

## Armenian Parliament approves bill on coronavirus restrictions without formal state of emergency



**The National Assembly approved on September 4 a bill allowing the Armenian government to continue to enforce coronavirus-related safety rules and restrictions after lifting a state of emergency declared in March.**

The bill passed in the first reading by 80 votes to 28 involves amendments to several Armenian laws. They empower relevant authorities to impose nationwide or local lockdowns, seal off communities hit by COVID-19 outbreaks, close Armenia’s borders and isolate people infected with the disease. The authorities can also ban or restrict public gatherings in the country.

The government drafted the bill to avoid extending the state of emergency again on September 11.

Deputies representing the two parliamentary opposition parties, Prosperous Armenia (BHK) and Bright Armenia (LHK), voted against the measure, saying that the government is hastily pushing it through parliament without a proper debate. The BHK’s Naira Zohrabyan also claimed that it violates some articles of the Armenian constitution.

Both the BHK and the LHK had for months criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government for repeatedly prolonging emergency rule. Some of their senior members had said that the government is not lifting it in order to keep in place a coronavirus-related ban on street protests.

The government lifted the ban last month. It at the same time set strict physical distancing requirements for organizers and participants of rallies.

The government used the state of emergency to impose a nationwide lockdown in late March. It began easing lockdown restrictions already in mid-April.

With the number of coronavirus cases in the country growing rapidly in the following weeks, the authorities put the emphasis on the enforcement of safety rules requiring Armenians to practice social distancing and wear face masks in all public areas.

The daily number of new coronavirus cases has shrunk by more than half since mid-July. Citing this downward trend, the government decided late last month to reopen universities and schools on September 1 and September 15 respectively.

The official total number of people killed by the disease thus reached 891. According to ministry data, 272 other infected persons have died from other, pre-existing conditions.

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## Red Cross Still Seeking Access to Armenian POW In Azerbaijan



**Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have still not been able to visit an Armenian army officer who was captured by Azerbaijani troops late last month, officials in Yerevan said on September 2.**

A spokeswoman for the ICRC office in Yerevan, Zara Amatuni, told RFE/RL's Armenian service that the ICRC is continuing its "dialogue" with relevant Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities regarding the

officer, Gurgen Alaverdyan. She would not say when the Azerbaijani side could allow ICRC representatives in Baku to meet and speak with Alaverdyan.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry also reported continuing efforts to arrange such a visit. "Given the sensitivity of the issue I won't give other details," said the ministry spokeswoman, Anna Naghdalyan.

The Azerbaijani military claims that Alaverdyan was taken prisoner during a failed Armenian commando raid on one of its frontline positions north of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian Defense Ministry strongly denies this, saying that Alaverdyan simply lost his way on August 22 due to poor weather.

Yerevan has said that Baku's treatment of the Armenian serviceman constitutes a serious violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention on prisoners of war. It has specifically decried an Azerbaijani Defense Ministry

video shows the serviceman saying in broken Armenian that he led a special army unit that planned to carry out "sabotage" attacks in Azerbaijan. It says he was clearly forced to read out a written text badly translated into Armenian.

The Azerbaijani authorities brought a string of criminal charges against Alaverdyan following the release of the video last week.

Naghdalyan deplored this and other "trumped-up" criminal cases brought against Armenian citizens held in Azerbaijani captivity.

"I want point out in this regard that two citizens of Azerbaijan have crossed into Armenia in the course of this year alone," she told a news conference. "Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia has not prosecuted them or portrayed them as prisoners of war and fully respects their dignity and human rights."

## Karabakh Leader sees no peace deal with Azerbaijan

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is unlikely to be fully resolved in the foreseeable future, Ara Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, said on September 2.

"The likelihood of resolving this problem within decades is very low," Harutyunyan told a news conference in Stepanakert. "We don't see that happening."

"That is why through strengthening our army we should force the enemy to reckon with the Armenian force of Artsakh (Karabakh) and maintain the status quo until major geopolitical developments that could lead to some temporary or rather partial resolution of the Karabakh conflict," he said. "A full resolution is not possible."

The Karabakh leader said that the international community has already brokered such an interim solution to the conflict in Kosovo, an Albanian-populated former province of Serbia recognized as an independent state by most Western nations.

Harutyunyan spoke to reporters on the



19th anniversary of Karabakh's declaration of independence from Soviet Azerbaijan which came just four months before the breakup of the Soviet Union and was followed by a bloody Armenian-Azerbaijani war for the territory.

Azerbaijan never recognized the legality of that declaration. It continues to consider Karabakh an internationally recognized part of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia.

Harutyunyan's remarks came amid efforts by international mediators -- and Russia in particular -- to revive the Karabakh peace process following the recent heavy fighting

at a volatile section of the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that both Yerevan and Baku now seem interested in further easing tensions and resuming peace talks mediated by the U.S., Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. He stressed that the talks should continue to focus on a framework peace accord which was first put forward by the mediators in 2007 and has been repeatedly modified since then.

The mediators' so-called Madrid Principles call for a phased settlement that would start with Armenian withdrawal from virtually all seven districts in Azerbaijan properly or partly controlled by Karabakh Armenian forces. In return, Karabakh's predominantly Armenian population would be able to determine the dispute region's internationally recognized status in a future referendum.

## Artsakh was the spark that spread the fire of freedom across the Armenian world – President



Artsakh was the spark which lit the fire of freedom which spread all over the Armenian world, President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian said in a congratulatory message on the occasion of Artsakh Independence Day.

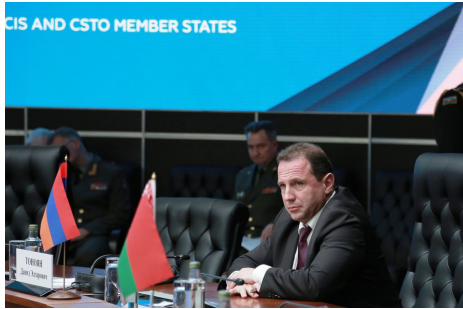
"Our people rose to defend their rights and to take their worthy place in the mod-

ern family of nations. This was a truly historic time for the realization of our aspirations and abilities and its significance was duly appreciated in Artsakh as well as in Armenia," the President said.

According to him, the declaration of independence became the catalyst which

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## Armenian Minister points to “expanded ambitions of certain countries” in the South Caucasus



The military-political situation in the South Caucasus is characterized by a high conflict potential, Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan said at the joint meeting of the Council of Ministers of the CIS, SCO and CSTO.

“Recently, there has been an exacerbation of contradictions in the region, which, in our opinion, is a consequence of expanding of the ambitions of certain countries. The military-political events dynamically developing in our region can be characterized as a conflict of geopolitical interests, the key factor of which is the lack of a common vision of security, as well as the lack of mechanisms to reduce risks,” the Defense Minister said.

He emphasized that the regional conflicts do not have a military solution, and noted that neither military rhetoric nor attempts to involve new states in these conflicts, with the subsequent aggravation of the situation in the region, is acceptable to Armenia.

“In particular, after each incident that is a direct continuation of the growing militant rhetoric, the forces conducting the latter get further convinced that this approach is not effective and does not lead to the desired result,” Minister Tonoyan stated.

He said “Russian presence in the region, as well as the deepening of the military-political cooperation between Armenia and Russia is the most important deterrent factor contributing to the preservation of regional stability and security.”

“The sphere of strategic interests of the Republic of Armenia includes not only the Caucasus region, but the entire area of responsibility of the CSTO, as well as the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Proceeding from this, Armenia is interested in maintaining peace and stability in these regions,” David Tonoyan continued.

The fight against terrorism remains one of the highest priorities, he said. “Highly assessing the role of the Russian Federation in the fight against international terrorism in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Armenia joined the process of providing humanitarian aid to the Syrian people and rebuilding the country’s infrastructure.”

The Defense noted that Armenia intends to continue to make its feasible contribution to the UN-sanctioned undertakings of various formats, carried out in different geographic, climatic, ethno-confessional and operational environments.

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allowed to form a sovereign statehood.

“Today, 29 years later, the Republic of Artsakh is a mature state unit thanks to the struggle being fought by all-Armenian forces, thanks to the victory, which was achieved through the unity of Artsakh, Armenia, and Diaspora, thanks to the willpower which is leading the people of Artsakh, and has become the promise of their success,” President Sarkissian continued.

“I bow to the memory of all fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives for the free and independent Artsakh and express gratitude to all who gave their health and well-being to achieve that goal,” he added.

The President noted that Artsakh was a touchstone for our national willpower and remains the pivot of our national unity.

“For us, as a nation, every achievement in Artsakh is a stone to the restoration of the huge Armenian world. Thus, our mind and effort, our work and ideas ought to be directed towards the protection of the Fatherland, security and peace of Artsakh and Armenia, well-being of our nation,” he stated.

The President believes this notion should be the strongest in each of us because the fight for Artsakh’s full freedom, for the restoration of the violated rights of our people is not over yet, it continues.

## Status of Artsakh an absolute priority to Armenia -FM

The issue of Nagorno Karabakh’s status is an absolute priority for Armenia, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyans said in an interview with Russian Interfax.

“The realization of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination without any restrictions, ensuring real, tangible security for Artsakh is an important priority. And we are ready to work both with the co-chairs and with the Azerbaijani side to define formulas that will allow us to compare and measure the possible compromise,” Mnatsakanyan said.

Another important issue about Nagorno Karabakh, he said, is that over the past thirty years it has shown absolute capacity to organize its social life, ensure his security, and assume international obligations.

“The full involvement of Artsakh in the negotiation process is a very important



issue and, among other things, is of a practical nature. Because this will strengthen the sense of ownership in relation to the negotiation process on the part of the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh, which, being elected by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, has a corresponding mandate to represent their interests,” the Foreign Minister stated.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyans said it is regrettable to observe the incitement of an atmosphere of hatred not only in the region, but also an attempt to transfer it to other countries.

“An important principle for Armenia in the process of peaceful settlement is to make every effort to create an atmosphere conducive to peace. It is impossible to conduct a peaceful negotiation process in an atmosphere of hatred, war rhetoric and the threat of the use of force.

It makes no sense to expect progress in the negotiations when Azerbaijan, on the one hand, incites hatred, on the other hand, in words, strives for peace. It is impossible to assume that we can have real progress in the negotiations in the conditions of “Armenophobia” and belligerent rhetoric,” the Foreign Minister stated.

## Yerevan slams Turkey's ban on German military flights to Armenia

The Armenian Foreign Ministry confirmed on September 2 reports that Turkey has refused to allow a German military transport aircraft to fly over its airspace en route to Armenia.

The plane was due to pick up Armenian soldiers and transport them to Germany for further training preceding their deployment in Afghanistan.

Some 120 Armenian servicemen serve in Afghanistan under German command as part of a NATO-led multinational force. The Armenian military rotates them on a regular basis.

The German magazine "Der Spiegel" reported on Friday that the Airbus 310 aircraft of the German Air Force was on its way to Yerevan in late July when Turkish air traffic controllers unexpectedly refused, without any explanation, to give it overflight permission. The plane had to return to a German military airfield as a result,



it said, adding that the Armenian soldiers were flown to Germany over Russia's airspace in mid-August.

"As far as I know, the Defense Ministry did not refute that information," said Anna Naghdalyan, the spokeswoman for the Armenian Foreign Ministry.

"It is condemnable that Turkey now also obstructs NATO-led and UN-led peace-keeping operations based on its anti-Armenian positions," Naghdalyan told reporters. "We have raised this issue with our interna-

tional partners through diplomatic channels."

Ankara has not denied the "Der Spiegel" report. According to the report, the German military, the Bundeswehr, regards the Turkish move as a "deliberate provocation" by a NATO member state.

The German plane was reportedly not allowed to fly over Turkish territory just days after the outbreak of heavy fighting on Armenia's border with Azerbaijan, Turkey's closest regional ally. Ankara blamed Yerevan for the weeklong hostilities, which left 17 soldiers dead, and voiced support for Baku in unusually strong terms.

The Armenian government responded by accusing the Turks of trying to destabilize the region, undercutting international efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and posing a serious security threat to Armenia.

## Tsarukyan 'Insists' on Government's resignation

RFE/RL – Yerevan) - Gagik Tsarukyan stands by his calls for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation made three months ago, a leading member of his Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) said on September 4.

In a June 5 speech, Tsarukyan accused Pashinyan's government of mishandling Armenia's coronavirus crisis and failing to mitigate its socio-economic consequences. Pashinyan and his loyalists reacted angrily to that speech.

Ten days later, Tsarukyan was stripped of its parliamentary immunity from prosecution and indicted on vote buying charges rejected by him as politically motivated. He claims that Pashinyan ordered the criminal proceedings in response to his speech.

Tsarukyan, who is one of the country's richest businessmen, reiterated last week his criticism of the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic and other policies. But he stopped short of demanding that Pashinyan and all members of his government step down.

Mikael Melkumyan, a senior BHK figure, insisted that Tsarukyan remains determined



to achieve the government's resignation and force snap elections. "What was said on June 5 and afterwards remains in force," he told journalists.

"In a political struggle you don't have to repeat the same thing every day," Melkumyan said when asked about Tsarukyan's most recent statements that did not mention regime change.

Shortly after Tsarukyan's indictment, the BHK, which has the second largest group in Armenia's parliament, joined forces with two other opposition parties: Hayrenik and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun). They have not ruled out the possibility of holding joint anti-govern-

ment rallies.

Hayk Gevorgyan, a senior parliamentarian from the ruling My Step bloc, was dismissive of the threat to Pashinyan's hold on power emanating from the BHK. He said Tsarukyan's party is simply trying to preserve its shrinking support base in the face of the ongoing criminal proceedings against its leader.

"In reality, the BHK has one objective: the issues connected with its leader," Gevorgyan told RFE/RL's Armenian service. "You know about the criminal cases."

Gevorgyan said that the BHK and other opposition forces cannot come to power by exploiting the coronavirus pandemic and resulting socioeconomic hardship. "They are in a hurry because very soon this environment will be over, economic progress in Armenia will resume and they will stand no chance," he said, adding that most Armenians continue to support the current government.

The Armenian economy is on course to shrink in 2020 after three consecutive years of robust growth.

## Armenian, Cypriot, Kurdish, Egyptian diasporas in the UK call on PM Johnson to hold Turkey to account

The leaders of the organized Cypriot, Armenian, Kurdish and Egyptian diasporas in the UK have written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson urging him to “incentivize” Ankara to end its destabilizing actions in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of the ongoing UK-Turkey trade negotiations.

The communities, which have all felt the impact of Turkey’s authoritarianism and aggression, note that Turkey is increasingly a “destructive force” in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider region. The communities said that Turkey is causing regional instability, undermining UK interests and espousing principles contrary to Global Britain.

The letter listed examples of Turkey’s actions, including:

- Frequent illegal maritime and land incursions into neighboring countries, accompanied by statements that disregard & violate international law
- Deliberately aggressive and inflammatory rhetoric from President Erdogan to stoke racial, religious and political tensions



- Extensive jailing of journalists and restrictions on freedom of expression
- Emerging & longstanding evidence of collusion with Daesh, facilitating the movement of foreign terrorist fighters via Turkey and exploiting/guiding illegal migration flows through Turkey

The co-signatories highlight the concern that such actions cause and point to the decision by the UK Foreign Secretary not to grant new export licenses to Turkey for weapons which may be used in Syria.

While the letter acknowledges London’s positive foreign policy agenda through the new sanctions regime against individuals that are responsible for human rights violations, it comments that this agenda “makes the UK’s current absence from the Eastern

Mediterranean, where it has historically had a very prominent role, all the more noticeable.”

The letter urges the Prime Minister to use the negotiations to play a “crucial role” in holding the Turkish government to account “with clear commitments and conditions as part of the UK-Turkey trade deal”.

“These trade talks represent a unique opportunity to reinforce this

positive foreign policy agenda, by encouraging and incentivizing Turkey to cease its actions aimed at destabilizing the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider region. We urge our Government to utilize this opportunity to reinforce our foreign policy goals,” concludes the letter.

### Signatories

Christos Karaolis, President of the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK  
Annette Moskofian, Chair of the Armenian National Committee UK  
Turkan Ozcan, Chair of the Kurdish People’s Democratic Assembly of Britain  
Mostafa Ragab, Chair of the Egyptian Council in the UK

## Tribute to the memory of Armenian Genocide victims at Komitas statue in Paris



Armenia’s Ambassador to France Has-

mik Tolmajian, French Ambassador to Armenia Jonathan Lacote, co-chairs of the Coordinating Council of the Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF) Ara Toranian and Mourad Papazian paid tribute to the memory of vic-

tims of the Armenian Genocide in front of the statue of Komitas in Paris.

The statue of Komitas in Paris was vandalized on August 30. The inscription “it is false” was written in red ink on the plinth of the memorial.

The Embassy of Armenia condemned in strongest terms the profanation of the statue dedicated to the memory of the Armenian genocide victims, as well as Armenian combatants and resistance fighters.

## 24 Diaspora specialists start working for Armenian Government



Starting from September 1, 24 Diaspora Armenian experts are working for the Armenian Government. The specialists hail from Canada, Denmark, Russia, Lebanon, France, Norway, Israel, the Netherlands, and China. Even in the current conditions with the pandemic, circumstances did not

prevent the experts from reaching Armenia.

High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan greeted and welcomed the participants of the program, expressing hope that they will have an unparalleled work experience in the homeland.

The director of the “Depi Hayk” foundation Sevan Kabakian and the co-founder of the “Repat Armenia” foundation Vartan Marashlyan briefed the participants on the peculiarities of the work in the government agencies of Armenia and gave practical advice for rapid integration into the environment.

Due to COVID-19 and limited air travel,

the remaining program participants will arrive in Armenia at a later date.

A total of 100 Diaspora professionals from across the globe will be placed in over 20 different ministries/offices in Armenia for one year under the iGorts program initiated and financed by the High Commissioner’s Office.



## Package for integration of Lebanese-Armenians submitted for government consideration

A package of programs for the integration of Lebanese-Armenians has been submitted to the government and put into circulation on September 1.

Just 20 days after the High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan’s visit to Lebanon, the integration package covering various spheres will be finalized after receiving feedback and proposals from several departments.



Under the package, Lebanese-Armenians will have access to health, socio-economic, educational and a number of other services.

During the preparation of the package, High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan has held meetings with Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, and a number of ministers.

## Armenia in talks to purchase new batch of SU-30SM fightersgovernment consideration

Negotiations are under way to acquire a new batch of SU-30SM fighters, Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan said in a conversation with Radio Liberty.

The Sukhoi Su-30SM is a Russian-made twin-engine, two-seat supermaneuverable 4+ generation fighter jet.

It is a multi-role fighter for all-weather, air-to-air and air-to-surface deep interdiction missions.

Last week, a spokesperson for the Federal Service for Military-Technical



Cooperation (FSMTC) of Russia is ready

to discuss with Armenia the supply of an additional batch of SU-30SM generation 4+ fighter.

“The work with the Armenian partners continues. The topic of the purchase of aircraft will be discussed if the Armenian side confirms its interest,” said Maria Vorobyova, official representative of the FSMTC of Russia.

In 2019, Armenia purchased four Su-30SM fighters from Russia. Yerevan announced plans to buy new aircraft.

## EU helps develop new winter sports resort in Armenia's Vardahovit

**From ski touring to local food: new opportunities for winter sports lovers are created in Vardahovit with the support of the EU.**

A new tour destination for winter sports has been developed in remote Vardahovit village offering extreme and common ski tours in Armenia's mountains, the EU Delegation to Armenia reports.

This activity helps to keep the low season in rural Armenia full, as tourists from various destinations travel to Vardahovit for this service offered during wintertime.

Tourists will be offered ski gear, guided service and local food.

The development of this tourist destination in Vardahovit became possible within the framework of the "EU4Armenia: Community-driven rural tourism and cultural activities in Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor marzes" project.



## Four Diaspora youth to be employed by the Armenian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

Four young people from Lebanon, France and Russia will be employed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs within the framework of the "iGorts" program.

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Zaruhi Batoyan welcomed the participants of the iGorts program initiated by the Chief Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan.

"I am sure this will be a powerful experience in terms of learning from each other," said Minister Batoyan.

The first four participants of the program will work for the next year in the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Minis-



try of Labor and Social Affairs, supporting programs and reforms in the field of women and children.

Twenty-four Diaspora Armenian experts have begun working for the Armenian Gov-

ernment. The specialists hail from Canada, Denmark, Russia, Lebanon, France, Norway, Israel, the Netherlands, and China. Even in the current conditions with the pandemic, circumstances did not prevent the experts from reaching Armenia.

A total of 100 Diaspora professionals from across the globe will be placed in over 20 different ministries/offices in Armenia for one year under the iGorts program initiated and financed by the High Commissioner's Office.

Due to COVID-19 and limited air travel, the remaining program participants will arrive in Armenia on a later date.

## TUMO Box ready to welcome teenagers in Berd community

TUMO Box is ready to welcome teenagers in Berd community.

Registration for the very first TUMO Box has begun. Anyone between the ages of 12 and 18 can now become a TUMO student and begin the education right on the spot.

These mobile mini-TUMOs are equipped with everything needed for a comfortable learning experience.

Registration is open on TUMO's website.

- The TUMO Box is a portable, low-cost, technically equipped mini TUMO.
- It provides young people from remote, rural communities with access to the TUMO curriculum.
- The TUMO Box will provide roughly 320 teens a year with education in technology and design.
- Students in Berd and surrounding areas will complete self-learning activities in Berd before they begin workshops and labs at TUMO Dilijan.



## Heroes of victorious battles of Tavush honored with high state awards and titles

An award ceremony for the Tavush victorious battles' heroes was held on August 28 at the Sardarapat Memorial, chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The event was attended by Artsakh Republic President Arayik Harutyunyan, His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Speaker of the National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan, Security Council members, members of government, statesmen, army generals, commissioned and non-commissioned officers, sergeants, soldiers.

Before handing the high state awards to the servicemen of the Armenian Armed Forces, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivered a speech, in which he stated:

"Honorable President of the Artsakh Republic,  
Your Holiness,  
Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia,  
Dear Security Council members,  
Dear Members of Government, statesmen,  
Dear Generals, officers, non-commissioned officers, sergeants, soldiers:  
Dear compatriots,

We have rallied to mark today's exceptional occasion at the Sardarapat Memorial, which is a symbol of our people's glorious victory over the Ottoman army.

For the first time ever in the history of the Republic of Armenia, 55 Armenian servicemen were awarded the Second Degree Combat Cross Order, and 16 servicemen were awarded the First Degree Combat Cross Order. This fact is unique in that 24 of them are present here, and I will enjoy the honor of awarding the medals in person. The other servicemen decorated with high state awards are not present here for the following reason: They are on duty defending Armenia's borders and security.

But the most important episode of today's event is still to come. For the first time in



the history of independent Armenia, a serviceman of the Armed Forces has been awarded the title of National Hero of Armenia during his lifetime.

Shortly after completing my remarks at this venue, which symbolizes our people's victorious struggle, I will present Captain Ruben Sanamyan with the Order of Homeland certifying the title of National Hero. Tomorrow he will be back on duty in his military unit.

This is the highlight of today's event. Most of the recipients of the First Degree Combat Cross Order were awarded posthumously in Armenia; all our national heroes were awarded posthumously, and this is the first time ever that a national hero, an army officer receives the high state award in person.

Today's event comes to evidence that the noble cause initiated by our liberation war heroes – Monte Melkonyan, Tatul Krpeyan, Movses Gorgisyan, Jivan Abrahamyan, Yura Poghosyan, Vazgen Sargsyan – is still alive. It is not just history, but an uninterrupted process carried on by specific actors at a specific time and venue.

Today's heroes are the embodiment of their predecessors' physical presence in our lives, the reflection of our psychology and thinking, and we can confidently tell our children and the rising generation that they can come across with true heroes not only in books, but they can also meet them in real life. They are with us, in the same building, in the same city, in the same

village; they face the same problems as anyone else does. They have been promoted to the title of national hero, which means that either we can do so, each of us can do that, and it is our duty to be heroes every day and anywhere through our daily work, behavior, in our way of thinking about the homeland and by acting for the sake of our homeland, because the example set by today's awardees teaches us that heroism is no longer a superhuman effort,

but daily work, daily life, daily responsibility.

Dear attendees, dear compatriots,

Today's awardees were all active participants in the July victorious battles in Tavush: they personally contributed to the July victory. That local military standoff was of great psychological, political and geopolitical significance; it recorded the following important outcomes:

Outcome One – For many years in a row, Azerbaijan's military-political leadership had been developing the thesis that Baku's failure to start a war against Armenia and Artsakh was a huge concession not only to Artsakh and Armenia, but also to the international community. They thought that the Azerbaijani army had reached such a high level of combat readiness that it was capable of resolving the Karabakh issue within up to 24 hours.

On this basis, a public opinion was fostered and delivered that a peaceful settlement of the Karabakh issue was only possible on the basis of Armenia's unilateral concessions. The victorious July battles shattered the bellicose rhetoric built up by the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan for almost 10 years. It proved that there is no military solution to the Karabakh issue, and that Azerbaijan should inevitably adhere to constructive approaches.

Outcome Two – For more than two years, in close touch with the international community and the lead-

➔ **page 8** ership of Azerbaijan, as well as in its public statements, our government has emphasized that it is useless to talk to Armenia in the language of threats and coercion. We made it clear that we would not allow anyone to talk to us in such a tone, and anyone who might attempt to do so would regret it bitterly.

The victorious battles of July proved the credibility of our political statements, proved that our assessment of the military-political situation in the region and the balance of power was soberly calculated and accurate.

Outcome Three – Large-scale reforms have been taking place in the Armenian Army for two and a half years now. I mean not only the reforms that can be seen and discussed in public, but also the strategic and tactical reforms that are not put on record.

It is obvious and unequivocal that the reforms were viable as evidenced in the victorious battles of July. In fact, we proved that Armenia can achieve a military advantage through intellectual work, tactical and strategic innovations, without having to engage in an exhaustive arms race.

Many may not know the fact that an exceptional situation was recorded during the victorious battles in July, when we had no casualties in the frontier combat positions during the hostilities; we had only one lightly wounded serviceman, while the well-known Anvakh (Fearless) stronghold and the adjacent outposts were the target of heaviest shelling, mass attacks of well-trained special forces. This means that the Armenian army has reached unprecedented tactical efficiency, which comes to enhance our confidence that we have an efficient and intelligent army with a decisive influence in the region.

Outcome Four – We have long been talking about the development of the military-industrial complex in Armenia and we have proclaimed it a priority. The victorious battles of July demonstrated the efficiency of the Armenian military industry.

They proved that we are well poised to position ourselves as a leading nation on the technological map of the world.

During the July battles, our Armed Forces hit high-tech weapons that had previously been considered invulnerable. This is a well-known fact, but few people may know that these weapons were damaged as a result of close synergy between Armenian-made weapons and weaponry upgraded and modernized in Armenia. Moreover, the ratio of weapons produced and modernized in Armenia is 70/30 in favor of those produced in Armenia.

Outcome Five – The victorious July battles demonstrated Armenia's ability to meet its own security challenges on its own. In the meantime, some developments revealed the scope of threats affecting not only Armenia, but also the region and on the other hand, strengthened our confidence in our strategic allies and partners, which can further enhance Armenia's ability to effectively play the role of a guarantor of peace and stability in the region, which was stated in my remarks delivered at the June 19 joint session of the Security Councils of Arme-



the emerging regional challenges. The level of our responsibility has increased, too, and it calls for superhuman effort and dedication. But as I mentioned above, today's ceremonious event comes to reaffirm the fact that the superhuman has for a while now become a daily routine for us, which is vividly evidenced by those high state awards we are presenting today. We are sure to be on the winning side!

And therefore,

Long live Freedom!

Long live the Republic of Armenia!

Long live the Republic of Artsakh!

Long live the Armenian Army!

Long live us, and our children, who live in a free, victorious and happy Armenia!

Thank you."

Through the mediation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and in accordance with presidential decrees, 16 Armenian servicemen who participated in the Tavush victorious battles were awarded the First Degree Combat Cross Order, 55 servicemen – the Second Degree Combat Cross Order. Through the Prime Minister's mediation, Captain Ruben Sanamyan was awarded the title of National Hero, and the Order of the Homeland.

The awards were handed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan: 25 servicemen, including Armenia's National Hero Ruben Sanamyan, received the state awards personally from the Prime Minister. The awards and medals will be handed over to those servicemen that were unable to attend the ceremony as they were on military duty.



nia and Artsakh in Yerevan.

Dear attendees, dear compatriots,

With the victorious battles of July, we ushered in a new historical stage, where Armenia's military-political, regional weight and significance have increased along with

## Ombudsman's report sheds light on violation of Armenian Officer's rights in Azerbaijan

Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan has issued a public report on violations of the Armenian military officer Mr. Gurgen Alaverdyan's rights after he appeared on the territory of Azerbaijan.

"Immediately after Mr. Gurgen Alaverdyan appeared in Azerbaijan, several videos with Azerbaijani soldiers were published on YouTube and later largely disseminated on social networks on August 23. These videos demonstrate Mr. Gurgen Alaverdyan surrounded by members of the Azerbaijani military, who handcuffed and blindfolded him with a winter-hat. Furthermore, the videos clearly demonstrate Azerbaijani military servicemen making insulting, humiliating statements, pronouncing ethnic slurs and diminishing Mr. Alaverdyan's ethnicity and honor.

Another video was published accompanied by a song diminishing the officer's dignity. All the videos are full of hate



speech with a clear reflection of Armenophobia," the report reads.

On 26 August, the Azerbaijani authorities disseminated another video showing Mr. Alaverdyan, sitting in front of the Azerbaijani flag, and reading out a statement about his service in the Armenian Armed Forces, about his appearance in Azerbaijan and his further plans.

In particular, Mr. Gurgen Alaverdyan "confesses" in detail on how "on how he appeared in Azerbaijan on August 23. The of-

ficer also "confesses" that he does not want to continue his military service in Armenia any longer and deeply regrets his actions, he wants to stay in Azerbaijan and make his contribution to the Azerbaijani state. At the end of the text, he announces that "Armenians do not have chances to win the Azerbaijani army."

The Human Rights Defender notes that "according to Article 14 of the Geneva Convention III "Prisoners of War are entitled in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honor."

"The filming and publication of the videos of August 23, 2020 violates Mr. Gurgen Alaverdyan's right for the respect of his dignity and honor protected by Article 14 of the same Convention.

This international obligation prohibits any verbal assault and precludes any treatment during detention that humiliates prisoners, for example, scornful language or other harassment," the report stated.

## Former Australian Defense Minister Joel Fitzgibbon joins Armenian, Assyrian, Greek calls for Genocide recognition

Australia's former Defense Minister and current Shadow Minister for Agriculture & Resources, Joel Fitzgibbon MP has reaffirmed his longstanding backing for national recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides by signing an affirmation of support for the Joint Justice Initiative of the Armenian-Australian, Assyrian-Australian and Greek-Australian communities.

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.

Fitzgibbon has long been a committed and vocal supporter on this cause, and has spoken on this matter in Parliament, including seconding a historic 2018 motion in Australia's House of Representatives recognizing Australia's first major international humanitarian relief effort, which was in aid of orphans and survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

During the debate on that motion, the Federal Member for Hunter said: "I have come to the conclusion our community of nation



spends too much time playing word games, arguing about whether what the Armenian people suffered in 1915 was or was not genocide. Rather, we should collectively spend more time recognizing that between 1915 and 1923 hundreds of thousands of Armenians had their lives cut short for no other reason than their ethnicity. The Armenian genocide and seven decades of Soviet rule would be enough to break the spirit of any culture or community, but Armenians are resilient and tough."

Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) Executive Director, Haig Kayserian said: "As the current co-convenor of the Australia-Armenia Inter-Parliamentary Union (Friendship Group), Mr. Joel Fitzgibbon has consistently demonstrated his ongoing support for Federal Australian recognition of the 1915 Genocide."

"Armenian-Australians, Assyrian-Australians and Greek-Australians are grateful

for Mr. Fitzgibbon and his growing list of colleagues urging Australia joins the correct side of history on this important issue of human rights."

The Joint Justice Initiative has so far announced the support of Fitzgibbon, Andrew Wilkie MP, Julian Leeser MP, Michelle Rowland MP, Senator Paul 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.

# Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator Recent News: As Usual, Strengthening the Nation and the Country...

## Water problem in Mozrov village resolved



Infrastructure development in remote communities is one of the project priorities for both Viva-MTS and FPWC. Within the framework of the "Eco Village Network" initiative, respective measures have been taken to improve the water supply in Vayots Dzor region. For years, the residents of Mozrov and Gnishik communities have been using the same water line, whereas now they will no longer need to wait their queue to irrigate their lands or irrigate their lands insufficiently.

Within a few years separate systems were built and put into operation for the two villages of Gnishik community. The most recent project was implemented in Mozrov. A new water line of about 1 km was built. Now there is enough water and enough water pressure that will certainly make the villagers life much easier. The official launch of the system on the site was done via a video call held by the heads of partner organizations.

*"Development of infrastructures in the regions has always been a priority for us. I am happy to say about yet another achievement in this direction. The efforts required investments, and equally needed coordinated work and patience. Life is different in a village; it requires more diligence. People*

*here need a chance to cultivate land and to get crops. We have done our best to achieve the objective,"* Viva-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said in a video call.

*"Once again, we did our best to gradu-*



*ally implement the idea standing behind the eco-villages. This is an important goal. It is necessary to create a clean environment in the communities, where people and nature co-exist in harmony. That's the way to build a healthy future,"* said Ruben Khachatryan, head of the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets.

The efficiency of building and operating new systems is major issue for the residents of the villages. The neighboring villages have it solved now; there are no more disputes over using water. Locals are more confident for their future.

According to the administrative head of the community Ara Levonyan, now there is 24 hour water supply in Mozrov and Gnishik communities that ensure a normal life for all villagers engaged in agriculture. Another advantage is that it is now possible to irrigate huge territories through drip irrigation systems.

Overall, as a result of two years' work, a 4950m long pipeline, 5 separation junctions and 31 individual connection points have been constructed.

## The energy saving system introduced in Shnogh already contributes to the community budget savings

It is already several months the energy saving system is introduced in Shnogh, a village in Lori region. Before that, part of the village was lit with expensive, non-durable lights of poor quality. To reduce unjustified expenses and have a full-scale lighting system in the settlement, Viva-MTS and The Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets came to help install a LED lighting system operating on new technologies, which have already brought the desired effect; the settlement has already recorded savings of budgetary means.

*"Before the system was introduced, we made some calculation. A monthly fee for street lights was around AMD 80-85 thousand. But this was not the only expense, as previous lights had a low quality and we often used to fix them; add all that costs and the monthly expenses will be even higher. Now all that is left behind. It's evident for us that the new system is efficient. The maximum fee we had during these months was AMD 51 thousand. So we save around AMD 30-35 thousand per month,"* said the head of Shnogh administration, Davit Ghumashyan. According to the initial plan a 1.4 km long section of road had to be illuminated in Shnogh. Due to the willingness of the community to invest, the 1.7 km-long central street is now fully illuminated. 47 energy-saving LED lights have been installed. The new system has already been launched, despite the official opening ceremony was replaced with a video call. *"The efficiency of this energy-saving system is a long-term benefit. That's one of its major advantages. We have had a positive feedback from the rural communities where the program had been implemented. You,*

[page 12](#)



too, will feel the benefits of the new technologies as they help you save means if the communities manage to steer the saved means to solving other problems there will gradual positive change in all spheres of life. That's an essential part of the model of flexible and efficient management," Vi-



va-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian said during video call.

"Due to the situation, we changed the format of the opening event, but the goal of creating and developing a network of eco-villages remained the same. This com-

munity contributed about 30% to the project, which enabled to embrace a bigger area in the project. This is a significant achievement," said Ruben Khachatryan, Founder of the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets.

LED lights are the first in terms of savings, environmental impact and quality of illumination. Distant regions of Armenia remain in the focus of partner organizations. In many settlements, work is coordinated over the years to address existing issues.



## One more family to get rid of desperate conditions of the metal container

Years ago, the hope and prospect of a good life made the Karapetyan family leave the country. However, the plans and the life stream abroad took a different course. After overcoming many health and financial issues, the Karapetyans had to return to Armenia.

The homeless family purchased a small plot of land and lived in a metal container. The metal container located in Dvin village of Ararat region, has deteriorated after serving the Karapetyan family for 8 years.

"The container was metal and decayed. It was leaking; the ceiling was damaged. We tried to take measures and to repair, but everything was temporary. We had to adapt, but it's no longer possible," said Melsida Karapetyan, the hostess.

To help his son Martik, the 91-year-old father, Sotnik, initiated home building investing the savings of the years, and the pension. Unable to do more, Sotnik told his

son to appeal to partner companies implementing housing projects in all regions of the country, to Viva-MTS and the "Fuller Housing Center of Armenia". The Karapetyan family was included in the housing project, and started the construction during the pandemic.

"Whatever has been organized and done is thanks to me. I have saved my pension to help my children. I have done it for no one to stay homeless after my death. I am 91 years old; I have worked until I was 88 years old. I take care of me and my children, too. They don't let me to participate in the construction, they say I have already done my part," said Sotnik Karapetyan.

The construction going on for several months has changed the mood and belief in future of the family. They are working hard to finish the works as soon they can. The 91-year-old grandfather can't wait for the



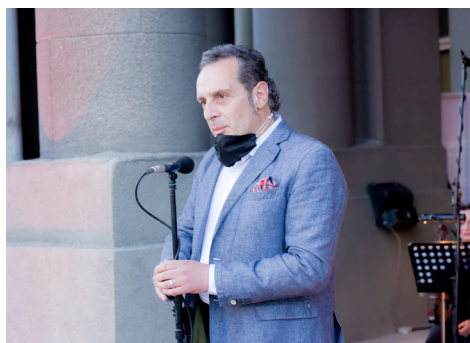
housewarming celebration. He hopes that his son's family will meet the New Year in a stone built house, and he will host the representatives of Viva-MTS and the "Fuller Center for Housing Armenia" in the new home.

Guided by social responsibility, the partners of the years actively follow the work carried out in different regions of the country to record the desired result envisaged by the program at the end of the year.



## For the First Time Opera House Opens its Doors for the Audience...

Compiled, edited and translated by  
**Gourgen James Khazhakian**,  
Chief Correspondent



On Saturday September 5, 2020, after a long break caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Al. Spendaryan National Academic Opera and Ballet Theater opened its hospitable doors for the audience. The long-awaited concert took place on the big balcony of the Theater and was entitled "Musical Journey".

The concert was starring by the



Theater soloists RA Honored Artists **Gevorg Hakobyan** (baritone) **Hovhannes Ayvazyan** (tenor), Theater soloist **Anna Ayvazyan** (soprano) as well as Theater orchestra headed by leading conductor **Harutyun Arzumanyan**. After a long break, the soloists, the orchestra, were at their height once again, giving many wonderful moments to the audience who missed their wonderful performances. During the evening the following pieces sounded:

Anna Ayvazyan

1. Artemiy Ayvazyan – "Yerevan"
2. Sergey Rachmaninov - "Here is

Good"

3. Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov - "Captivated by the Rose, a Nightingale" - Accompanying soloists: RA Honored Artist **Gayane Abrahamyan** (violin), **Arik Khalatyan** (piano)

Gevorg Hakobyan - RA Honored Artist (baritone)

1. K. Orbelyan- "Shum Berez" (the Birch Noise)
2. E.D. Curtis - "Tu ca nun chiagne"
3. G.M. Ferilli - "Un amore cosi grande"
4. R. Melikyan - "The Rose"

Hovhannes Ayvazyan – RA Honored Artist (tenor)

1. Vagharshak Kotoyan - "Like a Dream"
2. P.I. Tchaikovsky - "I'm Alone, Again ..." (developed for orchestra by Ashot Babayan)
3. F. Poland - "Dein ist mein ganzes herz" - from the "Land of Smiles" operetta
4. U. Cardillo - "Core 'ngrato" (cattari-cattari)
5. E.D. Kurtis- "Non ti scordar di me"
6. P. Sorozabal- "No puede ser"
7. E.D. Capua - "O sole mio"



According to the Theater General and Artistic Director Honored Artist of the Russian Federation Maestro **Constantine G. Orbelian**, due



to the efforts of the technical and theatrical staff of the Theater, a wonderful atmosphere was created on the big balcony of the Theater that gave a kind of unique breath to the evening. The evening was in a warm, friendly atmosphere on the cozy big balcony of the Theater, and so the audience expressed its gratitude to the artists with long applause, one could say, ovation... According to the Theater Deputy Director **Karineh Kirakosyan**, adapting to the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the creative staff of the Theater continues to live an active creative life. The next concert of the Theater soloists will take place on the big balcony of the Theater on September 12, 2020.



**Acknowledgment: Karineh G. Kirakosyan**

**Photographs by Tigran Araquelyan**

## “Arpi” Natural Historical Reserve: the Noravank Monastic Complex, Unique Treasure of the Middle Ages

*Compiled, edited and translated by  
Gourgen James Khazhakian  
Chief Correspondent*

The crown of the Reserve is the monastic complex of Noravank. One of the masterpieces of Developed Middle Ages' Arme-

vatsatsin (Mother Mary) two-storey mausoleum-church), two chapels, residential and economic buildings, a fence.

They were built in the 9th to the 14th centuries.

The exact date of the foundation of Noravank is not known. The construction of the main structures was carried out after the establishment of the legendary Orbelian Princely House in Vayots Dzor.

However, historical sources and archeological excavations testify that before the church-building works carried out by the Orbelians, there were Christian structures in the area, and Noravank was built on the site of the former monastery. In Amagh Gorge, a little below the current monastic complex, there was a small church-chapel named after **Pokas** Hayrapet (Catholicos, XI century) which traces are now preserved.

According to **Stepanos Orbelian**, water and oil were coming out from under the church stage that had healing properties, and when anointed with them, people were cured of skin diseases, even leprosy.

The regular activity of Noravank continued until 1604 deportation, and the last blow struck him in 1840' strong earthquake.

This really unique monastic complex was restored in 1984-1999.

In 2011 it was transferred to the Mother See of Etchmiadzin and now it is a working spiritual center.

In 2010 they opened there also a museum dedicated to life and activities of genius architect **Momik**.



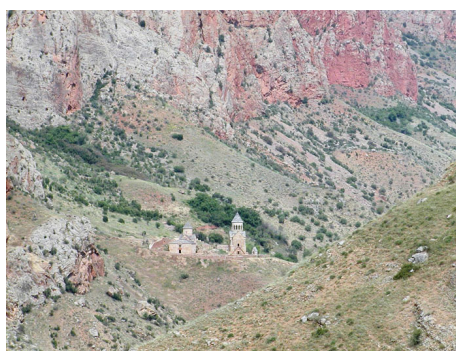
At the territory of Areni Village of Vayots Dzor Region (Marz) of Armenia, to the south of the second kilometer of Areni-Yeghegnadzor road, in Noravank Gorge, there is “Arpi” Natural Historical Reserve (with area of some 200 hectares). The Gnishik River flows through the Noravank Gorge. The caves of Arger (Bears), Mozrov and Magel are located in the area of the natural reserve.

World-renowned cave organizations consider these caves to be a unique natural treasure with their stalactites and stalagmites.

The Reserve is rich of many plants, herbs, wildlife and caves registered in the Red Book. There are karst caves rich of stalactites and stalagmites in the territory of “Arpi” Reserve.



nian architecture stands out with its perfect harmony with the surrounding nature, unique church sculptures, architectural solutions, the beauty of khachkars built there and high art of their performance, as well as with its (Noravank) patriotic role and outstanding persons worked and created there... Noravank is famous as well not only for its history, but also for rich



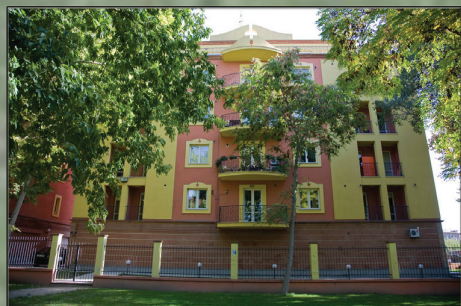
cultural heritage as a major center of architecture, sculpture, lithography, writing and miniature painting.

The monastic complex is a complete architectural composition that includes four churches and a vestibule (St. Karapet Church, St. Stepanos Nakhavka (Forerunner) Church with its vestibule, St. Gregory the Illuminator mausoleum-church, St. Ast-



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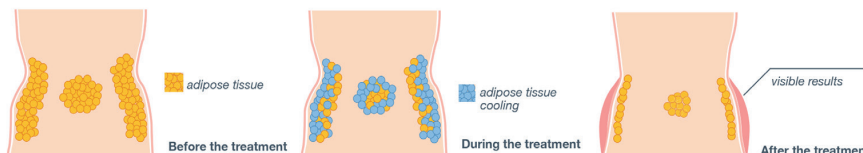
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