

Pashinyan, Macron meet at the Élysée Palace



During a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Élysée Palace, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reaffirmed Armenia’s commitment to the peace agenda.

According to Pashinyan’s office, President Macron welcomed the Armenian Prime Minister’s visit and expressed appreciation for his participation in the upcoming Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris. Macron also underscored the continued expansion of Armenia-France cooperation across multiple sectors and reiterated France’s support for Armenia’s development and stability.

In turn, Prime Minister Pashinyan

expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality, highlighting that 2024 has been a particularly dynamic year for Armenia-France relations.

“The Prime Minister noted that numerous meetings have taken place between the leaders and governmental bodies of the two countries. Pashinyan stated that Armenia-France relations have reached a new level,” the press release from his office reads.

The leaders discussed various aspects of bilateral cooperation, including the prospects for implementing joint programs in the economy, infrastructure, road construction, energy, education, tourism

and other sectors.

They also addressed the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, ongoing developments related to border delimitation, and the unblocking of regional transportation routes as part of Armenia’s Crossroads of Peace project.

Prime Minister Pashinyan reiterated the Armenian government’s commitment to the peace agenda.

“The two sides further exchanged views on the advancement of Armenia-European Union cooperation and the continued promotion of democratic reforms in Armenia,” it reads.

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Armenian PM attends AI Action Summit in Paris

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended the plenary session of the AI Action Summit in Paris. The Prime Minister and other high-ranking guests were welcomed by French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

The event was attended by French President Emmanuel Macron, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US Vice President James David Vance, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and leaders and heads of government of a number of other countries.

After the plenary session of the event,



the participants of the summit posed for a family photo.

The Prime Minister had brief talks with international partners within the framework of the summit.

In particular, the Prime Minister

exchanged views on the further development of Armenia-European Union cooperation in a conversation with the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

During the meeting with the Prime Minister of Ireland Micheál Martin, the prospects for further deepening ties between the two countries were discussed. The parties expressed their willingness to continue the dialogue in this direction.

Nikol Pashinyan also met with the Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo, and other international partners.

Armenia welcome at EU, says bill author

The EU is ready to accept Armenia, according to the initiators of the EU bill.

Artak Zeynalyan, a former minister of justice who is one of the initiators of the EU integration bill, told lawmakers on Tuesday that the EU has numerous expressed its unambiguous stance regarding Armenia not only through words but concrete legal documents.

He cited the CEPA agreement between Armenia and the EU. "It [CEPA] is an

integral part of Armenia's legal system, one of the legal acts about us being awaited in the EU. We are welcome in the EU," Zeynalyan said, emphasizing that Armenia is very valuable for the EU. "And the EU also needs Armenia, just like other unions."

The Armenian parliament is debating the bill on EU accession.

The bill was initiated by several civic organizations through a petition which garnered enough votes to be considered as

a bill. It calls on the Armenian authorities to launch the process of EU integration. The bill was previously endorsed by the Cabinet and a parliamentary committee.



President of Armenia, Iran Ambassador discuss bilateral partnership and cooperation

President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Iran to Armenia, Mehdi Sobhani.

According to the Presidential Office, President Khachaturyan welcomed the Ambassador and congratulated the Iranian people and leadership on the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, wishing them success and prosperity.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the development of bilateral relations between Armenia and Iran,



emphasizing the importance of expanding partnership and cooperation. They also

touched upon the progress of joint projects in the economic, cultural, and transport sectors.

President Khachaturyan and Ambassador Sobhani underscored the need to strengthen and expand ties between the two countries, highlighting the importance of ongoing efforts to further develop bilateral cooperation in line with the high level of mutual understanding and

mutually beneficial partnership.

Armenia's biggest challenge on the path to EU membership is compliance with standards – PM

Armenia's biggest challenge on the path to EU membership is compliance with standards, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said during a Q&A session at the National Assembly.

Pashinyan reiterated the government's positive assessment of the bill on launching the EU accession process, which the National Assembly passed at first reading earlier today.

He noted that it fits into the balanced and balancing foreign policy concept pursued by the government.

"I believe that we are taking a very important step in the sense that when this law finally enters into force, we will have provided an important service to our



people. We will have offered the people of the Republic of Armenia a complete "menu" of foreign relations, and that will give us the opportunity to make our political life more political and focus more on substantive discussions, and with that logic, I consider the adoption of the law

important," the Prime Minister noted.

At the same time, the Prime Minister emphasized that we need to form the right expectations so that citizens do not think that with this decision Armenia has become a member or candidate country of the European Union.

"This is an important step to provide the people of the Republic of Armenia with a very wide choice and to have a substantive discussion on the choices we have. I think this is also a very important component in terms of security, because these balances, I think, have a direct impact on the security environment," Pashinyan added.

Russian mediation in Azerbaijan talks unlikely, says Armenian Speaker of Parliament



consider accepting Russian mediation offers.

"I find it less likely, but we are ready to discuss any proposal, if made specifically," Simonyan said.

"However, the experience of the past has left bad memories. After all, there are still unresolved issues, for example, Russia's position both within

Instead, they reacted by saying that the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is not demarcated. Meaning, they simply found a pretext to avoid the issue," Simonyan added.

After these developments, Simonyan said, Armenia is skeptical about Russia's mediation offer.

"Not to mention the example of the November 9 trilateral statement, when Russian peacekeepers were stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh and were supposed to protect the Armenian people, where are the Russian peacekeepers now, and where are the Armenian people of Nagorno-Karabakh," the Speaker said.

Armenian Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan says a Russian mediation in the talks with Azerbaijan is unlikely.

Simonyan was asked at a press briefing on Tuesday whether Armenia would

the CSTO and the Armenia-Russia interstate treaty regarding the Azerbaijani troops who invaded Armenia. We expected at least Russia taking some action. But we didn't even get a political assessment.

Pashinyan, von der Leyen discuss perspectives of Armenia-EU relations

Armenian Prime Minister discussed the further development of Armenia-European Union with Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the AI Action Summit in Paris.

The event was attended by French President Emmanuel Macron, Indian



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US Vice President James David Vance, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, leaders and heads of government of a number of other countries.

Armenia-EU visa liberalization dialogue: Key issues discussed at foreign ministry meeting

A working meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, with the participation of representatives from the Consular Department of the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the European Union Division of the European Department and a delegation from the European Union.

According to a press release issued by the foreign ministry, the discussions

focused on the implementation of the Armenia-EU Visa Facilitation Agreement.

Consular functions performed by the Armenian Foreign Ministry and Armenian



embassies abroad were also presented.

The European Union delegation, comprising representatives from relevant EU directorates, the European Border and

Coast Guard Agency, and EU member states, will be in Armenia from February 10 to 14 as part of the Armenia-EU visa liberalization dialogue.

The purpose of the visit is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of Armenia's readiness in areas such as document security, border management, migration

management, and other related fields, which will contribute to the development of an action plan for the Armenia-EU visa liberalization dialogue.

Pashinyan claims incident with Iranian citizens singing Azerbaijani song was staged to fuel tensions in Armenia-Iran ties

While responding to a question from opposition MP Kristine Vardanyan regarding an incident involving Iranian citizens singing an Azerbaijani song about Nagorno-Karabakh, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan assured that the matter had no connection to Azerbaijan.

"The incident was deliberately staged to create tensions in Armenia-Iran

relations. I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out that they were financed by well-known circles aiming to harm these relations," Pashinyan stated.

He urged the public to remain resilient in such situations.

"They have identified our vulnerable spot. The public should not be alarmed by every trivial provocation. The opposition

is shocked, let them be. This is a scene staged by them," he said.

The Prime Minister added that he was not fully informed about the details of the incident. However, he emphasized that if a legal assessment is necessary, it should specifically address any attempts to disrupt Armenia-Iran relations.

No response from Azerbaijan for three months, says Armenian Speaker of Parliament

Azerbaijan hasn't responded to Armenia's latest peace treaty proposals for three months now, Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan said Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters, Simonyan emphasized that Armenia doesn't seek to mislead anyone and this is obvious for all international partners.

"Armenia is offering concrete mechanisms to Azerbaijan and is ready to discuss these mechanisms, because the goal

of both the government and the people of Republic of Armenia is well known, it is the establishment of peace. The accusations often made by Azerbaijan have absolutely nothing to do with Armenia," Simonyan said.

At the same time, Simonyan said he doesn't think that the negotiations are in a deadlock. He mentioned the ongoing delimitation and demarcation process.

"Indeed, it is already the third month

that the Azerbaijani side hasn't anyhow responded to our proposal. The Azerbaijani posture is highly concerning; we have been talking about this with all our international partners. I think it would be good if Azerbaijan resumed its participation in the peace process. We have presented a package and we are waiting for a response. We still don't have a response," Speaker Simonyan said.

West ‘morally obligated’ to support democratic Armenia and oppose dictatorship Azerbaijan, says Swedish legislator

Swedish Member of Parliament Erik Hellsborn has called on Sweden and other countries in the West to support Armenia and protest against the Azeri regime.

Speaking at a foreign policy discussion at the Swedish parliament, Hellsborn said the West must let Baku know that it doesn't accept the way the Azeri regime is treating its own people and neighboring countries.

Speaking about the situation in the South Caucasus, the Swedish lawmaker called on the West to support Armenia for democracy, freedom and human rights, as well as for a stronger Europe and stronger Western civilization.

He described the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as a ‘dictator’,



emphasizing that the latter has been terrorizing Armenia.

“There’s a dictator a few hundred miles away from here. A dictator who has been terrorizing its neighboring country, a small democratic country that has been looking towards the West,” he said.

The legislator spoke in detail about the historic facts, including how Azerbaijan

blockaded Nagorno-Karabakh for many months before launching an attack and driving out the entire Armenian population in 2023 in what has been described as ethnic cleansing.

He said that anti-Armenian racism in Azerbaijan has become state ideology.

“Dictator Aliyev has been using belligerent rhetoric against Armenia. He demands territories...,” the lawmaker warned, adding that the Azeri regime has been making false accusations against Armenia. “The risk of a new war is not far.”

Western support for Armenia and protest against Azerbaijan is a moral obligation, the lawmaker added, stressing that the democratic West must always support democracy and oppose barbarism.

Joint efforts of Armenia and India directed at promoting international and regional security, peace, and stability – Suren Papikyan

On a working visit to India, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan participated in the Defense Ministers’ Conclave on “BRIDGE- Building Resilience through International Defense and Global Engagement,” held on the sidelines of Aero India exhibition, and delivered a speech.

In his address, Minister Papikyan welcomed the participants of the Conclave and expressed gratitude to the Indian side

for their warm hospitality. He emphasized that the joint efforts of Armenia and India are directed not only at strengthening their national defense capabilities but also at promoting international and regional security, peace, and stability.

The Head of the Defense Agency also outlined Armenia’s perspectives on regional security issues and presented the “Crossroads of Peace” project developed

by the RA Government.



European powers double down on support for Ukraine after Trump-Putin call

Seven European countries, including the UK, France and Germany, say they remain committed to putting Ukraine “in a position of strength” in talks with Russia, the *BBC* reports.

The leaders insist “lasting peace” in Eastern Europe is a necessary condition “for strong transatlantic security.”

The joint statement was adopted after foreign ministers of seven European



countries and the European Commission met in Paris yesterday.

Their statement came after Donald

Trump said he and Vladimir Putin had agreed to [start negotiations](#) on ending the war “immediately.”

Also on February 12, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned Ukraine is “unlikely” to return to its pre-2014 borders.

Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte is likely to address Trump’s comments during a news conference with Hegseth this morning.

Armenia's High-Tech Ministry, French Mistral AI team up to empower the Armenian AI ecosystem

The Ministry of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia and the French Mistral AI come up for partnership to foster collaboration in the field of artificial intelligence (AI).

This partnership aims to enhance AI infrastructure, support AI-driven business solutions, and improve public administration through AI-powered GovTech by leveraging Mistral AI's expertise in both commercial and open-source AI technologies. This strategic alliance is expected to position Armenia as a key player in the regional AI ecosystem, fostering innovation and technological progress.

Key Goals are focused on: strengthening Armenia's AI ecosystem through



technical support and knowledge sharing, presenting a platform for AI innovators to develop business solutions, implementing AI tools to enhance governance and service delivery.

In a scope of Government and Industry

Collaboration The Armenian government will facilitate infrastructure and regulatory support, while Mistral AI will contribute expertise, training, and tailored AI solutions.

"This partnership is a milestone on building strong ecosystem to attract more talented people and use the AI solution for better and faster governance," said Gevorg Mantashyan, the First Deputy Minister at the Ministry of High-Tech Industry.

Arthur Mensch CEO at Mistral AI, said: "The Armenian AI ecosystem is flourishing, and we are proud to help its administration, startups and talents with our AI solutions".

Armenian economy minister explains potential results of strategic partnership with U.S.

The strategic partnership agreement signed with the United States could help to promote Armenian goods in the U.S. market, increase competitiveness and attract U.S. investments to Armenia, the Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan has said.

Asked about specific economic agreements with the U.S., Papoyan said the most important discussions is about providing the Armenian economy a status of market economy. "From the U.S. perspective Armenia is a country that doesn't have market economy. This is not because we don't have a market economy, but because

for many years no work had been done in this direction. There's a lot of homework to do here," he told Armenpress. Papoyan expects the strategic cooperation to give that advantage to Armenia.

"Secondly, we are now in D group, we will be able to move to B. The more you advance the more access you have to U.S. technologies. For example, our IT companies, even if they have money, they don't have the right to buy certain U.S. technologies because we are in D group. And I hope we will work in that area too," the minister said.



"If we work well, it should help us to position ourselves in the U.S. market, strengthen our exports, promote Armenian goods, increase competitiveness and bring U.S. investments," he added.

Armenia, India discuss avenues for expansion of defense cooperation

On a working visit to India, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan held a meeting with the Minister of Defense of India, Rajnath Singh.

The parties commended the current state of bilateral cooperation and explored avenues for further expansion of defense cooperation between Armenia and India.

Additionally, the Ministers exchanged



views on regional and international security issues.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to India Vahagn Afyan and the Chairman of the Military-Industrial Committee of the Ministry of High-Tech Industry Aram Jivanyan attended the meeting.

Economy ministry aims to secure at least 6% growth this year

The Armenian Ministry of Economy seeks to ensure over 6% growth this year, more than the projected 5,1% in the budget, Minister Gevorg Papoyan has said.

In an interview with Armenpress, Papoyan spoke about the economic developments in the country.

He lauded the growth in December 2024, stressing that securing growth against the figure of November-December 2023 had seemed unimaginable due because that period saw the highest gold exports and reexports. "It is considered something like a heroism because securing growth against high figures is very difficult. Indeed, we had some difficulties in November, we only had 1,5% economic activity growth, but in December we had

4,7% economic activity growth," Papoyan said, lauding the yearend results.

Despite the 2025 projection of 5,1% growth, the ministry aims to secure at least 6%.

"We have set a target of 6 or more percent," Papoyan said.

Speaking about the growth structure, Papoyan said construction will likely remain at the top with around 6,2%.

5,2% growth is expected in manufacturing and services.

He stressed the importance of domestic economic diversification, when growth doesn't depend only on one sector.

In the context of the latest EU accession processes, asked whether it is possible to concurrently be a member of the

Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the EU, Papoyan said, "It is difficult to imagine the combination. I don't think there is such a mechanism. At this moment we don't have an issue of leaving the EEU on the agenda. We don't have that agenda item and we continue to actively work with our partners in all EEU platforms."

Armenia has been taking practical steps in the direction of EU standard compliance, he said.

A laboratory was recently opened, and the economy is being modernized.

Papoyan said there are already many Armenian products that meet the highest EU standards, but the problem is often in quantity.

Armenia to join Black Sea Basin Interreg NEXT

The Cabinet endorsed on February 13 the approval of the Black Sea Basin Interreg NEXT program between Armenia, Romania and the European Commission.

The EU-funded program is aimed at promoting transnational cooperation between countries of the Black Sea Basin.



Participating countries are Armenia,

Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Ukraine and Moldova.

Regional development, environmental, energy and scientific-technical projects will be funded within the framework of the program.

Armenia, United Arab Emirates to mutually recognize driver's licenses

The Cabinet endorsed on February 13 the signing of a memorandum of understanding on exchange and mutual recognition of driver's licenses between Armenia and the United Arab Emirates.

UAE citizens arriving in Armenia for non-residential purposes will be able to use their driver's licenses without any additional exams, while those arriving for residence will benefit from simplified exchange procedures and will not have to

pass exams.

The driver's licenses will be mutually recognized without additional procedures.

Persons with residential permits in Armenia or the UAE will be able to exchange their driver's license without exams.

According to the Armenian authorities, the move will contribute to development of cooperation between the two countries in the transportation sector, and secure more convenient conditions for UAE

citizens living in Armenia or Armenian citizens living in UAE.



All prerequisites for peace in place: PM Pashinyan's article



The official narrative of the Republic of Azerbaijan is increasingly focusing on the proposition that Armenia is arming itself, preparing to attack Azerbaijan, and that therefore, Azerbaijan has the right to defend itself and take preventive measures.

To restate these propositions of Azerbaijani narrative in shorter and simpler terms, it all comes down to the following: Armenia is purportedly preparing to attack Azerbaijan, therefore it is better for Azerbaijan to attack Armenia as a preventive measure.

These narratives can have two potential origins: either Azerbaijan really thinks that Armenia intends to attack Azerbaijan, or Azerbaijan intends to attack Armenia and is trying to create a foundation for doing so. In both cases, the basic premise is Azerbaijan's claim about Armenia's intention to attack Azerbaijan.

Is Armenia preparing to attack Azerbaijan?

Any impartial observer can testify to the fact that the Government of the Republic of Armenia has left no room for ambiguous interpretation in this matter. I have stated on multiple occasions, and now I consider it necessary to clarify, that the Republic of Armenia is committed to the strategic agreement reached in Prague on October 6, 2022, whereby Armenia and Azerbaijan recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty on the basis of the Alma-Ata Declaration.

That is, the Republic of Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan over the territory of the Azerbaijan SSR, and the Republic of Azerbaijan recognizes the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia over the territory of the Armenian SSR.

This notion has already gained de-jure force in the two countries, as the Alma-Ata Declaration was affirmed as the basic principle of the demarcation process between the two countries in the Regulation on the Joint Activities of the Commission on Demarcation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Commission on Demarcation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, which has been ratified in both states.

It is also in light of this fact that I have stated several times that the Republic of Armenia is not setting the objective of using military means to return even the more than 200 square kilometers of territories, an integral part of the 29,743 square kilometers of internationally-recognized sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, which are currently under Azerbaijani occupation, because the above-mentioned Regulation has already in principle resolved that issue, and there is a real and substantive possibility to resolve it in practice in the demarcation process.

In this context, I consider it necessary to emphasize that on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the Armenian Army, I declared that the army should not be engaged outside the internationally-recognized sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia (this, of course, does not relate to the participation of Armenian peacekeeping units in international peacekeeping

forces).

Therefore, the claims about Armenia's intention to attack Azerbaijan are simply made-up.

Is the Republic of Armenia arming?

The Republic of Armenia is reforming its army within the framework of the above-mentioned principle, that is, to protect its territorial integrity and sovereignty recognized internationally, including by Azerbaijan. This, by the way, is an internationally-recognized right of any country, and challenging it is a gross violation of international law.

Do the reforms of the Armenian army have anything to do with Azerbaijan? Both yes and no.

No, because as I explained above, Armenia has no plan, intention, or goal for any military action against Azerbaijan.

Yes, because threats to the security of the Republic of Armenia are generated precisely in Azerbaijan. Firstly, in spite of the Prague Agreement, statements are made by the highest levels of Azerbaijan questioning the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia.

These statements are most fully formulated in the so-called "Western Azerbaijan" narrative, which is sponsored by the top leadership of Azerbaijan, and in the founding documents of an organization bearing the same name, about 60 percent of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia is referred to as "territories presently under the control of the Republic of Armenia" or "territory presently under the control of the political and legal unit called the Republic of Armenia."

Now, let us see this in combination with the staged trial taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan's billion-dollars procurement of weapons, and official Baku's aggressive

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page 8 ➔ rhetoric, only to make it clear that real threats are being generated in Azerbaijan against the security of the Republic of Armenia.

Solutions

The solutions to this situation are on the table; they were generated as a result of the joint work of the representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Firstly, the already agreed articles of the peace agreement have fundamentally resolved the issue of not only not having territorial claims against each other, but also not making such claims in the future. The signing of the peace agreement will forever close the door for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to ever make territorial claims against each other, a door that was already closed in Prague. The agreed part of the peace agreement is sufficiently weighty and mature for signing, although the Republic of Armenia has proposed

comprehensive solutions for the two non-agreed articles and is awaiting Azerbaijan's positive response.

Moreover, the Republic of Armenia has submitted a written proposal to Azerbaijan on the establishment of mechanisms for reciprocal arms control and joint investigation of border incidents, and is awaiting Azerbaijan's positive response.

Furthermore, the Republic of Armenia has submitted a written proposal to Azerbaijan on performing railway transportation from Azerbaijan to Azerbaijan and internationally through the territory of Armenia, and from Armenia to Armenia and internationally through the territory of Azerbaijan, and is awaiting Azerbaijan's positive response.

The Commission on Demarcation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State

Commission on Demarcation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia are operating normally and constructively.

A meeting was recently held between the Republic of Armenia Interagency Commission for Prisoners of War, Hostages, and Missing Persons and the Republic of Azerbaijan State Commission for Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Citizens.

All of this means that there are no prerequisites for escalation in the region and, moreover, all the prerequisites for peace have been put in place. It is necessary to abandon staged actions and a policy of staging escalations, and to establish institutional peace. Armenia not only is ready for this, but will not divert from this path.

NIKOL PASHINYAN

Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia

UK and US refuse to sign international AI declaration



The UK and US have not signed an international agreement on artificial intelligence (AI) at a global summit in Paris, the BBC reports.

The statement, signed by France, China

and India among other countries, pledges an "open", "inclusive" and "ethical" approach to the technology's development.

Downing Street said the UK "hadn't been able to agree all parts of the leaders'

declaration" and would "only ever sign up to initiatives that are in UK national interests".

Earlier, US Vice President JD Vance told delegates in Paris that too much regulation of artificial intelligence (AI) could "kill a transformative industry just as it's taking off."

Vance told world leaders that AI was "an opportunity that the Trump administration will not squander" and said "pro-growth AI policies" should be prioritized over safety.

He said that this would require regulation which fosters AI development "rather than strangles it".

Vance added that leaders in Europe should especially "look to this new frontier with optimism, rather than trepidation".

His comments appear to put him at odds with French President Emmanuel Macron, who defended the need for further regulation.

"We need these rules for AI to move forward," Macron said at the summit.

ANCA Congratulates DNI Gabbard, calls for investigation into U.S. complicity in Artsakh Genocide

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) congratulated former U.S. Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard on her confirmation today as Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and called upon her to launch a comprehensive investigation into U.S. intelligence, policy, and foreign aid failures that contributed to Azerbaijan's genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh's indigenous Armenian population.

"The ANCA welcomes Director Gabbard's confirmation today and urges her to ensure that the United States fully reckons with our role – whether through acts of omission or commission – in aiding, abetting, and emboldening Azerbaijan's genocidal campaign against Artsakh's



Armenian population," stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian.

In its congratulatory letter to Gabbard, ANCA emphasized the importance of an official intelligence review into how U.S. policies – such as military assistance to Azerbaijan – facilitated its war crimes. "As you know, Americans of Armenian

heritage in Hawai'i and across the United States have long supported your leadership on atrocities prevention, human rights, and other issues of special concern to our community and coalition partners. We remain deeply grateful for your support on U.S. remembrance of the Armenian Genocide and, of course, the democratic aspirations of the indigenous Armenian Christians of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh)," stated Hamparian.

Additionally, Hamparian's letter noted, "We stand ready to assist with an investigation into U.S. failings of omission and commission that aided, abetted, or emboldened Azerbaijan to pursue its genocidal designs against the peaceful Armenian civilian population of Artsakh."

OSCE MG 2019 proposal was the same Lavrov plan with few changes in details, says lawmaker

The 2019 plan on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution brought forward by the OSCE Minsk Group was actually the well-known 'Lavrov plan' in its content, according to a lawmaker.

Arman Yeghoyan, a Member of Parliament representing the ruling Civil Contract party, told reporters that the 2019 plan was the same Lavrov plan but with certain amendments in details.

"In terms of the content it is the same well-known Lavrov plan. Indeed, one detail could be added or removed in the



Lavrov plan, but the Lavrov plan was the following: the issue was supposed to have a phased solution, the first phase would see the surrender of five regions, while the

resolution of other issues, including the issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh would be left indefinitely for the future. The rest are just details," Yeghoyan said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke about the OSCE MG co-chairs' 2019 proposal during the February 12 parliament session. He said that the previous government was engaged in talks around the document. Pashinyan said he did not negotiate around the plan, which he described as the legacy from the previous government.

Economy Minister, US Ambassador discuss prospects for Armenia-US economic cooperation

Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan on February 13 received US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Kristina Kvien.

Deputy Minister Narek Hovakimyan was also present at the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, the minister briefed on the Armenian Government's vision for the economy, which focuses on innovation, stability, and accessibility to global markets.

"Currently, we are taking steps to

diversify exports, align with international standards, and attract foreign investments. In this context, we highly value the invaluable role of partners such as the United States in achieving these goals," noted Papoyan.

The prospects for Armenia-US economic cooperation, as well as several issues pertaining to export diversification, mining, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and ensuring food security, were discussed at the meeting.

Underscoring Armenia's interest in the American market and emphasizing the importance of boosting the recognition and promotion of Armenian wines there, Minister Papoyan suggested considering the possibility of organizing a visit to Armenia for American journalists and influencers.

The meeting also focused on the favorable business environment in Armenia and the wide range of investment opportunities available in the economic sector.

Armenia to refute Azerbaijan's baseless claims in Bern Convention arbitration



On 12 February 2025, the Republic of Armenia received the Statement of Claim filed by the Republic of Azerbaijan in an arbitration initiated under the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the Office of the Representative on International Legal Matters said in a press release.

The arbitration case commenced in 2023.

This follows a procedural calendar issued by the arbitral tribunal after the first procedural hearing on 12 April 2024, during which Armenia achieved several favourable rulings.

Armenia will continue to vigorously defend its position in these proceedings. Azerbaijan's legal case is based on an interpretation and application of the Bern Convention that does not comport with its object and purpose which is to promote cooperation among States to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats.

Contrary to what Azerbaijan suggests,

reports by the United Nations Environment Programme and other independent bodies, in fact, make clear that it is Azerbaijan that has engaged in environmental damage in recent years. Armenia will refute Azerbaijan's baseless claims as well as its demand for compensation.

Since becoming a State party to the Bern Convention, Armenia has remained committed to upholding its commitment to the conservation of the region's wildlife and preservation of the environment. This is reflected, inter alia, in Armenia's environmental record and its active engagement with the Bern Convention's Standing Committee.

Prime Minister Pashinyan participates in APRI-ORF roundtable in Munich

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has participated in a roundtable discussion titled Minilateralism and Transition from Global Alliances to Targeted Partnerships jointly organized by the Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI Armenia) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF) within the framework of the Munich Security Conference.

The meeting focused on the changes of the security environment in the modern world, and the effectiveness of major formal alliances and cooperation in small formats. The meeting continued in a closed



format, the prime minister's office said in a press release.

PM Pashinyan presented in his remarks Armenia's consistent policy aimed at strengthening the balanced and balancing foreign policy. The Prime Minister

emphasized that building flexible, but at the same time predictable and reliable partnerships is of special significance for ensuring Armenia's security and sustainable development. He presented the key priorities of his administration.

The Prime Minister said that Armenia's foreign policy is aimed at strengthening security and economic development through constructive cooperation with international partners. He presented the Crossroads of Peace project and other steps aimed at establishing regional peace.

Several injured after car plows into crowd in Munich



Several people were hurt on February 13 after a car drove into a group of pedestrians in Munich, the capital of Germany's southern state of Bavaria, German media and police reported, [Deutsche Welle](#) reports.

A police statement confirmed that a number of people had been injured in the incident.

"The driver of the vehicle was secured on the spot; he currently poses no further danger," police said.

Broadcaster BR24 said the group reportedly consisted of people carrying out a token strike by the trade union Verdi.

It also quoted eyewitnesses as saying two men had been in the car, with one of them being shot by police and carried away. Police were calling on the public to

refrain from speculation, it said.

The mass-circulation *Bild* newspaper reported that 15 people were injured, while the news magazine *Focus* put the number at 20, saying some were in a critical condition.

The incident has occurred just a day before high-ranking politicians from across the world gather in the city for the prestigious Munich Security Conference, which is to take place at a location some 1.6 km (1 mile) away from the site of the crash.

Erdogan is Said to be the Descendant Of a Greek Pro-Armenian Anarchist — By Harut Sassounian

By Harut Sassounian
www.TheCaliforniaCourier.com

Over the years, many articles have appeared in the Turkish press claiming that various high-ranking Turkish officials are of Armenian or Kurdish origin.

These officials have often vehemently denied the claim, but sometimes have ignored it in order to avoid drawing more attention to it. For example, several years ago, when it was claimed that Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan is of Armenian origin, he simply replied: "I regret that they are calling me Armenian." Given the prevalent racism in Turkey, calling someone an Armenian is considered an insult.

Former Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz was reported to be of Armenian origin, as well as Devlet Bahçeli, the Chairman of the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), a radical ultra-nationalist party. I recently found a YouTube video in which Isa Ilyasoglu, who served in Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT), claimed that Bahçeli is of Armenian origin on his mother's side. Ilyasoglu reported that during the genocide, a 16-year-old Armenian girl was kidnapped and raped by the Governor of Adana. That girl later became the grandmother of Bahçeli who, contrary to what is indicated on his I.D. card, is not from Osmaniye, but from Halfeti, a town in the region of Urfa. As a child his family moved to the town of Bahçe in Adana, where he acquired his last name, Bahçeli.

It is widely acknowledged that a large percentage of today's Turks are descendants of Armenians, Greeks or Kurds, many of whom were Islamized and Turkified, particularly during the 1915 Genocide, when young Armenian children were abducted and adopted by Turkish families. Most of these children were too young to remember their ethnic origin. The Turkified and Islamized Armenians are often referred to as "Hidden Armenians."

However, over the years, many Turks have come forward stating that they have just discovered their Armenian origin.

Some of them have even asked to be baptized in the Armenian Church and reconvert to Christianity.

In 2018, The Turkish Government unexpectedly launched a website that revealed the ancestry of all Turkish citizens. Within days, millions of Turks rushed to find out their ethnic origin. As a result, the website crashed and shortly thereafter, it was shut down. Subsequently, the website was reinstated with "enhanced privacy measures." There were several reports of Muslim Turks being shocked upon finding out that they had Armenian blood. One report claimed that an anti-Armenian Turkish fanatic, upon finding out that he was of Armenian origin, committed suicide.

There is also a large group of Armenians in Turkey, known as Hemshens, who live in the Black Sea region. They were forcefully Islamized. Some of them have retained their Armenian traditions and native Armenian language which has a distinct dialect.

In the YouTube video I recently found, the Turkish intelligence officer Ilyasoglu made sensational revelations about Turkish President Erdogan's ethnic origin. I am not sure how true his report is, but given Ilyasoglu's intelligence background, I could not ignore his claim.

Ilyasoglu lived in England from 1995 to 1996 and moved to Germany in 2000. In 2005, he ran for the Turkish Parliament, but later withdrew his candidacy. He is currently the Chairman of the Resurrection Party which has the slogan, "one government, one nation, one flag and one religion – Turk." He now lives in Germany. It is widely known that the Turkish government has many intelligence officers in Germany to spy on millions of Turks who live there, particularly Kurds and Erdogan's political opponents.

Erdogan's I.D. card shows that he was born in Rize which is in the Greek Pontus region of Turkey. Ilyasoglu said in his video that "Erdogan's father was a Greek man from Pontus. His mother was a Spanish Jew who came to Pontus via Georgia."

Ilyasoglu added: "If Erdogan dares, let him dispute it."

"The brother of one of Tayyip (Erdogan's) grandparents was a Greek priest who, on the coast of the Black Sea, tried to establish the Pontus Greek Republic after the Russian-Turkish war.

"His grandfather and his brother, who was a priest, were arrested, tried by the 'Giresun Independence Court,' sentenced to death in Giresun and hanged." Ilyasoglu explained that he is from Giresun: "This is written in the memoirs of Judge Ali Kilic."

"In fact, Erdogan's maternal great-grandfather, Tayyoub, was an anarchist, who after entering Turkish villages and committing murders, engaged in looting. Then, during the 1922 Marash Armenian rebellion, with his group, he sided with the Armenians, attacked Turkish soldiers and was killed in the Taurus Mountains." Ilyasoglu added: "Let Tayyip Erdogan look for his maternal great-grandfather's remains in the Taurus Mountains. In other words, his mother's grandfather has no grave."

The above cited video is dated October 28, 2023. There are no reports in the Turkish media that Ilyasoglu was criticized or prosecuted for his sensational revelations about Erdogan, even though he has visited Turkey several times. Since the Turkish media is under the total control of Erdogan, no Turkish newspaper would dare to publish anything that may be upsetting to the President. It is not known why the Turkish government has not prosecuted Ilyasoglu for claiming that Erdogan's forefathers are Greek. The reason could mean either that Ilyasoglu is telling the truth about Erdogan's ancestry or that the President is reluctant to draw more attention to the claims in the video.

According to a Turkish proverb, "a spoiled wine becomes bitter vinegar." This can mean that some Islamized and Turkified Armenians become fervent enemies of Armenians. This is similar to the expression, "more Catholic than the Pope."

California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation announces scholarships in remembrance of Armenian Genocide



The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation is hosting two scholarship contests in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. California high school students (Grades 9-12) are invited to participate in an essay and/or a visual arts contest to increase awareness of the Armenian Genocide on its 110th anniversary. All scholarship applications must be submitted by the Friday, March 28, 2025, deadline.

Winners will be announced to mainstream and Armenian media on Thursday, April 24, 2025. The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation will contact all winners directly to award them at its Annual Armenian Advocacy Day. Winners will also receive special recognition from the Foundation's members. Original artwork may be requested from visual arts finalists for display in the California State Capitol.

Criteria for each contest are detailed below. Students may enter both contests, but each application must be submitted separately. Use this [submission form](#) to register and submit the application. All applications must be submitted to the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation using this [form](#), or going to [bit](#).

[ly/2025CALCF](#) by or before 11:59 PM on Friday, March 28, 2025.

Essay Scholarship Awards

First Place: \$1,000

Second Place: \$750

Third Place: \$500

Visual Arts Scholarship Awards

First Place: \$1,000

Second Place: \$750

Third Place: \$500

Essay Scholarship

Prompt: You are hired as the Executive Director of the California Hall of Fame. You must select a prominent historical Armenian figure from California to be featured in the Hall of Fame. Who do you decide to feature? Explain your choice. Identify the individual's most significant contributions and their impacts to California. Describe how their accomplishments have positively impacted the Armenian American diaspora.

Requirements:

- Essay must directly respond to the essay prompt.
- Responses must be 750-1000 words and no more than four (4) pages in length.
- Responses must be typed on 8

1/2" x 11" paper, one-inch margins, in Arial 11-point font, and double-spaced.

- Applicant's first and last name must be included at the top of each page with a page number.
- Visual Arts Scholarship
- **Prompt:** Illustrate the achievements and importance of California's Armenian community. Discuss the impacts and contributions of California's Armenian diaspora to the state's cultural and social prominence.

Requirements:

- Include a 300-500 word personal statement explaining the artwork. Must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" paper, one-inch margins, in Arial 11-point font, double-spaced, and include the applicant's first and last name at the top of the page.
- Artwork must be original work created by the applicant.
- Only two-dimensional, visual art submissions will be accepted. Submission types are limited to drawings, paintings, photographs, digital illustrations, and graphic design.
- Artwork may not exceed an 11x17 frame and must weigh less than 25 pounds.
- Artwork and the accompanying personal statement may not include any nudity, excessive and/or graphic violence, racial slurs, derogatory and/or offensive language, profanity, and may not make use of or replicate existing artwork.
- Include up to five (5) high-definition photographs of the artwork. Take pictures in good lighting to ensure reviewers can see the details in the artwork. Provide different angles to showcase the depth of the artwork.

2024 Aurora Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege uplifts grassroots humanitarians



2024 Aurora Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege has selected recipients of the first cycle of participatory grants to local humanitarians. [Dr. Mukwege](#), a world-renowned gynecological surgeon and human rights activist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was named the 2024 Laureate at the [Aurora Prize events in Los Angeles](#) in May 2024.

The Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity recognizes individuals who risk their own lives to save the lives of others suffering due to violent conflict or atrocity crimes. After receiving the Prize, Aurora Laureates continue the circle of giving by designating grassroots humanitarians and organizations to support, amplifying the impact of their courageous work. In a moment of uncertainty around the future of United States' humanitarian funding, Aurora—which has not received money from donor governments—provides funds directly to our grantees in support of their life-saving work.

“I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to share the Aurora Prize award with remarkable Luminaries and organizations whose work transforms lives. Together, we will be able to continue building brighter futures for women and children through access to education, clean water, and healthcare,” said Dr. Denis Mukwege. “The Aurora Prize grant model amplifies our collective mission—not only to support those survivors who have endured unimaginable hardship but to invest in lasting solutions that prevent atrocities, strengthen communities, and foster resilience.”

Dr. Mukwege has designated the following beneficiary organizations and individuals to support during the first cycle of funding:

- [Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman](#) (Somalia), 2020 Aurora Laureates, a mother and daughter team protecting women's rights, promoting peacebuilding, and rehabilitating child soldiers
- [Julienne Lusenge](#) (DRC), 2021 Aurora Laureate, human rights defender helping the victims of wartime sexual violence
- [Nadia Murad](#) (Iraq), Aurora Luminary, Yazidi human rights activist renowned for her advocacy for survivors of genocide and sexual violence
- [Angelique Namaika](#) (DRC), Aurora Luminary, an activist supporting displaced women and children who fell victims to the civil war in her country
- CEPAC-Nacibunda (DRC), a primary school for children in South Kivu Province, DRC
- [Interface Compassion International](#) (DRC), a non-profit in DRC empowering women and children through access to healthcare, gender equality, economic support, and education
- [Malaika](#) (DRC), a girls' school that promotes a comprehensive approach to supporting communities by providing them with access to education, water and healthcare
- [Yennega Progress](#) (Burkina Faso), an initiative focused on improving education, health services, and basic infrastructure in regions where

access to social services is limited.

“For Aurora, a key part of our philosophy is championing grassroots humanitarians who know exactly what their communities need,” noted Armine Afeyan, CEO of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. “These participatory grants are designed with the belief that those on the ground are best equipped to determine how resources should be used, and we're excited to see the enhanced impact this model creates. At its core, Aurora is all about continuing the cycle of giving while putting the 'human' back in 'humanitarian'—directly supporting remarkable people who are transforming lives every day.”

The \$1 million USD Aurora Prize is allocated among the Laureate, their designated beneficiaries, and the Aurora Humanitarians (Aurora Prize Finalists). The Aurora Laureate is awarded \$300,000 in three equal installments of \$100,000 each over three years. The Laureate receives a further \$600,000 over three years to fund other grassroots humanitarians and organizations, including [Aurora Luminaries](#) (\$25,000 to up to eight recipients per year). The remaining \$100,000 is divided evenly between the two other finalists. In 2024, those Aurora Humanitarians were Iranian human rights lawyer [Nasrin Sotoudeh](#) and Bahraini human rights defender [Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja](#).

Founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2025. Aurora has already improved the lives of more than 3.4 million people across 60 countries and territories, deploying funding toward 463 projects that support emergency response, food, water, education, medical care, psychosocial support and more for underserved communities.

Jean Bekirian becomes first Armenian to make DP World Tour cut in Qatar

Jean Bekirian became the first Armenian to make a cut on the DP World Tour at the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters, [DP World Tour](#) informs.

After an opening four-under-par 68 at Doha Golf Club, the 22-year-old carded a 74 on Friday to ensure safe progress to the weekend at two under.

Bekirian, who changed his nationality from French to Armenian last year, is making his third start of the 2025 Race to Dubai after earning his DP World Tour card via Qualifying School.

He began his second round with a birdie at the tenth but made bogeys at the 11th and 16th along with a double-bogey at the 18th, before recovering one of those dropped shots at the fourth in a blemish-free back nine.

"I am very happy about that (making history)," he said.

"It was a very tough day today. The

game was good, like yesterday, but my wedging wasn't very good.

"I needed to play one under on the back nine to make the cut and I'm very happy about that. I hope this will lead to another cut in the future."

The DP World Tour has players from 41 different countries exempt for the 2025 season.

"Every first time is very difficult," Bekirian added. "So I'm very happy about that. I'm happy for my country of Armenia too."

Bekirian played on the HotelPlanner Tour in 2023, before last year appearing on the Pro Golf Tour as he went on to finish in a tie for tenth at Final Stage of DP World Tour Qualifying School.

He made starts in Australia and Mauritius during the DP World Tour's Opening Swing at the end of last year, before making back-to-back starts on the



HotelPlanner Tour prior to making the trip to Qatar.

"In the past I had trouble making cuts, a lot of times I missed by one or two," he reflected.

"So I'm very happy to make the cut and I'll do my best to finish as well as I can in the tournament.

"Last week on the HotelPlanner Tour I had a very good weekend (finishing tied 13th at the MyGolfLife Open hosted by Pecanwood Estate).

"I just made the cut on the line, so I hope this week will be the same."

East Watertown intersection to be named for Armenian artist Arshile Gorky

An intersection in East Watertown will be named in honor of an Armenian artist who made his home in Watertown for several years, [Watertown News](#) reports.

The City Council voted unanimously to name the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Hazel Street for Arshile Gorky.

After surviving the 1915 Armenian genocide and its aftermath, Gorky arrived in Watertown in February 1920 as part of a third wave of Armenians immigrants arriving in the United States to escape persecution.

He lived in Watertown with his sisters until late 1924 to early 1925, when he moved to New York City. Gorky's impact on art history and his continued influence on contemporary art cannot be overstated.

The request to name the intersection for Gorky came from members of a working group for the "100 Years of Arshile Gorky" celebration. The Working Group includes Watertown's Public Arts & Culture



Planner Liz Helfer, resident Jack Dargon, and representatives of the Armenian Museum of America, the Mosesian Center for the Arts and the Historical Society of Watertown.

The proposal first went to the Council's Committee on Public Works on Feb. 3, which voted 3-0 in support of naming the intersection for Gorky.

During the committee meeting, Helfer said the proposal is to mark the intersection with a pole and plaque similar to those used to name an intersection for

a veteran. Gorky would also be honored with two plaques placed near the homes where he and his family lived while they were in Watertown (86 Dexter Ave. and 14 Coolidge Hill Road), Helfer told the Public Works Committee.

When the proposal first came to the Council in October 2024, the location of the plaque was at Artsakh Street and Elton Avenue, but after receiving feedback from the Armenian community it was changed to Dexter and Hazel, which they said was more appropriate, according to the committee report.

The 100 Years of Arshile Gorky celebration includes a mural on the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway, an exhibition and movie screening at the Mosesian Center for the Arts, a curated collection on Gorky at the Watertown Library, a guided walk, and a self-guided tour

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E-mail: contact@nt.am
 URL: www.nt.am

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

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

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

Հասցե՝ Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009