

UN Court says Baku should ensure free movement along Lachin corridor, rejects Azerbaijan’s request



The Republic of Azerbaijan shall in accordance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions, the UN Court said.

The International Court of Justice on February 22 indicated a provisional measure against Azerbaijan. The Order was read out by President of the Court Joan Donoghue.

The Court concluded that the conditions for the indication of provisional measures by Armenia are met. “It is therefore necessary for the Court to indicate certain measures in order to protect the rights claimed by Armenia,” Joan Donoghue said.

The Court observed that, since 12 December 2022, the connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia via the Lachin Corridor has been disrupted. The Court notes that a number of consequences have resulted from this situation and that the impact on those affected persists to this date

“The information available to the Court indicates that the disruption on the Lachin Corridor has impeded the transfer of persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin hospitalized in Nagorno-Karabakh to medical facilities in Armenia for urgent medical care. The evidence also indicates that there have been hindrances to the importation into Nagorno-Karabakh of essential goods, causing shortages of food, medicine and other life-saving medical supplies,” the ruling reads.

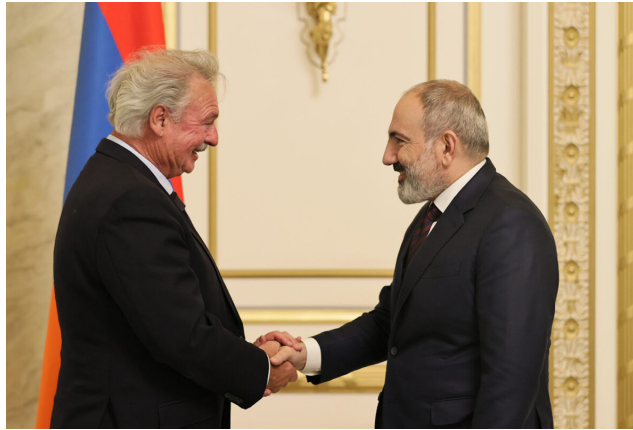
The Court noted that the Trilateral Statement of December 9, 2020, provides, inter alia, that the Lachin Corridor, “which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia ... shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peacemaking forces”. It recalled that the Statement further states that “Azerbaijan shall guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions”.

At the same time, the Court rejected Azerbaijan’s request for provisional measure against Armenia.

Armenian PM discusses regional processes with Luxembourg FM

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received on February 22 Foreign Minister of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn.

The Prime Minister noted that there are high-level political relations between the two countries and it's necessary to take steps to develop bilateral economic cooperation. Nikol Pashinyan expressed confidence that Mr. Asselborn's visit will contribute to the further expansion and strengthening of Armenia-Luxembourg relations. At the same time, the Prime Minister emphasized the Armenia-EU cooperation,



including in terms of the effective implementation of the institutional reforms being implemented in our country.

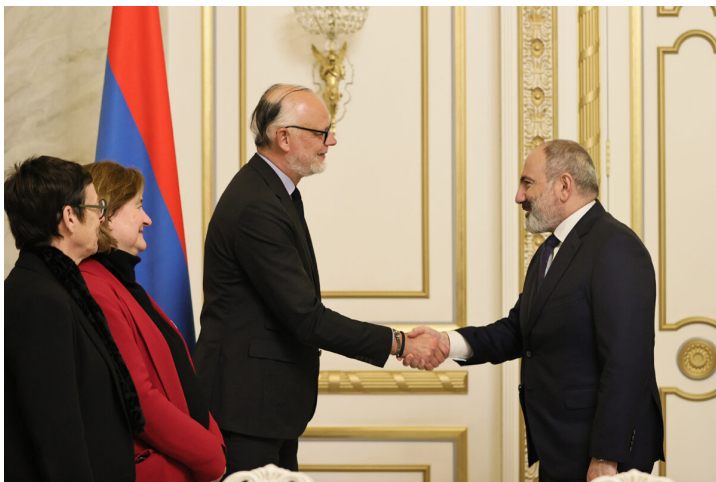
The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg emphasized his country's interest in deepening multi-sectoral cooperation with Armenia.

The interlocutors reflected on the processes taking place in the region, the humanitarian crisis resulted by Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor. The parties emphasized the consistent steps of the international community for unblocking the

corridor.

The sides exchanged ideas on other topics of international importance.

Armenian PM discusses processes taking place in the region with former French PM



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hosted the delegation led by former Prime Minister of France, Mayor of Le Havre Édouard

French Prime Minister's visit to Syunik region of Armenia.

Édouard Philippe noted that he had a

Philippe.

The Prime Minister emphasized the consistent development of Armenian-French relations and underlined Mr. Philippe's efforts in strengthening them. Nikol Pashinyan highly appreciated the former

meeting with Artsakh Armenians in Goris, who are unable to travel to Nagorno Karabakh due to the closure of the Lachin corridor, to assess the situation on the ground.

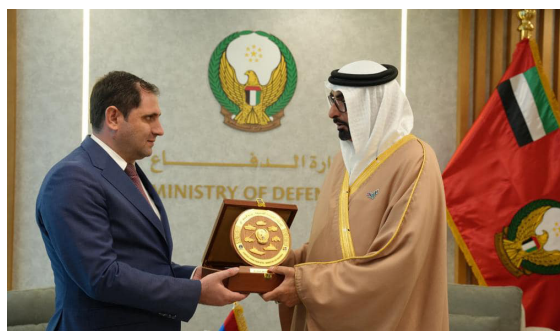
In this context, the continuous attention and consistent steps of the international community in the direction of unblocking the Lachin Corridor in order to overcome the humanitarian, environmental and energy crisis created in Nagorno-Karabakh was highlighted.

At the meeting, the interlocutors exchanged views about the processes taking place in the region.

Armenia, UAE discuss perspectives of military-technical cooperation

On a working visit to the United Arab Emirates, Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan met with the Minister of State for Defense of the United Arab Emirates Mohammed Ahmed Al Bowardi.

Armenia's High-Tech Minister Robert Khachatryan, participated in the



meeting.

The parties discussed the prospects of development of military and military-technical cooperation between Armenia and UAE.

Suren Papikyan invited the UAE Minister of Defense to Armenia.

World Court's ruling exposed, recorded Azerbaijan's conduct of misleading the international community – PM

The International Court of Justice ruling recorded Azerbaijan's conduct of attempting to mislead the international community. The court recorded Azerbaijan's responsibility for closing the Lachin corridor and emphasized that the decision is binding for Azerbaijan, PM Nikol Pashinyan said at the Cabinet meeting, commenting on the world court's judgment in the Armenia v. Azerbaijan case.

"Yesterday the court published its decisions, satisfying Armenia's request and rejecting Azerbaijan's request. With the binding decision the court obliged Azerbaijan to take all steps at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. The court emphasized that the ruling is binding for Azerbaijan," Pashinyan said, describing the judgment as extremely important.

Pashinyan commented on the political impact and significance of the ruling, noting that it exposed Azerbaijan's conduct of



trying to mislead the international community by falsely claiming that there is no blockade.

"Azerbaijan was claiming in all international bodies that the Lachin corridor isn't closed. It's another matter as to what extent the representatives of the international community believed Azerbaijan. But this recorded Azerbaijan's conduct of misleading the international community. And this was recorded by the highest court of the world," the PM said.

The Armenian PM highlighted that the court recorded the Azerbaijani state's responsibility for the closure of the Lachin

corridor, essentially dismissing the "eco-activist" narrative.

The court also reiterated Armenia's stance that under the 9 November 2020 statement the Lachin corridor should not be under Azerbaijani control and that Azerbaijan has an obligation to guarantee safe passage of persons, vehicles and goods in both directions.

"Essentially, the court recorded that this is Azerbaijan's international obligation. The other important circumstance is that the court clearly recorded the existence of the Nagorno Karabakh entity in accordance with the 9 November 2020 trilateral statement, and therefore also the statement itself and its provisions, including an international legal significance was given related to the existence of NK and line of contact," the PM said.

At the same time, the court confirmed that there is a humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh due to the blockade.

PM Pashinyan welcomes EU's decision to deploy civilian mission in Armenia

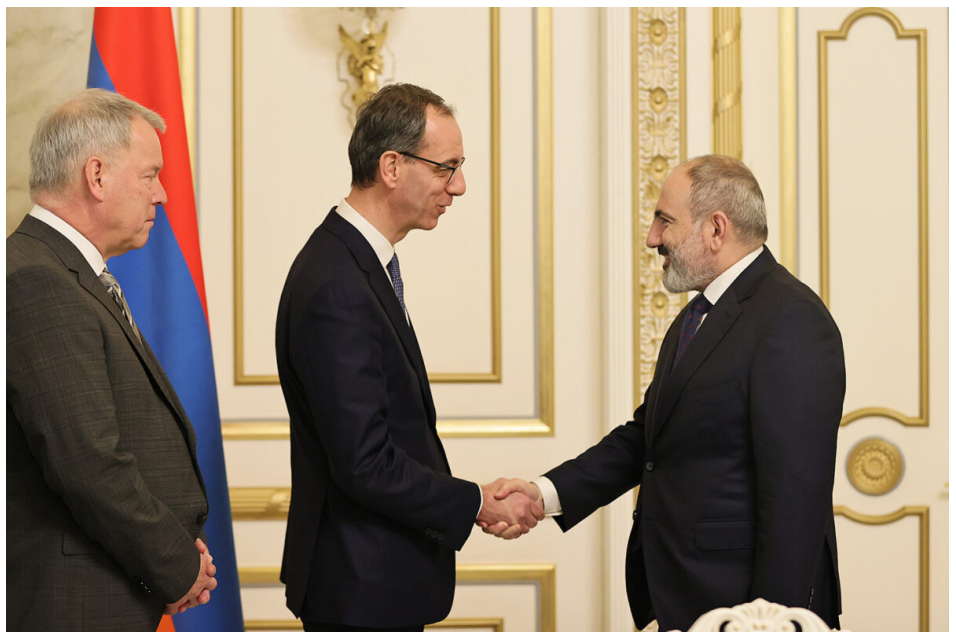
Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received today the Civilian Operations Commander of the European External Action Service, Stefano Tomat, and his delegation, which also included the Head of the new EU monitoring mission in Armenia, Markus Ritter.

The Prime Minister welcomed the decision to deploy the EU's long-term civilian monitoring mission in Armenia and emphasized that it will contribute to regional stability and peace.

The EU Civilian Operations Commander expressed gratitude to the Armenian side for the assistance provided to the mission and referred to the work to be carried out in Armenia.

At the meeting, the sides exchanged ideas on issues related to the EU civilian

monitoring mission and the cooperation agenda.



U.S. Signals another Armenian-Azeri Summit

Armenia and Azerbaijan will hold further high-level negotiations “in the coming days” to try to build on “significant progress” made by them in recent months, the U.S. State Department said on February 22.

The US has signaled that President of the EU Council Charles Michel could host Armenian-Azerbaijani talks in Brussels.

Commenting on Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s remarks on “significant progress” Armenia and Azerbaijan have made over the last several months, State Department Spokesman Ned Price said: “He was reflecting what we’ve seen over the last couple months. This has been the result of engagement between the parties. This has been the result of bilateral engagement with the United States,



trilateral engagement with the United States, the work that the EU has done in their diplomacy as well, and what we hope to see when the parties come together in Brussels in the coming days in the talks hosted by President Michel of the EU. So, we hope to see a continuation of that progress. We are not being Pollyannaish, but we are continuing to support this dialogue, this diplomacy, towards a comprehensive

solution in every way we possibly can.”

“We believe that Armenia and Azerbaijan have a genuinely historic opportunity to secure an enduring peace after more than 30 years of conflict,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a [meeting](#) with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

“The parties themselves have renewed their focus on a peace process, including through direct conversation as well as with the EU and ourselves. The United States is committed to doing anything we can to support these efforts, whether it’s directly with our friends, whether it’s in a trilateral format such as this, or with other international partners,” Blinken said.

Russia tells EU the mission in Armenia “has distinct geopolitical underpinning”

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin discussed the situation in the South Caucasus with Toivo Klaar, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus.

The Russian diplomat noted that the decision of Brussels to deploy a mission in Armenia “has a distinct geopolitical underpinning” that does not contribute to real stabilization in the South Caucasus.

The European Union launched on Monday the EU civilian mission in Armenia (EU Mission in Armenia / EUMA) under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

The EUMA was formally established by a Council Decision on 23 January 2023. Through its deployment on the Armenian side of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, the objectives are to contribute to stability in the border areas of Armenia, build confidence and human security in conflict affected areas, and ensure an environment conducive to the normalization efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan supported by the EU.

The total – exclusively civilian – staff of the EUMA will be approximately 100, including around 50 unarmed observers.

The Operational Headquarters of the



mission will be in Yeghegnadzor, in Armenia’s Vayots Dzor province. EEAS Managing Director of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) Stefano Tomat will serve as the Civilian Operation Commander, while Markus Ritter will serve as the Head of Mission.

Assad hails Armenia’s relief aid to quake-hit Syria

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad received on February 23 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan.

President al-Assad voiced his gratitude for Armenia’s decision to send rescue teams and relief aid for the quake-affected people, stressing that the ties binding Syria with the Armenians all over the world are historical.

The President noted that building good relationships and alliances between states with shared principles are important for overcoming the challenges and changes.

Minister Mirzoyan conveyed the

condolences of Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the Armenian people, asserting that his country cannot but stand by the Syrians and offer them aid. He noted that Armenia still remembers Syria’s support when Armenia was struck by a powerful earthquake in 1988.

The Foreign Minister added that Syria is homeland for thousands of Armenians who still live there.

Issues on regional and international security were also discussed.

The Foreign Minister of Armenia



briefed the President of Syria on the recent developments in the normalization process of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations, as well as the dire humanitarian situation resulting from the illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor by Azerbaijan.

Ruben Vardanyan dismissed from the post of Artsakh's Minister of State

On February 23, President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan chaired a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers.

The Head of the State presented the military political and socio-economic situation developed in the republic as a result of the blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, as well as the measures taken by the authorities aimed at the solution of the emerging issues.

During the meeting, President Harutyunyan also publicized the decree on the dismissal of Ruben Vardanyan from the position of State Minister. He highly appreciated Vardanyan's efforts both in raising international awareness of Artsakh and solving numerous domestic problems during the blockade.

"Ruben Vardanyan and I have been

together during this whole time, following the events and developments happening



both in Artsakh and in the outer world on a daily basis, we have constantly exchanged ideas about finding solutions to the current situation. I am grateful to Mr. Vardanyan for his eagerness to always share the responsibility with me to the maximum extent in both friendly and partnership relations and did not try to put it on me referring to the constitutional

norms. But on the other hand, he approached with awareness and understanding to the scope and extent of my personal responsibility for the situation created in Artsakh and all future problems," the Head of the State highlighted.

Arayik Harutyunyan noted that he proposed Prosecutor General Guren Nersisyan to assume the responsibilities of the State Minister, taking into account his professional and human qualities, professionalism, fairness, principled stance and statehood-orientedness.

The President informed that all executive bodies will be in the sphere of coordination of the new state minister, except for the law enforcement agencies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Armenian PM, UN chief discuss the possibility of sending fact-finding mission to Lachin corridor

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with UN Secretary General António Guterres.

The interlocutors touched upon the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh resulting Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor and the way to overcome it.

In particular, issues related to sending a UN fact-finding mission to Nagorno Karabakh and Lachin Corridor were discussed.

The sides emphasized the need to unblock the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan and the importance of its uninterrupted operation.

An agreement was reached to continue discussions on the issue of sending a UN mission. António Guterres noted that he will keep the issue in the center of attention.

The Prime Minister also highlighted

the ruling of the UN International Court of Justice to meet Armenia's request on indication of provisional measures regarding the unblocking of the Lachin Corridor.

The interlocutors exchanged ideas on issues related to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, protection of the rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh

EU "takes note" of binding order by ICJ, reiterates call on Azerbaijan to guarantee free movement in Lachin corridor



The EU takes note of the binding order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), indicating that Azerbaijan shall take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions, the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS) said in a statement.

"The European Union takes note of the binding Order issued by the

International Court of Justice (ICJ), indicating that Azerbaijan shall take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions.

The EU remains concerned about the obstructions that continue to be in place in the Lachin corridor and the resulting humanitarian implications for the local civilian population. All concerns of Azerbaijan about the usage of the corridor can and should be addressed exclusively through dialogue.

The EU reiterates its call on the Azerbaijani authorities, and all those responsible, to guarantee the freedom and safety of movement along the Lachin corridor, in line with commitments undertaken under the trilateral statement of 9 November

2020. We also underscore the vital need to ensure uninterrupted supplies of gas, electricity and other services to the affected population.

The EU remains engaged, including at the highest, level to support efforts towards strengthening peace and security in the South Caucasus," reads the statement issued by EEAS spokesperson Peter Stano.

The United Nations' highest court – the International Court of Justice – ordered Azerbaijan on Wednesday to "take all steps at its disposal" to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. The Lachin Corridor is blocked by Azerbaijan since 12 December 2022.

Armenia Revives Major Gold Mining Project



(RFE/RL) - The Armenian government and a Canadian-based company formally agreed on February 23 to restart a multi-million-dollar gold mining project in Armenia that was disrupted by protesters shortly after the 2018 “velvet revolution.”

The country’s former government had granted the company, now called Lydian Canada Ventures, a license to develop a massive gold deposit at Amulsar in 2016. Lydian planned to start mining operations there in late 2018 and produce 210,000 ounces of gold, worth \$385 million at current international prices, annually.

However, those plans were put on hold after several dozen environmental protesters started blocking all roads leading to Amulsar in June 2018. They said that the project would wreak havoc on the environment. Lydian dismissed those claims, saying that it would use modern technology that would prevent such damage.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan made conflicting statements about the Amulsar project. His administration did not revoke Lydian’s mining licenses. But it also refrained from using force to end the blockade.

The company, which claimed to have invested \$370 million in the project before the blockade, filed for bankruptcy protection in Canada in late 2019 before being restructured. It is now owned by two U.S. and Canadian equity firms specializing in mining.

Following the disastrous 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Pashinyan’s

government signaled plans to revive the Amulsar project and started negotiating with Lydian for that purpose.

The talks resulted in the signing in Yerevan on Wednesday of a memorandum of understanding by Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan, Lydian board member Jeffrey Coach, and a senior executive of the



Kazakhstan-based Eurasian Development Bank (EDB).

Kerobyan said at the signing ceremony that the three sides aim to raise \$250 million for finishing the construction of mining and smelting facilities at Amulsar and installing other equipment there. In particular, he said, Lydian will borrow \$100 million from the EDB and another \$50 million from an unnamed Armenian bank.

Kerobyan also announced that the U.S. and Canadian

investors have granted the Armenian government a 12.5 percent stake in the project in return for its pledge to manage their risks.

“This is a very important project for us,” Kerobyan told reporters.

“It is estimated that operations at Amulsar will increase Armenia’s GDP by approximately 1 percent ... and we just cannot miss such an opportunity,” he said, adding that Lydian will be paying between 30 and 40 billion drams (\$75-\$100 million) in various taxes each year.

“It’s an incredibly dynamic project for the economy of the country,” Coach said, for his part. “It will employ hundreds of Armenians.”

He also said that Amulsar will be “one of the most sophisticated operating mines in the world.”

“We will have complied with every environmental standard,” added the Lydian executive.

Neither man gave any dates for the planned start of open-pit mining at Amulsar. Nor did Kerobyan clarify what the government will do if the mining site is again blocked by protesters. He said only that that the government “will do everything” to protect Lydian’s investments.

Mining has for decades been a key export-oriented sector of the Armenian economy. The country’s largest mining enterprise, the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC), is also its leading corporate taxpayer.



Armenia Posts Double-Digit Growth

Armenia's economy grew by 12.6 percent last year on the back of soaring trade with and cash flows from Russia, according to government data released on February 20.

The Armenian government's Statistical Committee registered the sharpest gains in trade and other services that generated more than half of the country's GDP worth almost 8.5 trillion drams (\$21 billion). The services sector excluding trade alone expanded by over 28 percent, according to it.

By comparison, Armenian industrial output grew by about 8 percent while agricultural production was flat in 2022.

Armenia was initially expected to be hit hard by the barrage of sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and other Western powers on Russia, the South Caucasus nation's leading trading partner, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Russian-Armenian trade fell in March but recovered strongly in the following



months as the Russian economy proved more resilient than expected. It almost doubled to \$4.4 billion in January-November 2022, accounting for more than one-third of Armenia's overall foreign trade.

Armenian exports to Russia nearly tripled to just over \$2 billion in the eleven-month period. They most probably included goods manufactured in third countries and re-exported from Armenia to Russia as a consequence of the Western sanctions.

According to the Armenian Central Bank, individual remittances from Russia to Armenia quadrupled to almost \$3.2

billion in January-November 2022. Much of that money is thought to have been deposited in local banks by tens of thousands of Russians who relocated to the South Caucasus country after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

Visiting Yerevan in October, Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov described Armenia as "one of the beneficiaries of the resetting of Russia's economy and flows of goods and services" resulting from the sanctions. His then Armenian counterpart, Tigran Khachatryan, acknowledged Russian money's "significant positive impact on our current economic activity."

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his Russian counterpart Mikhail Mishustin praised the surge in bilateral trade when they met in Kazakhstan early this month. Mishustin suggested that Armenia can take even greater advantage of an exodus of Western companies from Russia.

Air communication between Armenia and Syria to be regulated with a new agreement

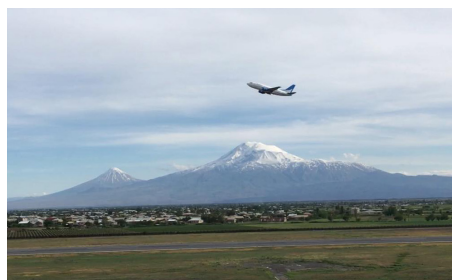
The Armenian government approved the bill on ratifying the agreement on air communications between Armenia and Syria.

The regular flights will further have significant positive effect on the movement of the Syrian-Armenian community to Armenia, as well as mutual visits of official delegations.

The Civil Aviation Committee had also spoken in favor of the approval.

According to Armen Simonyan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration, the legal regulation of relations will allow to

carry out regular bilateral flights, which will, in turn, lead to intensification of bilateral economic ties.



"The implementation of regular flights

will provide the Syrian-Armenian community with an opportunity to travel to Armenia and will contribute to the mutual visits of interstate, parliamentary and other delegations," he said.

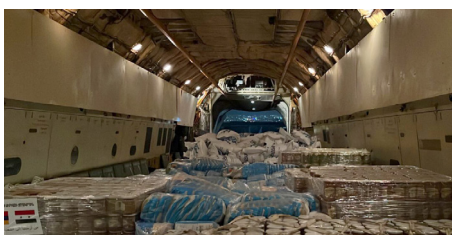
Air traffic between Armenia and Syria was previously regulated by an agreement adopted in 1995, which envisaged certain restrictions, particularly in terms of the number of companies.

It is now proposed to ratify the new agreement signed on May 14, 2021, which makes the legal regulations more complete.

Armenia delivers third batch of humanitarian aid to Syria

The Ministry of Emergency Situations has organized the delivery of the third batch of humanitarian aid to Syria.

Armenia sent another 32 tons of aid to earthquake-affected regions of Syria on February 23. This comes in addition of 55



tons sent earlier this month.

The cargo included food and medicine. It was sent to Syria from Yerevan Erebuni airport. The transfer from Yerevan to Aleppo was carried out by an IL-76 plane.

Artsakh is my home: Ruben Vardanyan says will stay in Stepanakert

Artsakh is my home, says former Minister of State Ruben Vardanyan, pledging to stay in Stepanakert and continue to work for the benefit of Artsakh.

Vardanyan, who was dismissed from the post of State Minister by President Arayik Harutyunyan's decree, says "it has been an honor to serve as State Minister for our people, our republic and our unwavering struggle for a free Artsakh."

He thanked President Harutyunyan for the time serving together. "While we may have different views on the issues, we have common red lines, which no one can cross -- red lines important to preserve our dignity and ensure Artsakh is free and Armenian."

"The people of Artsakh have demonstrated their strength in unity and resolve



to stand together in their fight for justice and self-respect. While we have accomplished a lot together during this very challenging period, I am confident, we can do much more," Vardanyan said on Twitter.

"I will remain in Stepanakert and

continue to work for the benefit of Artsakh. Together, we will continue to implement programs of the "We Are Our Mountains" initiative and undertake new, urgent projects to ensure our security, sovereignty and socio-economic and cultural development," he added.

He thanked the team and the whole of government for their tireless efforts in this time of crisis, often working from 7 am to 2 am with no gas and electricity. "These people proved that they are capable of anything and it has been a honor working with you all," he said.

"I look forward to continuing to serve Artsakh so that we may achieve our common goals," Vardanyan concluded.

Artsakh calls on international community to ensure implementation of UN Court Order by Azerbaijan

Artsakh's Foreign Ministry has welcomed the Order by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) dated 22 February on the indication of a provisional measure to Azerbaijan, obliging the latter to "take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions".

"This court order is a logical continuation of previous provisional measures indicated by the ICJ on 7 December 2021, and obliging Azerbaijan to "prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin", the Ministry said in a statement.

"We deem it important that when considering the case, the ICJ noted that the blockade may constitute a violation by Azerbaijan of the rights of the people of Artsakh protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The ICJ order allows to define the ongoing blockade of Artsakh as a manifestation

of discriminatory actions deliberately carried out by the Azerbaijani authorities. Of particular importance is also the Court's conclusion that the ongoing blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan entails a real and imminent risk that irreparable harm will be caused to the rights of the people of Artsakh. Thus, while indicating a provisional measure to Azerbaijan, the International Court of Justice used the tools available within their competence to protect the people of Artsakh from racial discrimination by Azerbaijan," the statement reads.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the Court's decision is an objective confirmation of the repeatedly voiced position of Artsakh that the blockade is just another episode of Azerbaijan's decades-long discriminatory policies aimed at expelling the people of Artsakh from their historical homeland.

"The criminal policy of Azerbaijan, carried out against the people of Artsakh and bearing a large-scale and systematic character, is defined by international law as a crime against humanity. The international

community in general and the UN member states in particular have legal and political obligations to take effective steps to prevent such massive human rights violations, as well as restore the violated rights," the Ministry stated.

"In this context, we call on the international community to take effective measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional implementation by Azerbaijan of the order of the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. At the same time, we deem it necessary to systematically and thoroughly consider at the international level the issue of the legal protection of the people of Artsakh from the Azerbaijani policy of massive violations of their rights. We are convinced that in their approaches to resolving the conflict between Artsakh and Azerbaijan, the international community, as an effective remedy, should acknowledge the legitimacy of the Artsakh people's choice for independence. Any discussion of the possibility of recognizing Azerbaijani jurisdiction and control over Artsakh and its people is tantamount to encouraging Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing," it concluded.

U.S. underscored need for free, open commercial and private transit through Lachin corridor at Munich summit – spox

The United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken underscored the need for free and open commercial and private transit through the Lachin corridor, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said at a press briefing.

“...we have made clear through our word and our deed that we are ready and able to help the parties – Armenia and Azerbaijan – advance progress on these very difficult questions in any way that we can. We have done so bilaterally, we have done so trilaterally with the parties, including when Secretary Blinken sat down with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts in Munich. We are and have been working with and through

our partners. We’re very supportive of the EU process, and I should note that there is an offer from President Michel of the EU to host the parties in Brussels. It’s an opportunity, should they accept it, to sit down to continue the progress that we’ve seen in recent weeks.

When it comes to the Lachin corridor, the Secretary raised this in his engagement with the prime minister and with the president in Munich last weekend. He underscored the need for free and open commercial and private transit through the Lachin corridor. He also called on the parties to open other transportation routes. We think it in the first instance is incumbent on the parties themselves

to resolve these impediments to the free flow of goods, including humanitarian assistance to the people who need it most in this corridor, and we’re going to focus our diplomacy on attempting to bring – to help bring that about,” Price said.

Asked when the Brussels meeting is expected to take place, Price said: “My understanding is that the invitation and the opportunity have been extended to the parties. Ultimately, it’s going to have to be up to the parties themselves – our Armenian partners, our Azerbaijani partners – to speak to their potential participation in any such meeting.”

The Lachin Corridor is blocked by Azerbaijan since 12 December 2022.

MEPs want to show to EU that sanctions against Azerbaijan are needed

The Members of the European Parliament, who arrived in Armenia on a fact-finding mission, are planning to show in the European Parliament that it is necessary to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan to avoid the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno Karabakh, Member of the European Parliament and Co-chair of the Friendship Group with Artsakh at the EP Francois Alfonsi said at a news conference in Yerevan.

The MEPs are visiting Armenia February 21-24 as a result of the work by European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD).

When asked what pressure the MEPs are able to use to open the Lachin corridor, MEP Alfonsi said: “The only pressure we can use at the EP is diplomatic pressure. Europe, for example, has the opportunity to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan. And we want to put the EU on that track.”

He said they want to centralize diplomacies of all EU members around the



diplomacy which is most engaged in this issue.

“We see that every week the demands for opening the Lachin corridor are increasing. And we can see that the Azerbaijani narratives are being discredited. We must show that in order to avoid this humanitarian crisis it is necessary to impose sanctions against Azerbaijan. Perhaps we will demand this,” he added.

MEP Alfonsi said he believes that Aliyev will lose his reputation as a result of international pressure and countries who deal with Azerbaijan economically will realize that they are cooperating with a

criminal regime.

“All of us will do everything for the international community to focus on this issue. Certainly, this is very difficult,” the MEP said.

The situation in Nagorno Karabakh can stabilize only when it will be possible to mobilize the attention of the entire international community, he added.

President of the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) Kaspar Karampetian said that their main goal at this moment is to achieve the unblocking of the Lachin corridor and bring the people of Artsakh out of isolation. He noted the important role of the EP Friendship Group with Artsakh members.

“Yesterday we were in Goris the whole day, we had broad meetings. They got acquainted with the situation on the ground; they saw where the Azerbaijanis are located after the September 12 encroachment. And they will present it in the European Parliament,” Karampetian said.

Armenia could again take Azerbaijan to world court over gas and power supply cut-offs in NK

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Armenia will again file a request to the International Court of Justice against Azerbaijan over the gas and electricity supply interruptions in Artsakh when sufficient evidence is collected.

The United Nations' highest court – the International Court of Justice – ordered Azerbaijan on Wednesday to “take all steps at its disposal” to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions. The Lachin Corridor is blocked by Azerbaijan since 12 December 2022.

However, the court ruled that Armenia



has not presented sufficient evidence that Azerbaijan is behind the gas and power supply interruptions.

“Of course, the reason for this situation

is that the valve of the gas supply pipeline of Nagorno Karabakh is in a location inaccessible for Armenia. The same can be said about the point of interruption of the electric energy. And here, Armenia simply couldn't present undeniable evidence. But this also means that the moment when we'll be able to collect direct evidence we will appeal to the court over this issue again. And there will be high likelihood

that the court will satisfy this request as well,” PM Pashinyan said, noting that at this moment the gas supply in Nagorno Karabakh is being carried out normally.

Armenian Ambassador briefs Speaker of lower House of Irish Parliament on ongoing crisis in Artsakh



On a working visit to Ireland, Armenia's Ambassador to UK Varuzhan

Nersesyan met with Mr. Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Chairperson of the Lower House of the Irish Parliament.

The interlocutors exchanged views on strengthening parliamentary cooperation between Armenia and Ireland and underlined the importance of the mutual support of initiatives by both countries within different inter-parliamentary institutions.

Ambassador Nersesyan briefed the Chairperson about the ongoing severe humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh,

as a result of Azerbaijan's illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor. In this context, the Ambassador stressed the need for decisive steps to be taken by the international community aimed at restoring unimpeded traffic along the Lachin corridor.

The interlocutors reflected upon the current stage of Armenia-Ireland relations, the perspectives of enhancing and deepening bilateral cooperation in the various fields of mutual interest including through active inter-parliamentary interactions.

Armenia's Consul General in Odessa awarded by Union of Armenians of Ukraine

The Union of Armenians of Ukraine awarded the Active Figure of Diaspora Order to Gevorg Petrosyan, the Consul General of Armenia in Odessa, Ukraine, AnalitikaUA.net reports.

The award was bestowed by the Head of the Union of Armenians of Ukraine Vilen Shatvoryan on February 22.

The event was attended by consuls general of countries represented in Odessa, representatives of the Union of



Armenians of Ukraine, including the representative of the union in Kherson Tigran Mkrtchyan, the union representative in

Kropivnitsky Tigran Khachatryan, Odessa community leader Tigran Harutyunyan, the Armenian Ambassador to Ukraine Vladimir Karapetyan, the Prelate of the Diocese of Ukraine of the Armenian Apostolic Church Bishop Markos Hovhannisyan and others.

The award was in recognition of Petrosyan's productive work for strengthening and developing the Armenian-Ukrainian relations, the union said.

Earthquake Damage and Corruption Are Intertwined in Erdogan's Turkey

By *Harut Sassounian*

With each passing day, the number of victims of the earthquake in Turkey is increasing. Our heart goes out to the nearly 50,000 dead and close to 200,000 injured as of now. The ancient city of Antioch (Antakya) with a population of 250,000 has been mostly reduced to rubble.

As I wrote last week, Armenians should distinguish between the Turkish government that committed the Genocide and the Turkish people who played no role in this mass crime. Not one of today's Turks was alive in 1915.

In recent days, hundreds of articles have been written by journalists from around the world pointing out that Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's corrupt practices increased the toll of the disaster manifold. Erdogan who came to power in 2003 as a devout Muslim has turned into a corrupt dictator. As it is said, "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely." Many Turks blame Erdogan personally for the large number of deaths and the collapse or damage of over 100,000 buildings which were poorly-constructed by the President's cronies. At least one million people have been left homeless in Turkey.

Let's start with the earthquake tax that the Turkish government established after the earthquake in 1999 which had caused the deaths of 17,000 people in Turkey. In 2021, by a presidential decree, the tax was increased from 7.5% to 10% on all private communication. The billions of dollars raised through this tax were used to fund construction, transport and agricultural projects, instead of the intended purposes of reinforcing buildings and disaster prevention.

Reuters reported the anguished plea from a mother whose two sons were

trapped alive for two days under the rubble in Antakya, begging for a crane to rescue her children. "Many in Turkey say more people could have survived the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the south of the country and neighboring Syria if the emergency response had been faster and better organized." In the absence of an organized rescue effort, people were forced to dig through the rubble with their bare hands to save their family members.

Turkish soldiers either did not show up to help in the rescue or were too slow to arrive, awaiting orders from Erdogan's civilian officials. Interestingly, Erdogan had "risen to prominence more than two decades ago partly due to his critique of the response to a major 1999 earthquake," Reuters reported. Instead, "he hollowed out state institutions, placed loyalists in key positions, wiped out most civil society organizations, and enriched his cronies to create a small circle of loyalists around him," according to Foreignpolicy.com. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the main opposition party, said that even more damaging than the magnitude of last week's quake was the "lack of coordination, lack of planning and incompetence."

Making the disaster worse, "in 2019, Pres. Erdogan of Turkey praised legislation that his political party had pushed through allowing property owners to have construction violations forgiven without bringing their buildings up to code," according to The New York Times. Up to 75,000 buildings were given such amnesties in the earthquake zone alone. Ironically, just a few days before the earthquake, the government was about to issue another amnesty for construction violators. Now the Turkish government is arresting building contractors with ties to collapsed buildings. But the true culprits

are the government officials who approved these shoddy buildings. Many of the owners of these buildings have close ties to Pres. Erdogan or his ruling political party.

Rather than taking urgent measures to rescue the trapped citizens, Erdogan lashed back at his critics. One such critic, "a French journalist with long experience in Turkey, Guillaume Perrier, was detained at the Istanbul airport and deported back to France, with a five-year ban on his reentry into the country," the Middle East Institute reported. Furthermore, the government temporarily closed down the social media in the midst of the earthquake to block criticism of the Turkish government's incompetence.

The Jerusalem Post published an article on Feb. 20, titled: "After the earthquake, Turkey's Erdogan hunts for scapegoats." The article stated that: "Erdogan's house of cards has collapsed with the earthquake. There is already a rush to find scapegoats and as well as the arrests of looters.... Faced with the coming elections, what Erdogan will find equally hard to explain is a video circulating on social media, where he boasted he had approved a construction amnesty for buildings in the earthquake epicenter of Kahramanmaraş, in 2019. This meant they were absolved from adhering to building and earthquake regulations. In the 10 earthquake provinces, almost 295,000 buildings were included."

One of the unexpected side effects of the disastrous earthquake is that Turkey will be preoccupied for several years with the reconstruction of over 100,000 collapsed buildings. Turkey's attention will be sidetracked from attacking Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Greece, Armenia and Libya. These countries will breathe a sigh of relief for a while!

200 years ago, a priest from Armenia made headlines in Madras – The Times of India

On February 5, around 15 Armenians from different parts of south India and Kolkata gathered at the Armenian Church in Chennai, to remember Reverend Father Harutyun Shmavonian, priest and founder-editor of “Azdarar,” the first Armenian journal ever to be published, the [Times of India](#) reports.

Azdarar was printed and published in Madras 229 years ago by Shmavonian, who lived most of his life in the city, until his death on February 9, 1824.

Shmavonian was born in Shiraz in 1750, but when he was serving as a priest there, he lost both his sons within a week of each other to an infectious disease.

It was the hardest period of his life and to overcome his grief he left the city for Mt Babakuhi, near Shiraz, where he lived with Iranian sufi practitioners. For seven years, Shmavonian immersed himself in the study of languages – Persian, Arabic and French – which he mastered. Although at the request of his family, he returned to Shiraz, the memory of his sons was too much to bear.

He requested to be sent as a priest to Madras, which at the time had an influential Armenian community engaged in commerce. It is said in the last decades of the 18th century, a group of Armenian liberal intellectuals – the ‘Madras Group’ – was formed.

Shmavonian arrived in Madras in 1784 with his wife and daughter. During his stay here, he became acquainted with Shahamir Shahamiryan, an Armenian writer, philosopher and merchant. Shahamiryan founded the first Armenian printing press in Madras in 1772 and published ‘Snare of Glory’ under the name of his son, Hakob Shahamirian, in 1773, which



contained a proposed constitution for the future Independent Armenian Republic.

After his sons who were helping him in the printing and publishing work died, he asked Shmavonian to manage the printing press and continue the work. In 1789, Shmavonian took over the press and began printing books in Armenian. The type used was cast by him from materials prepared by his own hands. He even made the paper himself from cotton pulp.

Shmavonian then began to publish ‘Azdarar’, the first periodical and newspaper in Armenian in the world, on October 28, 1794. At the outset, Azdarar had only 28 subscribers. It was a monthly journal of 48 pages. The layout was simple —one column, titles and text in the same size except for the main headings which were in capital letters. The price of the Azdarar was fixed at one hoon per copy (hoon was referred to as pagoda by the English traders). These coins both in silver and gold, bore inscriptions in Tamil.

Introducing the first issue of Azdarar, Shmavonian is supposed to have written: “One month ago, a distinguished Englishman started publishing, at the end of each month, a journal that contains the lives of celebrated people, interesting articles and stories. . . Following the example of that paper, we too started publishing, at the end of each month, a similar paper.”

Azdarar contained literary articles, contributions, as well as announcements of births, marriages and deaths in the Armenian community in Madras. It also contained commercial and shipping information, reviews of books and advertisements by Armenian merchants. It is said that merchants brought him news from Armenia, Persia and Russia,

almost like overseas correspondents. He also translated news from English and French publications into Armenian. Some pages contained information about the natural beauty of Madras and vignettes on life in the city.

Azdarar was published in Grabar (classical Armenian) though some of the text, news and announcements were in Ashkharhabar (modern Armenian). There were also individual writers who preferred to remain anonymous, who were given the option of dropping their articles in a special drop box, placed under the bell tower of the church. Shmavonian received permission from Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah, the Nawab of Madras and Arcot in 1795, to print and publish books in Arabic and Persian.

Azdarar was a monthly publication printed for 18 months. After Azdarar was launched in Madras, several other Armenian language publications began cropping up in other cities.

Shmavonian later lost his home because of heavy debt incurred by his daughter and grandchildren. He lived almost all his life in Madras, where he died at the age of 74. He is buried in the Armenian churchyard. The present gravestone is a recent replacement and the original is set into the wall of the belfry tower.

Armenian Minister of Healthcare assures safety standards at Amulsar mine will be strictly maintained and monitored

The Armenian Minister of Healthcare Anahit Avanesyan said she is certain that all modern technologies will be utilized to ensure the safe operations at the Amulsar gold mine in line with all standards.

"I am sure that all required studies were carried out and are carried out. And a strict monitoring will be carried out in the process," the minister told reporters.

She said the healthcare ministry is



always focused on mining-related possible health hazards.

"We are sure that all new technological means and opportunities will be utilized to ensure safe operations in line with standards," Avanesyan said.

The Amulsar gold mine is set to restart operations after its owner – Lydian Armenia – signed a 250,000,000 dollar agreement with the Armenian government. The government of Armenia will receive 12,5% shares of Lydian Armenia for free.

Educational partnership established between University of Iowa and Artsakh State University

In the midst of a blockade, the Center for Truth and Justice established an educational partnership between the University of Iowa and the Artsakh State University, [Asbarez](#) reports.

CFTJ announced the realization of this collaboration — a direct outcome of the international human

rights conference organized by CFTJ held in Yerevan, Armenia. It was back in June of 2022, while being in Armenia, that the honorable guest speaker, Professor Elke Heckner, expressed the intent to establish a partnership between the University of Iowa and Artsakh State University. Through the efforts of Associate Provost and Dean of International Programs Russ Ganim, Professor Heckner, and CFTJ Conference committee member Arsine Grigoryan, Esq., a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the above two universities.

"The University of Iowa is proud to collaborate with Artsakh State University under the auspices of this new Memorandum of Understanding," remarked Dean Ganim. "Our purpose is to connect faculty and students on issues regarding human rights and social justice in conflict zones around the world. We look forward to



learning about and from Artsakh as the partnership grows."

The timing of this historic event is even more impactful since Artsakh is in the midst of a blockade by Azerbaijan. On December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the only highway, referred to as the Lachin Corridor, connecting Stepanakert to Yerevan, and essentially to the rest of the world. For over 70 days now, 120,000 residents, including 30,000 children are deprived of food, medicine and other basic supplies they are in dire need of. Hospitals have indefinitely put surgeries on hold. Schools have been closed due to the shortages. Additionally, vital services like electricity, gas, and internet shut offs during the freezing winter temperatures have created more hardships for these residents.

"For the Artsakh State University, this extraordinary collaboration is

immeasurably important, with such prestigious universities like the University of Iowa, especially in these trying times that Artsakh is in a total blockade and such collaborations open a window of opportunity to the civil world," said Vitya Yaramishyan, Vice-rector of Artsakh State University as he signed the MOU.

"This partnership between two institutions will undoubtedly bring about significant progress in the promotion and protection of human rights in Artsakh and beyond," stated Grigoryan.

CFTJ is a US-based non-profit organization formed in November 2020 immediately following the 44-Day War in Artsakh. CFTJ is not affiliated with any political or governmental organization and is entirely independent. CFTJ's team of attorneys built a fact-finding infrastructure in Armenia and Artsakh, to gather testimonial evidence from victims of war-related human rights and humanitarian abuses. CFTJ has collected more than 400 testimonies from witnesses including returned POWs, displaced individuals, and victims of prohibited methods of warfare. CFTJ's mission is to create a living memorial to crimes against humanity, for purposes of education and legal action.

Photographer Ara Guler's life set for biopic

The life of Ara Guler, an Armenian-Turkish photojournalist nicknamed “the Eye of Istanbul” and “the Photographer of Istanbul” is set to become a biopic directed by Aren Perdecı and Ela Alyamac, the [Armenian Film Society](#) informs.

The filmmakers, who are of Armenian descent, are best known for their 2016 film, *LOST BIRDS*, which was the first film shot in Turkey to depict the Armenian Genocide.

The biopic, which has a working title of *HELLO*, will explore various aspects of his career and exotica travels, and at its core, examines a three-day journey the photographer made with his father to the Armenian village where he was born. Panavision is set to repurpose his originally owned lenses for production on the film.

In a statement to the Armenian Film Society, director Aren Perdecı shared, “We grew up with Ara Guler’s photographs,



they talked to us, told us stories and whispered gentle secrets. They expanded our horizons. We grew up and the photographs grew with us, they shined a light upon new discoveries.” Ela Alyamac added, “Ara will charm the audience with his deep philosophy, his passion for his work, his sense of humor and most importantly with the child he always kept within.”

In his career, Ara Guler traveled all over the world for photography assignments in countries such as Kenya, New Guinea, and Afghanistan. The subjects of his photographs have included artists and

politicians such as Salvador Dalí, Ansel Adams, Alfred Hitchcock, Pablo Picasso, Gandhi, and Winston Churchill. The legendary photographer studied at Getronagan Armenian High School. In 1975, he directed a documentary based on fiction on a World War I battle cruiser.

Directors Aren Perdecı and Ela Alyamac reportedly developed a close rapport with the photographer the year before he passed away and worked with him to develop his life story into a screenplay. The Dogus Corp. of Turkey, which owns the Ara Güler Archives and Research Center and the Ara Guler Museum, are unveiling the film, which is being produced by Turkey’s Kara Kedi Film company, to prospective partners at Berlin’s European Film Market.

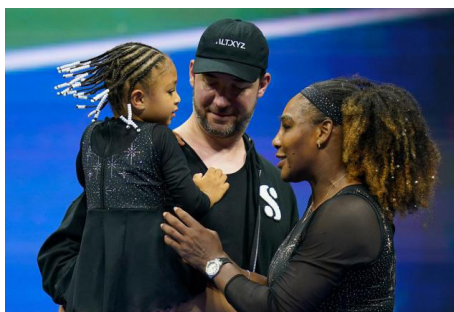
THE EYE OF ISTANBUL, a documentary on his work, is available on digital platforms. Ara Guler passed away in October 2018.

Alexis Ohanian on NFTs and Armenian carpets for daughter Olympia

Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian’s ancestors perished during the Armenian genocide and had their assets seized. That generational trauma is a big reason why he’s betting heavily on NFTs and future social networks, despite crypto’s chilly winter storm.

In an interview with *Forbes*, Ohanian speaks about how he is trying to restore his connections to his roots, acquiring the carpets and putting them on display in his farmhouse in Jupiter, Florida.

Among Alexis Ohanian’s earliest memories is his great aunt Vera, sitting him down on his sixth birthday to tell him in graphic detail about how his great-great-aunt and uncle were killed while being marched through the Syrian desert during the Armenian genocide more than a century ago; how as a child his great-grandfather, Avedis, saw his parents decapitated by Turkish soldiers, who upon turning their attention to the youngster were barely stopped by another soldier on



horseback; how that little boy was then shipped off to an orphanage in Istanbul before making his way to Ellis Island.

“A lot of people sacrificed for that opportunity,” she told him. “You have to make the most of it.”

Reflecting on the genocide of 1915, when an estimated 1.5 million people were killed, Ohanian gestures to the three newly acquired Armenian rugs on floor around him, explaining how his family’s inheritance of heirloom rugs was seized by Turkish soldiers, *Forbes* writes.

“Any group of people who have in their consciousness, or in their collective

history, some idea of persecution, especially by a state, makes the idea of a store of value that is not controlled by any single state very attractive,” says Ohanian. “And so, in some ways it was hardwired in me then, and made me in a way receptive to the idea of a decentralized currency.”

During Ohanian’s most recent trip to Armenia he engaged in what he calls “family mode.” In addition to preparing an inheritance of NFTs for his daughter, Olympia, he bought the three Armenian rugs that are now on display at his farm in Florida, hoping to rebuild the legacy that was seized more than a century ago. “I was thinking, Okay, how do I help restore some of these physical connections that were broken?” Once again gesturing to the floor around him he adds: “And so these carpets are all for Olympia. And who knows any other kids we might have. Knock on wood; this is not a country I’m planning on fleeing. But I know not everyone has that opportunity.”

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Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security

and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders. The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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