

Armenia Foreign Ministry statement on 5th anniversary of April War



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia issued a statement on the 5th anniversary of the Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh unleashed in April, 2016.

“Five years ago, on the night of 1 to 2 April, 2016, the Azerbaijani authorities, in flagrant violation of the commitment on ceasefire, launched a large-scale military offensive against Artsakh, attempting to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the use of force.

During the offensive, the armed forces of Azerbaijan deliberately targeted the civilian population and infrastructure. The four-day war against Artsakh was accompanied by cruel murders and torture of the servicemen and civilians of Artsakh, as well as mutilation of the bodies of the victims. Those who committed these crimes on the grounds of national hatred were later awarded by the Azerbaijani authorities at the highest level.

In the aftermath of the April war, inspired by the impunity of the committed war crimes and violations of human rights, the Azerbaijani authorities intensified their bellicose rhetoric and pro-

paganda of hatred against Armenians.

This policy resulted in unleashing new military aggression by Azerbaijan against Artsakh in 2020 with the direct involvement of Turkey and the latter’s affiliated foreign terrorist fighters causing numerous irreversible human and material losses. Considerable part of Artsakh’s territory fell under the Azerbaijani military occupation, tens of thousands of citizens became refugees.

The large-scale wars unleashed against Artsakh in April, 2016 and September, 2020, as well as the war crimes committed by Azerbaijan during those hostilities, demonstrated that Artsakh cannot be under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan with any status.

Only addressing the consequences of the Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh and the determination of the status of Artsakh will serve as a basis for lasting peace and stability in the region. Armenia and the Armenian people will make every effort to fully restore all the rights of our compatriots in Artsakh for a free and dignified life in their historical homeland,” the foreign ministry said in the statement.

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The session of the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers was held on April 2 in Moscow. Foreign Minister of Armenia Ara Aivazian also participated in the session, the MFA told Noyan Tapan.

The discussion focused on issues relating to strengthening the cooperation between the CIS participating states, raising the efficiency of the organization, etc.

During the session the foreigner ministers of the CIS states touched upon the current regional affairs, as well as approved the draft decision on the statement of the leaders of the CIS participating states addressed to the nations of the participating

states and the global community on the 80th anniversary of the launch of the Great Patriotic War.

In his remarks, the Armenian FM stated that the victory in the Great Patriotic War is also a clear call to build peace without wars, conflicts and violence.

In the context of regional security and stability-related issues, the FM drew the attention of the session participants to the current humanitarian situation in Artsakh caused by the recent Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression with the involvement of foreign terrorists. He presented in details the war crimes committed by Azerbaijan during the military operations, such as the deliberate targeting of the peaceful civilians and civilian infrastructure, the inhuman treatment against the prisoners of war and other detained citizens, stating that all these actions were aimed at eliminating the indigenous people of Artsakh in their historic homeland.

Minister Aivazian also touched upon the implementation process of the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement, stressing the necessity of the immediate return of Armenian prisoners of war and detained civilians from the Azerbaijani captivity.

In addition, the minister also raised the issue of alarming facts on vandalism against the Armenian religious and cultural heritage. He emphasized the impermissibility of another cultural genocide by Azerbaijan, noting that the establishment of peace on the ruins of the Armenian churches is impossible.

Summing up his remarks the minister said lasting and stable peace in the region is possible to achieve only through the comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict based on the principles of the international law, the people's right to self-determination and equality, within the frames of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.

Azerbaijani provocations should be brought to the attention of international organizations

On March 30, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Artsakh David Babayan met with Chairman of the National Assembly Artur Tovmasyan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Touching upon the recent cases of targeting with stones of civilian vehicles by Azeris, Artur Tovmasyan stressed the need to ensure the security of the population of Artsakh. The sides attached importance to raising these and other issues on the agenda in international organizations.



The sides also discussed the country's foreign policy priorities. In this context, the need for continuing the process of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement within

the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, as well as for the further development and deepening of relations with various countries, in particular, the Russian Federation, was stressed.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh David Babayan expressed confidence that in the current situation all internal resources, including parliamentary diplomacy, should be used to achieve success on the external front.

Russia's Federation Council chair honored with medal of the Armenian Parliament

Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan awarded the Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation Valentina Matvienko with the Honorary Medal of the National Assembly of Armenia

The Speaker signed a relevant order on March 30.

The medal was awarded for Mrs. Matvienko's significant contribution to the protection of human values, human rights and freedoms, as well as for strengthening inter-parliamentary friendly relations between Armenia and Russia.

Valentina Matvienko recently mediated the release of Lebanese Armenian woman Maral Najarian from Azerbaijani captivity.



Armenian Parliament Approves Changes to Electoral System

(RFE/RL) - The National Assembly approved on April 1 major amendments to Armenia's Electoral Code which some opposition parties say are aimed at helping Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan win snap parliamentary elections expected in June.

The government-backed amendments passed in the first reading changed the legal mechanism for electing the country's next parliament.

Armenians have until now voted for not only parties and blocs but also their individual candidates running in nationwide constituencies. In the last two general elections, parliament seats were equally distributed among candidates picked through national party lists and individual races.

The amendments backed by only pro-government lawmakers mean that the forthcoming elections will be held only on a party list basis.

Pashinyan announced last week his administration's decision to switch the electoral system to a fully proportional one. He claimed that none of the two opposition parties represented in the current parliament objects to that.

However, one of those parties, Bright Armenia Party, spoke out against changing the electoral system.

Bright Armenia Party leader Edmon Marukyan accused Pashinyan and the ruling My Step bloc of resorting to partisan gerrymandering when he spoke during a short parliament debate on the proposed amendments. He said the authorities must not hastily change the "rules of the game" less than three months before the anticipated elections.

"I am officially declaring that from now on the legitimacy of the elections is in doubt," Marukyan said. "With your new Elec-



toral Code, you are digging your political grave. This will be your end."

Marukyan also said that earlier this year the parliament's pro-government majority drafted different amendments to the Electoral Code and sent them to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission for examination. "You have fooled the Venice Commission," he charged.

Ruben Rubinyan, a senior My Step lawmaker, rejected the criticism. "Yes, the rules of the game are being changed right before the elections, but they are being liberalized," he said. Rubinyan argued that Marukyan himself advocated the abolition of individual constituencies as recently as in 2018.

The other parliamentary opposition party, Prosperous Armenia, has not publicly backed or opposed the amendments. Its deputies did not take part in Thursday's debate and ensuing vote.

Armenian, Russian FMs discuss Karabakh issue, bilateral relations



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts the implementation of Russian-brokered agreements to stop the war in Nagorno-Karabakh during separate talks held in Moscow on April 1.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the three ministers touched upon "humanitarian" issues and the "unblocking of economic and transport links" in the region.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazian was cited by his office as telling Lavrov that Azerbaijan is continuing to violate the ceasefire agreement brokered by Moscow on November 9. Ayvazian singled out Baku's refusal to free more than 100 Armenian prisoners of war and civilians remaining in Azerbaijani custody.

The truce accord calls for the restoration of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russian President Vladimir Putin, his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan decided to set up a trilateral "working group" for that purpose when they met in Moscow on January 11.

The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states has held several meetings since January 30. Its Russian co-chair, Alexei Overchuk, met with Aliyev and Pashinyan in Baku and Yerevan on Thursday.

Aliyev reportedly praised the trilateral group, saying that it has already achieved concrete results. He also told Overchuk that the risk of a renewed escalation of the Karabakh conflict is now minimal.

Aliyev and Putin spoke by phone later on Thursday. According to the Kremlin, they both were satisfied with the work of the Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani task force.

New High-Tech Industry Minister Named

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has replaced Armenia's Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan who resigned on Wednesday almost two weeks after assaulting a journalist at a restaurant in Yerevan.

Arshakyan's successor, Hayk Chobanyan, has served as governor of northern Tavush province for the last two years.

Pashinyan announced his decision to appoint Chobanyan as the new minister of high-tech industry during a cabinet meeting held on April 1. President Armen Sarkissian formalized the appointment with a decree signed on Friday.

Speaking at the cabinet meeting, Pashinyan praised Arshakyan's track record but did not comment on the reason for his resignation.

Arshakyan and his wife dined at a Yerevan restaurant on March 18 when he was approached by Paylak Fahradian, the editor of the Irakanum.am news website. The latter asked the minister to explain why he is not at work. Footage from a security camera showed Arshakyan hitting Fahradian in the face and damaging his laptop computer moments later.

Arshakyan apologized to the journalist several days after the incident. In a statement issued on Wednesday, he said



he will step down because he believes it is "unacceptable for an official to use violence against any citizen."

Arshakyan, 35, is a senior member of Pashinyan's Civil Contract party. He has held the ministerial post since October 2018.

Armenia's Minister of High-Tech Industry resigns after assault

Armenia's Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan announced his resignation on March 31 almost two weeks after assaulting a journalist at a restaurant in Yerevan, saying that he will continue to work for the development of the Homeland.

"As a citizen of the Republic of Armenia, I consider unacceptable the use of violence by an official against any citizen, we are obliged to move on the path of having a society without violence," Arshakyan said in a facebook post.

"As a high-ranking official, a person representing the Republic of Armenia in the international arena, I am obliged to serve the public as an example through my own experience. Thus, I express my intolerance for violence, both psychological and physical. I hope that what happened will serve



as a lesson for our society and we will love each other a little more and respect everyone's right to privacy and family life," the Minister said.

He thanked Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for trust and the opportunity to serve the Homeland in this high post. He also thanked colleagues in the government for joint work.

"I thank our citizens who trusted, loved or did not appreciate or criticized me during my tenure. I assure you that every word of encouragement and criticism has found its place in our daily work and success," Hakob Arshakyan added.

He expressed gratitude to thousands of employees of the Ministry and the adjacent bodies.

"Many of our brothers fell in battle, I bow my head before their memory and their families, their heroism will remain in our hearts forever. We have a very beautiful country, where strong and good people live. Do not divide and classify each other, we will build a happy, secure and developed country together, with the daily hard and consistent work of each of us," Arshakyan concluded.

Aliyev fueling anti-Armenian sentiments among Turkic-speaking and Muslim countries – Artsakh MFA

The statement by President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev at the Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States is of serious concern in terms of establishing lasting peace and stability in the region, Artsakh's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"The President of Azerbaijan continues to fuel anti-Armenian sentiments not only within Azerbaijan, but also in the societies of Turkic-speaking and Muslim countries. By doing so, the leader of Azerbaijan deliberately attaches ethnic and religious elements to the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict, attempting to unite the Turkic and Muslim worlds around the aspirations of

Azerbaijan," the Foreign Ministry stated.

It said "Aliyev purposefully transfers the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict and Armenophobia to the dimension of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, thus attaching elements of radicalism to these ideologies."

"In this context, the first serious geopolitical claim of the criminal trinity of Azerbaijan, Turkey and international terrorists was the large-scale military aggression unleashed against the Republic of Artsakh on September 27, 2020. This is followed by the expansionist aspirations also for different regions of the Republic of Armenia, in particular, Syunik," the



statement reads.

The Foreign Ministry stated that without adequate steps by the international community, similar actions will surely take place in other regions as well, which are fraught with unpredictable consequences for global peace and stability.

Slovakia Parliament Urges Release of Armenian POWs

The parliament of Slovakia on April 1 unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the immediate return of Armenian prisoners of war being held captive by Azerbaijan.

The resolution, which was introduced by Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee Marián Kéry, strongly condemns the killings of civilians, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, monuments of cultural and religious heritage, expresses concern over the military involvement of third countries in the conflict and their destabilizing role. The measure also emphasizes that the process of determining the future legal status



of Nagorno-Karabakh should be carried out under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

The bill also “expresses deep concern that prisoners of war and other detainees, including civilians, have not been released

in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention.”

The measure calls of the Slovak government, the European Union and international organizations “to ensure that all allegations of war crimes, including the use of cluster munitions, are properly investigated, that all prisoners of war and civilians are released immediately, and that international humanitarian organizations enter Nagorno-Karabakh without restrictions.”

In October, Slovakia’s parliament adopted a resolution condemning the attacks and aggression against Karabakh.

Swiss MPs urge the government to put pressure on Turkey



In an urgent appeal to the Federal Assembly of Switzerland, 33 members of the Council of States and National Council have called for pressure on Turkey over human rights violations and urged the government to postpone ratification of the country’s new free trade agreement with Ankara until Turkey implements the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), [ANF](#) reports.

Swiss MPs highlighted their commitment to human rights values, asking Swiss authorities to put pressure on Turkey.

In the letter, the 33 councilors stressed that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has led the country down an increasingly authoritarian path. “He has systematically marginalized the various forms of opposition in the country, silenced or co-opted critical media, dismissed independent judges and replaced them with his partisans, and imprisoned many journalists and other activists.”

Reference was also made to the 2020 democracy index by the Freedom House, which lists Turkey as an “unfree country.” “The U.S. State Department’s 2019 Human

Rights Practices Report further notes that the government has curtailed fundamental freedoms and eroded the rule of law under broad anti-terrorism legislation,” it added.

Erdoğan’s “bellicose foreign policy”

Erdoğan’s foreign policy has also become increasingly “warlike” over time, the Swiss MPs note: “In recent years, he has attacked the Kurds fighting the jihadist group ‘Islamic State’ in Syria and is carrying out military interventions in northern Iraq in total violation of the country’s sovereignty. He has encouraged Azerbaijan to resort to force to settle a conflict with Armenia. In the conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia and in Libya, the Turkish state has recruited and sent mercenaries to these countries in total violation of international law. President Erdogan has also sought to pressure a number of countries, including Switzerland, to extradite Turkish nationals he blames for the failed 2016 coup.”

Call for support for the HDP and Istanbul Convention

The letter goes on to say, “In this context, we believe that Switzerland has a key role to play. We call on you to urge President Erdogan and his government to immediately end the crackdown on dissenters at home and abroad, to release political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and to reverse the authoritarian course the country has taken. We demand that President Erdogan halt the ban on the HDP and reverse the decision to withdraw

from the Istanbul Convention.

Reminding Turkey of its obligations

It also seems reasonable to us that Switzerland reminds Turkey of the obligations it entered into by ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights. Therefore, we call on the Federal Assembly to postpone the ratification of the new free trade agreement between Switzerland and Turkey as long as Turkey does not implement the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. We deeply believe in the continuation of Switzerland’s humanitarian tradition and the values that the Confederation defends, and we are convinced that this urgent appeal will be heard.”

Signatories: Élisabeth Baume-Schneider | Marina Carobbio Guscetti | Christophe Clivaz | Brigitte Crottaz | Denis De la Reussille | Laurence Fehlmann Rielle | Pierre Alain Fridez | Claudia Friedl | Tamara Funicello | Balthasar Glättli | Eva Herzog | Irene Kälin | Ada Marra | Min Li Marti | Lisa Mazzone | Mattea Meyer | Sophie Michaud Gigon | Fabian Molina | Martina Munz | Isabelle Pasquier-Eichenberger | Valérie Piller Carrard | Katharina Prelicz-Huber | Stéfanie Prezioso | Léonore Porchet | Valentine Python | Franziska Roth | Franziska Ryser | Ursula Schneider Schüttel | Priska Seiler Graf | Carlo Sommaruga | Nicolas Walder | Manuela Weichelt-Picard | Cedric Wermuth

Eco-community with sustainable infrastructure, cost-effective resources to be built in Armenia



Minister of Economy of Armenia Vahan Kerobyan visited Abovyan community on April 2 to get acquainted with the projects of constructing a free industrial zone and sustainable community in the sidelines of “Build Armenia” program, as well as to discuss cooperation opportunities.

As ARMENPRESS was informed from the press service of the Ministry of Economy, Minister Kerobyan and Director of “Hayprospect” CJSC, “Build Armenia” program coordinator Sevak Artsruni signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the presence of Kotayk Governor Mesrop Mesropyan and Abovyan Mayor Vahagn Gevorgyan. The Memorandum is about encouraging the implementation of the

“Build Armenia” program and sustainable community building in Armenia.

Vahan Kerobyan noted that according to the Memorandum, the Ministry of Economy is obliged to assist “Hayprospect” CJSC in constructing a huge industrial and residential complex, where numerous businesses and educational facilities will operate. The Minister of Economy assessed the program very progressive and asked Sevak Artsruni to briefly present it.

Sevak Artsruni informed that the program is in the initial stage. Most part of the land has already been acquired, nearly 70 hectares.

“It’s expected that the infrastructures of the industrial zone will be ready by the end of the year. By now 6 million USD has been invested. By the end of the year, they will increase up to 20-30 million USD. The total program is estimated at up to 1 billion USD”, he said.

Sevak Artsruni noted that two months ago their company signed a memorandum with Abovyan Municipality and now a memorandum has been signed with the Ministry of Economy and they are very

happy for that, since they greatly highlight the cooperation with the Government and the community.

“Naturally, this is a business and there is the logic of pursuing profits, but we also assess this something important also for the country, because our final goal is also about repatriation and we know that we can make our country powerful with the help of 10 million Armenians, if we organize everything correctly”, Artsruni said.

Sevak Artsruni accompanied the Minister of Economy, Kotayk Governor and Abovyan Mayor to the construction site and presented the ongoing works.

“Hayprospect” CJSC has set a task to give priority to the participants of the war, servicemen with disabilities, as well as to the wives of the soldiers killed during the war during staff hiring. The hiring process will start from May.

“Hayprospect” community will be the first community environmentally and energy sustainable with cost-effective resources in the region. The residential part of the community will have 10 thousand residents.

World Bank expects slow economic recovery in Armenia

Armenia’s economy will return to growth this year after contracting by 7.6 percent in 2020 mainly because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the World Bank.

“GDP growth is projected to recover partially in 2021 (to 3.4 percent) and more strongly in 2022 (4.3 percent). The recovery will be slow; the economy is unlikely to return to pre-COVID output levels until 2023,” the bank said in its latest Economic Update for Europe and Central Asia released late on Tuesday.

“Private consumption and the services sector are expected to recover gradually. Private investment will likely remain subdued, reflecting weak investor confidence,” added the report.

The Armenian government has forecast



a similar growth rate for 2021. However, the country’s Central Bank said on March 17 that the domestic economy will likely expand by only 1.4 percent.

Data from the government’s Statistical Committee shows that GDP continued to shrink in January and February 2021.

The World Bank cautioned that its growth projections are a “baseline scenario” which assumes that Armenia will

avoid coronavirus-related lockdowns and further political upheavals.

“The risks to the outlook are weighted heavily to the downside,” it said, adding that they include a “slow pace of immunization” of the population and “elevated political uncertainty.”

“Although the pace of vaccinations will gradually ramp up, the authorities do not expect to vaccinate a significant share of the population until 2022,” read the report.

The bank also noted the pandemic’s “severe” impact on low-income Armenians, saying that poverty in the country increased considerably in 2020. “The unemployment rate rose by 1 percentage point year on year, reaching 18.1 percent at end-September 2020,” it said.

Armenia, Georgia to discuss transit of goods

An Armenian government delegation will be dispatched to Georgia April 5-7 to discuss issues arising during the transit of goods manufactured in Armenia through the territory of Georgia and identify possible solutions.

A relevant decision has been signed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Discussions will focus on the transit of wine and cognac spirit, cigarettes.

Minister of Economy of the Republic

of Armenia has been instructed to ensure that within three days after the return the delegation submits a report on the results of the visit to the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

150 houses to be built in Artsakh's Karmir Shuka community

It is planned to build 150 houses in Artsakh's Red Market settlement, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Artsakh informs.

Karmir Shuka settlement of Artsakh's Martuni region is located in the south-eastern part of the republic. Part of the population is engaged in agriculture, farming, animal husbandry, there are 2 or 3 large farmers. There are oil, wine, woodworking and other workshops.

Multi-apartment buildings are being built in Karmir Shuka with the help of the Artsakh Investment Fund. Many families from the surrounding villages have also ex-



pressed a desire to move to Karmir Shuka, because, in addition to jobs, there is a kindergarten and a newly built school.

The infrastructure was heavily in the community was damaged as a result of

the war. Fifteen houses were completely destroyed, 10 of which are not subject to repair. In 43 houses the roof was changed, in 65 others metal-plastic windows were installed.

It is planned to build 150 houses in the village.

There is an aid station in the community, but the building conditions are not good, there is an ambulance. Experienced nurses work here, but there is no doctor.

With the support of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, a community center has been built in Karmir Shuka, where the school library is located.

Armenian-made lung ventilators ready for clinical trials and production

Armenian-made lung ventilators are fully ready for clinical trials, certification and production, Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arsahakyan says.

Last year, within the framework of the government program, the process of developing of artificial respiration devices in Armenia was launched jointly with the Engineering Association.

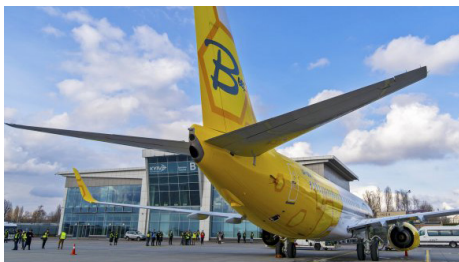
The presented device is a complex

engineering system, which replaces the human respiratory system with the necessary volumes with the help of air volume and pressure control algorithms.

As a result of the cooperation with the American NASA JPL laboratory, five examples of the devices are already ready and are undergoing tests for further certification and production, the Minister said.



Ukrainian low-cost Bees Airline to operate flights to Yerevan



The State Aviation Administration of Ukraine has allowed the new Ukrainian

low-cost Bees Airline to start flights on 16 charter and 13 regular routes, AnalitikaUA.net reports.

Bees Airline is the third Ukrainian airline to operate flights to Armenia, with UIA and SkyUp already flying to the capital of Armenia.

The regular network from Kiev will include Burgas, Heraklion, Rhodes, Batumi, Araxos, Alicante, Barcelona, Tirana, Varna and Larnaca.

Also, Bees Airline was allowed to launch regular flights from Odessa to Tbilisi and Yerevan, from Lvov to Yerevan.

The charter network includes routes from Kiev to Marsa Alam, Mombasa, Hurghada, Sharm el-Sheikh, Antalya, Bodrum, Tivat.

At a recent press conference, Bees Airline announced the launch of regular flights closer to the May holidays to Georgia and Armenia.

Travel Without COVID-19 app program now termless

The Travel Without COVID-19 program – which was initially a pilot program launched from February 1 to March 1, is extended and will work without timeframe limits, allowing passengers to cross the state border with a view to traveling from Armenia to Russia and in the opposite direction in case of a negative COVID-19 test result.

The decision to lift the timeframe limits was made by the Russian Government.

Armenia's Deputy PM Mher Grigoryan, in comments for ARMENPRESS, praised the program as an "effective and promising tool" facilitating the movements of Armenian and Russian citizens between the two countries.

In addition, Kyrgyzstan has been added to the list of countries whose citizens can use the application to visit Russia.

The Travel without COVID-19 program features a mobile app which shows the traveler's COVID-19 test result in the form of a QR code, which is used when crossing border.

State Department's Human Rights Report underscores violations by Azerbaijan, highlights treatment of Armenian POWs



The U.S. Department of State released the 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on Tuesday, March 30, during a press briefing led by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

Human rights violations against Armenians were outlined in the reports, particularly in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) war launched by Azerbaijan, with the full support of Turkey, against the Armenian people on September 27, 2020.

“Significant human rights issues” by Azerbaijan highlighted in the report included “unlawful or arbitrary killing; torture; arbitrary detention; harsh and sometimes life-threatening prison conditions...significant human rights issues connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict...unlawful killings, civilian casualties, and inhuman treatment.”

The report noted that “the government did not prosecute or punish the majority of officials who committed human rights abuses and that “impunity remained a problem.” Honing in on human rights abuses, the report contained examples of two videos featured on social media last October of Azerbaijani soldiers “humiliating and executing two Armenian detainees in the town of Hadrut.”

The report goes on to state that the videos were assessed as “genuine” and “authentic” by independent experts from Bellingcat, the BBC, and the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab. Another example listed was tied to an Amnesty International report that documented

the “execution by decapitation of two ethnic Armenian civilians by Azerbaijani forces.”

Azerbaijan’s “use of heavy artillery missiles, combat unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and aerial bombs, as well as cluster munitions, hitting civilians and civilian facilities in Nagorno-Karabakh” was also underscored in the report, noting that the Azerbaijani government “denied the accusations” that its military targeted civilian structures, despite the fact that the Human Rights Watch on October 3, 2020 and December 11, 2020 “criticized Azerbaijan’s armed forces for repeatedly using weapons on residential areas in Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Nonmilitary sites targeted included medical emergency service centers and ambulances, food stocks, crops, livestock, electricity and gas plants, and drinking-water installations and supplies, as well as schools and preschools. International observers reported that “Azerbaijani armed forces on multiple occasions struck near humanitarian organizations, such as The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and The HALO Trust, located in Stepanakert” and on October 14, 2020 “three aircraft reportedly dropped bombs on the military hospital in Martakert, damaging the hospital and destroying nearby medical vehicles, all clearly marked as medical.”

The report also cited that on November 2, 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights criticized Azerbaijan’s continuing attacks in populated areas in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, and quoted High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet, who stated “homes have been destroyed, streets reduced to rubble, and people forced to flee or seek safety in basements.”

A section on “abused soldiers and civilians by Azerbaijani forces” was rooted in

“credible reports” and detailed the abuse based on the Human Rights Watch report published on December 2, 2020, that “Azerbaijani forces inhumanly treated numerous ethnic Armenian soldiers captured in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” and “Azerbaijani forces subjected the detainees to physical abuse and humiliation in actions that were captured on videos and widely circulated on social media.”

The number of missing persons and prisoners of war was documented in the report, citing the ICRC that “processed cases of persons missing in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and worked with the government to develop a consolidated list of missing persons.”

Lastly, the report commented on the rise of “inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech against Armenians.” In his statement during the press briefing, Secretary Blinken emphasized that President Biden is “committed to putting human rights back at the center of American foreign policy” and that perpetrators of abuse will be held accountable. He noted that “human rights are universal” and that “all people are entitled to these rights.” The COVID-19 pandemic caused “alarming trend lines,” according to Secretary Blinken, which gave autocratic governments the opportunity to “further repress human rights.”

“Standing up for human rights everywhere is in America’s interest,” he said. “Standing for people’s freedom and dignity honors America’s most sacred values.” Secretary Blinken pledged to work with the U.S. Congress to sanction human rights violators and to “demonstrate a bipartisan commitment to promoting human rights.” He remarked that consequences would be imposed, including economic sanctions and visa restrictions if “autocratic institutions undercut human rights.”

Azerbaijan, a So-Called Ally of Israel, Friend of Jews, Betrays Israel at the UN



By Harut Sassounian

For three decades, the government of Israel and Jewish-American leaders have been showering Azerbaijan with excessive and undeserved praise for its alleged tolerance for its Jewish community and friendship with Israel. There have been several visits by Israeli leaders and prominent Jewish-Americans to Baku, glorifying the government of Azerbaijan and flaunting the special affinity between them.

This is hypocrisy of the highest form. The truth is that relations between Azerbaijan and Israel have nothing to do with the treatment of Jews in Baku. The two countries are basically engaged in mutual exploitation, ignoring all humanitarian and ethical concerns. Azerbaijan has purchased billions of dollars of advanced lethal weapons from Israel in exchange for the sale of Azeri oil to Israel, which imports 40% of its oil from Azerbaijan. It is disgraceful that descendants of the Holocaust are arming Azerbaijan to kill survivors of the Armenian Genocide for a fistful of dollars!

Israel has two other reasons for maintaining good relations with Azerbaijan. The first is Israel's interest in gathering intelligence on Iran and having access to Azerbaijan's airfields in case of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear stockpile. This is probably what Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev meant when he compared his country's relations with Israel to an iceberg: "Nine-tenths of it is below the surface." Israel's second reason is to cultivate good relations with a Muslim country, given the Arab-Israeli conflict and its isolation from the Muslim world. However, in light of the recent rapprochement between Israel and several Arab nations, the value

of Azerbaijan to Israel in this regard is diminishing.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan expects to maximize its political interests in the United States by benefiting from the influence of Israel and Jewish-Americans in Washington, to counter the Armenian-American lobby.

Nevertheless, Azerbaijan and Israel are concealing some of the irritants in their relationship. First of all, Israel has opened its Embassy in Baku in 1993, whereas Azerbaijan has refused to open its Embassy or even a Consulate in Israel, out of concern for its relations with Arab and Muslim nations, particularly Iran. This fact alone belies the supposed friendly relations between the two countries.

Another contradiction is Azerbaijan's anti-Israel votes and speeches at the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Azerbaijan's most recent critical action of Israel occurred at the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva, Switzerland on March 18, 2021.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a frequent apologist for Azerbaijan, quickly condemned the Azeri Representative's remarks at the UN by harshly accusing Azerbaijan of committing "a virtual 'blood-libel' against the Jewish state."

Speaking on item 7 of the Council's agenda, "human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories," Kamran Seyfullayev, Third Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the UN in Geneva, gave a three-minute speech on March 18, in which he severely criticized the treatment of Palestinians by the State of Israel. Here is what he said:

"I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) [Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev is the Chairman of the movement which is composed of 120 countries].

"For many years, the Non-Aligned Movement has maintained a firm position of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just cause, and the condemnation of massive, flagrant and systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed by Israel.

"The NAM also underscores the need to continue providing political, economic and humanitarian support to assist the Palestinian people and to bolster their resilience and efforts aimed at achieving their legitimate national aspirations, including their inalienable right to self-determination and freedom in their

independent State of Palestine.

"We recognize and commend the efforts of the United Nations and its agencies and particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East and the Committee of Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people. The Movement encourages continuation of their support. The NAM takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary General presented to the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council on the Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan.

"The NAM expresses its grave concern at the continuing Israeli settlement policy and related activities, including the expansion of settlements, the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, and the confiscation and destruction of property, which has changed the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

"The General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council have all confirmed that the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and other related activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal under international law. The NAM is also deeply concerned over numerous UN official reports, particularly by the recent report of the Secretary General, which have reaffirmed the continued human rights violations of the Palestinian people by Israeli force, throughout the occupied State of Palestine.

"In this regard, the NAM urges the international community to exert its pressure in order to cease immediately the continuation of this illegal trend by Israel which is a blatant violation of international law.

"Furthermore, the NAM strongly believes that Israel, as the occupying power, has to be held accountable for its continued grave and systematic violations of both international human rights law and international humanitarian law in all occupied Arab territories, including Syrian Golan.

"The NAM emphasizes that Israel, as the occupying power, should immediately release all Palestinian prisoners, particularly children and women. It should also cease serious violations of international law and fully lift the blockade of Gaza to remedy the ongoing punitive measures against the civilian population and release Palestinian children in detention

➡ page 12

Biden recognizing Armenian Genocide is righting a historic wrong - opinion

By Emily Schrader

The Biden administration reportedly will recognize the Armenian Genocide in a historic and long-overdue decision by the United States.

In a morally inexcusable shortcoming, Israel and many other nations have failed or even refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks in 1915 against Armenian Christians.

Only in 2019 did the United States pass a resolution recognizing the massacre; yet, as of now, a US president has yet to do so. Are the tides finally turning?

The genocide is seen by many historians as a precursor to the Holocaust, and its lack of recognition has often been cited as evidence for why remembering the Holocaust is crucial to prevent genocides in the future. Despite overwhelming evidence and eyewitness testimonies, there has been controversy over recognition, due to Turkey's adamant refusal to accept responsibility for the massacre.

In the case of Israel, the government has refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide, due to the volatile yet strategic political relationship with Turkey.

For decades, Turkey has blackmailed and threatened nations if they even considered recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

Initially, this wasn't something Israel could politically afford. Israel relied heavily on Turkey as one of the only Muslim states with which it had cooperation and diplomatic relations. Yet through the decades, Turkey has become increasingly hostile to Israel with the dictatorial and Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Not only that, Turkey is increasingly aligned geopolitically with Iran.

Today, Israel is less dependent than ever on Turkey, especially with emerging relations with Arab states. Yet instead of recognizing the Armenian Genocide and unequivocally standing on the right side of history, the Israeli government has sold out the Armenian people even today, by selling



weapons to Azerbaijan while it bombs Armenian cities.

In the case of the United States, Armenian Genocide recognition has come up numerous times over the decades, yet there was only formal recognition in 2019. Forty years ago, US president Ronald Reagan used the word "genocide" to refer to the event, in a major step forward toward recognition; yet after a Turkish uproar, the US Congress failed repeatedly to recognize it, due to political interests. Similarly, US presidents from the Left and Right have avoided using the term "genocide" so as not to antagonize Turkey.

In 2019, the US House of Representatives passed Resolution 401-11 recognizing the Armenian Genocide, followed by a unanimous decision in the US Senate. However, despite the fact that many US presidents have pledged to recognize the Armenian Genocide, none have followed through on their promise until now.

This month, White House sources stated that the Biden administration will recognize the Armenian Genocide in a move that rights a historic wrong.

It's important to note that the Armenian Genocide was not simply a horrific event that occurred. It was arguably the most horrific orchestrated genocide the world had ever seen (at the time), and not in the context of a war, but because the Armenians were Christian.

Persecution of Christians under the Ottomans occurred for years leading up to the Armenian Genocide, but escalated with the Tehcir Law, under which Armenians were robbed of their property and belongings

and deported en masse, and sent on death marches into the Syrian desert in inhumane conditions.

The Ottomans rounded up and murdered Armenian academics and intellectuals, they raped and enslaved Armenian women and girls, and those who survived were sent to concentration camps, executed, or left to die. Between 1914 and 1918, 1-1.5 million Armenians were murdered by Ottoman Turks, the direct predecessors of modern Turkey.

It absolutely unconscionable that the community of nations has continued to allow Turkey to use its geopolitical position to bully other nations into denying or refusing to recognize the Armenian Genocide. For decades, Turkey has actively censored those who recognize the genocide in Turkey itself, and has even destroyed evidence. Previously, it even imprisoned academics who dared to call the Armenian Genocide a genocide.

Whereas in Germany, the world demanded accountability and, even today, Holocaust denial is illegal, Turkey made it illegal not to deny the Armenian Genocide, and the entire world is complicit in allowing it to do so.

If even a few of the world's superpowers had recognized the Armenian Genocide from day one, we would be living in a different reality today, where smaller nations wouldn't be afraid to acknowledge the obvious historical fact to the detriment of a people that was almost eliminated.

The Biden administration recognizing the Armenian Genocide would not only send a morally necessary message to the people of Armenia on behalf of the United States, it also would send a message to the world. The time for recognition is now.

The writer is the CEO of Social Lite Creative and a research fellow at the Tel Aviv Institute.

How Azerbaijan infiltrated the German government – The Vice

A VICE investigation reveals how a little-known TV station and large sums of money were part of a lobbying strategy to polish Azerbaijan's image in Germany.

Angela Merkel's ruling centre-right alliance between the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union has recently been plagued by pandemic infighting and scandal. But there is an arguably larger scandal engulfing playing out: The Azerbaijan Affair.

A VICE reveals the previously-unknown extent of the authoritarian regime's influence on conservative German MPs. Oil-rich and with a tendency to lock up critics, Azerbaijan has been attempting to buy itself a better image in Europe for years.

It's done this by sponsoring sporting events – and bribing politicians. And not always successfully. For example, in 2020 Luca Volontè, a conservative Italian member of the Council of Europe, was found to have been paid around two million euros in order to prevent a critical



resolution against Azerbaijan and was sentenced to four years in prison by a Milan court. According to experts, Volontè is only the tip of the iceberg. In Germany, investigations are underway into a number of German MPs, including Karin Strenz and Axel Fischer, both members of the CDU.

Azerbaijani influence on Berlin involves a wide network of politicians and lobbyists. Endorsements by German politicians, mostly from the CDU/CSU, are celebrated in Azerbaijan's state media. And that's because the republic desperately needs good press abroad – for decades, Azerbaijan has been at loggerheads with its neighbour Armenia. Last year, Azerbaijan started a bloody war in Nagorno-Karabakh

region.

CDU MP Strenz was at the centre of the Azerbaijan Affair until she collapsed and died on a flight to Cuba on March 21. The Frankfurt public prosecutor's office was investigating Strenz on suspicion of bribery, bribery of elected officials and money laundering. She had received at least 15,000 euros (about £12,700) from Azerbaijan in 2014 and 2015. If convicted, she would have faced up to five years in prison.

In addition to Strenz, TV Berlin has also aired several interviews with Germany's Azerbaijani ambassador, plus cheerful reports on President Aliyev's visit to Germany, and pleasant documentaries on the country and its culture. One YouTube commenter sums up the elements conspicuously absent from the documentaries: "What about the unjust state of Azerbaijan? What about the free press, the opposition, just being shot in front of the house?"

For the full article click [here](#).

Canada remembers genocide victims

In 2015, the Canadian House of Commons designated April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation, and Prevention Month.

"During this month, we honor the memory of the victims of genocide and reflect on the root causes of these tragedies, so that they never happen again," Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth Bardish Chagger said in a statement.

"Throughout history, generations have been lost and suffered the indelible impacts of genocides, including the Holocaust, Holodomor, Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, Armenian Genocide or any of the other tragic examples of unbridled hatred and violence. It is our collective



responsibility to honor and give voice to the victims and survivors of genocide by learning about these horrific events and ensuring we preserve the truth of this history," she stated.

"As we continue to build an even better and consciously more inclusive country, we must all stand up against prejudice, hate as well as all forms of racism and discrimination, which can lead to such

tragic consequences. We must also commit to protecting the human rights and dignity of everyone in Canada and around the world," the Minister said.

As Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, on behalf of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Government of Canada, she encouraged all Canadians to remember and honor the courage and resilience of the survivors of genocides and their descendants.

"Canada has been home for many of them and they have contributed—and continue to contribute—in shaping the strong and inclusive country we know today. Keep well and safe," Minister Chagger concluded.

page 9 ➡ in accordance with international standards, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“In conclusion, the NAM extends its full support to the Government of the State of Palestine in its ongoing efforts to put an end to the occupation of the land of the State of Palestine and realize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.”

It is ironic that the Simon Wiesenthal Center officials, after years of kowtowing to Azerbaijan, repeatedly visiting that country, and praising it as a close friend of Israel, are now complaining about Baku's harsh criticism of Israel. I hope Jewish

and Israeli leaders realize that they have been fooled by Azerbaijan all these years and learn the valuable lesson that a wolf in sheep's clothing cannot be trusted. They should also realize that, as the saying goes, when you go to bed with dogs, you wake up with fleas. Israeli and Jewish officials do not seem to have learned anything from their experience of being deceived by Turkey. After decades of backing Turkey, even going as far shamefully blocking the congressional recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Israeli and Jewish officials are now accusing Turkey of anti-Semitism and hostility to Israel.

Armenians kept warning them for

years, to no avail, not to trust Turkey and that they will be stabbed in the back when they least suspect it. In this vulgar game of mutual exploitation, Israelis and Jewish Americans got the short end of the stick. The same thing is happening now in their relations with Azerbaijan. It will only get worse, unless they quickly come to their senses.

Not everything should be measured by oil, weapons and money. There is something much more valuable like humanity, justice and truthfulness than financial gain and self-interest. But in this selfish world, it is too much to expect such decent behavior!

Azerbaijan deliberately and purposefully undermines stability in the region – Artsakh MFA

Over the past week, the Azerbaijani side has twice resorted to provocations aimed at preventing the resumption of normal vital activity of the population of the Republic of Artsakh.

On March 25 and 29, 2021, the Azerbaijani side targeted with stones civilian vehicles moving along the Karmir Shuka – Stepanakert and Stepanakert – Goris highways.

Moreover, in the second case, a vehicle carrying the remains of those deceased during the military aggression of Azerbaijan, Turkey and international terrorists against Artsakh was attacked.

“Such provocations against the civil-



ian population of Artsakh testify that either Baku does not control the Azerbaijani armed units in the occupied territories of Artsakh, or the Azerbaijani authorities deliberately and purposefully undermine the stability in the region and the peacekeeping mission carried out by the Russian Federation. The actions of the Azerbaijani side

blatantly violate the norms and principles of international law,” Artsakh's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In this regard, the Ministry stressed that these incidents are also a consequence of the illegal presence in the occupied territories of Artsakh of Azerbaijani armed units and international terrorist groups under the patronage of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

“The provocative actions of the kind deserve the strongest condemnation, and the organizers and perpetrators must be punished appropriately. Impunity and inaction are fraught with unpredictable consequences for peace and stability in the region,” the Foreign Ministry stated.

Azerbaijani atrocities against Artsakh must be properly condemned – Ombudsman



The atrocities committed by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh in April, 2016, have not been condemned properly by the international community, Artsakh's

Ombudsman said in a statement on the 5th anniversary of four-day April war.

“Azerbaijan used impunity for what it did four years later in the fall of 2020 in a large-scale aggression against the Republic of Artsakh and its people together with the Turkish and international terrorist groups, accompanied by gross violations of international humanitarian law, and war crimes against the humanity,” the Ombudsman said.

He added that throughout the 44-day war, Azerbaijan indiscriminately and deliberately targeted the civilian population and infrastructure of the Republic of Artsakh, tortured and inhumanely treated the prisoners of war and the bodies of the killed servicemen.

“It is a result of impunity that Azerbaijan still refuses to repatriate the Armenian prisoners of war, civilian captives and continues to vandalize the Armenian cultural monuments in the areas beyond Artsakh's control. Azerbaijan's behavior is the result of the years-long systematic policy of Armenophobia pursued at a state level,” the Human Rights Defender said.

Artsakh Ombudsman is convinced that the regular and gross violations of the international humanitarian law by Azerbaijan both in the April war of 2016 and during the 44-day war, are a matter of serious concern for the entire international community and should receive an adequate response from the international structures and authoritative human rights organizations.

Legendary commander Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan dies aged 81



Legendary military commander, Major General Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan passed away on March 31 aged 81. Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan was the leader of the Armenian forces during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and Armenia's former Deputy Minister of Defense.

Ter-Tadevosyan is best known as the commander of the operation of liberation of Shushi on May 8, 1992.

Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan was

born in Tbilisi, Georgia. After graduating from a high school in Tbilisi, he decided to become an officer. He attended the Baku Combined Arms Command School and later the Leningrad Military Academy of Rear Services and Transportation.

He served in Afghanistan where he earned the nickname "Mountain Fox."

The President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Bako Sahakyan, awarded him with the Order of the Golden Eagle and the title of Hero of Artsakh on the 17th anniversary of the Liberation of Shushi in 2009.

Azerbaijani soldiers vandalize 19th century Armenian church

Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan has shared footage showing Azerbaijani soldiers vandalizing the St. Yeghishe Armenian Church in Mataghis, Artsakh (19th century).

"The Azerbaijani servicemen (the Turkish flag is also clearly visible on the uniform) are cynically vandalizing the Armenian church, openly showing the deliberate insult to the church and knowing



that the church is Armenian," the Ombudsman said.

"It is obvious that this is an act of open hatred, both on ethnic and religious grounds.

Moreover, this is not a separate case, but a result of years of systematic policy of hatred and enmity in Azerbaijan, which continues today," Tatoyan said.

The Human Rights Defender will present this case to the international bodies, noting that it is another proof that a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Armenians was carried out in Artsakh in September-November 2020.

Armenian Chair to be established at Charles University in Prague

Armenian Chair will be established within the Department of East European Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague, the Armenian Embassy in the Czech Republic informs.

A respective agreement was signed by Armenia's Ambassador Ashot Hovakimian and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts Dr. Michal Pullmann.

The establishment of the Armenian

Chair aims at promoting the teaching of the Armenian language, history, literature, philosophy and culture at Charles University.

It follows the spirit of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Czech Republic on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science, Youth and Sports, signed on December 10, 2010, as well as the decades-long tradition of the

functioning of the Armenian Studies program at Charles University.



EU and UN Armenia welcome the arrival of Covid-19 vaccines to Armenia



Armenia received 24 000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines through the COVAX facility, a joint initiative of CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO. The long-awaited first batch of the COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Armenia on 28 March 2021 and was received by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia. The timely arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in Armenia marks a major milestone for the country to return to a path of recovery. Efforts as part of the Global World Immunization Week from 24 to 30 April will contribute to the vaccine deployment in Armenia.

Team Europe, consisting of the European Union and its Member States, has contributed to the COVAX facility with over €2.2 billion and recently an additional €900 million was pledged by Germany.

On the occasion of the delivery, Andrea Wiktoria, the Ambassador of the European Union to Armenia stated: “Considering the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Armenia, we see the vaccine delivery as a very positive development. The European Union will continue its support to the Republic of Armenia in its effort to decrease

the number of infected people and save lives. The European Union and its Member States, in the spirit of Team Europe, are the biggest contributors to the COVAX facility, which will deliver more vaccines to Armenia within the upcoming period. We believe this will increase people’s access to safe and effective vaccines to end the pandemic and protect the health and lives of Armenian citizens.”

The delivery of the first batch of the AstraZeneca vaccines has come six weeks after the launch of a joint EU-WHO initiative, which covers all phases of the vaccination programme – from the COVID-19 vaccines deployment to vaccination. The initiative will support the deployment of the delivered AstraZeneca vaccines.

“Intense COVID-19 transmission is ongoing and is putting enormous pressure on hospitals, intensive care units and health workers. Vaccines are a critical new tool and will strengthen the concerted efforts to stop COVID-19 in Armenia. Indeed, COVAX’s goal is to end the acute phase of the pandemic globally by delivering doses of safe and effective vaccines, on a global, fair and equitable basis. One of WHO’s highest priorities as a co-leader of COVAX, is to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of these COVID-19 vaccines,” stated Egor Zaitsev, the WHO Representative in Armenia.

Mr Yuri Oksamitniy, acting UNICEF Representative, added, “The COVID-19

pandemic reveals what is at stake when we don’t have the protective shield of immunization. Today, vaccines are our best hope of ending this pandemic and rebuilding a better world. To support vaccine deployment in Armenia, UNICEF leveraged its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world to procure and deliver the COVID-19 vaccine doses on behalf of COVAX Facility,” said ‘UNICEF will also support Ministry of Health with upgrading the capacity of cold-chain system and training for frontline healthcare professionals for the deployment of COVID-19 vaccines.”

To support the public with accurate and user-friendly information about COVID-19, UNICEF and WHO are also launching the Armenian version of Health Buddy+ application, available on Google Play and App Store. HealthBuddy+ is an interactive solution that uses artificial intelligence to keep the public up to date with COVID-19 facts, including on vaccinations and also addresses rumours and misinformation.

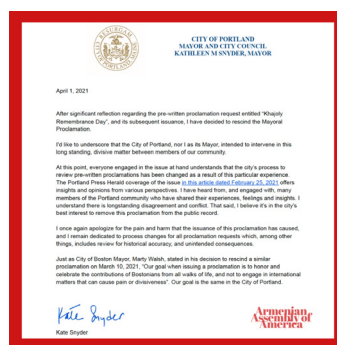
In the run up to the World Immunization Week on 24-30 April 2021, partners reiterate their call that vaccines work. Vaccines have brought us closer and will bring us closer again. When we choose to vaccinate, we’re not just protecting ourselves and our families – we’re doing our part to create a safer community and a healthier future for all. #VaccinesWork

Portland, Maine Mayor rescinds and apologizes for Azerbaijani propaganda proclamation

The City of Portland, Maine’s Mayor, Kathleen M. Snyder, announced in a letter to the Armenian American community that she rescinded the Khojaly Remembrance Day Mayoral Proclamation, stating that it’s in the “city’s best interest to remove this proclamation from the public record,” reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

Mayor Snyder apologized for the “pain and harm that the issuance of this proclamation has caused.” She also noted that the City of Portland’s process regarding the review of pre-written proclamations has been “changed as a result of this particular experience.”

The Mayor’s Proclamation follows the rescinding of a similar Proclamation in Boston last month.



“We appreciate Mayor Snyder’s apology to the Armenian American community and for rescinding the Mayoral Proclamation,” said Assembly State Chair Gerard Kiladjian, who is the President of the Armenian Cultural Association of Maine. “The activism and support from the community has been fantastic,” Kiladjian added.

“On behalf of the Assembly, in addition to the Mayor, I would like to thank Gerard and Annie Kiladjian, Paul Prouadian, Co-Founder and Board Member of the Armenian Cultural Association of Maine, Armen Carapetian, Charlene Theriault, and

Gary Zartarian for their efforts in bringing awareness to this historical inaccuracy. The Armenian Assembly remains committed to standing up for the truth and calling out propaganda by Turkey and Azerbaijan,” stated Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian.

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