

Armenia to establish Foreign Intelligence Service



The Armenian Government has greenlighted the establishment of Foreign Intelligence Service. A relevant decision was approved at cabinet sitting on December 8.

The 2021-2026 Government Action Plan stipulates the imperative to have a foreign intelligence service. Given the problems in the process of providing information by intelligence agencies during the Artsakh wars of 2016 and 2020, and taking into consideration the need to improve the efficiency and quality of intelligence information, the government believes Armenia has an imperative to have a new quality intelligence and to form its own intelligence school in order to ensure the continuity of intelligence activities and

the improvement of the field.

The executive says the establishment of the foreign intelligence service will not only contribute to increasing the functional efficiency of the NSS, enabling it to focus on counter-intelligence and combating terrorism, but will also provide an opportunity to respond more flexibly and adequately to the challenges of the rapidly changing world and region.

The Government's legislative initiative was assessed as urgent and will be submitted to the National Assembly.

Referring to the drafts, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said, "The world is changing dynamically, and the ways and methods of external intelligence are

also undergoing very significant changes. It is very important for us to be able to transform and develop our capabilities according to modern conditions and requirements. In that sense, I think one of the important things is that intelligence methods, forms and formulas in the world are developing in a way that is not always directly related to the nature of military service. And we have made a decision in this regard, and it is also mentioned in the transformation strategy of Armenia until 2050."

The Prime Minister voiced hope that the adoption of the drafts would contribute to the development of the country's foreign intelligence capabilities.

Where There Is An Armenian, The American Missionary Association Is There With Him

According to the newly appointed Director of the Armenia office of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, if Armenians reorganize and unite, they will overcome any calamity

Interview with new type of Diasporan top manager by Gourgen James Khazhakian, Honored Journalist of the Republic of Armenia, Chief Correspondent

-Dear Mr. Deyirmenjian, can you tell us about your family, roots, education, and traversed path?

- I was born in Beirut in 1990, into a family of an evangelical father and an



apostolic mother. My grandfather had a small brass souvenirs business, which later on my father and uncles went to expanding in terms of various metals and products. I helped my father to further develop the business for 10 years and still do...You

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At a meeting with Putin, Armenian PM draws attention to increased tension in Artsakh



At a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Bishkek, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said the situation in our region remains tense, and

noted that the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement remains main issue.

“Unfortunately, recently we have also seen an increase in tension in Nagorno-Karabakh in the zone of responsibility of Russian peacekeepers. I am sure you are aware that the Lachin corridor was recently blocked, and there are very big concerns in Nagorno-Karabakh about this. Of course, we always discuss these issues. I hope that today we will be able to discuss

all the important issues of regional security,” he said.

Vladimir Putin noted, in turn, that Russia remains a leading trade and economic partner and one of the leading investors in Armenia.

“In the first ten months of this year, the growth of trade turnover reached 67 percent. This is a very good and positive indicator,” the Russian President said.

Chances for renewed provocations by Azerbaijan remain high. Armenian FM to US Assistant Secretary of State

On December 9, Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried. Noyan Tapan was informed from MFA Armenia.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Kern Donfried addressed issues related to regional security and stability.

The sides exchanged thoughts on the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Nagorno Karabakh problem. The willingness



During the telephone conversation, the process of border security and delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the unblocking of transport infrastructures in the region, was also touched upon.

Emphasizing the efforts made by Armenia to establish peace, Minister Mirzoyan noted that the security situation in the region is fragile, and the

of the USA to support the peace process in the South Caucasus was emphasized.

probability of renewed provocations by Azerbaijan remains high.

Armenian FM, EU envoy discuss development of peace treaty, unblocking of regional infrastructure

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan received Toivo Klaar, EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia.

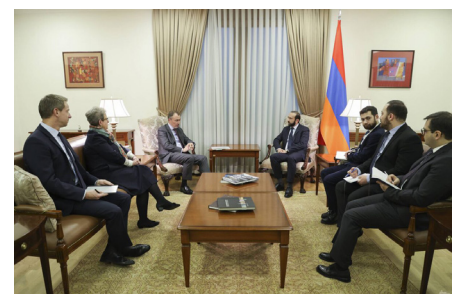
The parties exchanged views on the development of the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the latest developments on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, as well as the border demarcation process and the unblocking of regional transport

infrastructures.

Ararat Mirzoyan noted that the Armenian side is committed to establishing peace and stability in the region, stressing that Azerbaijan's continuous provocative actions and fanatical rhetoric lead to the aggravation of the fragile security situation.

The interlocutors also referred to the activities of the EU observation mission in

Armenia and highlighted its role.



At EAEU meeting, Armenian PM raises the issue of formation of single gas market



Consistent implementation of the agreements aimed at creating common markets of energy resources is a priority for Armenia, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in his remarks during the session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Bishkek.

According to him, finding mutually acceptable solutions to all issues is highly important in terms of the successful implementation of the Eurasian agenda.

“In this respect, the Armenian side considers the consistent implementation of the agreements aimed at the creation of common markets of energy resources a priority. In particular, the formation of a single gas market remains a sensitive issue for us.

Thanks to a constructive dialogue and moving on the path of finding consensus solutions, it was managed to ensure a high-level preparedness of the international draft agreement on the formation of a sin-

gle gas market.

However, taking into account the complexity of the process and based on the necessity of considering various opportunities and interests of the countries in the energy sector, several issues remain unresolved”, Pashinyan said.

The Prime Minister emphasized that Armenia is ready to provide flexible approach to achieve consensus and ensure the balance of interests of all the member states of the EAEU around the unresolved issues, aimed at fully using the advantages and potential of the Union’s single gas market.

Military-technical assistance to Armenia was also considered in CSTO, but political assessment is priority for Armenia

Within the framework of the CSTO, the issue of providing military-technical assistance to Armenia was also considered, but the primary thing for Armenia is the political assessment, the recording of the fact by the allies, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan said during the parliament-Cabinet Q&A session, referring to the question of Lilit Minasyan, MP from “Civil Contact” faction.

The MP reminded that, following the results of the CSTO summit recently held in Yerevan, Armenia did not join a number of documents, which were sent for revision. She inquired at what stage the revision process is at, and whether Armenia has any expectations from those documents.

“There is one expectation - to clearly record what happened, and that is the invasion of the sovereign territory of the



Republic of Armenia by Azerbaijan, the targeting of civilian infrastructures, the recording of this fact and the taking of actions arising from it. The CSTO is a military-political alliance, where the states have agreed to protect each other’s territorial integrity, to protect it through diplomatic and political means, but, if necessary, also through military means. And here we expect that our CSTO partners will have this spirit when adopting the

decisions”, Mirzoyan said, adding that the work continues.

The MP also inquired what kind of assistance was offered by the CSTO.

“In the discussed decision, among other measures, the issue of providing military-technical assistance to Armenia was also considered, but, I repeat, for us, the issue of political assessment is priority, the recording by our allies that there was an invasion of the territory of Armenia, then we could consider the remaining measures as well: resolving the issue politically, that is, ensuring the withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops, military-technical assistance, other measures,” Mirzoyan explained.

The Minister said that the decision has not been taken, now the foreign ministers should continue to work to see where it is possible to come to a common denominator.

Armenia, Russia Defense Ministers sign 2023 military cooperation plan

As part of his working visit to the Russian Federation, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan participated in the joint meeting of defense ministers of SCO and CIS countries, where he presented the situation created in the region as a result of the latest military aggression of Azerbaijan.

It was followed by a meeting between

Armenian and Russian Defense Ministers Suren Papikyan and Sergey Shoigu. A number of issues related to regional security, as well as military and military-technical cooperation were discussed. At the end of the meeting, the Ministers signed the 2023 military cooperation plan between the Defense Ministries of Armenia and Russia.



France favors extending EU mission on Armenian-Azeri border



France has called for an extension of a two-month monitoring mission launched by the European Union along Armenia's volatile border with Azerbaijan in October.

The leaders of the two South Caucasus nations as well as French President Emmanuel Macron and EU chief Charles Michel reached an agreement on the mission at an October 6 meeting in Prague. It came three weeks after large-scale border clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces left more than 300 soldiers dead.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said on December 6 that the 40 or so

civilian monitors deployed by the EU to the Armenian side of the border have "really limited the risk of escalation."

"This presence should continue as long as it is needed," Colonna told the French parliament. "This is our belief. This is also ... the desire of the Armenians." Colonna acknowledged that tensions in the conflict zone are running high. But she blamed that on "the absence of credibility of security guarantees which Russia claimed to have offered the region."

For its part, Moscow has voiced skepticism over the work of the EU monitors. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said on December 8 that their deployment was part of the West's efforts to drive Russia out of the region.

Tensions along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the "line of contact" in and around Nagorno-Karabakh increased late last month and early this month, with the two sides regularly accusing each other of

violating the ceasefire. Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan described the situation there as "extremely tense" last week.

"It will be good if they stay in the region longer [than planned,] and if the European Union takes such a step Armenia will welcome it," Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, told reporters on Thursday.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan made a similar statement in the Armenian parliament on Wednesday. But neither he nor Grigoryan clarified whether the Armenian government has asked the EU to keep the 40 monitors on the border after December 20.

Mirzoyan and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed the monitoring mission with Toivo Klaar, the EU's special envoy to the South Caucasus, at separate meetings held in Yerevan on December 8. Their press offices reported no details of the discussions.

President of Île-de-France Valérie Pécresse reaffirms support to Artsakh

The delegation led by President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan who is on a working visit in the Republic of France, met with President of the Region of Île-de-France Valérie Pécresse.

The President highly appreciated the principled and consistent activity of Valérie Pécresse, aimed at the protection of human rights and freedoms, the principles of humanity and democracy, the universal values, and the support of the Artsakh Republic, noting that she came to Artsakh during the hardest and most difficult period for our people, when the wounds of the bloody war were still fresh.

The President stressed that France and the French people have a special place



among the good friends of Artsakh. "The resolutions adopted by the Regional Council of Île-de-France under your leadership in 2020 and 2022 regarding the recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, as well as in favor of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia are vivid evidence of that. We highly

appreciate such a support and the role of such steps for our country that has embarked on the path of democracy", Arayik Harutyunyan stressed.

At the same time, the President expressed confidence that the sincere friendship of our peoples, based on a common system of values and interests, will be further strengthened and deepened, and the areas of dialogue and cooperation will expand.

Valérie Pécresse reaffirmed her solidarity and support to Artsakh, emphasizing that in order to ensure stability and peace in the South Caucasus, it is necessary to achieve a peaceful and fair settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Yerevan-Baku peace treaty will be based on Alma-Ata Declaration – Russian FM

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan will be signed based on the Alma-Ata Declaration.

During a joint press conference with his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov in Moscow, FM Lavrov said that the Russian draft of the peace treaty has been presented to the sides back in the beginning of this year, which, overall, received a posi-

tive reaction. However, the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides have also presented their proposals over the Russian draft. Lavrov said that in autumn, during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries in Washington, the Azerbaijani side presented another version of the document, after which the Armenian side presented their version.

"We are ready to provide support, as

before, but here it is very important to decide on the main principled issues. In this respect what has been agreed between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Prague on October 6, is, of course, very important as they have confirmed their determination to solve all issues based on the UN Charter and the Alma-Ata Declaration of December 1991", the Russian FM said.

Armenia, Turkey set to launch Air Cargo traffic

Armenia and Turkey will likely start “very soon” mutual cargo shipments by air in line with an interim agreement reached by them earlier this year, a senior Armenian official said on December 9.

The agreement announced in July followed four rounds of normalization talks held by Turkish and Armenian envoys. The two sides also agreed to open the Turkish-Armenian border to citizens of third countries.

“It is very likely that [the agreement on air cargo traffic] will be implemented very soon,” the Armenian negotiator, Ruben Rubinian, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service. He gave no concrete dates.

Citing unnamed diplomatic sources, the



Turkish newspaper Hurriyet Daily News reported on Thursday that the cargo shipments between the two neighboring states could start before the end of this month. It said the partial opening of their border is also on the cards.

Officials from various Armenian and Turkish government agencies met at a bor-

der section in early November to discuss preparations for what will likely be modest cross-border traffic.

Turkey has for decades made the full opening of the frontier and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia conditional on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal acceptable to Azerbaijan. Turkish leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed this precondition since the start of the normalization talks with Yerevan in January this year.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on October 17 that Armenia must also agree to open an extraterritorial land corridor connecting Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. Yerevan rejected the demand.

Armenia wants peace, if Azerbaijan withdraws, stops aggression – Ambassador

If Azerbaijan were to immediately withdraw from the sovereign Armenian territory that it occupies and promise to halt further aggression the path could be cleared toward a comprehensive peace settlement with Armenia, Armenian Ambassador to UK Varuzhan Nersesyan said in an op-ed published by *The Jerusalem Post*.

Azerbaijan wants to eliminate Armenia, Armenian identity, the Ambassador said, the Ambassador says.

“In Azerbaijan’s school system children are taught to hate Armenians. In one school textbook for nine to 10-year-olds a young girl is shown killing an Armenian soldier with an axe. Ironically, the ax murderer who was convicted by the Hungarian court for beheading a sleeping Armenian counterpart in Budapest is a national hero of Azerbaijan and according to the country’s

ombudsman is “a symbol for the young generation”,” the Ambassador writes.

“Armenia is not an obstacle to peace but what sort of peace does Azerbaijan seek?” he says. “However, what Armenia guards against is Azerbaijan exploiting the border delimitation process for new territorial claims and occupation. For example, it continues to publish maps showing the south of Armenia as part of Azerbaijan. Armenia has confirmed its road network would be open for transportation between those two but that it would not whatsoever constitute an extraterritorial corridor that Azerbaijan could use as a pretext for further aggression.”

“Azerbaijan’s claims to desire peace have been undermined by President Aliyev’s decision to pull out of a meeting in Brussels planned for today with Prime



Minister Pashinyan, France’s President Macron and the president of the European Council, Charles Michel,” Ambassador Nersesyan writes.

“However, the same four leaders met in Prague last October where they all agreed that the quadrilateral format would again be used in Brussels. Armenia remains fully committed to a peace agenda. If Azerbaijan is serious about peace, the only way to show it is to return to negotiations instead of finding pretexts to avoid them,” he concludes.

No Azerbaijani checkpoints in the corridor linking the Republic of Artsakh to Armenia – NSS

Artsakh’s National Security Council has denied reports claiming that an Azerbaijani checkpoint will be installed in the corridor linking the Republic of Artsakh to Armenia.

The conclusions were wrongly made after an interview of Andrei Volkov, the head of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh, was published in the media.

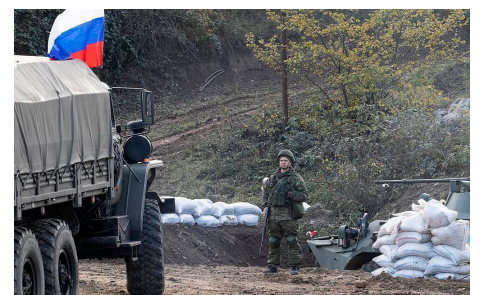
The National Security Service of the Republic of Artsakh organized a discussion

on the issue with Andrei Volkov, during which the latter stated that there will be no checkpoint in the corridor, it will not be controlled by Azerbaijanis, and there will be no Azerbaijanis in the areas where peacekeepers are stationed in the corridor.

According to him, it is only planned to install technical control devices to facilitate the work of the peacekeepers.

The leadership of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh will make a

statement about the above in the near future.



Lowest inflation in region registered in Armenia

Inflation in Armenia's consumer market comprised 8.8% in November 2022 compared to November 2021, and 1.1% compared to October 2022, the Statistical Committee said.

In November 2022, compared to November 2021, 11.1% inflation was registered in food products and non-alcoholic drinks, and compared to October 2022 – 2.4%.

Regarding the prices of non-food products, the inflation here comprised 7.7% in November compared to last November. In November compared to October, the prices of petroleum and diesel fuel declined in Armenia by 2.5% and 4.5% respectively. Compared to November 2021, the price of petroleum declined by 3.3%, and that of the diesel fuel increased by 23.9%.



The prices of services have increased by more than 7% compared to November 2021.

In January-November 2022, the consumer price index comprised 8.7%.

In October 2022 compared to October 2021, the consumer price index in the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) increased by 13.4%:

Armenia – 9.5%
Russia – 12.6%
Belarus – 15.2%
Kyrgyzstan – 15.4%
Kazakhstan – 18.8%

Consumer prices have also increased in the countries of the region, particularly in Turkey – 85.4%, Georgia – 10.6% and Azerbaijan – 15.6%.

Among the EAEU states and the countries of the re-

gion, the lowest inflation was registered in Armenia (it was 9.5% in October 2022 compared to October 2021).

Recently the Eurasian Development Bank has presented a report about the forecasts of macroeconomic indicators for the EAEU states in 2023, stating that by the end of 2023 the lowest inflation will be registered in Armenia, around 4.6%.

EBRD invested over €2 billion in over 200 projects during 30 years of operation in Armenia



The EBRD has been operating in Armenia for 30 years, investing over €2 billion in over 200 projects, with more than 90 per cent of these in the private sector, the Bank said in a statement.

The Bank's key areas of investment

include the financial sector, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and sustainable infrastructure. The Bank supports these sectors through investment combined with policy engagement and technical co-operation.

On average, the Bank invests around €150 million

in Armenia's economy on annual basis. Through its partner financial institutions in Armenia, the EBRD channels approximately €100 million to local SMEs through various programmes on trade finance, competitiveness, green, and inclusive fi-

nancing.

In terms of sustainable infrastructure, across Armenia, the Bank is financing the modernisation of the border crossing in Meghri, and the construction of the Sisian-Kajaran road. These projects build on the success of the recently completed bridge in Bagratashen. In the capital, the Bank is supporting the municipality to acquire modern, greener, and more efficient buses for residents of Yerevan.

The Bank uses a range of products to directly support important players in Armenian economy. In recent years EBRD has financed Telecom Armenia, Picsart, Saranist, and Amber Capital among others.

The first crowd investing platform has been established in Armenia - ARFI



Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) has created Armenia's first online crowdinvesting platform, ARFI (Armenia Financed), that provides investors worldwide with the opportunity to invest in Armenian SMEs and tech startups.

As of 29 Nov 2022, the Armenian Central Bank has registered and licensed ARFI Investment Company to be the platform's operator (license number IC0023). Today marks the beginning of the submission and

cooperation process with potential business projects and companies. ARFI has also begun negotiating with well-known Armenians to participate in its future success. Investing through the platform is expected to begin in early 2023.

This platform aims to contribute to the growth of Armenian companies, expand alternative investment products in Armenia, and strengthen Armenia's business environment and relationships with the Diaspora.

The platform will host business projects, including their creation history, development, and financial projections. Companies will be able to place stocks and bonds on the platform.

Anyone over 18 can invest in projects they believe in from anywhere in the world.

This exclusive approach protects and

provides income-generating opportunities for investors, while helping local businesses expand.

"We have been waiting for this event for a long time. Time will tell, but I believe today will mark a shift in the business environment and economic development of Armenia. We believe that ARFI will become an effective instrument to reinforce trust of Diaspora towards doing transparent business in Armenia" said Serge Grigoryan, the Chairman of ARFI's board of directors.

"Our solution will be an innovative addition to Armenia's financial ecosystem and will certainly have a positive impact on the country's capital markets," said Edgar Evoyan, CEO of ARFI Investment Company.

Visit www.arfi.am for more information and to register.

High-tech industry continues to confidently lead Armenia's economy, Deputy Speaker of Parliament says

In Armenia, the high-tech sector continues to confidently lead the economy, being the fastest growing and developing sector, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Hakob Arsahakyan said at the Silicon Mountains Tech Summit at Matenadaran.

He added that Armenia has solved its task of being a technological center, a high-tech country, at least on the regional level.

According to Hakob Arshakyan, many countries in the region have entered a race with their tax systems, infrastructural programs, tactics of negotiating with big companies in different directions.

"It is necessary to accept this as a challenge and continue to work in this direction and make efforts," he said and emphasized that although the high-tech industry sector



in Armenia is the leader in terms of growth rates, the toolkit for its application in society and business is not on a very high level.

The Deputy Speaker referred to the importance of the connection between high-tech industry, science, education and economy, and noted: "It is necessary to bring the connection between science, education, industry and economy to a fundamental new level, and this should be our conversation about the future of

ensuring a new scientific and technological leap in Armenia."

Concluding the speech, the NA vice-president highlighted the importance of discussions in such a format and wished the participants effective work.

Yerevan hosts end-of-year Silicon Mountains International Tech Summit dedicated to the usage of Smart Digital Solutions in different fields of economy.

International and local expert, government and international organizations' representatives share their experience on:

- Smart Governance
- Smart Economy
- Smart Banking
- Smart Infrastructure

Representatives from different fields share their best experience of using digital tools and international expert will present topic on business investment.

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Where There Is An Armenian, The American Missionary Association Is There With Him

know, I don't want to stay too far away from our family's history and legacy ...

I graduated from the American University of Beirut, after graduation I went to Switzerland for two years where I received an MBA master's degree.

...At the age of 28, something woke up in me. I realized I wanted to change something in my life. I decided I had something else to give outside of the business. Especially since my father did not put pressure on me that I should continue his work. My father said I was free to choose whatever I want to do with my life, for which I am very grateful to him. When I decided that it was time to get out of the business, this coincided with AMAA Executive Director **Zaven Khanjyan's** search for a new Director for AMAA's Armenia branch, and when we met in Beirut in 2019, Mr. Khanjyan proposed that I come to Armenia for a two-year trial period. Those two years became three years.

In 2022, from September 1, I assumed the position of the AMAA's Yerevan Office Executive Director.

- Have you ever been in Artsakh?

- We have offices almost everywhere in the Armenian world, and, of course, in heroic Artsakh.

- Since you are already highly familiar with the programs, both in Armenia and Artsakh, please tell us about the AMAA's upcoming projects.

...However, before that, I would like to understand that in today's difficult situation, when many people avoid investing in Artsakh for obvious reasons, the Missionary Association not only continues its projects, but develops new ones...

...I don't know, if I have the right to say that after several meetings with the honorable Mr. Khanjyan, also after studying his biography, I got the impression about him that he is a serious, long-established American type



businessman who always calculates the risks...

- Mr. Khanjyan's belief is that certain political situations should not affect how we think about our mission. Where there are Armenians, and they are in need, we must stand by them...

As you fairly mentioned above, Zaven Khanjyan is well-aware of all the risks, and I, as an official here, am obliged to ask him sometimes: Are we really ready to do a new project in Artsakh?

His answer is as follows: there are Armenians in Artsakh, so we must stand by them.

You know, there are some organizations and people who make loud announcements, advertise, spend literally pennies, but, yes, the fact is that our organization is the biggest investor in the second Armenian Republic today... And the Armenian people should know this.

- If I'm not mistaken, your organization also helped rebuild Artsakh residential houses bombed by the aggressor Azerbaijan...

- Yes, we have already rebuilt twenty houses in Artsakh, particularly in Martuni, Stepanakert, and now we are building six new houses in the Nakhijevanik village of Askeran region, so that six families return from Armenia.

...There are about 15-20 thousand

Artsakh residents living in Armenia today; some of them have already settled here, but a significant part wants to return to Artsakh.

... Unintentionally, the scene came before my eyes, how during 44-day war's days, the buses were bringing Artsakh refugees to the door of Missionary Association's head office on 18 Baghramyan avenue, where they



gave them shelter, provided them with hot food, clothes and shoes, money, and textbooks for children ...

- The Government of Artsakh gave us a building, a former hotel, to build a new kindergarten in Stepanakert. We hired architectural specialists from Armenia called "Storaket", which, I think are one of the best architects in Armenia. They re-designed that building, and now the construction and interior finishing works have already begun. We now have ninety employees in Artsakh; this number includes our Shushi employees who have

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page 8 ➡ been relocated. Currently we have a kindergarten in Mardakert, a kindergarten and “Shogh” Day Center in Askeran, a kindergarten and “Shogh” in Stepanakert.

However, we must redouble our efforts in Artsakh ...

We have organized the sponsorship of about two thousand children from Armenia, 3-18 years, by different Diaspora Armenian families: USA, Europe, Australia, etc., and this connection continues.

They are children from disadvantaged families, sometimes orphans... These children also benefit from all our programs including Summer Camps, Christmas and Easter special programs, medical care...etc.

One of the new programs that we are investing in is the development of milk and cheese production in Lori. This is not a traditional cash hand-out program, but with one with consulting, creating business opportunities and teaching to create income. We do this in cooperation with Children of Armenia Fund (COAF). The material condition of approximately 200 families will be improved thanks to this program; about 500 cows will be artificially inseminated, etc.

The goal is to encourage the population in remote regions of Armenia, especially the border regions, that they are not alone, forgotten and abandoned, so that they choose not to leave their villages.

You already know about AMAA's «Avedisian» School; we add classes every year, and now there are already about 700 students there.

There are four “Shogh” centers in Armenia; recently we opened one in the city of Stepanavan. It became our sixth center in Armenia and Artsakh. We also have big programs in Yerevan.

We have a program that I can't talk about definitively, but I can say the following.

We are cooperating with the RA Government to take a plot where we must first prepare a new training center/kindergarten for 200 children and

later we will donate it to the Government/Armenian people. In return, we will receive special conditions so that we can implement our projects.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to mention, - in order to avoid any misunderstandings spreading among our people, that the Evangelical Church of Armenia has a history of almost two hundred years, being a sister church of the Armenian



Apostolic Church.

- ...Excuse me for interrupting, but don't you think that a simple Armenian man, in practice, will have great difficulty separating the Armenian Missionary Association and the Armenian Evangelical Church? Besides, few of our fellow citizens know about the Church/Association at all...

- You are right... Evangelicalism/Protestantism is quite widespread in the world; first of all, in the USA, then in Germany, in a number of other countries, but in our beloved Motherland, so to speak, we still have a lot to do in this regard, especially since here, let me say in this way, the Armenian Apostolic Church dominates...

...Of course, we will continue our projects.

For example, in the border zone of Tavush Region, in the town of Berd, we built a building that will have two functions: first, a soup kitchen for helpless elderly people, second, a day center, which we should develop into a full-fledged “Shogh” center over time. There we cooperate with the Dutch organization “Mission Possible”. We have paid special attention so that,

again, from a strategic point of view, the residents do not feel that they are abandoned there, and stay in their settlements.

We have centers where people gather, prepare business plans and present them to us.

For example, we have a center in the Shaghat village near Sisian where people want to become hairdressers, manicurists, etc., we can say, we invest in business start-ups in the form of trainings and acquiring the necessary technical equipment.

We have another similar program in the Tigranashen village of Ararat Marz. In Mets Masrik village near Vardenis, which suffered a lot from enemy bombings during latest September battles, we are preparing a youth hub for the villagers.

...It is not an easy period for Armenia. The old ways of fighting a war no longer work, we have to think together about new ways, reorganize ourselves and reorganize the Army, the economy, everything...

We always have a chance to try again, to live new tomorrows, that's for sure, we must not despair and always start again, and I believe in our organization and Armenia.

Let's start with new strength, and



this should encourage us to continue trying to put this country on the right path, if we all believe in our strength, reorganize ourselves, unite, and with the God's help, Armenia will overcome any difficulties.

P.S. Mr. Deyrmenjian just a few days ago returned from Artsakh, where he supervised above mentioned AMAA projects' implementation works.

Restoring people's faith, uniting, accepting that change is inevitable – Takeaways from Ruben Vardanyan's interview

State Minister of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) Ruben Vardanyan gave an interview to the Artsakh Public Television where he spoke about several pressing issues.

We present several takeaways from the interview.

1 month in office:

“Important, but perhaps not very visible work has been done. This allows me to confidently say that we know the state of the economy of Artsakh, the state of the society, we know the most pressing issues and the deep and complicated problems which require difficult decisions from the government and the society. I am now ready to form working groups around these issues which will not simply discuss but will start implementing changes in various directions. We've already began making changes in several directions, which are not visible. But believe me, a part of the society that is having various relations with the government has already felt these changes. Perhaps the ordinary person hasn't felt change, but people who are dealing with the government have felt the difference because we have introduced a very clear culture, strict conditions, emphasizing that our relations will be transparent, systematic, and we will be very demanding towards those who are not fulfilling their obligations to the state.”

On developing and strengthening Artsakh

“What began in 1988, that Artsakh must be Armenian, Artsakh must be a developed and happy country, remains the same. That's not the issue: I see that faith that this will become reality has decreased. And there is a bigger problem that people don't have faith in the future, don't have faith in leaders, and from this perspective it is being doubted whether we can achieve this goal. I am sure that we can achieve this goal, it requires great efforts and work.

You are asking how we will achieve this goal, and that's the right question. First of all, we must revise the general governance approach, we must restore the public's faith for their leadership, because at times of crisis if you don't believe in



your leaders, you can't do anything. Second, we must definitely do everything so that people realize that in this situation the only way to victory is in our unity. Third, we must accept that changes are inevitable, and these changes could cause a very painful reaction, first of all among the elites who've very often had more opportunities than regular people.

On formation of government

“First of all we want to clearly define the goals, and there are several goals. We've already presented this to the President and the Cabinet. By defining the goals, we will affirm the approach on how we see the formation of our team, and by which model they will work. It is important that they agree to these goals and do everything for their realization.

This team can include both former ministers, acting ministers and new officials. We are defining the goal and actions which should lead us to success. And we are sure that our team, comprised of both Artsakhians and non-Artsakhians will also be a change because we really want to include people who've worked both in and out Armenia. And this gives big opportunities to Artsakh to utilize our pan-Armenian potential.

On Security and the Azerbaijani provocations

“Azerbaijan is doing everything in order to make people in Artsakh lose faith for the future, in order for people to stop believing in success and eventually leave. In this sense, the Berdzor incident and all other incidents show that it isn't related with my appointment. These incidents were among the reasons that I came here because I consider that it will be possible to break that provocation and approach if

people unite here, from Artsakh and from elsewhere.

Now the Azerbaijani provocations have become more frequent, this was expected. If you remember, one of the issues at the first Cabinet meeting was about preparations for winter. We must be ready to withstand various difficulties throughout the winter. I came here to show with my example and the example of my friends who stand by me that we will not leave from here. The only way we see of having some kind of relations with Azerbaijan is that they must accept that Artsakh will be an independent country and we must find a formula – as difficult as it may be - to live side by side, but separately.

The rally in Artsakh was surprising for them in the sense that 35-40 thousand people can get together in the plaza. They were trying to find explanations how that happened. My appointment [as State Minister] was unexpected for them. The generated interest for Artsakh in both Russian and global media and the changes that began were unexpected for them and they had to react somehow. That's normal, and we must realize that we shouldn't stem from their opinion, rather we must do whatever we find to be right for Artsakh. And the blocking of the road or the obstruction of farmers in doing their agricultural work, unfortunately such things can happen to us every day. There is no such way of thinking that we can calmly work, learn or live. We must be ready for everyday struggle.

We have martial law that implies that not everything can be done publicly. Martial law requires us to be very careful in issues related to information. Believe me, we are doing everything to protect the interests of Artsakh.

I have made this decision [move to Artsakh] by being a successful man who had the chance to live anywhere in the world, but I understood something for myself: If I want to be respected, If I truly want my children to remain Armenian, I have to do everything I can for Artsakh to remain independent and Armenian. I will not leave until we make Artsakh the place where people can live calmly and safely.”

Armenia Should Bring Back Skulls of Five Genocide Victims from Museum in France

By Harut Sassounian

The New York Times published on November 28, 2022, a shocking article by reporter Constant Méheut, titled: “A Paris Museum Has 18,000 Skulls. It’s Reluctant to Say Whose.”

The article reveals that the Musée de l’Homme (Museum of Mankind) in Paris, France, holds a “vast collection of human remains.” Stored in the basement of that museum are “18,000 skulls that include the remains of African tribal chiefs, Cambodian rebels and Indigenous people from Oceania. Many were gathered in France’s former colonies, and the collection also includes the skulls of more than 200 Native Americans, including from the Sioux and Navajo tribes.

The remains, kept in cardboard boxes stored in metal racks, form one of the world’s largest human skull collections, spanning centuries and covering every corner of the earth.” Five of the skulls belong to Armenian Genocide victims. The museum has not made public the information about the identities of the 18,000 skulls, fearing restitution lawsuits.

I read the December 15, 2021 report of a French Senate Committee on its discussion of a proposed law about the fate of the remains at the museum. During that meeting, Sen. Catherine Morin-Desailly, co-author of the proposed law, stated: “amazingly, we find in our collections skulls dating from the Armenian Genocide.” Sen. Pierre Ouzoulias, another co-author of the proposed law, added: “I was overwhelmed learning that five Armenian skulls of victims of the Armenian Genocide, which were recovered in Deir-ez Zor [Syria], are still in the collections of the Museum of Mankind.”

Since New York Times reporter Méheut mentioned in his article that he had obtained confidential documents about the human remains in the museum,

I wrote to him asking if these documents contained any details about the

skulls of the five Armenian Genocide victims. He informed me that they were female skulls which were collected by Emmanuel Passemard, a French prehistory specialist, during his explorations in Syria in 1925-1926. The Bulletin of the French Prehistoric Society reported that Passemard gave a lecture at the Sorbonne University in Paris on February 16, 1927, during which he described his trip to the banks of the Euphrates River in Syria.

Méheut wrote in his article that “while France has led the way in Europe in investigating and returning colonial-era collections of artifacts—cultural objects, made by human hands — it has lagged behind its neighbors when it comes to remains.”

The claimant of the remains has to prove an ancestral connection. However, “French legislation has made any return a cumbersome and time-consuming process.” Méheut added: “As with other 19th-century museums, the Museum of Mankind was initially a repository for items gathered from around the world.

The skulls were collected during archaeological digs and colonial campaigns, sometimes by soldiers who beheaded resistance fighters. Prized by researchers working in the now-debunked field of race science, the remains then fell into relative oblivion.

In 1989, Philippe Menecier, the curator [of the museum], put together the first electronic database of the collection. It enabled him to identify hundreds of what he called ‘potentially litigious’ skulls—remains of anticolonial fighters and Indigenous people, collected as war trophies or plundered by explorers—that could be claimed by people wishing to honor their ancestors.”

Christine Lefèvre, a top official at the Museum of Natural History, which oversees the Museum of Mankind, and Martin Friess, who is responsible for the museum’s modern anthropology collections, told Méheut the information was with-

held because of privacy concerns, fear of controversy and because of uncertainties around some remains’ identities. “But several scholars and lawmakers said the museum’s stance stemmed from a greater concern: that transparency could open the floodgates for restitution claims,” Méheut wrote. “Over the past two decades, France has returned only about 50 sets of remains, including to South Africa, New Zealand and Algeria.”

Méheut explained that “to make matters more complicated, objects in public museum collections are the property of the French state and cannot change ownership unless the return is voted into law — a cumbersome process that has sometimes led France to lend remains instead of ceding possession. A representative for France’s culture ministry said officials were working on a sweeping law to regulate future returns of human remains.”

The French government has yet to accept “a bill passed by the Senate in January that would remove the need for Parliament to approve every restitution.” During the French Senate committee hearing, referring to the skulls of victims of the Armenian Genocide, Sen. Ouzoulias told his colleagues: “This is intolerable. We risk a major diplomatic conflict with certain countries when they become aware of the content of our collections.

It is time to stop this. We can no longer live with corpses in our closets.” Now that Armenians have learned about the storage of the skulls of five Armenian Genocide victims in a French museum, I suggest that the Armenian government, through its embassy in Paris, make an immediate request for the return of these skulls to Armenia to be buried near the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex in Yerevan.

These victims deserve a respectful burial after being stored in a box in the basement of a French museum for a century.

Armenian Foreign Minister awards Medal of Honor to outgoing United States Ambassador



On December 7, the Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan received U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy, who is completing her diplomatic mission in Armenia.

The interlocutors commended the positive dynamics in the Armenia-U.S. relations, including active political dialogue,

the foreign ministry said in a readout.

Minister Mirzoyan thanked Ambassador Tracy for her significant contribution to the development of Armenian-U.S. relations and awarded the Ambassador with the Medal of Honor of the Foreign Ministry of Armenia. Ararat Mirzoyan wished Lynne Tracy success in her future service.

Armenian Ombudswoman presents facts about Azerbaijani war crimes at meeting in USA

On December 6, Human Rights Defender of Armenia Ms. Kristinne Grigoryan met Ms. Erica Olson, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State overseeing policy for Southern Europe and the Caucasus, in Washington, the Office of the Ombudswoman said.

The Defender expressed her gratitude for the efforts made by the State Department toward the repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war. She also presented the problems and emotional difficulties that the family members of the prisoners of war are going through given the provocative information environment created by the Azerbaijani side.

The Deputy Assistant Ms. Olson noted that they are continuing their work aimed at solving many humanitarian issues, in-



cluding the return of prisoners of war, and clarifying the fate of missing persons, etc.

The Defender presented to Ms. Olson the ad hoc reports of the Defender's Office, which documented and analyzed the continuous violations of human rights during and after the Azerbaijani military aggression on September 13-14, 2022, and the humanitarian problems faced by peo-

ple living in the communities that were attacked. The reports also included facts about the war crimes which were confirmed by the Defender's Office based on a specific methodology, as well as the testimonies of repatriated prisoners of war concerning the facts of torture and inhuman treatment during their detention in Azerbaijan.

The Defender emphasized the responsibility of the perpetrators of war crimes and the inevitability of their punishment, regardless of their nationality.

Ms. Erika Olson highly valued the work done by the Defender's institution and expressed her gratitude for the timely and impartial presentation of important information.

Housing conditions of over 5300 families improved in Spitak earthquake disaster zone

The government-funded program aimed at improving the housing conditions of families who lost their homes in the Spitak earthquake of 1988 is nearing completion.

5419 families from the provinces of Shirak, Lori and Aragatsotn were included as beneficiaries of the program which began in 2008.

"5391 of the 5419 families have already solved their apartment issue as part of the 70 billion drams which was allocated in the past years. The housing issue of 28 families in Jradzor, Shirak province still requires solution.



These families prefer their housing issue to be solved within the framework of the

construction of a new village near Kaps reservoir. Thus, we can say that the government's obligations towards all recognized beneficiary families will be considered completed," Director of Housing Stock Management and Communal Infrastructure Department at the Urban Development Committee Tanya Arzumanyan said at a press conference ahead of the Spitak earthquake commemoration day.

However, there are still families who've been left out from the program and are now involved in court proceedings to restore their right.

Garik Israelian hands Stephen Hawking Medal of Starmus to Jane Goodall



On September 6th, 2022, Jane Goodall received the Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication during the sixth edition of Starmus Festival in Yerevan, Armenia. The nomination was presented by Nobel Laureate scientist and Starmus Advisory Board member Emmanuelle Charpentier.

Dr. Goodall's work has inspired several generations of scientists, naturalists, explorers and science communicators, and her story became the trigger for the careers of thousands of young women who went after their dream and made it come true. The Starmus Advisory Board unanimously selected Dr. Goodall for this prestigious award announced during the ceremony in Yerevan. However, Dr. Goodall was not able to attend the ceremony in person, which is why the award was handed to her on November 29th at Royal Geographical Society in London by Dr. Garik Israelian, co-founder of Starmus Festival.

The Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication was founded by Pro-

fessor Hawking and Starmus Festival's Advisory Board in 2016. The winners were chosen by Professor Hawking and Starmus Board and received the award during Starmus Festival, a global gathering of the most brilliant minds on the planet combining art, space exploration and science communication, founded by Dr. Garik Israelian and Dr. Brian May.

The award consists of a medal designed by astronaut Alexei Leonov and Dr. Brian May, Queen guitarist, and an exclusive Omega watch created specifically for the recipients of this award.

Watch Jane Goodall's inspiring speech that has brought to tears many thousands of participants of Starmus VI in Armenia.

Blown away by creativity and quality: Eurovision Supervisor on organization of the event in Armenia

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Armenian broadcaster AMPTV gave a joint press conference December 8 updating journalists on developments from this year's Junior Eurovision Song Contest.

Executive Supervisor Martin Österdahl was joined by AMPTV Director General Hovhannes Movsisyan and Junior Eurovision 2022's Communications Director Anna Ohanyan here at the Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex.

As this year marks the 20th running of the Junior Eurovision Song Contest, questions were asked about how the event has evolved, how things have been going here in Yerevan, and where it might go in the future.

Österdahl commented: 'We're de-

lighted that Junior Eurovision has really bloomed, and it's growing a lot every year in popularity. Distribution in the region is growing, and we the quality of talent we see on display is increasing as well. It really does get better and better every year.'

'I think I can say from the impressions from all of the sixteen delegations here in Yerevan is that everyone is really taken aback and impressed not only by the quality of the organization and the infrastructure here in the venue, also the stage and production, which really is world class, but I'd say even more with the warm welcome and hospitality that's been shown to us,' he said.

Österdahl specifically wanted to highlight the success of this year's Opening Ceremony and Social Programming, which

was not only enjoyed by the delegations, but it was also a very real reminder of how enthusiastic and supportive the Armenian public have been for the events of this week.

'I think the Opening Ceremony that we saw on Monday was a new milestone. I was blown away by the creativity on display and the quality of the production and organization. And also the Social Program that's been put together here for all of the delegations from across Europe, they've been really outstanding. I even had the pleasure of going myself, and it was absolutely extraordinary.

I think what's happening here this year is that in the 20th anniversary, we're taking another step forward with Junior Eurovision.'

SKA: Construction to begin on world's biggest telescope

One of the grand scientific projects of the 21st Century begins its construction phase on December 5, the *BBC* reports.

The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) will be the largest radio telescope in the world when completed in 2028.

Split across South Africa and Australia, with a headquarters in the UK, the facility

will address the biggest questions in astrophysics.

It will perform the most precise tests of Einstein's theories, and even search for extra-terrestrials.

Delegations from the eight countries leading the project are attending ceremonies in the remote Murchison shire

in Western Australia and in the Karoo of South Africa's Northern Cape.

When the festivities are over, the bulldozers will move in.

'This is the moment it becomes real,' said Prof Phil Diamond, director general of the Square Kilometre Array Organization.

Ambassador Gallagher hosts UK participant in Junior Eurovision Song Contest in Armenia



Ambassador John Gallagher hosted a reception for Freya Skye, the UK participant in the Junior Eurovision Song Contest in Armenia, and the entire UK Delegation. He was also pleased to welcome Maléna, last year's winner from Armenia who brought the contest to this beautiful country with her popular song 'Qami Qami.'

They spoke about Junior Eurovision, the UK's participation in it, and the hopes for the final on December 11.

The British guests said they were excited to be in Yerevan and were impressed by the opening show on 5 December.

This year, the UK will be participating in the Junior Eurovision Song Contest for the first time in the last 15 years.

Armenian chess players win 1 gold and 3 bronze medals at European Youth Championships

Young Armenian chess players won one gold and three bronze medals at the European Youth Chess Championship held in Antalya, Turkey.

Mamikon Gharibyan won the bronze medal in the U18 tournament. Rudik Makaryan, an Armenian chess player representing Russia, won the champion's title with 7.5 points.

Armenia's representative Emin Ohanyan was third in the U16 competition. With 7 points he was only half a point behind the winner.

Benik Aghasarov also won a bronze medal in the U14 tournament.

Holding U18 World Champion Mariam Mkrtchyan won the European title in the U18 girls' competition.



Armenia joins Council of Europe's Impressionism Routes project

The National Gallery of Armenia has joined the Impressionisms Routes project, which expands Armenia's involvement in the "Cultural Routes" program of the Council of Europe.

This cooperation creates new opportunities for the popularization of Armenian culture in the European cultural landscape,

intercultural dialogue and implementation of new joint projects.

Launched by the Council of Europe in 1987, the Cultural Routes demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe contributes to a shared and living cultural heritage.



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