

Deadly fighting reported on Armenian-Azeri Border



At least four Azerbaijani soldiers were reportedly killed and several others wounded in heavy fighting that broke out at a section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on July 12.

The spokeswoman for Armenia's Defense Ministry, Shushan Stepanyan, said Azerbaijani forces shelled an Armenian army outpost in the northern Tavush province during a failed attempt to seize it. Stepanyan said they suffered casualties while being repelled by Armenian soldiers stationed there.

"There are no casualties on the Armenian side," she wrote on Facebook.

According to Stepanyan, earlier in the afternoon a military vehicle carrying Azerbaijani soldiers tried to cross into Tavush "for reasons unclear to us." The soldiers fled and left the vehicle behind after warning shots fired from the Armenian side, said the official.

For its part, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that Armenian forces backed by artillery fire attacked its border posts in Azerbaijan's western Tovuz district bordering Tavush. It said two Azerbaijani servicemen died and five others were wounded as a result.

The ministry reported a fourth Azerbaijani combat death later on Sunday.

The fighting reportedly continued into the early hours of Monday. The Defense Ministry in Yerevan said Azerbaijani troops are using a battle tank and mortars to continue shelling the same Armenian army post.

"Gunfire is periodically continuing with various intensity," Stepanyan, the ministry spokeswoman, said shortly after midnight. No Armenian soldier has been killed or wounded, she added.

The Azerbaijani military claimed, meanwhile, that Armenian forces are firing mortars on not only at Azerbaijani border positions but also a nearby Azerbaijani village.

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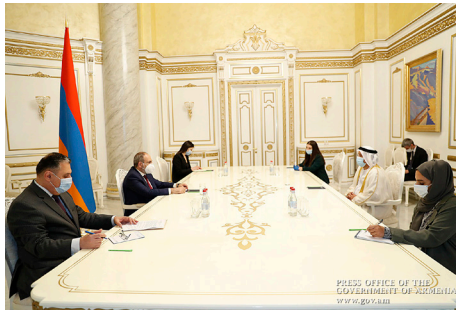
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Armenia, UAE interested in close cooperation - PM holds farewell meeting with outgoing UAE Ambassador

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received the Ambassador of the UAE to Armenia Mohamed Al Qatam Al Zaabi, who completes his diplomatic mission in Armenia.

As the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia informs, PM Pashinyan noted that the tenure of the outgoing Ambassador was an active and effective period for the relations between Armenia and the UAE. Nikol Pashinyan emphasized that Armenia is interested in the development and reform experience of the UAE. "We hope that in the near future our country will become more attractive for the business entity of your country", PM Pashinyan said.

He emphasized that the political relations



between the two countries are on a high level and thanked the UAE for its balanced position over Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

PM Pashinyan also thanked the UAE for supporting Armenia in the fight against coronavirus and noted that it can be defeated as a result of close cooperation.

Ambassador Mohamed Al Qatam Al Zaabi thanked PM Pashinyan and the Government for the close cooperation, adding that he will preserve the close ties with Armenia and the Armenian people in the future.

The Ambassador noted that he is impressed by the effective activities of the young members of the Cabinet. Mohamed Al Qatam Al Zaabi emphasized that his country is also interested in expanding relations with Armenia.

The interlocutors expressed confidence that following the coronavirus pandemic the partnership in various directions will continue to develop and progress by joint efforts.

Armenophobia is the last defense line of Aliyev's power – Armenian MFA



Armenophobia is the last defense line of Aliyev's power, Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan said.

It describes the evolving domestic crisis and desperation in Azerbaijan at its best, the Spokesperson said.

The comments come after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev made a historical excursion about Armenia and the Armenian nation. He also commented on Armenia's domestic processes, Nagorno-Karabakh peace process and criticized the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.

"Aliyev has no other words to address his society in lockdown than bringing forward the image of 'useful enemy'," she added.

"It's ridiculous that Armenia's domestic processes, human rights and freedoms have been reviewed by a leader of a country where for decades political and economic power has been in the hands of a single family, defined internationally as a repressive regime. It's noteworthy that Ilham Ali-

yev, with his hostile and racist comments, expresses irresponsible and disrespectful attitude, first of all, towards the statement of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs issued a week ago, which contained concerns about the inflammatory and provocative rhetoric," she stated.

"As Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated at the recent joint session of the Security Councils of Armenia and Artsakh, attempts to turn the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict into a long-term Armenian-Azerbaijani enmity within which our peoples will fight on everything – past, present, future and the whole region – is in the interests of neither the Armenian nor the Azerbaijani people," she stated.

Ruling faction head of Armenian Parliament meets with Russian Ambassador

Head of the ruling My Step faction of the Parliament Lilit Makunts and MP Alexei Sandikov met with Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergei Kopyrkin.

Makunts said on Facebook that they have discussed with the Ambassador issues relating to the development of the Armenian-Russian relations.

"As head of the My Step faction I introduced the Ambassador on the ongoing domestic political developments in our

country. The meeting touched upon the ongoing legislative changes. In the context of promoting the bilateral ties we highlighted the role of the parliamentary diplomacy. We also highlighted the importance of joint efforts of Armenia and Russia in fighting the novel coronavirus", Lilit Makunts said.

She added that during the meeting they also exchanged views on the actions taken to ensure the return of the Armenian and Russian citizens to their home countries



under the absence of regular flights these days.

Armenia's new National Security Strategy released



The new National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia has been published and will replace the one adopted in 2007.

The new Strategy is based on three fundamental principles.

The first principle is the creation of a strong and prosperous Armenia as a guarantor of its own security.

“There is no alternative to the strength and prosperity of the Armenian state for ensuring Armenia’s security. As a state, that is interested in the preservation of peace and stability and is constantly developing its capacities on this direction, Armenia will continue making efforts for having its decisive role in ensuring regional peace, security and stability. At the same time, Armenia will continue participating in ensuring international security through the engagement of

Armenian peacekeepers to the international peacekeeping missions, not only as a consumer of the international security, but also as a provider of it”, stated in the document.

The second fundamental principle is that with its logic the Strategy aims at contributing to the long-term goal of ensuring the eternity of the Armenian statehood, preparing us to resist possible dangers sometimes threatening our statehood.

According to the third principle, in the constantly changing world it’s a priority to develop Armenia’s domestic and external resilience to be always ready for the new, unpredictable challenges and responding them effectively.

The 40-page document consists of introduction, 6 chapters and concluding provisions. The Strategy presents Armenia’s security environment, national interests, the goals and principles of the Strategy.

“Since the adoption of the first National Security Strategy of Armenia in 2007, the international and regional security environment has undergone major changes, making the challenges facing Armenia more complex and multi-layered. Armenia has also changed. With the implementation of the peaceful, Velvet, people’s Revolution in Armenia in 2018, the citizen of Armenia

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Stepanyan insisted in another overnight Facebook post that Armenian army units are targeting only Azerbaijani military facilities.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Anna Naghdalyan, insisted that the fighting was sparked by the Azerbaijani “attempts to infiltrate into Armenian positions.”

Naghdalyan also tweeted that Armenia’s foreign and defense ministers are “in constant contact” with the U.S., Russian and French mediators co-heading the OSCE Minsk Group over the latest escalation.

The mediators urged the conflicting parties to strengthen the ceasefire regime during a June 30 video conference with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers. In a joint statement, they reiterated that “there is no military solution to the conflict.”

has set a high bar for ensuring the state’s security, development and welfare. In the new context the key of Armenia’s security policy is the democratic system of governance which creates a firm base for the strengthening of the country’s economic, political, intellectual, therefore also military potential. These realities require from us to have a new, more ambitious National Security Strategy”, stated in the document.

President of Armenia meets with Artsakh counterpart in Stepanakert

President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian arrived in the Republic of Artsakh on a working visit on July 10, the Armenian President’s Office told Noyan Tapan.

President Sarkissian met with President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan in Stepanakert.

President Sarkissian once again congratulated and wished success to Arayik Harutyunyan, expressing confidence that he will successfully continue serving the homeland with his experience and knowledge. “I also want to congratulate the entire people of Artsakh because the presidential and parliamentary elections were held in a democratic way”, Armen Sarkissian said. “Please convey my congratulations also to the other participants of the presidential election, who didn’t win personally, but won together,



showing to the world that Artsakh is not only a firm, strong, but also is a democratic country, as well as a free country where free elections are being held. They should be proud of as they had their contribution to this process. I want to first of all wish you and all citizens of Artsakh good health. I am confident that we will overcome this difficult situation and will move on, strengthening both Armenia and Artsakh”.

In his turn the President of Artsakh thanked for these words and stated that most of the candidates who participated in the presidential election are part of the current political leadership, adding that he is ready to ensure the country’s progress and development, and those, who are not involved, also continue their activity for the sake of Artsakh. Arayik Harutyunyan thanked Armenia’s authorities for assisting the practical programs aimed at the development of Artsakh. “I want to note that together we will manage not only to overcome the current situation, but also ensure progress in the development of our homeland”, he said.

The meeting also touched upon a number of ongoing and prospective programs directed for the strengthening and development of Artsakh.

Armenian Defense Minister, Chinese Ambassador discuss development of cooperation

Defense Minister of Armenia Davit Tonoyan and Ambassador of China to Armenia Tian Erlong met outdoors for discussing issues of mutual interest.

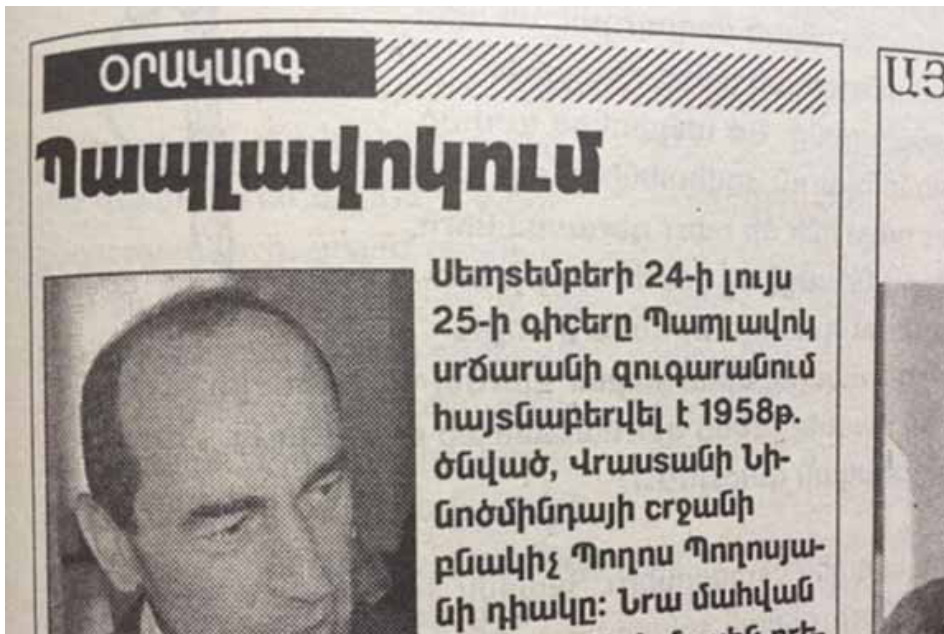
As ARMENPRESS was informed from the press service of the defense ministry of Armenia, the sides noted that Armenia and China have high level of relations and mil-



itary-political dialogue. Future steps for the development and expansion of cooperation were discussed. The sides exchanged views on regional and international security issues.

Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan thanked the Chinese Ambassador for supporting the efforts of the Armenian Government against coronavirus pandemic.

Court orders fresh trial over 2001 café ‘murder’



Armenia's Court of Appeals agreed on July 6 to order a fresh trial in connection with the violent death in September 2001 of a man at a Yerevan café visited by then President Robert Kocharyan.

Poghos Poghosyan, a 43-year-old ethnic Armenian from Georgia, was found dead in the café restroom shortly after Kocharyan left its premises together with his entourage.

Prosecutors said at the time that Poghosyan died after falling over and hitting the toilet floor with the back side of his head during a violent argument with one of Kocharyan's bodyguards, Aghamal Harutyunyan. They claimed that the scuffle broke out after he "reprimanded" Poghosyan for

greeting Kocharyan in a way he found too familiar.

Some eyewitnesses asserted, however, that Poghosyan was attacked and forced into the toilet by several men who looked like security agents. The witnesses included a friend of Poghosyan's who shared a table with him at the Poplavok café, then a popular venue for jazz concerts.

Nevertheless, Harutyunyan was the only presidential bodyguard prosecuted in connection with the deadly incident that caused uproar in Armenia. A district court in Yerevan backed the official version of events at the end of his high-profile trial in February 2002. Harutyunyan was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and given a suspended

2-year prison sentence.

Poghosyan's friends and relatives as well as Kocharyan's political opponents condemned the verdict, alleging an official cover-up.

Armenian prosecutors decided to conduct a fresh investigation into Poghosyan's death only after the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" and the ensuing arrest and prosecution of Kocharyan on coup and corruption charges rejected by the ex-president as politically motivated.

The prosecutors based their decision on testimony given last year by Stephen Newton, a British citizen who claims to have witnessed the 2001 incident. Newton, who worked in Armenia at the time, stood by his earlier claims that the victim was beaten up by several presidential bodyguards.

In January this year, the Office of the Prosecutor-General formally asked the Court of Appeals to overturn the 2002 guilty verdict and order a retrial. It said that the fresh investigation conducted by another law-enforcement body found further proof that Poghosyan's death was a murder committed by "a group of individuals."

The Court of Appeals accepted the demand, sending the case back to the Yerevan court of first instance.

During court hearings on the prosecutors' appeal Harutyunyan's lawyers denied the new and more serious accusations leveled against the former security officer. It is not yet clear whether any of the other former or current bodyguards have also been indicted.

White House policy on Armenian Genocide ‘unchanged’

The White House on Wednesday said that its policy on the Armenian Genocide, or “Meds Yeghern” as it is being called, “remains unchanged.”

“The President has reaffirmed that the Meds Yeghern was a historic atrocity and tragedy for the Armenian people, as well as our commitment to stand with the Armenian people,” a White House official told Asbarez.

The clarification of the policy comes two days after the White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany referred to the “Armenian Genocide Memorial” during her daily briefing



on Monday when decrying protesters desecrating memorials across the country resulting from the nationwide social justice

movement.

“There seems to be a lack of understanding and historical knowledge when the Armenian genocide memorial, remembering victims of all crimes against humanity, including slavery, is vandalized,” McEnany said Monday in an apparent reference to the recent defacing of the Armenian Genocide memorial in Colorado, which is on the grounds of the state’s capitol and was vandalized along with other monuments there during last month’s social justice protests.

Helen Fazey appointed as UK’s Chargé d’Affaires a.i. to Armenia



Ms Helen Fazey has been appointed as UK’s Chargé d’Affaires a.i. to Armenia with the personal rank of ambassador,

pending the appointment of a new Ambassador later this year.

Ms Fazey will succeed Mr David Moran, who has served as Chargé d’Affaires a.i. to Armenia with the personal rank of ambassador since November 2019. Mr Moran will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Ms Fazey will take up her appointment in August 2020.

Ms Fazey joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2002. She was Deputy Head of Mission and HM Consul at the

British Embassy in Kyiv from February 2016 to June 2020.

Her previous roles include Counsellor for Regional Security and ASEAN at the British Embassy in Jakarta (2012-2015), postings to the British Embassy in Tripoli (2005-08) and the Coalition Provisional Authority in Kirkuk (2004).

She has also worked in the Western Balkans Department and the Middle East and North Africa Directorate of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London.

Turkey’s Erdogan signs decree converting Hagia Sophia into mosque

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan signed a decree on July 10 opening Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia as a mosque after a Turkish court annulled a 1934 government decree that had turned it into a museum.

Erdogan shared on his Twitter feed a copy of the decree he had signed which said the decision had been taken to hand control of the Ayasofya Mosque, as it is known in Turkish, to the country’s reli-



gious directorate and reopen it for worship.

The Council of State issued its ruling in a statement late afternoon July 10, ending a years-long legal process over the status of

the Hagia Sophia upon the appeal of an Istanbul-based association.

The court based its verdict on the fact that the Hagia Sophia was a property of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Han Foundation and registered to be used only as a mosque. The decision to grant a status of museum to the Hagia Sophia was given by former President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1934.

The reasoning of the Council of State stressed that the government in 1934 had no powers to change the status of the religious structure.

Support Armenia Fund and Ministry of Economy will cooperate

The Support Armenia Fund and the Armenian Ministry of Economy will cooperate to promote micro-business recovery.

The Ministry has expressed willingness to support the targeted assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises as a result of the fundraising organized by the Fund.

During a video conference with the Support Armenia Fund's organizing group, Minister of Economy Tigran Khachatryan welcomed the initiative and assured that his team is ready to help the fund to effectively organize its work.

The Minister presented the policy of the government's anti-crisis programs and mentioned the criteria by which the target business groups that received first aid were selected.

The Minister noted that about 900 economic entities received assistance within



the framework of the third anti-crisis measure meant to support SMEs.

The Fund's representative Olivia Zhamkochyan thanked Tigran Khachatryan for his readiness to support him, presented the fund's activities and upcoming plans. She noted that they intend to primarily support small family businesses, especially in the field of tourism. She attached importance to the mobilization of forces to reach large amounts of support.

The participants of the meeting hailed the fact that Kim Kardashian also joined the fundraising campaign.

Earlier this week TV personality and entrepreneur Kim Kardashian called on millions of her social media followers to consider making donations in support of small businesses in Armenia.

"Consider donating to Armenia Support Fund help provide COVID-19 aid to struggling small businesses in Armenia,"

Kardashian tweeted.

In response to COVID-19, the Armenia Support Fund has partnered with The Paros Foundation to launch the Armenia COVID-19 Small Business Support Initiative.

The purpose of the project is to raise funds to support the business-related needs of family-owned small businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19 in Armenia.

A number of new privileges on the joint platform of IDBank and Idram

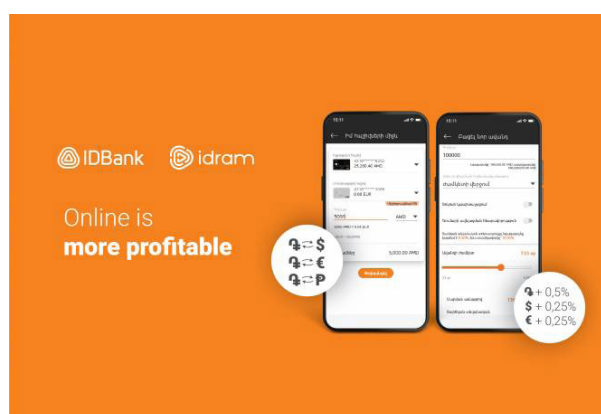
IDBank and Idram continue the development process of Banking department of their joint digital platform and application not only to present an easy and clear platform to their customers but also profitable offers for them.

At this moment, several privileges are available on the platform:

Opportunity to make currency exchange with the best rate in the banking system. The users can make currency exchange with profitable conditions through Banking department of Idram application and IDBanking.am online platform.

No additional commissions will be charged. The following currencies are already available in the system:

USD/AMD – AMD/USD,
EUR/AMD – AMD/EUR,



RUB/AMD – AMD/RUB,

Other currencies will be added in the near future. This opportunity will interest the customers who receive money through the fast transfer system of IDBanking.am and Idram, as they can receive transfers on their accounts and make a currency exchange with a profitable rate with outvisiting Bank.

Opportunity to make termdeposits with more profitable conditions: making a deposit is more profitable by digital channels: for deposits in AMD the annual interest rate will be higher by 0.5%, and for deposits in USD by 0.25%.

Free delivery for cards when ordered online: you can order IDBank cards online through Idram app, IDBanking.am platform or the Bank's website, even if you are not a customer of the

The number of opportunities will expand in the future, as the companies continue improving the digital platform and offer innovative digital solutions in accordance with the requirements of the customers.

THE COMPANIES ARE CONTROLLED BY CBA

Armenia to produce 50,000 Kalashnikov rifles annually



Accompanied by Defense Minister David Tonoyan and Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Kalashnikov rifle factory in Armenia.

The Prime Minister toured the production plant of the AK-103 Kalashnikov rifle created on the base of the Neutron GAM CJSC and got acquainted with the production process.

The Prime Minister was informed that the factory will produce 50,000 rifles annually. It is planned to produce different nanofibers, as well as various items made of nanofiber.

on the production of the famous Russian rifle in Armenia was signed in August 2018 by "Royalsys Engineering Ltd" and "Kalashnikov" concern. Part of the product will be supplied to the Armenian Armed Forces, and the rest will be exported.

The Prime Minister also got acquainted with the upcoming programs of "Neutron GAM" CJSC. It was mentioned that the production of bullets

In particular, optical-electronic devices and night thermal sights will be produced. Production will be launched after full testing, and the demand of the Armenian Ministry of Defense will be met within a year.

The agreement

by the factory has been transferred from Yerevan to the production area located in Kotayk region. After renovating the facilities and equipping them with modernized production lines, the production of 7.62×39 mm, 7.62×54 mm, 12.7 mm, 9×18 mm and 9×19 mm caliber bullets will start, as a result of which new jobs will be created.

Contracts worth about \$24 million have been signed with Russia's Spetsmashengineering OJSC for the purchase of modern and upgraded 7.62×39 mm, 7.62×54 mm, 12.7 mm caliber bullets.

Based on the base of the branch located in Kotayk region, it is planned to establish auto and armor repair factories.



Investment project worth 1.6 billion drams to be implemented in beverage production field

The Armenian government approved on July 9 the application submitted by Armenia Wine Factory LLC, enabling the company to use the privilege on exempting the imported equipment, their components and raw materials from the customs duty for an investment program.

The products to be imported by the company will be used for the production of vodka and wine



in Aragatsotn province.

1.6 billion drams are will be invested for the project. Currently there are 255 jobs, but 40 new ones will be created within the frames of this investment project with 250,000 average salary.

The total production volume will comprise 10 billion drams.

The cost of goods to be imported comprises 1.6 billion drams. The privilege on exempting from the custom duty comprises 106 million drams.

European Court refuses urgent measure in case concerning constitutional reform in Armenia

European Court refuses urgent measure in case concerning constitutional reform in Armenia

The European Court of Human Rights has decided not to apply an interim measure requested in the case Gyulumyan and Others v. Armenia concerning recent amendments to the Constitution of Armenia.

In 2015 the Constitution of Armenia was amended, introducing a 12-year non-renewable term of office for Constitutional Court (CC) judges and establishing a 6-year non-renewable mandate for the President of the CC. However, pursuant to a transitional arrangement, judges who had been appointed before the entry into force of these amendments were to continue serving under the old rules, according to which CC judges were appointed until their retirement. Similarly, the President of the CC was to keep his mandate until retirement.

The four applicants requested in particular that the European Court indicate to the Armenian Government that they freeze enforcement of the constitutional amendments and preserve their offices.

The Court decided to reject the request as outside the scope of application of Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, since it did not involve a risk of serious and irreparable harm of a core right under the European Convention on Human Rights.

The applicants are Alvina Gyulumyan, Hrant Nazaryan, Feliks Tokhyan and Hrayr Tovmasyan, who were born in 1956, 1959, 1956 and 1970 and live in Yerevan. All the applicants were judges of the CC at the



time of the constitutional reform. The first applicant is also a former judge of the European Court of Human Rights.

On 26 June 2020 the applicants made a request to the Court under Rule 39 of its Rules of Court for an interim measure to indicate to the Armenian Government to: freeze the enforcement of the constitutional amendments adopted by the National Assembly and, in particular, preserve the offices of the applicants; abstain from appointment of new judges at the Constitutional Court; abstain from institution of any proceedings against the judges and or/suspend the ongoing proceedings; and “ensure the physical safety, mental and moral integrity of judges by abstaining from manipulation of public perceptions through administrative resources”.

The European Court decided to reject the request as out of scope. According to the Court’s well-established practice, requests fall outside the scope of application of Rule 39 of the Rules of Court when they do not involve a risk of serious and irreparable harm of a core right under the Convention.

In the context of their request, the ap-

plicants complain that the adoption of the constitutional amendment affecting their term of office was carried out in violation of the national law and was arbitrary. They also allege that the constitutional amendments were the result of a long process of harassment of judges of the CC, which started after the change of Government in 2018 and intensified after the CC accepted an application lodged by the former President of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, concerning the constitutionality of criminal proceedings against him. They rely on Articles 6 (right to a fair trial), 8 (right to respect for private and family life), 14 (prohibition of discrimination) and 18 (limitation on use of restrictions on rights) of the European Convention on Human Rights, and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 (protection of property) and Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 (general prohibition of discrimination) to the Convention.

Although the applicants’ request for an interim measure has been found to be out of scope, it is still open to them to lodge an application and to pursue their complaints before the Court. When required, the Court may decide to give priority to certain applications.

The refusal of the interim measure was decided by a Chamber of the Court which was constituted by drawing of lots of judges who joined the Court after 31 October 2014, that is the date when former Judge Gyulumyan’s mandate ended. The national judge withdrew from the case under Rule 28 of the Rules of Court.

Greek Parliament ratifies the Armenia-EU Agreement

At the plenary sitting on June 7 the Greek Parliament ratified the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between Armenia and the European Union.

The meeting was chaired by Atanasios Buras, Deputy Speaker of the Greek Parliament from the New Democracy Party.

The agreement was submitted to the parliament on June 24.

The ratification was preceded by



discussions in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense.

The ruling New Democracy, the main opposition SYRIZA, the Movement for Change (Kinima Allagis), the Greek Solution (Elliniki Lisi) and the MeRA25 parties all spoke in favor of the agreement.

Greece is the 23rd EU Member State completing the ratification process.

WITSA proud to have bestowed its highest award to UATE's Karen Vardanyan

The World Information Technology & Services Alliance (WITSA) is proud to have bestowed WITSA's 2019 Eminent Person's Award to Karen Vardanyan.

On behalf of the World Information Technology & Services Alliance (WITSA), its Chairwoman Yvonne Chiu offered condolences over the passing of the long-time CEO of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE).

"I cannot adequately express my heartfelt sadness in hearing of the passing of our great friend and colleague Karen Vardanyan. My sincerest and deepest condolences go out to Karen's family, loved ones, friends and colleagues," Yvonne Chiu said.



"As the longtime Executive Director of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) in Armenia, Karen was considered the 'Father of the Technology Industry in Armenia'. His dedication to his

country, the ICT industry and especially the youth was inspiring, indelible and will be greatly missed," she added.

"WITSA is very proud to have bestowed upon Karen, in 2019, its highest and most prestigious award, WITSA's Eminent Person's Award. The award is bestowed on individuals who a significant contribution to mankind. His name will go down in history with other luminary recipients," the Chairwoman continued.

"Karen was the great man and a great, gentle person. He will be sorely missed," she concluded.

Karen Vardanyan died on Friday aged 57.

Armenian Robin the Robot arrives in California

Armenian Robin the Robot has arrived at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital in California, UCLA Health website reports.

With its big WALL-E eyes and sleek plastic body, Robin has the huggable, child-friendly look of an animated Pixar character — one that is eager to interact with pediatric patients to ease their anxiety and loneliness in the hospital.

The emotional-learning technology that enables Robin to engage realistically with children is even more essential in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which physical isolation has become all the more important for sick children, particularly those whose immune systems are compromised.

But while physical isolation is necessary, the feeling of being isolated is not, says Dr. Justin Wagner, a pediatric surgeon at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and co-leader of the Robin project.

"Negative feelings are even stronger during this time," Wagner noted. "We hope to integrate Robin as a member of the team, augmenting our ability to give children contact, attention and companionship."

The artificial intelligence system was developed by Expper Technologies, a Silicon



Valley-supported startup with roots in Yerevan, Armenia. Robin's technology enables the robot to build what is called associative memory — it recognizes a child's emotions by interpreting his or her facial expressions and builds responsive dialogue by replicating patterns formed from previous experiences.

Robin is expected to begin zipping along the halls of the hospital by mid-July and will go through a yearlong training period during which it will be remotely operated by a specialist from the hospital's Chase Child Life Program. The specialist will provide Robin's voice and control the robot's actions and expressions as it "learns" how to respond to the needs of children and families.

"This is another tool in our toolbox to provide developmental and coping support for our young patients," said Kelli Carroll, director of the Chase Child Life Program. "While our traditional interventions are on pause during the pandemic, the need remains to prepare, educate and provide behavioral distraction for children. Robin will help our specialists do that."

In addition to providing emotional support for pediatric patients, Robin will be the subject of a study by a multidisciplinary team of medical and behavioral specialists that will assess the robot's impact on children and families. The goal is to determine how well this new technology helps both children and parents to cope with the stresses of being hospitalized.]

"The ability to provide our pediatric patients with this type of social companionship is very compelling, particularly during this pandemic," says Dr. Shant Shekherdimian, a pediatric surgeon and co-leader of the project. "We also knew that by bringing Robin to UCLA, our team of clinicians and researchers would work tirelessly to improve this technology and make it an even more powerful tool."

National Security Adviser Bolton Exposes Trump's Corrupt Dealings with Erdogan



By Harut Sassounian

John Bolton, President Trump's former National Security Adviser, published a fascinating book on his work at the White House from April 2018 to September 2019. His revealing book, "The Room Where it Happened: A White House Memoir," shows why President Trump is unfit for office and incompetent. Bolton emphasized repeatedly that everything Trump did was either to secure his reelection or for his own self-interest, contrary to the interests of the country.

Today we will focus solely on Trump's unholy relationship with the dictator of Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whom President Trump calls "The Sultan." Turkey is mentioned 135 times in Bolton's 570-page book. Erdogan is mentioned 95 times. This shows the importance the White House places on Turkey and Erdogan, President Trump's "close friend." Surprisingly, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan is mentioned in the book even though Bolton made a trip to both countries during his tenure.

In "The Room Where It Happened," Bolton compares Erdogan's tone on a phone call with Trump to "Mussolini speaking from his Rome balcony," describing the Turkish leader as a "radical Islamicist."

Erdogan, during his multiple visits to the White House and 20 phone calls with President Trump, repeatedly raised the following three priority demands from Trump

1. The release of Turkish businessman Reza Zarrab from arrest in the United States by appealing to President Trump to drop the charges against him. Zarrab,

with Erdogan's blessing, had laundered \$20 billion to Iran through the Turkish government-owned Halkbank to circumvent the U.S. sanctions on Iran; 2. The extradition from the United States to Turkey of Fethullah Gulen, the Turkish cleric, who after his close alliance with Erdogan, split with him and became the Turkish President's enemy number one. Erdogan falsely accused Gulen of leading the Turkish coup attempt in 2016. 3. The acquiescence of Trump to withdraw US troops from Northern Syria, allowing Turkey to invade that area and eliminate the Kurdish population's presence inside the Syrian border. Bolton related in his book that during the G20 summit meeting in Argentina on Dec. 1, 2018, Erdogan gave Trump a memo requesting that Zarrab be freed from U.S. jail. According to Bolton's book, Trump told Erdogan that "he would take care of things, explaining that the Southern District [of New York] prosecutors were not his people, but were Obama people, a problem that would be fixed when they were replaced by his people."

When Bolton was dispatched to Turkey to warn Erdogan that he should not invade Northern Syria, Bolton received a last minute phone call from President Trump asking him to refrain from telling the Turkish President that the U.S. troops will not withdraw from Northern Syria, even though most of the White House senior staff disagreed with the President's decision.

Trump also violated U.S. laws and congressional demands by refusing to sanction Turkey, a NATO member, for purchasing Russian anti-aircraft S-400 missiles.

David Ignatius published an article in the Washington Post last week, titled, "Trump's corrupt dealings with Turkey are some of the most startling stories in Bolton's book." Bolton recalls that he told Attorney General William P. Barr in April 2019 that Trump's repeated efforts to help Erdogan showed his "penchant to, in effect, give personal favors to dictators he liked." Ignatius described Trump's corrupt dealings with Erdogan as "the clearest, most continuous narrative of misconduct by Trump that has yet surfaced."

Ignatius linked the Trump-Erdogan

friendship to Trump's "personal business interests. When he launched Trump Towers Istanbul in April 2012, his daughter Ivanka Trump tweeted thanks to Erdogan, the prime minister at the time, for attending. With them was a Turkish businessman named Mehmet Ali Yalcindag, whom Donald Trump described at the opening as a "great friend" of Ivanka. Kushner, her husband, was there, too."

Trump was surrounded by a group of pro-Turkish staff, such as his first National Security Adviser Michael Flynn who was forced to register as a foreign agent after it was revealed that Flynn's consulting firm was paid \$500,000 from a Turkish businessman who headed the state-run Turkish business federation. Flynn's task was to get Gulen extradited to Turkey.

Another pro-Turkish adviser was Rudolph W. Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, who contacted then U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara on Feb. 24, 2017, stating that he was traveling to Ankara as the representative of Zarrab. Giuliani pressured the Justice Department for "some agreement between the United States and Turkey" for the release of Zarrab, according to Giuliani's statement filed in federal court. Trump fired Bharara in March 2017, but the case against Zarrab was continued by the new U.S. Attorney, Geoffrey Berman, who was also fired by Trump last week.

Not surprisingly, Erdogan was angered by Bolton's revelations. Fahrettin Altun, the Turkish presidency's communications director, said on Twitter: "Recent publication of a book authored by a high-level former U.S. official includes misleading, one-sided and manipulative presentations of our leader President Erdogan's conversations with the US President Donald Trump."

Unfortunately, Bolton refused to testify in Congress during President Trump's Congressional Impeachment Hearings, even though it would not have made a difference. Just about all Republican Senators blindly follow Trump's lead no matter how wrong he is. As Trump arrogantly proclaimed during the campaign, "I could stand in the middle of 5th Ave. and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters."

Senator Paul Scarr adds his voice of support for Australian recognition of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides

Federal Senator for Queensland, Paul Scarr has added his support to the Joint Justice Initiative of the Armenian-Australian, Assyrian-Australian and Greek-Australian communities calling for Australian recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides.

The February 2020 launch of the Joint Justice Initiative at Australia's Parliament House featured the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU), Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA) and Australian Hellenic Council (AHC), which declares Australia's recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides as a priority on behalf of their communities.

Sydney-born Scarr was a lawyer at top tier firms and recognized as a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia, before being elected to the Senate at the 2019 Federal Election. He met a delegation from the Joint Justice Initiative in February 2020, before deciding to sign an Affirmation of Support backing national recognition of the



Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides.

"For many years, I have provided support to the Queensland Rwandan community in relation to its commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsis," Scarr stated. "I understand the importance of recognizing historical truths."

Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) Executive Director, Haig Kayserian said: "We welcome Senator Paul Scarr joining our growing coalition of supporters in the Federal Parliament, representing a broad cross-section of political parties. It is only a matter of time this support must translate in overdue Australian recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides."

The Joint Justice Initiative has so far announced the support of Scarr, Tony Zappia MP, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Senator Hollie Hughes, Senator Rex Patrick, Mike Freeland MP, Senator Eric Abetz, Senator Larissa Waters, Senator Pat Dodson, Jason Falinski MP, Josh Burns MP, John Alexander MP, Senator Andrew Bragg and Bob Katter MP, with a promise of more announcements to come.

On 25th February 2020, over 100 Federal Australian parliamentarians, diplomats, departmental officials, political staffers, academics, media and community leaders were treated to cultural performances, food, wine and brandy, as well as the historic signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, which affirmed that the signatory public affairs representatives of the three communities were jointly committed to seeing Australia recognize the Turkish-committed Genocide against the Armenian, Greek and Assyrian citizens of the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

Trump on Kanye West's presidential run: 'He is always going to be for us'

President

Trump brushed off the news of rapper Kanye West's presidential bid and his subsequent comments that he no longer supports the president, The Hill reports.

"He is always going to be for us, and his wife is going to be for us," Trump said Thursday in an interview with Fox News's Sean Hannity, referring to West and reality TV star Kim Kardashian West.

Trump brushed off comments that West made earlier this week, telling Forbes that he is "taking the red hat off," referring to Trump's signature red "Make



America Great Again" campaign baseball caps.

Trump did not, however, criticize West in his interview with Hannity and maintained that he thinks West will support him in his reelection bid.

"[He's a] very good guy. He is a person

that I get along with very well," Trump said. "At the end I think he would support us over anyone else, we have to stop the radical left from taking over our country."

West tweeted last week that he would be running for president in November's election, despite having missed the filing deadline to get on the ballot in most states.

The rapper told Forbes he thinks he can argue that he should be allowed extra time due the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm speaking with experts, I'm going to speak with Jared Kushner, the White House, with [Joe] Biden," he said.

U.S. House panel implicitly backs legislation for continuing USAID funding for demining in Artsakh

A key U.S. House panel has approved legislative report language indirectly calling for continued USAID funding for humanitarian demining in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), ARMENPRESS reports, citing the official website of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“We certainly welcome this report recommendation as a step in the right direction,” said Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the ANCA. “However, in light of this Administration’s all-out attack on Artsakh demining, it’s clear that Congress will need to do more in the underlying foreign aid bill to ensure continued U.S. support for a mine-free Artsakh.”

Support for Artsakh demining was included in the House Appropriations Committee report accompanying the Fiscal Year 2021 Foreign Aid Bill, as follows: “The Committee recommends funding consistent with prior years for USAID’s Humanitarian Demining program.” The only USAID funded demining program currently in operation is in Artsakh, where The HALO Trust has successfully removed over 61,000 mines and cleared some 62,000 acres of land, ensuring a safer future for over 80% of Artsakh’s population. Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ), who visited Artsakh last year and met with representatives of The HALO Trust, was a strong proponent of the report language, along with his Armenian Caucus colleagues, including Co-Chairs Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Representatives Judy Chu (D-CA), Devin Nunes (R-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA) and others.

Congress has consistently pushed back against efforts to stop demining assistance to Artsakh, with over 30 Senators and 75 U.S. Representatives calling on key Ap-



propriations Committee members to continue the assistance program, in letters sent in April and March of this year. Last year, 22 Senators and 89 Representatives cosigned bipartisan letters defending the USAID-funded HALO-Trust demining program in Artsakh. In 2017 and again in 2019 the U.S. House passed amendments supporting continued U.S. aid to Artsakh. In the lead up to today’s vote, one-third of U.S. House members testifying before the House Appropriations Committee cited Artsakh demining as a key priority for inclusion in the FY2021 Foreign Aid Bill.

The United States has been funding humanitarian programs in Artsakh since 1998, providing clean water to rural communities, support for maternal and child health, and life-saving demining assistance. Artsakh assistance has been long under attack by Azerbaijan’s Aliyev regime, and over the past two years, aggressively targeted by the Trump Administration, even as it ramps up U.S. defense and security aid to Baku.

Continued aid to Artsakh to support demining and rehabilitation efforts has been a key part of the ANCA’s 360-degree policy priorities to ensure Artsakh security and freedom. In testimony to the House Appropriations Committee earlier this year, ANCA Government Affairs Director Tereza Yerimyan argued that “The U.S. aid program to Nagorno Karabakh may require only a small expenditure, but it represents a major American investment in

peace.” She went on to note that despite exceptional progress in The HALO Trust’s effort to make Artsakh mine-free, more needed to be done. “While the exact percentage of territory requiring clearance remains uncertain, The HALO Trust’s village-by-village resurvey has already identified 1.8 million square meters of additional contamination in the highly populated Martakert region, a figure that will

certainly increase as the re-survey continues. All told, 385 people have been killed or injured by landmines or other explosives in Nagorno Karabakh since 1995, including several HALO trust employees in just the past few years,” explained Yerimyan.

Over 10,000 advocates have contacted Congress in support of continued U.S. demining assistance to Artsakh through the ANCA’s online action portals. ANCA Leo Sarkisian and Maral Melkonian Avetisyan Summer program participants have been rallying nationwide constituent outreach in support of continued Artsakh aid. Letters to Senate and House members can be sent by visiting anca.org/aid. Constituents can be directly connected to their U.S. Representative by phone through the ANCA’s Quick Connect system by visiting anca.org/call. Grassroots outreach to Congressional offices will continue until the FY2021 Foreign Aid Bill is finalized.

The FY 2021 Foreign Aid Bill and its accompanying report were approved by the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 29 to 21 and is scheduled to be taken up by the full House of Representatives soon. The Senate Appropriations Committee will be taking up its version of the FY2021 Foreign Aid Bill in upcoming weeks. The current measure did not specify amounts for direct aid to Armenia or Azerbaijan, allowing the State Department latitude to define funding levels and programs.

Recent News from Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator

The semi-built building purchased some 10 years ago to become a home

Active construction works are underway in Sisian. The homeowners, who have lived in 5 different homes with the last 18 years of their life, are now on the construction site. The walls of the rented house have become more bearable in summer, but the extended family strives to sooner finish the con-



struction and build the semi-built building purchased 10 year ago.

"We bought the semi-built building 10 years ago, but couldn't complete the construction. We started the construction after being included in the housing project. The roof is already built; the doors and windows are installed. The electricity problem is solved, now other works are being done. I work with my father and friends; we work from morning till late night with good mood. We want to celebrate the New Year in our new home," said the homeowner, **Hunan Sahakyan**.

Viva-MTS and the "Fuller Center for Housing" Armenia support the initiative of the young homeowner through the housing project. The methods implemented for many years are stopped temporarily; volunteer works are not done due to the pandemic. Yet, the delivery of the construction materials is organized remotely. The process is in the center of attention of partnering organizations.

"We stand by your side hand in hand



with our partner. Although our ways of communication have changed these days, our purpose is the same, and our aim is unchanged. The program shall be implemented. We have shortened the distance between Yerevan and Sisian with the help of technologies and a video call, and we will meet in person, once the situation gets settled. Keep your heads up, keep working hard and reach out for your dreams!", Viva-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said during the video call.

"The situation is the same everywhere

in the world. We have already got used



to it, but the construction process should not suffer from it. We do our best to deliver the construction materials on time and expect to fulfill the dream of your family by the end of the year," said the "Fuller Center for Housing" Armenia president **Ashot Yeghiazaryan** in a video call.

In the current year, the housing problem of 37 families will be solved in different regions of the republic. The evaluation of the results of the past years has played an important role in ensuring the continuity of the program.

Prioritizing energy-efficient technologies

Viva-MTS and the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) continue the energy-efficient outdoor lighting systems installation in the remote settlements of Armenia. Development of infrastructure is important both in terms of the

page 13 ➡ creation of eco-villages network and equally for the purpose of mitigating the development gap between the country's capital and rural areas.

Energy-efficient technologies were



installed in the Hermon, a settlement in Vayots Dzor region, two years ago. The number of illuminated streets has been increased this year. The introduction



of this modern infrastructure has been carried out in stages. With the first project, 33 LED lights were installed and a kilometer-long street was illuminated. As a result, we resolved an issue which the settlement had been facing for some 27 years, ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the second project, 23 LED lights were installed; Hermon now has 55 LED lights. This energy-efficient lighting system allows illumination of around 2 kilometer-long

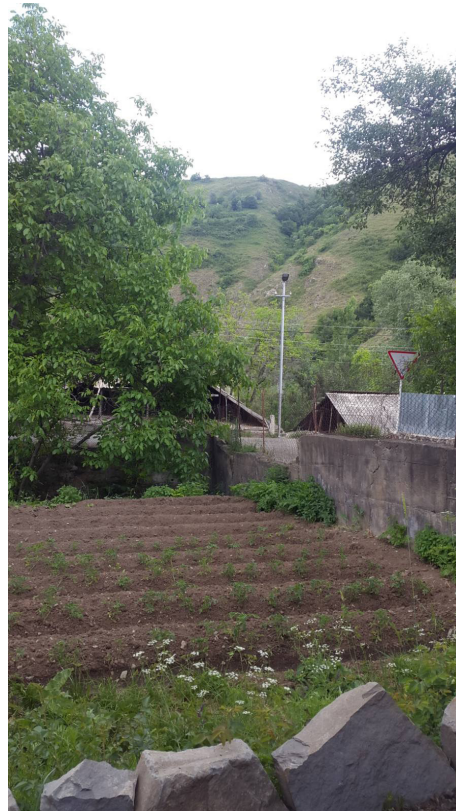
territory, encompassing the main streets in the settlement.

Due to the current situation, the parties to the project were unable to be present at the launching of the new system, but a poll has some interesting details about what the locals think of the system.

As a rule the local administrations are



the first to evaluate the efficiency of the modern system, underlining the reduction of expensed and budget savings. This is an important indicator for the villagers, for they know the savings can be steered to solving other problems. The residents of Hermon shared their



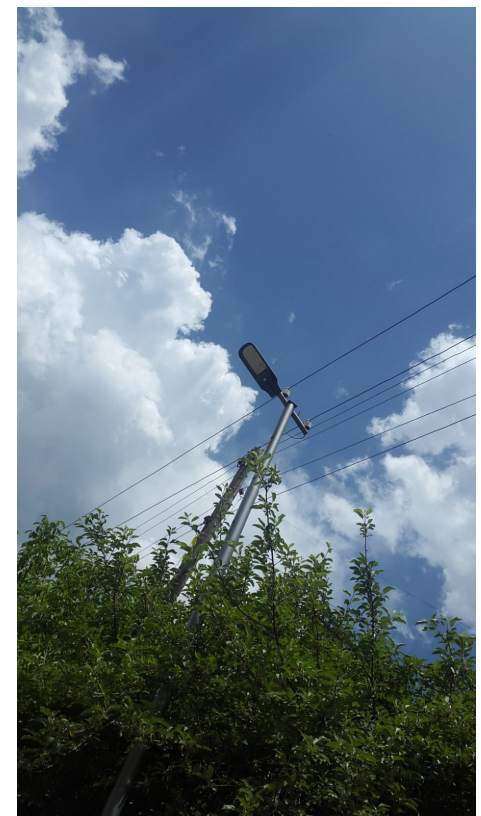
opinions and insights of the positive impact of the program.

The small farm owners stated that there was a noticeable increase in activity and initiatives in the village. The lighting system contributed to the safe



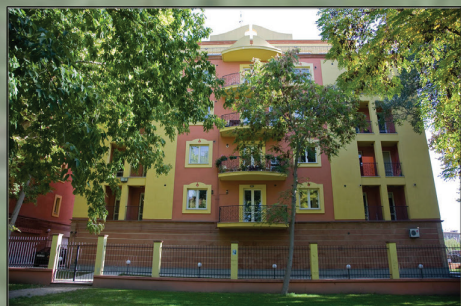
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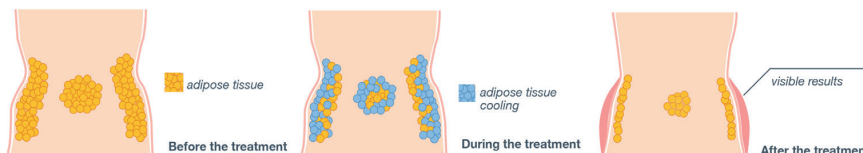
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Switzerland

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 Marz
Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62
Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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E-mail: contact@nt.am

URL: 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