

Armenia says has irrefutable evidence of Azerbaijan's torture of PoWs



were captured. This becomes even more unacceptable against the background that in the fall of 2020, Azerbaijani users posted videos of the capture of specific Armenian soldiers, and later the decapitated or shot bodies of those soldiers were discovered. We have **irrefutable evidence about the torture of our captives**," Pashinyan said.

"An outrageous example of the deepening of the atmosphere of hostility is the opening of the so-called trophy park in Baku, where Azerbaijani schoolchildren are taken on excursions to watch the mannequins of captured, killed or bleeding Armenian soldiers.

"These and other steps are taken to demonstrate the impossibility of peace in our region, but we will consistently advance that agenda by using every opportunity and by creating new opportunities to open an era of peace for our region."

Armenian Prime Minister **Nikol Pashinyan** has used the UN stage to raise numerous gross violations of international law by the Azerbaijani armed forces during the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh. In a pre-recorded video for the 76th session of the UN General Assembly on Friday, September 25, Pashinyan spoke about **Azerbaijan's deliberate targeting of civilians** and vital infrastructure, extrajudicial killings of prisoners of war and civilian hostages, torture and many other documented crimes.

Pashinyan said the Armenian people were subjected to complete ethnic cleansing in the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, which came under the control of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, he added, the international community was again unable to prevent the mass atrocities: "Today, no Armenian lives or practically could live in the territories under the control of Azerbaijan."

"Azerbaijan not only still holds several dozen citizens of the Republic of Armenia in captivity, but also has sentenced many of them to 6 to 20 years imprisonment on trumped-up charges. In addition, there are persons whose captivity has not yet been confirmed by Azerbaijan, although there is clear evidence that they

consistently advance that agenda by using every opportunity and by creating new opportunities to open an era of peace for our region."

Pashinyan also weighed in on the unblocking of transport communications in the region, stressing the importance of a possible rail route from Turkey to Armenia.

"I consider the opening of regional communications extremely important, which is stated in the trilateral statements signed by the President of the Russian Federation, the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021," Pashinyan said in a pre-recorded message on Friday, September 25.

"While examining the topic of reopening transport links, we discovered that there are options that aim to sustain regional isolation and hostility, but there are also options that emphasize regional interconnectedness and can serve as a step-by-step solution of the problem of hostility. We are an advocate for the latter option."

Pashinyan added that if the railway connecting Armenia to Turkey is opened too, the topic of unblocking regional communications will cover a broader scope.

Armenian FM, CoE Secretary General meet in New York

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U.S. House demands Azerbaijani war crimes investigation, release of Armenian POWs

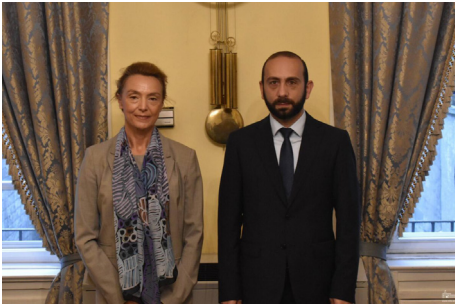
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Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

Welcoming the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Minister Mirzoyan expressed satisfaction with the years-long multi-layered cooperation with the organization, noting that the Council of Europe

Armenian FM, CoE Secretary General meet in New York

remains one of our country's most important partners in the process of democratic reforms, rule of law and protection of human rights. Marija Pejčinović Burić congratulated Armenia on holding parliamentary elections in accordance with democratic standards.

Touching upon the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh and the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, the Minister praised the statements and calls made by various bodies of the Council of Europe, including the Secretary General, to end hostilities and eliminate the humanitarian consequences of the war.

Ararat Mirzoyan stressed that Azerbaijan continues to hold Armenian prisoners of war hostage, which is a violation of international humanitarian law and its obligations under the trilateral statement of November. Minister Mirzoyan also stressed the need to ensure the free access of international organizations, in particular, the competent bodies of the Council of Europe, to Artsakh.

Issues related to the 2019-2022 Action Plan between Armenia and the Council of Europe were also discussed during the meeting.

Armenian, Russian, Azerbaijani Prosecutor Generals meet in Nur-Sultan

Armenian Prosecutor General Arthur Davtyan, Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov and Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan Kamran Aliyev held a meeting in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

The parties stressed the importance of the trilateral meeting, especially in terms of contributing to the efforts aimed at establishing stability in Artsakh and the region, ensuring normal life of the population of Artsakh.

The parties hailed the joint efforts in the process of search for missing and the exchange of information between the parties within that framework, and stressed the need to continue this work.

The parties expressed readiness to adhere to the agreements reached on the exchange of information on various violations on the Armenian-Azerbaijani line of contact and the communication routes. It was noted that the main function will be reserved to the Russian peacekeepers stationed in Artsakh.

The Armenian Prosecutor General stressed the need to release the Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held in Azerbaijan envisaged by paragraph 8 of the November 9th statement on ceasefire, which, he said, could be an important impulse for ensuring peace in the region, further possible cooperation and building confidence

between the parties.

During the meeting, the parties praised the consistency of the Russian side and personally President Vladimir Putin and Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov – in easing tensions in the region, resolving humanitarian issues, and establishing a dialogue between the parties.



Armenian FM urges to add pressure on Baku to ensure NK people's rights at UN Ministerial meeting

Within the framework of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the Ministerial meeting of the "Alliance for Multilateralism" platform took place, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan made a speech.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the MFA Armenia, highly appreciating the opportunity of holding a Ministerial meeting on the Alliance for Multilateralism platform and the opportunity to participate, Mirzoyan noted that Armenia reaffirms its strong commitment to multilateralism, which gains

further importance today in the face of growing disasters around the world.

Speaking about Covid-19 pandemic, Mirzoyan noted that it has had a severe impact on every state, hindering economic progress and disrupting the security environment both in the region and in the world.

"In the light of the global pandemic, the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh and its people led to a humanitarian catastrophe. Even today, Azerbaijan continues to block the entry of humanitarian missions to Artsakh, de-

priving civilians of access to humanitarian aid", Mirzoyan said, adding that since one of the main goals of the Alliance is protect, preserve and develop the international law, including the international humanitarian law, "We call on all the members not only to strengthen pressure against Azerbaijan for ensuring the rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh and returning the Armenian POWs, but to also support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group for finding a lasting political solution to Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Minsk Group Co-Chairs meet Armenian, Azerbaijani FMs

The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Stephane Visconti of France, Andrew Schofer of the United States of America, and Igor Khovaev of the Russian Federation) made the following statement:

On the sidelines of the General Debate of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs met separately in New York with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. The Co-Chairs also hosted both Foreign Ministers at a joint meeting. The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (PRCiO) Andrzej Kasprzyk participated in the meetings.

The Co-Chairs and Foreign Ministers discussed a wide range of outstanding unresolved issues between Armenia



and Azerbaijan. The Co-Chairs proposed specific focused measures to deescalate the situation and possible next steps. The Co-Chairs stressed their continuing strong support for the full range of indispensable activities and operations undertaken by the PRCiO and his team.

On 24 September the Co-Chairs and PRCiO met with UN Under Secretary Gen-

eral for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and OSCE Chairperson in Office Foreign Minister Ann Linde to brief them on their efforts over the past year, including the most recent developments in the process.

The Co-Chairs welcome this first meeting of the two ministers of foreign affairs since November 2020 as a sign of the resolve of the two countries to reengage in the peace process through direct dialogue aimed at contributing to security, stability, and prosperity in the region. The Co-Chairs reaffirm their commitment to continue working with the sides to find comprehensive solutions to all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with their mandate.

Relations with Turkey should be normalized without preconditions – Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council



The relations with Turkey must be normalized without preconditions, Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council Armen Grigoryan told reporters at the government on September 24.

He noted that it has been voiced by all Armenian authorizes over the past thirty years.

“When there are preconditions, it’s difficult to proceed on any issue. We do hope that the relations will be normalized without preconditions. All the existing issues

are subject to discussion at a later stage, but it will be very difficult to start a relationship with preconditions,” the Secretary stated.

He noted that the normalization should be gradual. Asked about Erdogan’s remarks claiming that he had received an offer for a meeting from Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan through the Georgian side, Armen Grigoryan said: “We are convinced that one of the opportunities for the normalization of these relations is to have a dialogue at the highest level. We have stated at various political levels that Armenia is ready to normalize relations with Turkey, and the mentioned statements and political steps have been made within that logic,” the Secretary noted.

He attached importance to distinguishing between the normalization of relations

with Turkey and relations with Armenia, “if there are such.”

“The only format for the settlement of the Karabakh issue is the OSCE Minsk Group. All three co-chairing countries – Russia, France and the United States – have made statements stressing the need to resume the negotiations. And there is an important issue to be discussed within that framework – the issue of status of Artsakh,” Armen Grigoryan said.

He noted that “the Karabakh issue remains unsolved and is awaiting solution. We see that settlement within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship, and the issue of status will be discussed within that framework,” he added.

U.S. House demands Azerbaijani war crimes investigation, release of Armenian POWs

The U.S. House passed the Cardenas-Schiff-Sherman Amendment, demanding Azerbaijan's immediate release of Armenian POWs, and calling for a report on Azerbaijani war crimes, including the use of illegal munitions and white phosphorus against Armenian civilians. The amendment also requests an investigation into the use of U.S. technology in Turkish drones used to target Armenian civilians during the 2020 Artsakh war, ANCA reports.

The document says in particular that "on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan, with support from Turkey and foreign militia groups, launched a military assault on Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh, resulting in the deaths of thousands and displacing tens of thousands of ethnic Armenian residents". It states that "the Third Geneva Convention, of which Azerbaijan is a signatory, and customary international



law require the release of prisoners of war and captured civilians upon the cessation of hostilities and require that all detainees be treated humanely".

"Despite Azerbaijan's obligations under the Geneva Conventions and their commitments in signing the November 9 statement, long after the end of the conflict, the Government of Azerbaijan continues to detain an estimated 200 Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and detained persons,

misrepresenting their status in an attempt to justify their continued captivity", the document says.

The Cardenas-Schiff-Sherman amendment states it is the sense of Congress that "Azerbaijan must immediately and unconditionally return all Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians. The Biden Administration should engage at all levels with Azerbaijani authorities, including through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Minsk Group process, to make clear the importance of adhering to their obligations, under the November 9 statement and international law, to immediately release all prisoners of war and captured civilians".

It goes on to demand a report from the Secretary of Defense on the use of U.S. technology in Turkish drones used by Azerbaijan to attack Armenia and Artsakh during the 2020 war.



Armenian Minister of Defense Arshak Karapetyan received Lieutenant General Rustam Muradov, Lieutenant General Gennady Anashkin and Major General Mikhail Kosobokov.

During the meeting, Deputy Commander of the Southern Military District of

Russia appoints new Commander of Peacekeeping Forces in Artsakh

Russia, Lieutenant General Rustam Muradov introduced the newly appointed Commander of the Peacekeeping Forces of the Russian Federation in Artsakh, National Hero of the Russian Federation, Lieutenant General Gennady Anashkin.

The Armenian Minister of Defense congratulated Lieutenant General Gennady Anashkin on assuming the new post and wished him success in the implementation of the peacekeeping mission. Minister Karapetyan thanked the former

Commander of the Peacekeeping Forces, Major General Mikhail Kosobokov, for the proper service during his tenure, and wished him success in his future activities. The parties praised the efforts of the Russian Federation to stabilize the military-political situation in the region and expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh. They also exchanged views on regional security issues.

By the CSTO military drills Russia and Armenia make clear that they keep control of the situation

The "Thunder-2021" exercises of the CSTO operative response units, which will start on September 24, will be of global significance, regardless of their scale and will be in the focus of external actors because of the exclusive geopolitical importance of Armenia and South Caucasus, Director of the Center for Strategic Trends Studies, military expert Ivan Kononov told ARMENPRESS, emphasizing that exercises like that, as a rule, contain very serious message.

"Conducting such exercises is, in fact, not of regional, but even global significance for one simple reason: Armenia and the entire South Caucasus region are of

exceptional geopolitical importance, and conducting such exercises, as a rule, contain a very serious "message". Naturally, such exercises are in the center of attention of various geopolitical players, first of all, the South Caucasus republics, the foreign actors gathered around the South Caucasus, including Russia, Turkey, Iran, the USA and France. So, such exercises, regardless of their scale, are in the center of a lot of attention", Ivan Kononov said, adding that the place of conducting the exercises is also of key importance.

"In this case, the exercises will be held in Armenia", he said, adding that they are aimed at making clear many countries in-

terested in the region that Russia and Armenia keep control of the situation.

The "Thunder-2021" exercises of the CSTO operative response units will take place in Armenia from September 24-28.





Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, who is in New York to participate in the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, met with Victoria Nuland, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

The sides commended the high level of dynamics of the Armenia-US relations, expressing readiness to further develop

Armenian FM, US Under Secretary of State discuss regional security issues

and strengthen the cooperation in various spheres. The priorities of cooperation between the two governments in the development of democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption were specifically emphasized.

The interlocutors also exchanged views on regional security issues. Touching upon the situation in Artsakh, Minister Ararat Mirzoyan commended the US position on the resumption of the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, adding that a

comprehensive settlement of the conflict should be reached under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.

Both sides highlighted the importance of the efforts towards de-escalation in the region.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia once again expressed his gratitude to US President Joe Biden for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, noting that it is an important step in the fight of recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide, as well as to prevent new genocides.

Diaspora Youth Ambassadors arrive in Armenia

The Diaspora Youth Ambassador Program will launch in Armenia in two days, the Diaspora High Commissioner's Office reports.

The young ambassadors have already arrived from Russia, Lebanon, and Israel. Harutyun Atoyian, Lusine Ghazaryan, Armen Sargsyan, and Lusine Ustyan are participating in the program from different parts of Russia, Dikran Mhramyan from Lebanon, and Hagop Djernazian from Israel. They are among the 20 selected participants.

The Diaspora High Commissioner's Office announced the program in June with the generous support of the Jinishian Memorial Foundation. The program aims to create a dynamic network of Armenian youth, who will have the opportunity to become Diaspora youth representatives of the homeland in their respective communities around the world.

The program will target young peo-



ple 22 to 35 years old, from the Armenian communities of the Diaspora for a period of one year, during which two weeks will be spent in Armenia.

The selected candidates will participate in a series of lectures, workshops and meetings to increase their knowledge about the most pressing political, social and economic issues in Armenia, as well as to gain a deeper understanding about community engagement, participation and advocacy.

The program will be a blend of theoretical and practical work and will be conducted in Armenian. It will also include

excursions to historical, cultural and memorial sites, as well as visits to educational, scientific and tech institutions in Armenia. The youth will have the opportunity to participate in social and cultural events, as well as in various volunteering opportunities available during the time of visit. At the end of the two-weeks training period in Armenia, the youth will also participate in a "Youth Forum", during which they will collectively draft a youth policy paper to set the framework for sustainable cooperation between the communities of the Diaspora and the homeland.

Upon their return to their respective communities of the Diaspora, the youth will be engaged in producing media content for local and international outlets, and will plan and implement community meetings and repatriation talks with the members of the Armenian Diaspora communities.

Armenian, French FMs discuss Artsakh issue, stress the need to resume the peace process

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan, who is currently in New York to participate in the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly, met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Jean-Yves Le Drian.

The sides discussed issues of the Armenian-French privileged relations, as well as further expansion and deepening of mutually beneficial cooperation in a number of spheres.

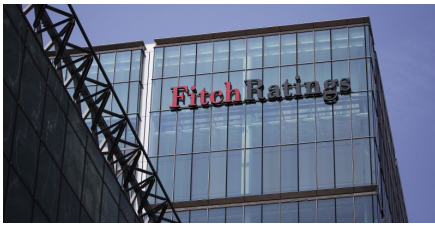


The sides touched upon the humanitarian issues resulting from the 44-day war

and the prospects of the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Minister Ararat Mirzoyan specifically emphasized the speedy repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians held in Azerbaijan.

Both sides agreed on the need to resume the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.



Fitch affirms Armenia at 'B+'; outlook stable

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Armenia's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'B+' with a Stable Outlook.

A full list of rating actions is at the end of this rating action commentary.

KEY RATING DRIVERS

Armenia's 'B+' IDRs reflect strong per-capita income, governance and business environment indicators relative to peers, as well as a robust macroeconomic and fiscal policy framework and credible commitment to reform that are underpinned by an IMF programme. Set against these strengths are high public foreign-currency debt, relatively weak external finances, and geopolitical tensions that have the potential to reignite into military conflict.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's decisive win at the 20 June 2021 snap elections secured a parliamentary majority for his 'Civil Contract' party and should resolve the domestic political crisis that has ensued since the 6 November 2020 Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan concluded the 44-day Nagorno-Karabakh war. The election outcome refreshes the government's mandate to pursue key structural reforms and tackle corruption, and is a further endorsement of democratic-based politics as the second elections to be widely acknowledged as free and fair following the 2018 Velvet Revolution. The new government has emphasized regional peace and commitment to the OSCE Minsk group process to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, a marked softening in its tone from last year. Nevertheless, periodic border incidents and minor infractions of the ceasefire agreement are reminders of the possibility for renewed fighting to erupt and the greater reliance on Russia for security in the region.

Public debt is high, with general government debt/GDP jumping 13pp to peak at 67.4% (current 'B' median: 68%) at end-2020, due to the fiscal impact of the pandemic and the Nagorno-Karabakh war's impact on public finances, the fall in GDP

and depreciation of the dram. Fitch forecasts debt/GDP to fall to 60.2% in 2021 on strong nominal GDP growth (13%), narrowing of the fiscal deficit, and strengthening of the dram. Public debt/GDP should continue its gradual downward trajectory to 55% by 2023, guided by the government's commitment to its debt reduction fiscal rule, which will be reinstated from 2022. Foreign currency debt is high at 81% of total government debt in 2021 ('B' median: 63%), and heightens sensitivity to exchange rate fluctuations.

Fitch forecasts the consolidated government deficit to narrow to 3.8% of GDP in 2021 (2020: 5.1%), and further to 2.0% by 2023. Fiscal performance for 7M21 showed an outperformance relative to both the governments and Fitch's forecasts at the last review. Tax revenues rose by 10.5% yoy driven by higher VAT receipts from a rebound in domestic consumption and foreign trade, while investments and other expenditures were under-executed relative to the budget at end-July. The deficit will be financed predominantly by the USD750 million Eurobond proceeds raised in February 2021, but deficit financing in 2022-23 will focus more on domestic sources as the government seeks to reduce external debt and limit vulnerability to dram depreciation.

Real GDP staged a strong, broad-based rebound in 2Q21 of 13.2% yoy, driven by base effects, dynamism in construction, agriculture and services, and supported by strong remittance inflows and continued accommodative policies. Fitch forecasts real GDP growth to recover to 5.5% in 2021 (2020: -7.4%), moderating to 5.3% in 2022 and 4.7% in 2023. Risks to our forecasts are fairly balanced, with the potential for faster economic recovery offsetting risks of renewed economic restrictions from a potential further intensification of the Covid-19 crisis in the context of Armenia's slow vaccination roll-out (under 5% of the population was fully vaccinated by mid-September).

Inflation accelerated to 8.8% yoy in August 2021, above the Central Bank of Armenia's (CBA) target of 4.0%, driven primarily by global pressures on food prices (15.1% yoy), rebounding demand from the 2020 recession, and bottlenecks

in supply chains. Fitch forecasts inflation to average 7.4% in 2021, moderating to average 5.0% and 4.0% in 2022-23 as supply chains and production adjust. The CBA has raised its policy rate by a cumulative 300bp to 7.25% between December 2020 and September 2021 in response to domestic inflation pressures. An increase in banks' dram reserve requirements, aimed at enhancing monetary transmission, has also had the effect of tightening monetary conditions. An unexpected monetary tightening by major central banks to curb rising global inflation could lead to pressure on the CBA to further tighten rates.

External finances are a relative weakness compared with 'B' rated peers. A long record of large current account deficits not financed by foreign direct investment flows has resulted in high net external debt (NXD), which we forecast at 55% of GDP at end-2021 ('B' median: 20%).

The narrowing of the goods and services trade deficit in 1Q21, growth in remittance inflows and tightening monetary conditions have led to the dram/US dollar appreciating by 6% in 8M21. Fitch forecasts the recovery of imports as economic activity rises to contribute to a normalizing of the current account deficit to relatively high levels of 4.4% of GDP in 2021 and 5.0% in 2022 (2020: 3.8%). Government Eurobond proceeds, emigrant deposits, and modest FDI inflows are expected to finance the deficit, and the residual and a USD175 million-equivalent special drawing rights allocation to raise official reserves to USD3.1 billion by end-2021 (end-2020: USD 2.6 billion).

ESG – Governance: Armenia has an ESG Relevance Score (RS) of '5' & 5[+]' respectively for both Political Stability and Rights and for the Rule of Law, Institutional and Regulatory Quality and Control of Corruption. These scores reflect the high weight that the World Bank Governance Indicators (WBI) have in our proprietary Sovereign Rating Model. Armenia has a medium WBI ranking at 48th percentile reflecting a recent track record of peaceful political transitions, a moderate level of rights for participation in the political process, moderate institutional capacity, established rule of law and a moderate level of corruption.

Armenia starts production of titanium prostheses for wounded soldiers



Armenia starts production of titanium prostheses for wounded soldiers, Diaspora High Commissioner's Office reports.

Armenians from France, Russia, Ger-

many, the United States and Lebanon, in cooperation with Armenian partners, have established the Hybrid Laboratory (Medical & Health), DDC (Digital Diagnostic Center), and MDS (Medical Dental Shop).

High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan participated in the opening ceremony, calling the venture an excellent example of cooperation between different Diaspora communities. The Commissioner toured the center and learned about the work

being done.

Eleven soldiers have already got titanium prostheses implanted. After successful surgeries they have returned to normal life.



Tashir Group announces plans for nearly \$780 million investment in Armenia and Republic of Artsakh

Tashir Group is planning to invest up to \$600 million to ensure Armenia's energy security, create new production capacities and modernize of electric networks, President of Tashir Group of Companies, Chair of the Association of Armenian Entrepreneurs Samvel Karapetyan said at the Armenia Business Forum 2021.

Announcing the plans, Samvel Karapetyan said energy is the basis of development of any economy, and it is doubly important in case of Armenia.

The second important direction is industry, he said. "Sustainable development of the country is impossible without the development of production capacities, including the implementation of new innovative solutions in the sphere. The development of new capacities in the locomotive of the whole economy, which increases the export capacity, creates jobs," Karapetyan said, adding that a total of \$50 million will be invested towards this end.

According to him, tourism is another important sector for Tashir Group. "Ar-

menia is a unique country for tourism with a huge potential for development. We will allocate about \$50 million or the sphere," Karapetyan stated.

Tashir Group will next promote youth entrepreneurship, and will provide about \$30 million for those programs.

Finally, Samvel Karapetyan attached importance to continuing the development programs in Artsakh. "It's impossible to imagine Armenia without Artsakh, and our task is to ensure a safe future for Artsakh," he said, adding that about \$50 million will be allocated for development programs.

Samvel Karapetyan called for investments in the Armenian economy. He noted that despite the difficulties of the past years, Armenia remains a favorable coun-

try for business, especially for Russian businessmen.

"The Armenian economy is open for close cooperation thanks to traditionally friendly relations between our peoples," Karapetyan said.

He said the forum organized by the Association of Armenian Entrepreneurs aims at boosting the development of Armenian economy through investments, establishing closer ties with businessmen from different countries, including Russia, taking the dialogue to a new level and uniting the Armenian business community across the world, promoting and supporting young entrepreneurship.

He said that the government, in turn, should create conditions for the effective functioning of the business.

Aeroflot starts flights to Armenia's Gyumri

The Russian Aeroflot airline has started flights to Gyumri's Shirak" airport.

Moscow-Gyumri-Moscow flights will be operated three times a week, every Monday, Thursday and Friday.

For more information on air tickets, it's necessary to visit the airline's website or contact the local travel agency.



Iran emphasizes crucial significance of guaranteeing traffic via Goris-Kapan Road

The need for guaranteeing traffic via the Kapan-Goris road and efforts for regulating transport shipments as a result of agreements on new demarcations in Syunik province have become of double importance for both Iran and Armenia, the Iranian embassy in Armenia said in response to an inquiry of ARMENPRESS, referring to the obstacles facing Iranian cargo truck drivers on the Kapan-Goris road caused by the Azerbaijani authorities in areas under their control, such as checkpoints and charging of duties.

The Iranian embassy added that clarifications made by Armenian government officials give great hopes around the swift development of the alternative bypass through Tatev, and that Iran is hopeful that in the nearest future they will witness the opening of a road with safe infrastructure. At the same time, the Iranian side expects that before the opening of the alternative road, traffic via the current road will resume normally.

ARMENPRESS – According to the official press release, on September 22 during a meeting with the Secretary of Security Council Armen Grigoryan, the Iranian Ambassador to Armenia H.E. Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri addressed the obstacles caused by Azerbaijan in the Kapan-Goris section of the interstate road, expressing concern over the problems around the use of infrastructures linking Iran with Armenia. What information can you convey over the course of actions in direction of resolving these problems and around the discussions over this issue with the Armenian and especially Azerbaijani sides? Does the Azerbaijani side continue to cause obstacles for Iranian motorists on the Kapan-Goris Road?

Iranian Embassy – In the recent months, while communicating with relevant authorities of Armenia, the [Iranian] embassy tried to evaluate the unique condition of the Goris-Kapan Road, the pros-



pects of its exploitation and various sides related to the transit of goods and passengers from this and other possible roads. Undoubtedly, until the present phase of this road it was the main route of trade continuation and movement of citizens of the two countries. Nevertheless, as a result of the latest agreements on new demarcations in the Syunik province, the need to guarantee traffic and efforts for settling transport shipments have become of double importance for both the Islamic Republic of Iran and Armenia.

We believe that the security of Armenia's land road, in addition to the positive effect it will have on the current communication, can present the stable picture of the region to the businessmen and investors of the two countries and the region and guide them to plan their economic activity and raise the level of mutual interactions. The security of this two-way road, in addition, can show Armenia's reliable position for advancing major infrastructure projects in the region.

Undoubtedly, what was being proposed in the recent months as a goal – to unblock regional transportation communications, is again in this format, which is becoming actual.

ARMENPRESS – In your opinion, how can in principle the problem of the road linking Iran with Armenia be solved? Do you have any offered formula in this regard?

Iranian Embassy – During the latest

meeting of the Iranian Ambassador and Mr. Armen Grigoryan the unique condition of the Goris-Kapan Road and the unusual move implemented in direction of charging only Iranian cargo trucks with duties, and current programs and initiatives were discussed. The clarifications coming from Armenian government officials inspire great hopes around the swift development of the alternative route through Tatev, and we are hopeful

that soon we will witness the opening of a road with safe infrastructure.

Certainly, the Islamic Republic of Iran expects that before the opening of the alternative road, the traffic via the current road will continue normally. These concerns have been communicated to Armenian government officials on various occasions. At the same time, this issue, besides proper attention and consultation of the Armenian government with its colleagues, requires also the efforts of other sides. Therefore, parallel to expressing Iran's expectations to Armenian authorities, separate contacts are underway with other sides, including with Azerbaijani government officials.

ARMENPRESS – Do you see political subtexts in Azerbaijan's actions given the recent Azerbaijani media reports saying that Iranians are conducting cargo shipments to Artsakh Republic?

Iranian Embassy – In the bilateral dimension, with the purpose of further advancing cooperation projects, an agreement was reached to hold a joint forum of economic cooperation between the two countries, which we are hopeful will be implemented soon. Fortunately, as part of the Dushanbe summit constructive negotiations of the two presidents took place, and there is a comprehensive program of joint cooperation.

Aram Sargsyan

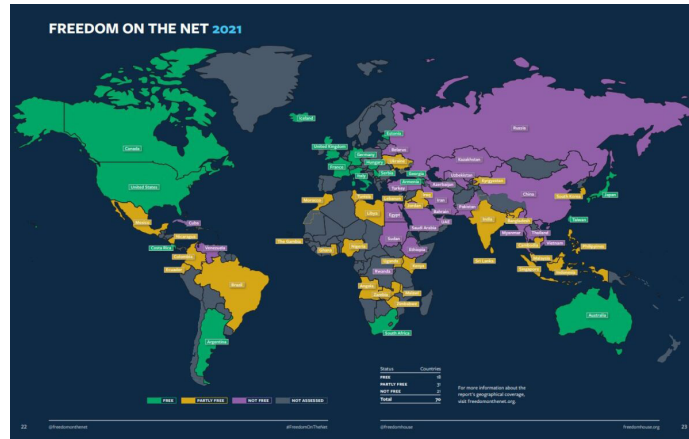
Freedom on the Net 2021: Armenia ranked as ‘free’ country

The Freedom House has ranked Armenia as a “free” country in its annual *Freedom on the Net 2021: The Crisis of Social Media* report.

Armenia’s neighbor Georgia is also a “free” country, Azerbaijan and Turkey are ranked as “not free.” Armenia’s southern neighbor Iran is “partly free.”

According to the report, “Internet freedom in Armenia declined significantly as a result of restrictions on the free flow of information the government adopted during the armed conflict between ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“The implementation of martial law in late September 2020 placed broad restrictions on the media’s ability to report on the fighting, including by banning speech deemed to endanger national security, permitting authorities to demand content



removal, and mandating fines for noncompliance. A number of Turkish and Azerbaijani websites with .az and .tr domains were inaccessible for several weeks. Users also reported problems accessing TikTok,” Freedom House said.

Prominent news sites also faced technical attacks, including distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, leaving many of them temporarily inaccessible during the conflict. In a positive move, a measure that

had required telecommunications companies to provide authorities with subscriber metadata in order to facilitate contact tracing, adopted in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, was lifted in September 2020 alongside a virus-related state of emergency.

The report found that global internet freedom declined for the 11th consecutive year. The environment for human rights online deteriorated in 30 countries this year, while only 18 countries registered net gains. The largest decline occurred in Myanmar, followed by Belarus and Uganda. Ecuador experienced the largest improvement, followed by The Gambia. The United States ranked 12th overall, while Iceland was once again the top performer. For the seventh consecutive year, China was found to have the worst conditions for internet freedom.

Turkish-American groups contributed \$2.2 million to politicians since 2007



By Harut Sassounian
The California Courier

I came across a Turkish-American website, “tenthousandturks.org,” which is described as: “Ten Thousand Turks Campaign.”

The website includes the combined information of five separate Turkish-Amer-

ican political action committees (PACs): 1) Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee (TC-USA PAC); 2) Turkish Coalition California Political Action Committee (TC-CAL PAC); 3) National Coalition of Turkish American Lawyers Political Action Committee, (NC-TAL PAC); 4) National Coalition of Turkish American Women Political Action Committee (NC-TAW PAC); 5) Turkish American Political Action Committee (TURKISH PAC-TX).

The website states that the “Ten Thousand Turks Campaign,” was launched on April 29, 2010. It is “dedicated to reaching out to over 10,000 Turkish-Americans and friends of Turkey willing to take a stand to support candidates that understand the value of positive U.S.-Turkish relations.” This coalition of PACs has adopted the impossible task of fostering “positive

U.S.-Turkish relations.” The leader of Turkey, Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has done a great job of undermining U.S.-Turkish relations as well as Turkey’s relations with many other countries. I suggest that instead of wasting their hard-earned money, Turkish-Americans get rid of Erdogan which will immediately improve U.S.-Turkish relations.

The group’s website claims that the five Turkish PACs combined have raised a total of \$2,152,849 from 2007 to 2020 for U.S. political candidates. Interestingly, the number of contributions they have received has declined precipitously from a high of \$510,765 in 2015-16 to a low of \$202,640 in 2019-20. This may indicate that Turkish-Americans are not as hopeful about improving U.S.-Turkish relations by contributing

➔ page 11



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hoc.yerevan@mea.gov.in

accounts.yerevan@mea.gov.in

Last Date for acceptance of application: October 22, 2021

Azerbaijan files counterclaim against Armenia before UN Court



Azerbaijan has filed a counterclaim against Armenia with the International Court of Justice.

The Republic of Azerbaijan on September 24 instituted proceedings against the Republic of Armenia before the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, concerning the interpretation and application

of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

According to the Applicant, “Armenia has engaged and is continuing to engage in a series of discriminatory acts against Azerbaijanis on the basis of their ‘national or ethnic’ origin within the meaning of CERD”.

The Applicant claims that “through both direct and indirect means, Armenia continues its policy of ethnic cleansing”, and that it “incites hatred and ethnic violence against Azerbaijanis by engaging in hate speech and disseminating racist propaganda, including at the highest levels of its government.”

Referring to the period of hostilities

that erupted in autumn 2020, Azerbaijan contends that “Armenia once again targeted Azerbaijanis for brutal treatment motivated by ethnic hatred”.

Azerbaijan further contends that “Armenia’s policies and conduct of ethnic cleansing, cultural erasure and fomenting of hatred against Azerbaijanis systematically infringe the rights and freedoms of Azerbaijanis, as well as Azerbaijan’s own rights, in violation of CERD”.

Azerbaijan thus requests the Court to indicate certain provisional measures “as a matter of urgency.”

Armenia [filed an identical complaint](#) n September 16, 2021.

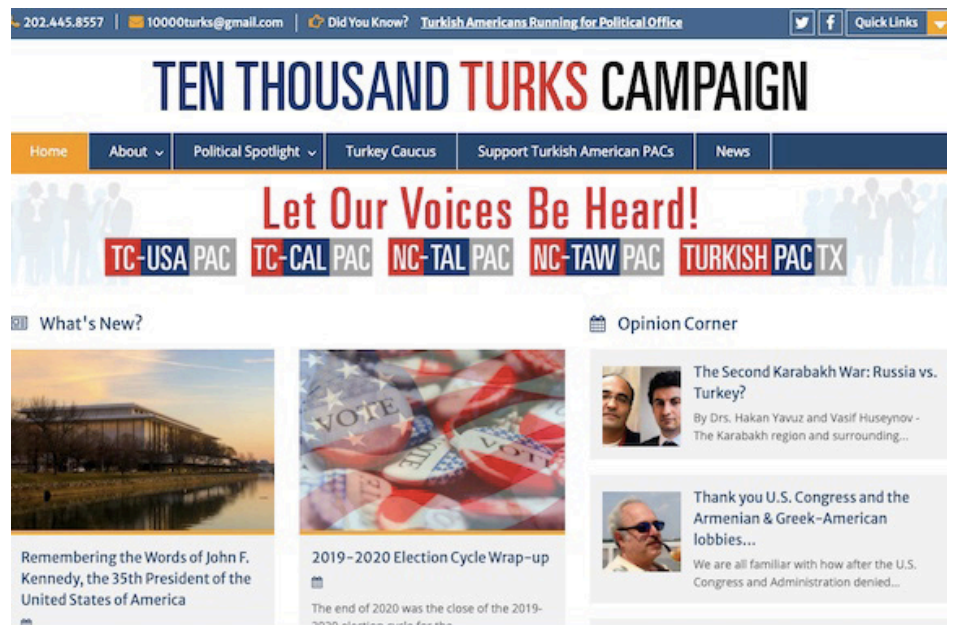
page 9 to political campaigns. The website does not explain how the group was able to raise money in 2007 to 2009 before it was formed in 2010.

A screen shot of the Ten Thousand Turks campaign

The Turkish website also provides the amount of money raised by each of the five PACs in the 2019-20 election cycle: TC-USA PAC (\$57,500); TC-TAW PAC (\$37,750); TC-CAL PAC (\$44,490); TC-MIDWEST PAC (\$35,800); and TURKISH PAC-TX (\$27,000). Some of the groups have changed their names over the years.

Here is additional information regarding each of the five groups:

1. TC-USA PAC: This group's fundraising declined from \$231,950 in 2009-10 to \$57,500 in 2019-20. It is headquartered in Washington; D.C. G. Lincoln McCurdy is the Treasurer and Louette Ragusa is the Custodian of Records.
2. TC-CAL PAC: This group's fundraising declined from \$64,400 in 2015-16 to \$44,490 in 2019-20. It is headquartered in Long Beach, California. Maria Cakiraga is the Treasurer and Yelda Bartlett is the Northern California Representative.
3. NC-TAL PAC: No fundraising information is available on its own website. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. The PAC's Officers & Executive Committee Members are: Doreen Edelman, President; Robert Levent Herguner, Treasurer; Aylin Acikalin; Zeliha Arslan; Yelda Bartlett; and Lawrence Cenk Laws.
4. NC-TAW PAC: No fundraising information is available on its website. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. Tuba Firincioglu is the Treasurer and Louette Ragusa is the Custodian of Records. Louette holds the same position with the TC-USA PAC. The website claims that there are nationwide 11 Turkish elected officials in city and local governments and none at state or federal levels.



1. TURKISH PAC-TX: No fundraising information is available on its website and no executives are named. The group is headquartered in Houston, Texas.

The "tenthousandturks.org" website provides the following additional details: "In the 2019-2020 election cycle, the PACs contributed to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), Congressional Black Caucus PAC (CBC PAC), and Bold PAC (Congressional Hispanic PAC).

"The PACs also contributed to three U.S. senators, 61 candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, and 10 candidates for state or local races. The percentage of wins was 100% for the Senate, 98% for the House, and 50% for state and local offices. Further, the PACs were instrumental in rallying support for the 11 Turkish Americans running for public office in 2020, the largest number ever, and the three spouses of Turkish Americans for a total of 14 candidates.

"Notable successes by the PACs in the 2019-2020 election cycle were the following:

- "1. The comeback of Cong. Pete Sessions, the former Turkey Caucus Co-Chair, in winning Texas's 17th congressional district after his loss in 2018 when he represented the 32nd district;

2. The election of Farhan Khan, a popular friend of Turkish Americans in southern California, as the Mayor of Irvine, California;

3. The election of Turkish American Aycha Sawa as the City Comptroller for Milwaukee, Wisconsin;

4. The reelection of Turkish American Tayfun Selen as a Freeholder (County Commissioner) of the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders (County Commissioners) in New Jersey;

5. The reelection of Ben Bartlett, spouse of Turkish American Yelda Bartlett, as a City Council Member in Berkeley, California; and

6. The election of Leah Ersoylyu, spouse of Turkish American Sarp Ersoylyu, as a Trustee of the Newport Mesa United School District in Orange County, California."

Naturally, Turkish-Americans have the right to contribute to political campaigns in the United States like any other American. The only issue is that they are using their political outreach to spread lies about the Armenian Genocide. Their political fundraising website is full of disinformation about the Genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey against Armenians. This is something Armenian-Americans need to counter with their own "One Million Armenians Campaign."

From French Chamonix to Armenia's Dilijan: Third Armenian Summit of Minds to be held in October

Dilijan, Armenia, will host the third Armenian Summit of Minds October 23-24, the President's Press Office reports.

The recent Summit of Minds traditionally held in Chamonix, France, brought together incumbent and former officials from different countries, well-known figures from political, economic, scientific, cultural and business circles, as well as heads of international think tanks. The President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian participated in the summit.

The Summit of Minds is a unique platform for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience, the main goals of which are to present new ideas on key issues, to establish new partnerships through direct discussions.

This prestigious international conference, traditionally held in the French city of Chamonix, was hosted in June 2019 in Dilijan, Armenia. For the first time in



its history, the summit was held outside Chamonix. An exceptional agreement on its organization was reached in September 2018, when the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian participated in the summit as keynote speaker.

The conference held in Dilijan was called Armenian Summit of Minds and has become a unique Armenian brand.

Back in 2019, Chamonix expressed a desire to establish deeper friendly relations with Dilijan. Chamonix is a classic example of how a small town can be so success-

ful. Smaller than Dilijan, with a population of less than 10,000, Chamonix receives 5 million tourists a year, from skiing enthusiasts to cultural and conference visits.

Both Chamonix and Dilijan have wonderful nature, clean air, ecologically clean environment. With a clear vision of development, strategy and program, Dilijan also has all the opportunities to become a tourist center, cultural, intellectual, tourist city. The friendship between Chamonix and Dilijan will bring to Armenia not only thoughts and ideas, but also experience, business relations, international partnership.

President Armen Sarkissian invited the participants of the Chamonix discussions to the Third Armenian Summit of Minds scheduled for October 23-24 in Dilijan, which is a unique opportunity to present Armenia's potential, develop new areas of cooperation and establish business ties.



The opposition lawmakers will apply to the Constitutional Court asking to repeal Healthcare Minister Anahit Avanesyan's order requiring all private and public employees to either get vaccinated or get tested for COVID-19 twice a month starting October 1, opposition Hayastan bloc

Armenian opposition takes vaccine mandate to high court asking revocation

lawmaker Aram Vardevanyan told reporters.

"We already have the required 1/5 of signatures of lawmakers. In relation to the well-known, discussed order of the healthcare minister which had objectively angered a large part of the society we will apply to the Constitutional Court asking to revoke the order," he said.

Vardevanyan noted that vaccinations are important, but it is up to every individual to make that decision.

"That is, we should see every day how

the government is explaining with social ads and other platforms why people must get vaccinated. But when instead they tell people in difficult conditions of minimal wage 'go get PCR tests every 14 days at your own expense or go get vaccinated' – this is coercion. Why doesn't the government want to cover that expense? Let the government subsidize the PCR testing expenses. By the way, this is one of the grounds for applying to the Constitutional Court," the lawmaker said.

Community enlargement bill passes first reading as opposition boycotts voting

The government-authored bill on community enlargement passed first reading in parliament with only 59 lawmakers voting in favor, 0 against and 0 present.

The two opposition blocs, Hayastan and Pativ Unem, boycotted the session and didn't participate in the voting.

The opposition argues that the items on the agenda – pertaining to the community enlargement process whereby a number of towns, cities and villages will be incorporated into merged municipalities – are unlawful and contradict the constitution.

Hayastan bloc secretary Artsvik Minasyan said in his speech earlier that they demand the President Armen Sarkissian to focus on the matter and dispute the issue.

Pativ Unem secretary Hayk Mami-janyan accused the pro-government bill in seeking to "remove politically undesirable mayors from office". "By joining Hayastan bloc's proposals, Pativ Unem bloc will likewise not participate in the debates of this item," he said.

The lawmakers of both blocs then left



the session before the debate.

The bill seeks to merge 441 communities into 37 enlarged communities. The government says that the current administrative divisions hinder community development, especially in cases of communities which have a population below 3000.



Archbishop Raphaël François Minassian elected Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia

The Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia of the Armenians, Lebanon, convoked by the Holy Father in Rome on 22 and 23 September 2021, has elected His Excellency Archbishop Raphaël François Minassian, titular of Caesaria in Cappadocia of the Armenians and ordinary for Armenian Catholic faithful of Eastern Europe, as Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians, Vatican News reports.

The Patriarch-elect has taken the name of His Beatitude Raphaël Bedros XXI Minassian.

His Beatitude Raphaël Bedros XXI Minassian was born on 24 November 1946

in Beirut. He studied at the Patriarchal Seminary of Bzommar (1958-1967) and at the Pontifical Gregorian University (1967-1973), where he also studied philosophy and theology. He attended a specialisation course in psycho-pedagogy at the Salesian Pontifical University.

On 24 June 1973 he was ordained a priest as a member of the Patriarchal Clergy Institute in Bzommar. From 1973 to 1982 he served as parish priest of the Armenian Cathedral in Beirut, and from 1982 to 1984, secretary to Patriarch Hovhannes Bedros XVIII Kasparian. From 1984 to 1989 he was in charge of founding the parish complex of the Holy Cross in Zalka, Beirut.

From 1975 to 1989 he was a judge at the ecclesiastical tribunal of the Armenian Church in Beirut. He taught Armenian liturgy at the Pontifical University of Kaslik

from 1985 to 1989, and in 1989 he was transferred to the United States of America, where he worked for a year as a parish priest in New York. Subsequently, until 2003, he was pastor for Armenian Catholics in California, Arizona and Nevada.

Since 2004 he has directed *Telepace Armenia*, of which he is founder. In 2005 he was appointed as Patriarchal exarch of Jerusalem and Amman for the Armenians. On 24 June 2011 the Holy Father appointed him ordinary for the Armenian Catholic faithful of Eastern Europe, assigning him the titular see of Caesarea in Cappadocia of the Armenians and the title of archbishop *ad personam*.

From 24 to 26 June 2016, he received Pope Francis during his Apostolic Journey in Armenia.

Seventeenth-century Armenian paintings return to Windsor Castle after 150 years

Two newly conserved paintings by 17th century Armenian artist Marcos have been installed in the King's Dining Room at Windsor Castle in England for the first time in 150 years, Windsor Express reports.

They were last recorded within the castle in the early 1870s.

It is not known how or when the paintings arrived in England.

They were first recorded as hanging at Windsor Castle in James II's inventory in 1688, and subsequently hung at Kensington Palace and Hampton Court Palace, according to Windsor Express.

"The paintings show a member of the military aristocracy and an unmarried woman from New Julfa, the Armenian district of Isfahan, which was the cosmopolitan capital of Persia in the 17th century.

The figures are dressed in luxurious

fabrics including Persian silks, which the Armenians of Isfahan famously traded across the globe. Both portraits include European details, such as a Venetian wine glass, a German



clock and Dutch flowers, signifying affluence through access to luxury international commodities," Grace Witherden wrote in Windsor Express.



ALEXANDER SPENDIARYAN – 150

The year 2021 is declared Spendiaryan year... The jubilee 150th anniversary of the founder of the symphonic music, pedagogue and public figure, conductor and composer Alexander Spendiaryan. In 2019 UNESCO accepted the jubilee 150th anniversary of the world

ArmSSR People's Artist, the Laureate of the ArmSSR State Prize, Professor Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, Magda Mkrtchyan, opera singer, the RA Merited Artist Hayk Melikyan) and young gifted musicians as well.

The RA Deputy Minister of Ed-

the attendees in one-minute silence paid tribute to the memory of those fallen during 44-day war. The concert was a success, the audience enjoyed the music despite the cold weather.

The festival was organized by the initiative of A. Spendiaryan House-Museum, with the support of the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. The partner of the festival was the Formica Art Production, producer – Shahen Nazarenko. In the end of the evening concert the director of Spendiaryan House-Museum, Marine Otaryan mentioned that one more Spendiaryanian meeting will be held in Gyumri on November 6, this time - in the form of a symphonic concert.

Klingen Choir and Cultural Association (KCCA) under the auspices of the Embassy of Armenia to the UK presents a Concert

Multinational Tribute to Alexander Spendiaryan (150) and Arno Babajanyan (100)

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acclaimed composer and conductor in the 2020-2021 calendar of the world famous people and important events.

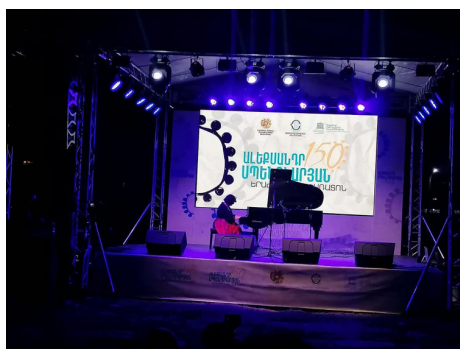
The music festival Spendiaryan-150 dedicated to the chamber works of the composer took place on September 5, 2021 in the yard of Gyumri Museum of National Architecture and Urban life. The participants were Armenian famous artists (Barsegh Tumanyan, well acclaimed opera singer, the RA People's Artist, Svetlana Navasardian, world acclaimed pianist, the

ucation, Science, Sport Ara Khzmalyan, the Head of Shirak Diocese of Armenian Apostolic Church Mikayel Archbishop Ajapahyan, the



Honourable Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Gyumri Aleksan Ter-Minasyan, guests from Gyumri community and from Yerevan, directors, employees from Yerevan and Gyumri Educational Cultural institutions, music lovers and others. The presenter of the event was from the Public TV Company Karen Kocharyan.

At the beginning of the Festival



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