

Pashinyan discusses Armenia-EU agenda and regional issues with EU Foreign Ministers



Armenia - The foreign ministers of Austria, Lithuania and Romania meet with acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Yerevan, June 25, 202

Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis, Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg, and EU Special Representative for the Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar. The visit is authorized by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell.

Nikol Pashinyan welcomed such a representative visit to our country, reminding that it was planned at a time when there were more crises in Armenia than solutions.

“I am glad that the visit takes place after elections were held in Armenia, as a result of which the commitment of our people to democratic values was confirmed, and the quality of which was highly appreciated by international organizations,” said the Acting Prime Minister. According to Nikol Pashinyan, the political crisis in Armenia has been overcome, and the government can fully return to the implementation of its most important working

agenda, including the effective implementation of the provisions of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu noted that such a delegation is visiting the region for the first time in history, one of the primary goals of which is to promote Armenia-EU relations. The Romanian Foreign Minister congratulated Nikol Pashinyan on holding the elections at a high level, on the victory of the “Civil Contract” party, as well as on the entry into force of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement from March 1 this year.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis noted the importance of strengthening security and stability in the South Caucasus, adding that it is also crucial for them in the context of ensuring their own security. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister stressed the need to build and strengthen an atmosphere of trust between

➡ page 8

Armenian people can count on full support of France: Macron congratulates Pashinyan on election win
p. 2

U.S. urges acceptance of Armenian vote results
p. 4

Armenia to host the Summit of Minds for third time
p.7

EU calls on political forces in Armenia to work together to tackle the challenges
p. 5

Armenian people can count on full support of France: Macron congratulates Pashinyan on election win



President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic has sent a congratulatory message to Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on his Civil Contract party's victory in the latest snap parliamentary elections. The message reads:

"Mr. Prime Minister, Dear Nikol,

I would like to congratulate you on your party's victory in the early parliamentary elections of June 20 and wish you every success in your continued tenure to the benefit of Armenia and the

friendly Armenian people.

France and Armenia are bound by exceptional relationship underpinned by deep-rooted historical ties and fostered by the privileged dialogue between the two governments, parliaments, as well as local authorities and civil societies.

I will be happy to continue with you the work initiated during your first mandate. You know that France follows with keen interest the reforms you have launched in Armenia. As I had the opportunity to tell you again during your visit to Paris on June 1, the Armenian people can rely on the full support of France in their drive for democracy and the rule of law. Economic cooperation between France and Armenia will continue to be strengthened.

Firmly determined to continue providing humanitarian assistance to

vulnerable populations, France stands in solidarity with your country to help it face the consequences of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh with full respect for Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this regard, I would like to reiterate France's commitment to negotiating a lasting settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in its capacity of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair.

You may rest assured of our commitment to the resumption of a political process which can ensure long-term stability in the South Caucasus and promote the values of peace, solidarity and friendship that we share with the peoples of the region.

Reiterating my sincere congratulations, Mr. Prime Minister, I assure you of my highest consideration."

Iran congratulates Armenia on successful snap election

Iran's Foreign Ministry congratulated Armenia on holding the snap parliamentary election successfully, hoping for the expansion of friendly relations between the two neighbors, *Tasnim* news agency reports.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh congratulated the Armenian people and election winners on the successful snap parliamentary polls.

He also wished the election winners success in their efforts to ensure Armenia's development, establish domestic stability



and strengthen peace in the region.

Highlighting the significance that Iran attaches to neighboring states in its foreign policy, Khatibzadeh said the promotion of relations with Yerevan is important to

Tehran.

The spokesman expressed hope that the formation of a new parliament and government in Armenia would result in the expansion of friendly ties between the two neighboring countries.

Armenian acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party has won 53.9 percent of the vote in snap parliamentary polls called in an effort to defuse the post-war political crisis in the country.

An alliance led by ex-leader Robert Kocharyan, came second with 21 percent of the vote.

China keen to raise relations with Armenia to a new level

President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to President Armen Sargsyan on his birthday.

The Chinese President stressed that Armenia is one of their traditionally friendly countries. In particular, he noted that last year China and Armenia fought hand in hand against the coronavirus,

which was a new impetus for the development of bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

"I attach great importance to the development of Chinese-Armenian relations, I am ready to make efforts to raise bilateral relations to a new level for the benefit of our countries and peoples," Xi Jinping said.



“Page of falsifying election results irreversibly closed in Armenia” – acting PM



The assessment of the local and international observers is definite that the elections were held in accordance with the international standards, acting Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said

during Cabinet meeting on June 24.

“We, in fact, have set a new standard. When snap parliamentary elections were held in 2018 and received an unprecedented high assessment by the international community, there was such a context that time, which said that the results of the elections were obvious to all from the very beginning, and the government had no need to falsify them.

The possible results of the 2021 elections were not predictable, all knew that perhaps the most unpredictable elections in the history of the third

Republic were being held. And it’s very important that we have recorded our political will and value system that voters’ expression of free will is a crucial value for us”, Pashinyan said.

Commenting on the criminal cases launched over election bribes, he stated: “Of course, there are criminal cases over election bribes and illegal influence on voters’ will. I am sure they will be properly examined, but I want to believe that the page of falsifying the results of the elections is irreversibly closed in Armenia”, he said.

Canada appoints Amb. Stéphane Dion as Special Envoy to Armenia

The Honorable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, has announced that the Honorable Stéphane Dion, Ambassador to Germany and Special Envoy to the European Union and Europe, will undertake a mission to explore options for Canada to better support Armenian democracy.

Building on the joint work of recent years and long-standing people-to-people ties between our countries, Canada is committed to cooperating with Armenia to further its democratic progress, which is of critical importance not only for Armenian society but for the region.

Special Envoy Dion will examine options as to how Canada can encourage the ongoing efforts of Armenian civil society, strengthen democratic institutions, grow Armenia’s engagement with multilateral institutions, and promote inclusive economic growth. The goal is that as a result of this mission, the support of Canadian society for the benefit of Armenian democracy is durably consolidated.

His work will take several months and will include virtual consultations with a range of stakeholders in Canada and partners in Armenia. COVID-19 travel permitting, he will also travel to Armenia



to meet with senior members of Armenia’s government and key departments, as well as with partner embassies, civil society groups, international organizations, private sector representatives and local media. He will also meet with Members of Parliament and civil servants involved with the Canadian-funded Parliamentary Centre project.

This mission underscores the importance Canada attaches to the success of Armenian democracy. The Special Envoy will report his findings to Minister Garneau following the mission. This

will include recommendations to guide Canada’s future engagement with Armenia toward further realizing its democratic ambitions.

“A strong democracy in Armenia is one of the building blocks for stability in the region. Special Envoy Dion has always shown a great interest in the democratic success of Armenia, and his profound grasp of democratic development will ensure that he will serve Canadians well in this mission.”

Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs

U.S. urges acceptance of Armenian vote results



The United States has called on the Armenian opposition to accept official results of Sunday's parliamentary elections that gave victory to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian and his party.

"The United States congratulates the people of Armenia on their June 20

parliamentary elections," a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, Ned Price, said in a statement released late on Monday.

Price noted and welcomed a largely positive assessment of the Armenian authorities' handling of the snap election given by European observers earlier in the day.

"We urge Armenians of all political affiliations to respect the results of these elections once certified, employ the legal election grievance process to address issues of concern, and avoid political retaliation as Armenia continues to pursue

a sovereign, democratic, peaceful, and prosperous future," he said.

Price also praised the Pashinyan government's track record and said Washington looks forward to working with it to "grow our bilateral relationship and cooperation."

"We commend Armenia for the progress it has made with respect to reforms and anti-corruption efforts and encourage Armenia to continue along this path, in line with the aspirations of the Armenian people, as expressed in the spring of 2018," he said.

EU's Borrell responds to concerns over "Trophy Park" in Baku

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell has responded to a written question sent by Member of the European Parliament Costas Mavrides on EU position and the steps the Union is willing to take about the so-called Azerbaijani 'Trophy Park,' the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) informs.

The Park is a provocative exhibition of war trophies organized by the Azerbaijani Government in Baku, showing confiscated or destroyed Armenian machinery, equipment and armaments during the 2020 war, displaying the helmets of Armenian soldiers killed in the war and degrading wax mannequins of Armenian military personnel.

Mr. Borrell said "the EU is aware of the Military Trophy Park opened on 12 April 2021 in Baku" and added that Azerbaijan "must avoid fueling animosity and hatred."

"The EU believes that in processing the recent history, countries should be mindful about human dignity and good neighborly relations, and seek to promote



reconciliation and avoid fueling animosity and hatred. This is what the EU expects and the message has been publicly passed," the High Representative said.

"While we welcome the stand of the EU on this issue, we would like to remind that the so-called Azerbaijani 'Trophy Park' is nothing but another demonstration of decades-long state policy of Armenophobia in Baku. Unfortunately, thanks to the xenophobic regime of Baku, the sentiment of hatred towards anyone or anything Armenian is now anchored

deeply in the Azerbaijani society, including children, teenagers and army men, which led to well-documented war crimes against the Armenians of Artsakh," EAFJD said.

"The EU must take more concrete actions and use political pressure at the highest level in order to prevent the spreading of anti-Armenian hatred and racism by the Azerbaijani Authorities. And this begins by releasing all the Armenian POWs (Prisoners of War) and shutting down the so-called park of trophies," it added.

EU calls on political forces in Armenia to work together to tackle the challenges



The European Union calls on all political forces to now work together in order to effectively tackle the challenges Armenia is confronted with, in the interest of the Armenian citizens, the EU said in a statement on Armenia's snap parliamentary election.

The statement reads:

Early parliamentary elections took place in Armenia on 20 June. According to the preliminary assessment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission, the elections were competitive and generally well-managed within a short timeframe. Voters were provided with a broad range of options, and fundamental rights and freedoms were generally respected, with contestants being able to campaign freely. The election day, including the vote count, was assessed positively overall.

As also noted by the OSCE/ODIHR Mission, the electoral campaign was marked by intense polarization and marred by increasingly inflammatory rhetoric among key contestants, hindering a policy-focused debate. The Mission also noted that women were notably side-lined during the election campaign.

Any complaints or appeals regarding the electoral process should be addressed

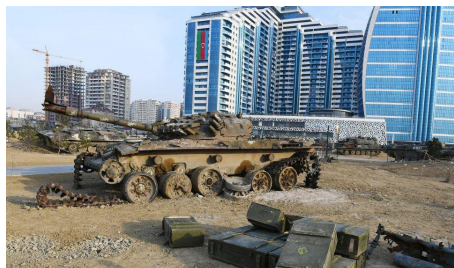
thoroughly and expeditiously using the appropriate procedures as foreseen in the legal framework of Armenia. The European Union is committed to supporting a stable, democratic and prosperous future of Armenia.

We are looking forward to working closely with all Armenian institutions, including the newly elected Parliament and government. The European Union calls on all political forces to now work together in order to effectively tackle the challenges Armenia is confronted with, in the interest of the Armenian citizens. The European Union stands ready to further strengthen our bilateral relations and to support Armenia in its important reform agenda based on the joint commitments in the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

UK Government responds to Azerbaijan's decision to create a "trophy park"

The UK Government has responded to Azerbaijan's decision to create a "trophy park" celebrating their actions against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and said "the UK Government will support the Government of Armenia as it recovers from last year's conflict". Baku's Trophy Park simply encourages and celebrates hatred.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, responded to a letter by Lord Alton of Liverpool. The message reads:



Thank you for your email of 11 May about the opening of a 'trophy park' in Azerbaijan. I am replying as the Minister of State for responsible for Human Rights.

The UK Government is aware of the 'trophy park' that has recently been opened by President Aliyev in Baku following last year's Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During

her visit to the region in February the Minister for the European Neighborhood and the Americas urged both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to refrain from rhetoric and actions that may exacerbate the tensions. We will continue to raise our concerns with the appropriate Governments.

I want to assure you that the UK Government will support the Government of Armenia as it recovers from last year's conflict. We shall continue to encourage both parties to engage in substantive negotiations under the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to find a peaceful, sustainable and fully negotiated settlement.

Georgian PM announced about readiness to assume the role of mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said in a speech at the parliament that Georgia had successfully acted as a mediator between Azerbaijan and Armenia, referring to Georgia's role in the return of 15 Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan. ARMENPRESS reports, citing Georgian media, Irakli Garibashvili noted that Georgia had never played such a role before.

"It was the expression of the confidence



of the leaders of the two countries towards Georgia. In my turn, I reaffirm

Georgia's full readiness to continue to play a mediating role in this process," Garibashvili said.

Earlier, the Georgian Prime Minister's Office reported that Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili was personally involved in the return of 15 Armenian captives on June 12, and that due to his efforts the Armenian side provided Baku with valuable information on the minefields.

Armenia registers unprecedented growth in number of workplaces in May

Armenia has registered a new figure in the number of workplaces, Caretaker Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the Cabinet meeting on June 24.

Chairman of the State Revenue Committee Edvard Hovhannisyan informed that the number of jobs with high income above zero comprised 635,000. “This is an unprecedented figure and passed the highest number registered in September 2020 which was 632,000. This

is more from the figures of 2018-2020. In particular, it is more by 34,000 from the figure of May 2020, and by 37,000 from May 2019, and by 87,000 from 2018”, he said.

Pashinyan stated that the number of jobs increased by 15% or 86,962 in May compared to May 2018. “The wage fund increased by 38 billion drams or 39% compared to May 2018. Average wage

per capita increased by 35,714 drams or 20.2%”, he said.

Pashinyan noted that there is an economic growth in construction sector, which led to the increase in the number of jobs. “We also have a slow, but a steady increase in tourism sector. The next biggest segment is in the catering sector where we have a growth in workplaces”, Nikol Pashinyan said.

Russia to provide 3.2 million USD for UNDP project aimed at assisting Armenia’s most affected regions

The government of Russia will provide 3.2 million dollars to the UNDP project aimed at assisting the most affected regions of Armenia in post-conflict recovery, the Russian Embassy in Armenia said on Facebook.

“The Russian government decided to finance the project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which will help the most affected regions of Armenia in post-conflict recovery. For that purpose, 3.2 million dollars have been allocated from



the budget”, the Embassy said.

The Embassy of Russia has already officially informed the Armenian side

about the decision.

The Embassy also noted that Russia is providing financial aid in a coordinated manner to the initiatives of the UN organizations aimed at Armenia’s comprehensive development. The volume of that aid in implementing projects in the fields of healthcare, education, socio-economic development, industry competitiveness increase, environment, disaster management, energy, has totaled nearly 70 million USD since 2010.

Government provides support to production of UAVs: new investment program worth 4,25 billion drams



The Armenian government approved a

decision to include Artek Power Systems LLC in the Alliance Free Economic Zone.

The company will produce and export unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).

The operation of beneficiaries in Alliance FEZ will enable to attract investments, boost the export of production in high and innovation technologies, contribute to the spread of an Armenian

bran in that area.

The project will be implemented within five years (2021-2025). The investments will comprise about 4.25 billion drams.

85 and more new jobs with 450,000 average monthly salary (in the first year), which will rise up to 550,000 drams later, will be created within the frames of the project.

Armenian President discusses technology development prospects with acting economy minister, FAST director



President of Armenia Armen Sarkisian received acting Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan and Executive Director

of the Foundation of Armenian Science and Technologies (FAST) Armen Orujyan, the Presidential Office told Noyan Tapan.

The meeting participants discussed the development potential and prospects of scientific-technical and technology sectors in Armenia.

The guests introduced the President on

the ongoing projects and activities in the field of high technologies.

The possibilities and ways of implementing joint programs within the framework of the presidential initiative ATOM (Advanced Tomorrow) were discussed during the meeting. The officials highlighted developing the partnership between the local companies and the leading international high-tech organizations which cooperate with ATOM.

Armenia to host the Summit of Minds for third time

Armenia will host the Summit of Minds, an annual event taking place in the French resort area of Chamonix, for the third time in October 2021, the Presidential Office told Armenpress.

The Summit of Minds is a major event gathering over 300 politicians, scientists, businessmen-investors, heads of large companies and media outlets from all over the world. The event aims at presenting new ideas on issues of global importance, establishing reliable partnering relations through direct discussions.

This year the Armenian Summit of Minds will be held in Dilijan at the Training-Research Center of the Central Bank. This decision was announced by co-organizers of the event – Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian, Central Bank President Martin Galstyan and The Monthly Barometer founder Thierry Malleret during an online meeting with the summit participants.

"I think many of us miss the Summit



of Minds. This year it will be held in several locations - Chamonix, Dilijan and Washington. These three summits show that people are really interested in the opinions voiced by the participants about this or that particular issue", the Armenian President said in his welcoming remarks.

The meeting touched upon the main topics to be discussed at the Summit,

relating to the geopolitics in South Caucasus, technology development issues.

"The Summit of Minds must continue in Armenia, must examine the future of special technologies – artificial intelligence, biotechnologies, in order to understand what 2021 differs from 2019", the Armenian President said.

page 1 ➡ the parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, adding that the EU was ready to assist in this regard as well. Gabriel Landsbergis attached importance to the solution of humanitarian issues, including the return of prisoners of war held in Azerbaijan.

The Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg referred to the results of the elections in Armenia, noting that in addition to the victory of the



“Civil Contract” party, democracy won. According to him, to the delight of the Armenian people, those who predicted problems during the elections in Armenia

turned out to be wrong, which shows Armenia’s commitment to democratic



values.

Expressing gratitude for the opinions expressed, Nikol Pashinyan emphasized that the crisis situation created after the war, as well as the elections, showed the viability of democracy in our country, so democracy in Armenia is another irreversible process.

During the meeting the interlocutors discussed the agenda of Armenia-EU relations, as well as issues related to the situation in the region and its resolution.

Nikol Pashinyan praised the role of

the EU, in particular, the President of the European Council Charles Michel in ensuring the return of 15 Armenian prisoners of war from Azerbaijan, noting that Armenia is ready to respond to the humanitarian step with an appropriate step. The Acting Prime Minister stressed the need for the full implementation of the trilateral statement signed by Azerbaijan on November 9, 2020, the return of all detained prisoners of war, as well as the peaceful resolution of the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The Acting Prime Minister stressed that the issue should be resolved exclusively by the representatives of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces from the sovereign territory of Armenia, reminding that he had made a corresponding proposal on this issue earlier. Touching upon the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Nikol Pashinyan noted that the process of comprehensive settlement of the conflict should take place within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

Putin, Pashinyan discuss Armenian-Azeri transport links

(RFE/RL) - Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on June 24 to congratulate him on his party’s victory in the Armenian parliamentary elections and discuss Russian-backed plans to restore transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Kremlin reported that Putin “emphasized the importance of consistent implementation” of the Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and follow-up understandings reached by the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in January.

“The Russian side will continue active mediation efforts to ensure stability in the region,” it said in a statement.

The Armenian government also said the two men discussed the implementation of those agreements. In that context, it said, Pashinyan stressed the need for the release of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians still held in Azerbaijan.

Putin spoke with Pashinyan one day after his phone call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. According to a Kremlin statement, the call took place “at



the initiative of the Azerbaijani side” and touched upon “practical aspects of the realization of the agreements” reached by Aliyev, Pashinyan and Putin.

“Special attention was paid to intensifying work in a trilateral format on the restoration of economic links and transport routes in the South Caucasus,” added the statement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov spoke by phone earlier on Wednesday.

The agreements call for the reopening of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for commercial traffic. They specifically commit Armenia to opening rail and road links between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan. For its part, Armenia should be able to use Azerbaijani territory as a transit

route for cargo shipments to and from Russia and Iran.

At their January 11 meeting in Moscow, Putin, Aliyev and Pashinyan agreed to set up a trilateral working group tasked with working out practical modalities of establishing such transport links. The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states held several meetings in the following months.

The group has not met since Azerbaijani troops crossed several sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on May 12-14, triggering a continuing military standoff with Armenian forces.

“Given these border incidents, I don’t think it’s possible to constructively work on that [Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani] platform,” the group’s Armenian co-chair, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, said recently.

Grigoryan’s Azerbaijani opposite number, Shahin Mustafayev, suggested earlier this week that the trilateral task force will resume its activities after a new Armenian government is formed as a result of the June 20 elections.

EU determined to get more actively involved in settlement of protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus



The European Union is determined to get more actively involved in the process of settling the protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus, a region of geopolitical importance for the EU, Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu told press conference in Tbilisi, upon the conclusion of a regional tour of EU diplomats to Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

“This tour allowed us to pass a message of European solidarity and engagement on behalf of the EU and the member states. At the same time, we conveyed a message of the EU commitment to prioritize security, stability and prosperity of all three South Caucasus countries,” Mr. Aurescu said.

He stressed that the conflicts have a negative impact on regional security and stability, hamper the socio-economic progress and generate difficulties for the people living in the affected areas.

“It is important to mobilize the EU attention on these issues, to identify the best ways of using the EU instruments and cooperation formats to support the affected countries. We encouraged our partners in the South Caucasus countries to make best use of the instruments provided by the Eastern Partnership framework in order to strengthen regional cooperation for the benefit of peace and prosperity and also ultimately to the benefit of people,” the

Romanian FM stated.

Minister Aurescu added that on behalf of Romania he will promote the need to develop a security dimension within the Eastern Partnership.

He hailed the good organization and the democratic character of the Sunday parliamentary election in Armenia,

noting that further modernization and democratization of the country should become a new strategic objective for Armenia, which, he said, is “capable of uniting the efforts of all political forces to the benefit of the Armenian people.

“In Armenia and Azerbaijan, we had an in-depth discussion on the current situation and the perspectives of moving forward following last year’s military confrontation. We called for a constructive spirit and for trust-building, confidence-building measures,” the Romanian FM said, adding that the release of all detainees and the handing over of all the maps of mined areas remain a priority and the EU remains ready to continue to help the efforts.

“We underlined the EU readiness to provide support upon request on all matters that might lead to a negotiated, sustainable and lasting settlement of all pending issues. I underlined the need for reconciliation between the two societies, which is a process that will take some time and a lot of efforts, but there is no other option,” Bogdan Aurescu said.

Alexander Schallenberg noted in turn, that the main objective of the visit was to help build trust, but also reiterate the EU’s commitment to the region.

We will not leave the region to other

actors, and we are willing to build a positive agenda for the whole region,” he said.

“The trip reconfirmed what we knew beforehand. Trust is the most needed resource in the region, and the most scarce resource in the region.

“Our aim was to plant the first seeds of this trust. We know that the wounds inflicted during the Nagorno-Karabakh war are still open, they have not healed yet, but we need a healing process. And the good thing is that the trip showed that all sides realize that the healing process is indeed needed, and they need partners in order to embark on this process,” the Austrian FM said, stressing that the EU stands ready to help in every way possible.

He welcomed the role of Georgia in this context and personally the Prime Minister in ensuring the release of 15 Armenian detainees and the handing over of mined area maps to the Azerbaijani side.

“I think this trilateral cooperation is beneficial to all partners. This is something that we will as a European Union strongly support in the future.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis added that the South Caucasus is one of the most geopolitically important regions not only for the EU, but also in the world.

“There are many regional powers interested in ascertaining their influence in all three countries of the region. But interestingly enough, although the three countries are rather different, but there are certain things they share. They all need stability and predictability of the region,” he said.

He stressed that in case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the EU first must help build confidence.

EAFJD draws attention to the video proving Baku is using Armenian captives for political bargaining

The European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) sent a letter to the EU leaders on June 23 drawing their attention to the leaked video of a conversation between the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife proving Azerbaijan's instrumentalization of Armenian captives.



The Letter was sent to Charles Michel, President of Council of the European Union, Ursula Von der Leyen, President of European Commission and Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission.

The video attests that Aliyev's and his government's previous public statements on the non-existence of Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan were false, and explicitly proves Aliyev's intention of using these captives as mere objects of trade and political bargaining.

Below is the full text of the letter:

A recently leaked [video](#) of an informal conversation between the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife not only attests that Aliyev's and his government's previous public statements on the non-existence of Armenian prisoners of war (PoWs), captives in Azerbaijan were false, but also explicitly proves Aliyev's intention of using these captives as mere objects of trade and political bargaining.

In the video (dating to 15 June 2021) one can clearly hear Erdoğan's wife asking Ilham Aliyev whether they still have more [Armenian] captives. Aliyev responds to this by "yes, of course, it is in the process". Erdoğan's wife then comments, saying "then return them in portion by portion", meaning in stages. The whole conversation implies that the Armenian captives and PoWs should be traded for something else.

Despite this irrefutable evidence of the Armenian captives being held as bargaining chips, we remind you of the

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev's answer to media representatives at press conference on 26 February 2021 and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov's statement at press conference on 15 March 2021 where they both emphasised that there were no Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan.

This video and the developments on the ground testify that the Azerbaijani authorities

1. illegally keep all Armenian captives as objects for use in political bargaining;
2. continuously mislead the international community by qualifying the captives as "terrorists" or "saboteurs";
3. organize false, illegal criminal proceedings against the captives;
4. commit human trafficking, which is a criminally punishable act, such as the capturing of 6 Armenian servicemen on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia on 27 May;
5. blatantly violate clause 8 of the tripartite ceasefire statement of 10 November, 2020 which stipulates the return of all prisoners of war and captives.
6. deliberately cause continuous suffering to the Armenian captives, prisoners of war as well as their families.

Additionally, we recall the fact that since 11 May 2021, the Azerbaijani forces have encroached onto the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia where they still remain illegally, endangering the security of the population in border settlements and generating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. The US department of State, the French

President Emmanuel Macron have urged to pull back all the forces from the sovereign territory of Armenian and cease the provocation. In its resolution adopted by overwhelming majority on 20. May 2021, the European Parliament declared that "the temporary entry of troops from Azerbaijan into the territory of Armenia amount to a violation of the territorial integrity of Armenia and of international law".

Taking into account all the above-mentioned facts, the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament, as well as by several national parliaments of the EU member states, we a panEuropean grassroots organisation, call on you to:

- use all the leverage at your disposal and put pressure on Azerbaijan to ensure an immediate and unconditional release of all the Armenian captives and prisoners of war, as stipulated by the ceasefire statement of 10 November 2020;
- to stand up against the Azerbaijani encroachment on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia;
- support the creation of a security zone on the border of Armenia with Azerbaijan as an essential prerequisite for a demarcation process which must take place within the framework a comprehensive peaceful settlement, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group;

The lives and dignity of human beings should never be an object of trade. The release of the Armenian prisoners of war is a mandatory international requirement, and not an act of goodwill or grace. There is no lasting peace without justice. In order for peace to be sustainable, it has to be viable. As EU citizens we thus call on you to use all the instruments at your disposal to defend the inalienable rights of the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh and to ensure the realisation of the above-mentioned objectives which are a minimal prerequisite for starting any viable peace-process.

Italian Lega Party calls for release of Armenian POWs and civilians

Members of the Italian Lega Nord Party Massimiliano Capitanio and Giulio Centemero have urged the government to take action to ensure that Armenian prisoners of war are immediately released and repatriated.

“Azerbaijan continues to hold numerous Armenian prisoners of war hostage to use them in political negotiations with the support of Turkey,” the MPs said in a statement.

“We also learn that a few days ago a disturbing video of a conversation between the presidents of the Turkey and



Azerbaijan, which would confirm the fact that Armenian prisoners are illegally held in Azerbaijan and are used to obtain

minefield maps or other concessions in exchange,” the noted.

They emphasized that clarity, as well as urgent and firm stand by all international partners is needed to stop speculation about these human lives.

“The hope is that our government will soon make its voice heard with a stance against those who continue to violate all international humanitarian law. We therefore ask that these prisoners and civilian detainees be immediately released and repatriated without preconditions,” the lawmakers said.

Azerbaijan has raised a whole generation on fake news and Armenophobia, MP Naira Zohrabyan tells PACE



Azerbaijan has raised a whole generation on propaganda of hatred and enmity towards Armenians, Armenian MP Naira Zohrabyan said at the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

“When the leader of that country, Azerbaijan, talks about the reasons for

their victory in the last Artsakh war and mentions that they won because they were able to educate a generation that grew up with hatred and enmity towards Armenians, he is right, and the Azerbaijani media had an undeniable contribution to that. They preached and continue to preach anti-Armenianism, violence, hatred and falsification,” Zohrabyan said.

“When an Azerbaijani politician sates Armenians must be killed in Karabakh, and it is being spread by the Azerbaijani media, when a 13-year-old Azerbaijani girl announces that she wants to become a sniper in order to kill an Armenian, and this becomes a top news, we get the terrible picture which we had during the recent bloody war and in its aftermath – atrocities,

lie, fake news and media manipulations,” she noted.

“The trial of Armenian soldiers, who are presented by Azerbaijan as terrorists and saboteurs, is underway in Azerbaijan these days, and the entire Azerbaijani media is full of fake news and misinformation about these immoral trials,” she added.

“If we fail to protect our societies from fake news, which feeds racism, intolerance and lies, especially in totalitarian countries, we will have Azerbaijan as a result, where the media field is flooded with videos of torture and humiliation of Armenian prisoners of war, and public opinion welcoming all this,” the MP added.

Lithuania supports the aspirations of the Armenian people to live in a peaceful, secure and stable state – President

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda has congratulated the leader of the Armenian political party Civic Contract, Nikol Pashinyan, who declared victory in the early parliamentary elections.

“Nikol Pashinyan will lead the newly formed government, he has been given the mandate of the Armenian people to lead the country as Prime Minister. I wish you success, patience and dedication in performing the duties of this responsible position. Political stability is especially important for the citizens of Armenia after the recent war. We support the aspirations of the Armenian people to live in a peaceful, secure and stable state,” the

President said.

Gitanas Nausėda underlined the importance of preserving Armenia’s national security and sovereignty and the need to resolve the divisions between political forces and within society in order to unite them for the benefit of the state. The President calls for active efforts to implement reforms for successful and effective cooperation between Armenia and the EU. This is particularly important with the entry into force of the comprehensive EU-Armenia Partnership Agreement.

The President emphasized that he would pursue an ambitious Eastern Partnership policy agenda in the run-up



to the Eastern Partnership summit this coming autumn.

The early elections in Armenia were described as “competitive and well-organized” by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OSCE).

Australian Mayors join call for recognition of Armenian Genocide

Mayor Gail Giles-Gidney of the City of Willoughby and Mayor Jerome Laxale of the City of Ryde recently added to calls for Prime Minister Scott Morrison to recognize the Armenian Genocide, following the 106th anniversary of the mass killings and deportations committed by the Ottoman Empire



Australian State Parliaments have also recognized the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides, while the Australian parliament has debated in favor of motions correctly characterizing the events of 1915 as genocides.

The Joint Justice Initiative of the Armenian-Australian, Assyrian-Australian and Greek-

in 1915, reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU).

Both municipalities are home to thousands of Sydney-based Armenian-Australians who were direct descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide and have established vibrant Armenian community centres, schools and churches.

In her letter to the Prime Minister, Mayor Giles-Gidney reaffirmed Willoughby City Council's position and endorsed the 1997 resolution on the Armenian Genocide passed by the New South Wales State Parliament. The letter also condemned the atrocity, recognized that Assyrians and Greeks were also subjected to genocides by the same perpetrators, and noted the importance of learning from history. Mayor Giles-Gidney acknowledged the ANZAC prisoners of war who witnessed and saved Armenian victims, as well as the significant humanitarian relief effort by Australians.

Mayor Jerome Laxale's letter to the Prime Minister called upon "the Australian Government to recognize the Armenian Genocide", as his Council has unanimously done on several occasions at the joint initiative of Councillor Sarkis Yedelian – himself a grandchild of Armenian Genocide survivors.

ANC-AU Executive Director Haig Kayserian thanked Mayor Giles-Gidney

and Mayor Laxale for their continued support and solidarity with the Armenian-Australian community, and acting on their councils' Armenian Genocide recognition motions by calling upon the Federal Government to do the same.

"Recognition of the Armenian Genocide is important for Armenian-Australians in our pursuit for justice and for humanity in its pursuit for prevention of such crimes, therefore to have Mayors Giles-Gidney and Laxale amplify calls on our Prime Minister is both sincerely appreciated by our community and simply the right thing to do," said Kayserian.

In 2005, the City of Ryde formally recognized the Armenian Genocide, with a memorial plaque honoring the 1.5 million Armenians who were killed in forced deportations and massacres. Council reaffirmed its position in 2018 by passing of a resolution recognizing the Genocide and again in 2021 by unveiling an Armenian Khatchkar (cross-stone) in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

In 2015, Willoughby City Council also passed a motion recognizing the Armenian Genocide, becoming the second Australian local government to accurately characterize the events as Genocide.

The New South Wales and South

Australian communities has over 40 Federal parliamentarians as signatories, collectively calling on the Australian Government to recognize the genocides committed against their ancestors, while the Prime Minister Scott Morrison has also received letters calling for his accurate recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides from Mr. Trent Zimmerman MP and Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP – as co-convenors of the Armenia-Australia Inter-Parliamentary Union, Senator Janet Rice – as the Foreign Affairs Spokesperson of The Australian Greens, Hon. Jonathan O'Dea MP and Hon. Walt Secord MLC – as co-convenors of the New South Wales Armenia-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group, the New South Wales Young Liberals, the New South Wales Ecumenical Council representing 16 churches, Christian Charity Barnabas Fund Australia, Kurdish Lobby Australia, Arab Council of Australia, as well as from numerous prominent academics.

The Jewish-Australian community also added their voice to these calls, with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Zionist Federation of Australia, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the editors of Australian Jewish News calling on Australia and Israel to recognize the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides.

Hungary's Deputy PM Makes Surprise Visit to Armenia

(RFE/RL) - Hungary's Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen joined a group of Hungarian academics in visiting Armenia on June 25 despite the virtual absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Armenia froze those relations in 2012 after the Hungarian government controversially extradited to Azerbaijan an Azerbaijani army officer who hacked to death a sleeping Armenian colleague in Budapest in 2004. The officer, Ramil Safarov, whom a Hungarian court sentenced to life imprisonment in 2006, was pardoned, rewarded and promoted by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on his return to Azerbaijan.

The Hungarian government claimed to have received prior assurances by Baku that Safarov would serve the rest of his life sentence in an Azerbaijani prison.

Yerevan dismissed that explanation. Then Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian alleged at the time that corruption was at the root of the



"Azerbaijani-Hungarian deal."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban travelled to Baku and met with Aliyev two months before Safarov's release.

Semjen is the first senior Hungarian official known to have visited Armenia since then. He arrived with a delegation of officials from Hungary's Pazmany Peter Catholic University received by Catholicos Garegin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

In a statement on the meeting, Garegin's office referred to Semjen and the other visitors as "pilgrims." It said Garegin discussed with them "inter-church relations," the Hungarian university's cooperation with Armenia's Khachatur

Abovian State Pedagogical University and issues relating to Hungary's small Armenian community.

Semjen, who holds a doctoral degree from Pazmany Peter Catholic University, also held a separate meeting with Garegin. It was not clear if the Hungarian vice-premier will meet any Armenian government officials during the trip.

Unlike other European Union member states, Hungary has openly supported Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed that support three days after the outbreak of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war last September.

Visiting Baku in March this year, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto discussed with Azerbaijani officials Hungarian companies' participation in the planned reconstruction of areas around Karabakh retaken by Azerbaijan during and after the six-week war.

Matenadaran hosts second Congress of French language teachers in Armenia



The second Congress of French teachers in Armenia organized by the Embassy of France in Armenia and the Association of French teachers in Armenia kicked off at Matenadaran on June 22 in the presence of Ambassador of France in Armenia, Mr. Jonathan Lacôte and the Deputy Minister

of Education, Ms. Zhanna Andreasyan.

About a hundred French teachers from Armenian schools and universities, from private and associative centers came together at the initiative of the Embassy to discuss the challenges and opportunities present in the field.

The Ambassador thanked the Director of Matenadaran, Mr. Vahan Ter-Ghondyan, for hosting the congress in this symbolic place of "writing and memory."

Ambassador Lacôte welcomed the cooperation between the Embassy and the Ministry of Education, noting that educa-

tion plays an important role in the bilateral relations between France and Armenia.

Jonathan Lacôte recalled that the Embassy is working to create a French cultural center in Armenia – a French Institute, which would be hosted within the future Aznavour Center. The Ambassador hailed the success of the French Lycée Anatole France and the French University in Armenia, which, he said, are steadily developing.

Welcoming the participants, the Deputy Minister of Education, Ms. Zhanna Andreasyan, presented the new curricula and standards for language teaching in Armenia, and stressing that her Ministry attached particular importance to the quality of teaching of foreign languages.

Step Toward Home: Diaspora youth explore Armenia

Over 100 youth from eight countries have arrived in Armenia as part of the *Step Toward Home* program of the Diaspora High Commissioner's Office.

During the first three days young people visited the Matenadaran depository of ancient manuscripts, Oshakan, AGBU Armenian Virtual College, and Tsitsernakaberd. They are taking courses of Armenian, Armenian song and dance.

The program's participants viewed and learned about the Matenadaran's ancient



manuscripts, some of which were donated by Diaspora-Armenians.

In Oshakan, they visited the St. Mesrop Mashtots Church named after the inventor

of the Armenian alphabet who is buried there.

At the AGBU Armenian Virtual College, the Diaspora-Armenian youth learned about available technologies for studying Armenian language and Armenian Studies.

Afterwards, the participants visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial, where they laid flowers in honor of the 1.5 million Armenians martyred during the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

Museum of the Bible to launch online exhibition on churches of Artsakh

The Museum of the Bible will launch a new online exhibition documenting the sacred sites of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

The museum offers to explore the histories of these remarkable sites, now threatened by cultural erasure, and meet some of the people who live and worship there and hear them tell their stories.

The launch of *Ancient Faith: The Churches of Nagorno-Karabakh* includes a virtual panel discussion consisting of

esteemed scholars, preservation experts, and church representatives.

Topics of discussion will encompass the church sites and architecture, the risks they currently face, and the need to preserve these irreplaceable churches and this material culture.

Christina Maranci

Christina Maranci, the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architectural History and chair of the department

of the history of art and architecture at Tufts University, and the Very Rev. Shahe Ananyan, priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church and director of the Ecumenical Department of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, will speak at the event.



Sergei Parajanov's 'Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors' named best film in the history of Ukraine's cinema

Sergei Parajanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* has been recognized the best film in the history of Ukrainian cinema, AnalitikaUA.net reports.

The *Flights in Dreams and in Reality*, by Roman Balayan was 7th on the list.

The survey was conducted between June and October, 2020. Ninety-seven respondents were offered to name the best Ukrainian films without restrictions on types, genres, timing and year of release.

In total, 186 films were mentioned. The top 100 included 68 feature films, 26 documentaries, 6 animation films.

According to the source, the Union of



Armenians of Ukraine is actively working towards the popularization of national historical values. Chairman of the Union of Armenians of Ukraine Vilen Shatvoryan says science and culture are traditionally in the center of attention.

"Every historical and cultural object is important for us, we are proud of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Armenians of Ukraine, and we do our best to preserve and popularize this legacy," he says.

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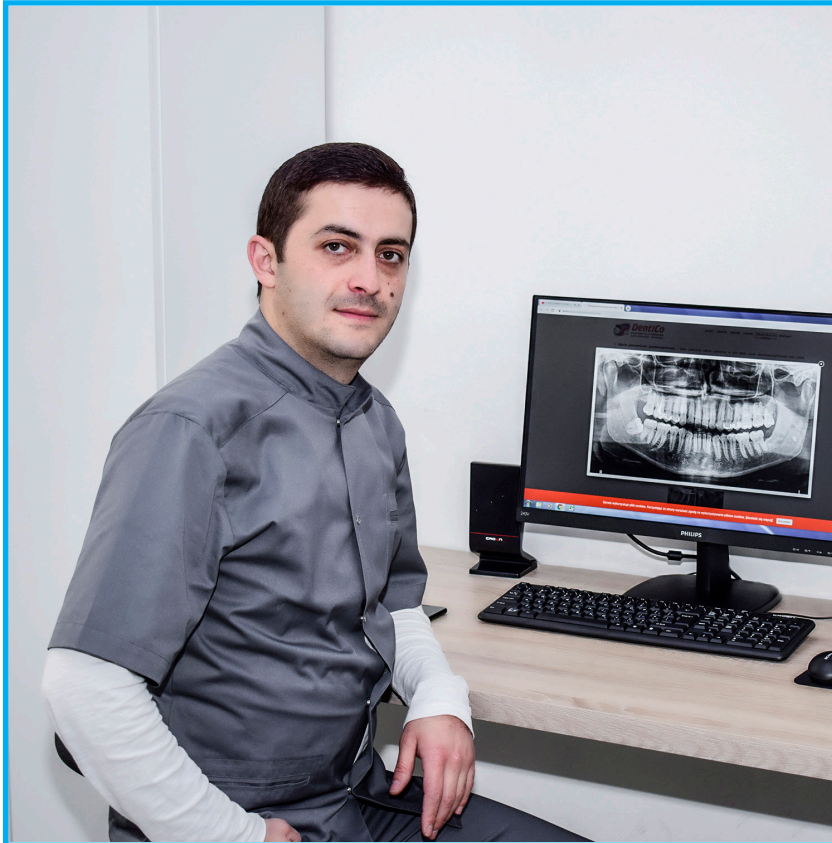
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The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող
ԼՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

Ծավալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպաքանակը՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

President of the NT Media Holding:

TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN

Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:

GAYANEH ARAKELYAN

Director of the weekly:

MARINA HARUTYUNYAN

Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**

Computer Design: **Ashot Khalapyan**

Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604

Գրանցման վկայականի համար՝
03ԱՑՑՑ68, տրված 11.01.2013թ.
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

E-mail: contact@nt.am

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