of civilians forcibly transferred and deported, including children. We strongly support*

*accountability for the most serious crimes under international law committed on the territory of Ukraine through appropriate, fair and independent investigations and prosecutions at the national or international level, and to ensure justice for all victims and the prevention of future crimes.”*

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan participated** in the plenary session of the second Summit for Democracy on March 29. The summit was held at the initiative of the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, in an online format.

## Whoever attacks Syunik, attacks Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes – says French region's president in Armenian province



The Syunik Province of Armenia and the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of France have signed an agreement on deepening cooperation in healthcare, economy and tourism.

The signing ceremony of the cooperation agreement was held in the Tatev Monastery Complex. It was signed by Syunik Governor Robert Ghukasyan and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes President Laurent

Wauquiez.

Mayors of cities in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, delegates from French organizations, Syunik provincial authorities, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Vache Terteryan, mayors of cities in Syunik, Members of Parliament representing Syunik constituencies, clergymen, the Armenian Ambassador to France and the French Ambassador to Armenia attended the ceremony.

Priorities of cooperation outlined in the agreement include access to healthcare, economic development – especially in agriculture, vocational education – mainly for the youth, tourism promotion and Francophonie promotion.

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes President Laurent Wauquiez, in his remarks, said he knows the historic and meaningful value

of visiting the province. “And why are we here today? The struggle for Armenia’s integrity will by and large be determined here, in Syunik, because first of all you have always carried the spirit of Armenian resistance, Syunik has never [retreated]. As someone who comes from a mountainous country, I feel strongly for people like David Bek and Garegin Nzhdeh. Thus, in order for Armenia to achieve success, Syunik must develop and be strong. You are the crossroads of the big roads that can also be the defense of Armenia. Therefore, our goal is to empower this province through joint programs and cooperation. From this moment on, the fates of Syunik and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes are one, this means whoever attacks Syunik attacks Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.”

## Armenia not carrying out military transfers to Artsakh: PM Pashinyan dismisses Azerbaijani claims

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan dismissed Azerbaijani reports claiming Armenia is transferring weapons to the Republic of Artsakh.

Speaking at the government sitting on March 30, PM Pashinyan said it’s a “propaganda lie” aimed at creating legitimacy for new escalation.

“Armenia is not carrying out military transfers to Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia has no army in Nagorno Karabakh,” he stressed.

The Prime Minister reminded that Azerbaijan rejected the proposal to deploy

an international fact-finding mission that could verify this fact during the October 6th quadrilateral meeting in Prague [between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, French President Emmanuel Macron and EU Council President Charles Michel].

“The proposal remains in force, and I think there is a need to finally clarify the issue on the international level, and he option is to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Nagorno Karabakh and the Lachin corridor,” he said.

PM Pashinyan said there is the Defense

Army in Nagorno Karabakh and its existence is justified by the fact that Azerbaijan is apparently preparing for genocide of Armenians in Artsakh.

“The Lachin corridor has been closed for more than 100 days, the gas and electricity supply is cut, farmers and agricultural equipment are being periodically targeted by Azerbaijani forces, Azerbaijan’s belligerent rhetoric continues. We must continue to consistently inform the international community about this and work towards employing relevant international mechanisms,” he said.

## Opposition nominates candidate for Ombudsman



The two opposition caucuses in the Armenian parliament have nominated their candidate for Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman), a position that has been vacant since the resignation of Kristinne

Grigoryan in January.

The opposition’s candidate is Edgar Ghazaryan, a former Armenian Ambassador to Poland and former Chief of Staff of the Constitutional Court, the chair of the human rights and public affairs committee Taguhi Tovmasyan said in a statement.

Ghazaryan is a vocal critic of the incumbent government.

The ruling Civil Contract party has officially nominated Deputy Prosecutor General Anahit Manasyan as its candidate for Human Rights Defender, the party’s parliamentary faction secretary Artur

Hovhannisyan announced.

Candidates must pass a confirmation vote in parliament to be installed as Ombudsman.





## If there is no spring offensive by Azerbaijan, then the EU mission in Armenia is a success, Markus Ritter says



If there is no Azerbaijani assault this spring, then the EU mission is a success, head of the EU mission in Armenia Markus Ritter says.

Many Armenians are glad about the EU presence, Ritter said in an interview with *Deutsche Welle*.

But he was quick to dampen expectations: observers are not permitted access to Azerbaijani territory. Ritter and his colleagues are therefore unable to detect, for instance, troop movements in preparation of another attack.

"We cannot interfere, we only have binoculars and cameras at our disposal," Markus Ritter said.

"Many Armenians believe there'll be a spring offensive by Azerbaijan. If this doesn't happen, our mission is already a success," he added.

The European Union launched the EU civilian mission in Armenia (EU Mission in Armenia / EUMA) on February 20 under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

The EUMA was formally established by a Council Decision on 23 January 2023. Through its deployment on the Armenian side of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, the objectives are to contribute to stability in the border areas of Armenia, build confidence and human security in conflict affected areas, and ensure an environment conducive to the normalization efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan supported by the EU.

## Moscow hopes issues of cooperation between Armenia and CSTO will be resolved constructively – Deputy FM

Moscow expects that harmful discussions regarding the nature of Yerevan's interaction with other CSTO members will stop, and the issues that arise in this regard will be resolved constructively, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin has said.

"We hope that the harmful discussions on the topic of "who withdraws from where" will stop and all issues of interaction with Yerevan within the framework of the CSTO, including the deployment of an observation mission of the organization on the territory of Armenia, will be resolved in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner," he said in an interview with RTVI.

The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister also noted that all the concerns of the Armenian side are being discussed within



the framework of the interaction formats existing in the CSTO – from meetings of the Permanent Council to the Collective Security Council, which is the highest body of the organization.

"For our part, we reaffirm our readiness to implement plans to deploy a CSTO mission on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in the interests of ensuring

the security of Armenia, as well as other assistance measures laid down in the relevant draft decision of the CSTO Collective Security Council on providing assistance to the republic," he stressed.

According to Galuzin, the organization has launched an intensive process of implementing the decisions that were made during last year's meetings of the leaders of the CSTO member countries.

"Thanks largely to Armenia's chairmanship; much has been done to build up the CSTO's capabilities to repel challenges and threats to our collective security. I would like to emphasize that the results achieved would not have been possible without the coordinated, fruitful and interested work of all member states," the diplomat added.

## Iran sees '3+3' format as a way to resolve tensions in the Caucasus – FM



Tehran believes that the tensions in the Caucasus region can be resolved within the "3+3" format, which implies the participation of the three countries of the South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia

and Georgia), as well as the three closest neighbors of this region (Russia, Iran and Turkey), Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian said on March 29.

"Of course, we must, through the '3+3' mechanism, as well as through existing mechanisms resolve issues in this region without resorting to force," he said at a press conference following talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow.

Abdollahian also emphasized the

importance of moving together towards lasting peace and inclusive security to have the economic opportunities of the Caucasus region flourish. He also pointed out the unacceptability of foreign interference in this situation.

"We believe that it is necessary to move towards peace and stability, and foreign interference in this region and efforts to change the geopolitical situation in the region are factors that complicate the situation further," the diplomat stated.

## Armenia's High-Tech Ministry to cooperate with Apple's official partner ASBC

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on March 29 between the Armenian Ministry of High-Tech Industry and Apple's official partner ASBC within the framework of the FutureTech conference.

The memorandum was ratified by Minister of High-Tech Industry Robert Khachatryan and ASBC Director General Mikayel Grigoryan.

Robert Khachatryan said the cooperation with ASBC is another important step towards the development of high technologies in Armenia.

"The memorandum will provide an opportunity to contribute to the dynamic development of information technology infrastructure in Armenia. In addition,



companies operating in the Armenian market will be able to purchase Apple devices at an exceptional price, and replace old devices with new ones. I hope that representatives of the sector will take advantage of this opportunity, modernizing

the technical capabilities and equipment of the companies," said Robert Khachatryan.

ASBC Director General Mikael Grigoryan said he believes that Apple products and services will be available in the Armenian market with wider opportunities, scales and profitable values.

"I want to thank the ministry for this opportunity. I sincerely hope that our cooperation will have a positive impact on the development of the technological sector of Armenia," he said.

The event was attended by ASBC partners, representatives of leading IT companies and media.

## Economic Activity Index grows 10,9% in January-February



Armenia's economic activity index grew 10,9% in January and February of 2023 compared to the same period of 2022, according to official data released by the Statistical Committee.

Industrial output in the two months of 2023 grew 1% compared to the same period of the previous year. Construction grew 13,2%.

Trade turnover increased 18% while services increased 23.5%.

The Consumer Price Index grew 8,1%. Meanwhile, the Industrial Product Price Index grew 0,8%.

Electrical energy production dropped 0,2%.

A 77,7% growth was recorded in the foreign trade volumes compared to the same two months of last year. Exports and imports grew 96,4% and 67,4% respectively.

## Rosselkhoznadzor asks Armenia to stop supplying dairy products to Russia

The Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision (Rosselkhoznadzor) asks Armenia to stop supplying dairy products to Russia from April 5, 2023, the Ministry said in a press release.

"Taking into account the results of the negotiations and the unsatisfying results of the inspection, which were reported earlier, Rosselkhoznadzor applied to the Veterinary Service of Armenia with a request to suspend the certification of dairy products from all enterprises of the country to Russia from April 5, 2023," TASS quoted from the report.

As explained by the department, on March 31, 2023, negotiations were held between the veterinary services of the

Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia, during which the results of the inspections conducted at dairy processing enterprises of Armenia from March 20 to 24, 2023 were discussed. During the meeting, the issue of the impossibility of guaranteeing the safety of dairy products for Russian consumers by the Veterinary Service of Armenia was raised.

Rosselkhoznadzor added that the possibility of resumption of supplies will be discussed additionally, taking into account the results of the works aimed at eliminating the violations discovered by the Armenian side.

As Noyan Tapan reported earlier, "Rosselkhoznadzor" reported that there is an increase in the supply of dairy products

from Armenia to the Russian market. The department reported that according to preliminary information received from the Armenian side, the milk processing enterprises of Armenia use raw materials produced by the enterprises of the Islamic Republic of Iran, against which "Rosselkhoznadzor" applies restrictive measures.

In response to this statement, the Food Safety Inspection Body informed that no food safety issues threatening human life and health were found. The Inspection Body noted that dairy production, as well as the entire chain of food production, is properly controlled by the Food Safety Inspection Body, in accordance with the functions assigned by legal acts.



## Nagorno Karabakh's economy suffers at least \$1,9 million in losses every day amid ongoing blockade

Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) is suffering at least \$1,9 million in economic damages every day amid the ongoing Azerbaijani blockade, according to a report by a specialized team of economists led by international consultant for finance management Vardan Aramyan.

The report was ordered by the government of Nagorno Karabakh and the former State Minister and co-founder of the We Are Our Mountains Territorial Development Agency Ruben Vardanyan. Recovering Nagorno Karabakh's economy in the future is going to be very difficult, the experts warned.

100 days of blockade caused \$190,000,000 damages (including deadweight loss) to Nagorno Karabakh.



The evaluation doesn't take into account loss of potential and the necessary expenditures for buffers intended for avoiding such economic shocks.

"The longer the blockade lasts the more damage is inflicted upon the economic potential. Someday soon we might face a situation when there won't be an economic

life at all, and there'll be simply consumption, the money will flow from the outside, the residents will simply consume, and the consumed products will mostly be imported," Aramyan warned.

Nagorno Karabakh's economy was growing before the 2020 war. Since then, it dropped on an average of 17,6% annually. But the economy began to recover in 2022, with 18,2% growth being recorded in January-September. The blockade disrupted the growth. In December, the economic activity index dropped 20,7% after having recorded 27,7% and 13,5% growth in October and November.

Some 16,200 people could become unemployed if the blockade continues.

Nagorno Karabakh has been blockaded by Azerbaijan since 12 December 2022.

## Armenia continues to be in a state of high economic activeness. Nikol Pashinyan

Chaired by Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, a consultation was held in the Government on economic growth trends and development plans in Armenia on March 29, the Office of the Prime Minister informs

In relation to the topic, the Prime Minister particularly said, "According to the data published by the Statistical Committee yesterday, Armenia continues to be in a state of high economic activeness. We have set a task to ensure economic growth of at least 7 percent also in 2023. I propose to discuss some nuances related to the indicator of economic activity and to summarize our upcoming actions in the sense of guaranteeing our objectives regarding economic activity."

The officials in charge referred to the



data published by the Statistical Committee on the main macroeconomic indicators for January-February 2023. Accordingly, a 10.9 percent increase in economic activity was recorded. The volume of construction increased by 13.2 percent, services by 23.5 percent, domestic trade by 18 percent, and foreign trade by 77.7 percent. The index of consumer inflation decreased, making 8.1 percent. It was noted that the inflow

of capital and labor to Armenia continues.

The measures to be taken in the direction of maintaining the dynamic of progressive growth recorded in the economic sector were discussed. Investment projects and development programs in industry, agriculture, urban development, infrastructure, energy, technology and other fields, reform agenda, fiscal and monetary policy, international economic trends, etc. were addressed.

Summarizing, the Prime Minister emphasized the consistent work towards ensuring continuous economic growth and instructed to keep the implementation of the Government's goals in the center of attention.

## Supreme Court's decision on the Rome Statute does not recognize anyone guilty - Deputy President of the parliament



Armenia has heard the concerns of the Russian Federation and will be able to ensure that the further process related to the Rome Statute does not harm the strategic relations between Armenia and Russia, Deputy President of the National Assembly told ARMENPRESS.

- Mr. Arshakyan, after the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia recorded in the decision published on March 24 that the Rome Statute corresponds to the Constitution of Armenia, both in Armenia and in Russia and in the international press, there was a great noise and it was presented that this was Armenia's reaction to the issuance of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court against the President of the Russian Federation. How will you comment?

- I think the best answer to the question is provided by the chronology. The Government of the Republic of Armenia approved the draft law of the Republic of Armenia "On Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court signed on July 17, 1998 and on the adoption of a statement on the retroactive recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in accordance with Article 12, Part 3 of the Statute" on December 29, 2022, during the public session of the Cabinet. The issue was reported live by Minister of Justice Grigor Minasyan. It has been clearly recorded that this is Armenia's reaction to the cases of Azerbaijan's aggression against the sovereign territories of Armenia, in particular, to the acts of war committed by Azerbaijani servicemen during the September aggression. The ratification of the Rome Statute will give Armenia the opportunity to raise the issue of responsibility for the gravest crimes committed by the servicemen of Azerbaijan in the International Criminal Court. Continuing the chronology, I would like to emphasize that the government presented the issue to the Constitutional Court on January 3, according to the

established procedure. The International Criminal Court published the decision on the President of the Russian Federation on March 17. The Constitutional Court of Armenia published its decision on March 24 after a three-month discussion. Moreover, according to Armenian legislation, the Constitutional Court should make a decision within three months. That decision is exclusively legal and answers only one question: do the obligations stipulated by the Rome Statute correspond to the Constitution of Armenia? I mean, the decision of the Supreme Court does not recognize anyone as guilty in any matter, neither requires anyone to be arrested. And back in December 2022, the Armenian government of course could not have guessed or predicted the probability and content of concrete decisions by the International Criminal Court in March.

- But the MP of the ruling faction announced that after the ratification of the Rome Statute, if the Russian president visits Armenia, he will be arrested.

- There were similar publications in the Russian press before the statement of the MP of the ruling faction. This does not

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## France's Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region will try to organize delivery of humanitarian aid to Artsakh



Laurent Wauquiez, President of the Regional Council of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France, says they will try to deliver humanitarian aid to Artsakh.

"I have long been a friend of Armenia and Artsakh. I'm shocked by everything happening here," Mr. Wauquiez said speaking alongside Artsakh's Foreign Minister Sergey Ghazaryan at the Representation of Artsakh in Yerevan.

He said an agreement on cooperation

between Artsakh and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region was signed back in 2019. Laurent Wauquiez says his family faced huge pressure on the part of pan-Turkic organizations because of his stance on Artsakh.

"I'm here today, because I know that the whole international attention is focused on Ukraine, and there is a threat that Armenia and Artsakh could be forgotten amid all this. In our region, the Armenian flag is flying alongside that of Ukraine in the conference hall of the Regional Council," he said.

Earlier this week Laurent Wauquiez visited the entrance to the Lachin corridor. "I did it for all my compatriots to see and realize that the international law is being violated here and that beyond that border, 120 000 people are deprived of

basis human rights," he said.

"My duty as a politician now is to act and try to help you at this moment," he added.

Mr Wauquiez said that jointly with Armenian organizations of France they want to organize delivery of humanitarian aid to Artsakh.

"The convoy will be organized with our region's support and will bear our region's flag. It will approach the Lachin Corridor, and we will demand passage to Artsakh. Either the convoy will pass and we will have a ray of hope, or the convoy will be barred and it will give us the opportunity to present this issue before international and European organizations, noting that that once again the international law is being violated, and that actions must be taken," Wauquiez added.



mean that the Russian press expressed its wishes in those publications. I think the MP of our faction was impressed by the publications of the Russian press and social networks, for which I am sorry. Naturally, the ruling party and team have no such intention or desire.

- But the problem is that if the Rome Statute is ratified, it will be inevitable.

- It is a wrong perception, because today we have signed an agreement with another country, according to which the Statute of Rome will not affect our bilateral relations. There can be such a regulation with Russia. But this is just one

of the options. There are other options as well. One thing is clear, we have heard the concerns expressed by the Russian Federation, and I think we will be able to ensure that the further process related to the Rome Statute does not harm the strategic relations between Armenia and Russia.

## Armenian Parliament Speaker briefs Bundestag President on Artsakh blockade, calls for sanctions against Azerbaijan



As part of the working visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, the delegation headed by Armenian National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan met with the President of the Bundestag, Bärbel Bas.

The stable development of friendly relations between the two countries and the deepening of inter-parliamentary cooperation were emphasized. The parties stressed the importance of multi-layered parliamentary cooperation between the National Assembly and the Bundestag, mutual visits of lawmakers.

The National Assembly Speaker noted that Armenia attaches great importance to the implementation of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and appreciates Germany's support in this matter.

Presenting the post-war situation and

talking about the need to provide quick solutions to the security issues in the region, the Armenian National Assembly Speaker noted that the no less devastating developments in the South Caucasus, around Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, are being overlooked by many.

Alen Simonyan briefed his counterpart on the crisis in the Lachin Corridor, the danger facing the 120,000 Artsakh residents under siege, and multifaceted humanitarian problems.

He noted that by continuing the policy of ethnic cleansing and creating unbearable living conditions, Azerbaijan, is forcing the local Armenian population to be forcibly deported in front of the eyes of the whole world.

The Speaker reminded that on February 22, the International Court of Justice

in The Hague made a legally binding decision to apply an urgent measure against Azerbaijan, obliging the latter to take all necessary measures to ensure the uninterrupted movement of people, vehicles and cargo through the Lachin Corridor.

"We expect our German partners to take active steps to ensure the immediate implementation of the Court's decision by Azerbaijan by applying sanctions against Azerbaijan," he stressed.

He added that Armenia welcomes the German side's efforts towards peace in the region, thanking the German government for supporting the decision to deploy a long-term EU monitoring mission in Armenia.

Referring to the troubled situation in the world, the parties confirmed the need for long-term peace. The President of the Bundestag thanked for the comprehensive information about the region, Armenia and the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, and for the direct and open conversation, noting that he is ready to make efforts to improve the situation and strengthen democratic values within the scope of her authority. She added that wars are a human evil and first of all they mutilate destinies, causing pain and suffering, which is unacceptable and rejected by civilized humanity.

At the end of the meeting, the Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly invited the German counterpart to Armenia for an official visit.

## ANIF has gained trust of major institutional investors, implemented successful deals - Dominique De Villepin



Dominique De Villepin, an independent member of the Board of Directors of the Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF), says it is still early to give a meaningful evaluation to the Fund's activities. However, he says that in this period of less than 4 years, ANIF has gained the trust of some major institutional investors and indeed has implemented a number of successful deals.

Dominique De Villepin, a former French Prime Minister and former Foreign Minister, told ARMENPRESS in an interview that ANIF is undoubtedly on the right track.

**Mr. de Villepin tell us please what is your connection to Armenia and in this context how did your journey with the Armenian National Interest Fund start, how did you become member of ANIF's Board of Directors?**

Armenia and France have always had a special historical and cultural bond. France is home to thousands of Armenians, especially after the Genocide of 1915. Many Armenians have become successful in France and some, like Charles Aznavour, Henri Verneuil or Michel Legrand, have become icons of the contemporary French culture. So France's close ties with Armenia after its independence were a given. As both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of France I was keen to see French-Armenian ties develop, deepen and always kept good relationships with my Armenian friends after I left office. I received an invitation to join ANIF's Board in 2019 and happily accepted the offer. The creation of Armenia's Sovereign Investment Fund seemed timely and constructive.

**Mr. de Villepin, what investment opportunities does Armenia have? What kind**

**of challenges and opportunities is Armenia facing from an investment destination perspective?**

I believe the biggest challenge for emerging economies, and especially small post-Soviet countries such as Armenia, is that it is a little known destination for potential investors and many may consider investing there risky or simply be unable to measure associated risks. Armenia has a lot of competitive advantages, not the least of which is its creative and hardworking people, its democratic standing, its willingness as a nation to be integrated into the global market. The ability to present this to potential investors will determine its ability to attract and retain investors.

**In this context, what is the role and importance of ANIF in Armenia?**

Sovereign investment funds play an important role in directing and leading a country's investment and economic path and ANIF can be decisive in setting the right benchmarks and choosing sustainable paths for the country's economic advancement. The model ANIF has chosen is a tested, workable model and I trust Armenia needs institutional guidance for investors that ANIF provides. That is one of the many roles institutions like ANIF have.

**ANIF has been active since spring 2019 and has managed to implement various successful projects. How would you rate the activity of ANIF, how do you evaluate the work of the executive team?**

It is still early for a meaningful evaluation. However, in this period of less than 4 years, I believe ANIF has gained the trust of some major institutional investors and indeed has implemented a number of successful deals. That, without a doubt, means that we are on the right track. As I said, people are Armenia's asset and I believe ANIF's team is the quintessence of that competitive advantage. Having the right people in the right place, armed with the right strategy and governance is extremely important in maintaining the trust of investors. I think there is more to come both for ANIF and for Armenia and I am hopeful that both ANIF and Armenia will be able to overcome challenges and seize opportunities in the best possible manner.

**In what areas of economy do you see the need for ANIF's active presence?**

I think that Armenia, as any developing economy, should be open to all kind of partnerships to attract investments in virtually all areas of its economy, of course within bounds of high ESG standards. As already mentioned, many investors may prefer to have institutional support when investing in a little known investment destination like Armenia and many would want to see the state sharing the responsibility for the project and ANIF is instrumental in this sense. I also believe that the institutional knowledge and experience that ANIF has accumulated in this short period will be helpful for Armenia in all its investment related exercises in various capacities.

###

*Mr de Villepin is a French politician and a diplomat with a career spanning several decades. Mr de Villepin graduated with a degree in Law and Letters from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, and the National School of Administration. In 1980 he was appointed to the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs of the Quai d'Orsay, he then served in the French Embassy in Washington DC from 1984 to 1989. He went on to advise the French Embassy in New Delhi between 1989 to 1992. In 1993, Mr de Villepin became the Director of the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, prior to being appointed by President Jacques Chirac as the Secretary General of the Elysée from 1995 to 2002. Mr de Villepin was entrusted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from May 2002 to March 2004, during which, confronted with the Iraq crisis, he expressed French positions in favor of peace at the UN. In 2004 he was appointed the Minister of the Interior of the Raffarin government, and eventually the Prime Minister a year later, the post which he held till 2007. Mr de Villepin is the author of several historical essays on Napoleon I, on diplomacy, Europe and international relations, as well as texts on poets and painters, including Zao Wou Ki.*



## U.S. State Dept. Publishes Critical Report on Human Rights in Armenia

By Harut Sassounian

The U.S. State Department issued on March 20, 2023 its annual Country Reports on Human Rights for the year 2022. The report covered 198 countries and territories, including Armenia.

The Executive Summary of the report described the Parliamentary elections of 2021: “the elections were generally well managed, and contestants were able to campaign freely. The elections, however, were also characterized by intense polarization and marred by increasingly inflammatory rhetoric. The observation mission noted that ‘high levels of harsh, intolerant, inflammatory and discriminatory rhetoric in the period leading up to election day tainted the debate.’ Other shortcomings included incidents of pressure to attend campaign events, allegations of vote buying, blurring of the line between the ruling party and state, alleged misuse of administrative resources, inadequate campaign finance provisions, and the narrow standing allowed for submitting electoral complaints.”

Regarding various human rights abuses in Armenia, the State Dept. wrote that there were “credible reports of torture by members of the security forces; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with judicial independence; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; restrictions on freedom of expression; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting civil society figures and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons; and the worst forms of child labor. The government took only limited steps to investigate and punish alleged abuses by former and current government officials and law enforcement authorities. There was no reported progress on government investigations of alleged abuses committed by Armenian armed forces or individuals during the 2020 hostilities.”

Regarding the 2022 attack by Azerbaijan on Armenia, the State Dept. wrote: “there were reports that Azerbaijani forces engaged in unlawful killings, and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of

Armenian forces in September.”

Under the subtitle, “arbitrary deprivation of life and other unlawful or politically motivated killings,” the State Dept. expressed concerns “regarding noncombat deaths in the army and the failure of law enforcement bodies to conduct credible investigations into those deaths.”

The State Dept. then detailed further problems with elections: “Reports of arbitrary arrests that appeared election-related continued. Law enforcement officials arrested two municipal employees affiliated with the opposition coalition, ‘Strong Community,’ in the Tavush region, on election day, September 25. These arrests followed the detention of four opposition-linked mayors in the Syunik region during and following the June 2021 parliamentary elections.”

There were also serious problems with the courts: “the judiciary was not viewed as independent or impartial due to its history of corruption and political influence, resistance to reform, and recent high-profile scandals. There were unconfirmed reports of attempts by the government to influence judges. The high case load, lack of public trust, and allegations of government pressure discouraged professionals from applying to judgeships. During the year, NGOs continued to report on judges who had acquired significant amounts of property and assets that were disproportionate to their salaries and continued to note that the absence of vetting of all standing judges based on objective criteria — particularly of those in the Supreme Judicial Council and Constitutional Court — undermined the integrity of the judiciary. They further noted that the annual asset declaration checks of sitting judges were limited in scope and did not help to remove corrupt judges.”

Section 2 of the State Dept. report covered: “Respect for Civil Liberties.” Under the subtitle, “Freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media,” the report stated that “the government generally respected this right, albeit with some restrictions.”

On the topic: “Violence and

Harassment,” the report stated: “the local NGO Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression reported 14 cases of violence against 16 journalists during the year, most of which were at the hands of law enforcement and took place when the journalists were covering opposition protests.”

Regarding “Freedom of Peaceful Assembly,” the report stated: “while the government generally respected freedom of assembly, there were some restrictions, particularly disproportionate use of force by police against protesters, police brutality against protesters and journalists, and arbitrary detention of demonstrators.... On June 2, the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women issued a statement condemning violence by police officers against protesters, violent apprehensions, beatings, and humiliating treatment of protesters, including women.... On the morning of September 21, special police used force and detained 37 relatives of deceased service members, mostly women, who had gathered at the entrance of the military pantheon and were waiting for the arrival of the prime minister and other officials.”

The State Department’s lengthy report on Armenia critically, but accurately, described the various human rights abuses in great detail.

While the State Department does not rank countries on a scale, the U.S.-based Freedom House rated Armenia on its Freedom Score as “Partly Free.” It is disappointing that five years after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan came to power under the guise of establishing democratic rule, Armenia is still classified as “Transitional Hybrid Regime.”

The only consolation for Armenia is that its two hostile neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey, have much lower scores. Both Azerbaijan and Turkey are ranked by Freedom House on its Freedom Score as “Not Free.” In terms of democratic rule, Azerbaijan is classified as a “Consolidated Authoritarian Regime,” while the report on Turkey is still pending.

## California State Assemblymember Holden introduces measure condemning Azerbaijan's blockade of Lachin Corridor

California State Assemblymember Chris Holden has introduced a measure in the assembly condemning Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor and urging the United States government to take immediate action and provide humanitarian support to the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) reported.

Following successful committee passage on Tuesday, the California State Assembly will vote on the ANCA-backed measure – AJR 1 – on Thursday, March 30th.

"AJR 1 condemns Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin Corridor and urges the United States government to take immediate



action and provide humanitarian assistance to the Armenians of Artsakh," Holden said in the California State Assembly. "Azerbaijan has maintained a total blockade of the only road between Armenia and the ethnic Armenian Nagorno Karabakh

region, which is home to over a 120,000 ethnic Armenians, since December 12, 2022. The blockade completely severs Artsakh's only humanitarian lifeline to Armenia, prohibiting the transfer of food, fuel, medicine and other vital humanitarian supplies to the region. It has been more than a hundred days since this blockade has begun."

Assemblymember Holden added that the US State of California is home to a large Diaspora of Armenian-Americans, whose families and friends are being impacted by the continued blockade.

## Armenia's TUMO Center for Creative Technologies eyeing presence in Philippines



Armenia-based free educational program TUMO Center for Creative Technologies said it is looking to expand into the Philippines, [Business World](#) reports.

"We are just at the start of discussion... to build those relationships and networks, to understand what the narrative is for the country, where the need is, and if we can,

hopefully, find the right partners to launch our first center in Manila," said Chris Shahinian, TUMO's director of development.

TUMO is a free educational program founded in 2011 that empowers teenagers to take charge of their learning. It recently developed a new approach to promoting learning among young people by using their interest in the digital world to make links to creativity, learning, and education.

The program teaches students additional skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and creative thinking, which are essential for success in the world.

"Kids hate to study but love to learn. Choice is super important. You need to give them enough choice for them to find their path and what they're passionate about," Mr. Shahinian said.

TUMO has expanded to eight international locations, including Paris, Beirut, Moscow, Tirana, Berlin, Kyiv, and Lyon. There are also plans to open centers in Seoul, Tokyo, and Sydney.

TUMO covers over 20 focus areas, including animation, computer programming, robotics, writing, and sustainable cities.

## Rosa Linn announces first headline tour

Rosa Linn, Armenia's representative at Eurovision Song Contest 2022, has announced her first ever [headline tour](#).

"From writing songs in my bedroom to competing on Eurovision, it has been an incredible journey so far... And now, I'm beyond excited to share the next chapter with you all!!!! I'm thrilled to announce that I am going my first ever headline

tour!" Rosa said in a Twitter post.

"Playing live music is literally my favorite thing in the world to do, and I can't wait to bring my music to these cities and all of you," she said.

Later this year Rosa Linn will join multiple Grammy award-winning star Ed Sheeran for the North America tour.

Rosa is set to open five shows of Ed

Sheeran's +=÷x Tour (pronounced "The Mathematics Tour") in North America together with Khalid.

The "Mathematics" tour will travel to North America for the first time since Sheeran's 2018 "Divide Tour" became the most-attended and highest-grossing tour of all time.



## Armenian American Raffi Joe Wartanian named Glendale's first Poet Laureate

Raffi Joe Wartanian is the City of Glendale's first Poet Laureate. The position serves as an ambassador for Glendale's rich culture and diversity, promoting the art of poetry, [Asbarez](#) reports.

As Poet Laureate, Wartanian will develop a project that engages community members of all ages in poetry writing, performance, and poetry appreciation; write a poem that celebrates Glendale's rich culture and diversity; and read poetry aloud at special events throughout the City.

Following a grassroots call from a citizen of Glendale, the request of Mayor Ardy Kassakhian, and the approval of the City Council, Glendale Library, Arts & Culture created the City's first Poet Laureate program and requested applications from resident poets. The selection panel was comprised of Arts & Culture Commissioner Sevana Zadorian, Los Angeles Poet Laureate Lynne Thompson, Poet and Founder of The Los Angeles Press Linda Ravenswood, and Poet and Instructor at Glendale Community College Julie Gamberg.

Raffi Joe Wartanian was selected as Glendale's first Poet Laureate in recognition of his accomplishments in poetry and his vision for the "Glendale Poet Laureate as someone who can utilize writing to promote self-expression, find common ground across communities, and foster solidarity that celebrates diversity while embracing individuality."

His poems have appeared in No Dear Magazine, h-pem, Ararat Magazine, Armenian Poetry Project, and The Armenian



Weekly and performed live with the Asian American Writers' Workshop, and International Armenian Literary Alliance. His essays have appeared in The New York Times, Los Angeles Review of Books, Outside Magazine, Lapham's Quarterly, The Baltimore Sun, Miami Herald, and elsewhere.

Raffi's hybrid piece "A Letter to My Great-Grandson" is forthcoming in the anthology "We Are All Armenian: Voices from the Diaspora" (University of Texas Press, March 2023). Raffi currently teaches writing with UCLA Writing Programs, and his work has received grant and fellowship support from the Fulbright Program, Humanity in Action, and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation. In 2017, Raffi collaborated with Abril Books, the Lakota People's Law Project, and In His Shoes to launch "Days of Solidarity: Celebrating Armenian and Native American Survival," a multi-day performance and workshop that united Armenians and indigenous American tribes in Glendale. Raffi currently serves on the advisory board of the International Armenian Literary Alliance and advises the Tumanyan International Storytelling Festival.

"We are thrilled to have Raffi Joe

Wartanian serve as our City's first Poet Laureate," said Mayor Ardy Kassakhian. "Wartanian's work reflects the diversity and intricacies of our city and residents. His experience as an educator and organizer, leading creative writing workshops for incarcerated writers, veterans, and youth affected by war through Letters for Peace, a conflict transformation workshop he created, make him a great first Poet Laureate for Glendale."

Known as the "Jewel City," Glendale is the fourth largest city of Los Angeles County. With a population of more than 200,000, Glendale is a thriving cosmopolitan city that is rich in history, culturally diverse, and offers nearly 50 public parks, and easy access to a municipal airport. It is the home to a vibrant business community, with major companies in healthcare, entertainment, manufacturing, retail, and banking.

Founded in 1907, the Glendale Library, Arts & Culture Department includes eight neighborhood libraries including the Brand Library & Art Center, regional visual arts and music library and performance venue housed in the historic 1904 mansion of Glendale pioneer Leslie C. Brand, and the Central Library, a 93,000 square foot center for individuals and groups to convene, collaborate and create. The department also serves as the chief liaison to the Glendale Arts and Culture Commission which works to continually transform Glendale into an ever-evolving arts destination. Glendale Library Arts & Culture is supported in part through the efforts of the Glendale Library Arts & Culture Trust.

## Travel off Path advises American travelers to visit Armenia – one of world’s most ancient civilizations



The [Travel off Path](#) travel website advises American travelers to visit Armenia, one of the most ancient civilizations in the world.

“Despite its relative obscurity, Armenia is one of the most awe-inspiring and promising destinations out there. It is located not on one but two continents, and its recorded history spans at least three millennia, with a defining culture and nationhood as ancient as the early Greeks,” author Vinicius Costa writes.

Armenia is almost entirely surrounded by Islam, bordering Turkey, Iran, and

Azerbaijan to the South and West, but it takes pride in being the very first nation to fully convert from paganism into Christianity. It has impacted not only the architecture through the construction of numerous monasteries and Orthodox churches but also the culture and the locals’ way of life.

“Sitting along the Caucasus mountain range, a grey area acting as a natural divide between Europe and Asia, Armenia is both *too Eastern* to be considered traditionally European, yet *too Western*, and irrevocably Christian, to fit into the Western Asian stereotype,” the article reads.

The author recommends travelers to visit:

**Yerevan**, the capital and largest city, known for its Soviet-era architecture and palatial buildings

**Sevan**, where a historic monastery is set against the backdrop of a serene lake

**Dilijan**, a mountainous region highly

sought-after for its spa resorts and wellness retreats

**The Shikahogh State Reserve**, an unspoiled forested reserve offering scenic views

**Mount Aragats**, a dormant, snow-capped volcano that is Armenia’s highest peak

**Noravank**, a remote redbrick-built monastery founded in the 13th century

**Tsaghkadzor**, an up-and-coming hotspot for winter sports home to some of Europe’s most affordable ski resorts

**The Upper Azat Valley**, a UNESCO-protected site dotted with ancient monasteries

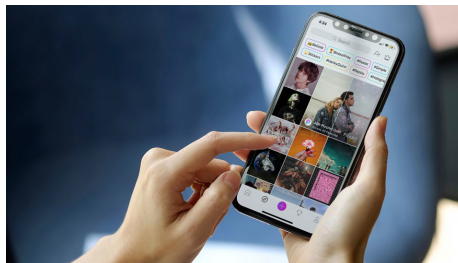
**Gyumri**, Armenia’s second-largest city and Yerevan’s closest rival in terms of cultural offer: more than a thousand buildings in the historic center are between 300 and 200 years old.

## Forbes lists Armenian Picsart among 14 “mind-blowing” AI tools

[Forbes](#) has listed Armenian Picsart among the 14 “mind-blowing” AI tools.

Picsart is described as a “text-to-image platform with a comprehensive set of image-editing tools that lets you turn words into art and then fine-tune the results to get the images that you need.”

In the article Bernard Marr highlights a set of tools, which have the potential to make life easier in a range of different



ways.

“The sheer range of applications and

platforms covered here also demonstrates how quickly AI is developing and diversifying and its potential impact on all aspects of life,” the author says.

Listed alongside Picsart are Synthesia, Cleanvoice, Jasper, Pictory, Canva, Upscaler, Taplio, Talk to Books, KeywordInsights, Sprinkl, Lisa AI Art – Magic Avatar, Perplexity.ai and Beatoven.



## Armenia’s tourism attractions presented at roadshow in France

The first Armenian roadshow in France took place in Lyon and Paris on March 27th and 28th, the Tourism Committee of Armenia informs.

Among the guests were French tour operators and agents.

During the event Armenia was presented as a captivating tourist destination. Guests enjoyed some Armenian cuisine and wine while listening to live Armenian

music.

The event was supported by EU and BMZ.





# ARMENIA

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**Phone: 011 33 1 43 59 66 72**  
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## Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security

and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders. The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

### Armenia Office of the Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) Organization

**Address: 1 Amiryan str., Yerevan, RA, 0001 (In Armenia Marriott Hotel)**

**Phone: +374 55 509050,  
+374 91777739:**

**E-mail: [armenia@hyeid.org](mailto:armenia@hyeid.org),  
Website: [armenia.hyeid.org](http://armenia.hyeid.org)**



# AZAD

## AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

### Switzerland

#### AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Durachweg 15  
CH-8200 Schaffhausen  
Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10  
Fax: +41 52 632 09 11

#### AZAD Pharma AG

Bahnhofstrasse 9  
CH-3125 Toffen  
Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10  
Fax: +41 31 810 40 11

### Canada

#### AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd.

1895 - 55th Avenue  
Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9  
Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99  
Fax: +1 514 636 75 55

#### Atlit Inc.

16 Westminster Ave.,  
Suite 306A  
Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1  
Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91  
Fax: +1 514 369 81 67

### China

#### Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG

Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza,  
#102 Moganshan Road  
310051 - Hangzhou China

Phone +86-571-8761 5336  
Mobile +86-153-5505-0903  
Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963

### Germany

#### AZAD Pharma GmbH

Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a  
DE-78315 Radolfzell  
Phone No: +49 7732 939101510  
Fax: +49 7732 9391016

### Armenia

#### AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC

Vanahovit 8, Proshian  
Ashtarak Ave., Kotayk Maiz  
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62  
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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URL: [www.nt.am](http://www.nt.am)

Address in Armenia:

28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA  
Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

Address in France:

Masion De L'Armenie,  
Paris 17e-95, Bld. Gouvion, France  
Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA:

1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112,  
Glendale, CA, USA, 91206  
Tel.: +1 (818) 646 10 72

Հասցե՝

Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009