

**Azerbaijan's threats to bomb Armenian nuclear power plant a crime against humanity – PM**



*Armenia -- Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan speaks at a meeting with Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan (L) and top Armenian army generals, Yerevan, July 18, 2020.*

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Ministry of Defense on July 18 where he met with the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, headed by Defense Minister David Tonoyan and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Onik Gasparyan. Minister of Foreign Affairs Zohrab Mnatsakanyan attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, PM Pashinyan said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the operative situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Before that, he noted that the military-political situation in the region has become tense due to Azerbaijan's aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

The Prime Minister reminded that last Sunday, July 12th, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched an attack to occupy the "Anvakh" border position of the Armenian Armed Forces. "For a full understanding of the situation, it should be noted that this position is located on our side of the border, in the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, and Azerbaijan's actions can only be described as aggression," he said.

At the same time, he noted, the Azerbaijani armed forces targeted the villages of Movses, Aygepar, Chinari, Nerkin Karmiraghbyur in the Tavush region with artillery fire and drones, causing significant damage to civilian infrastructure and homes.

"We have evidence – factual data – that the Azerbaijani armed forces deployed artillery and armored vehicles between the houses and in the yards of the village of Aghdam in front of Chinari. It was from there that our villages were targeted in order to

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## PM Nikol Pashinyan meets with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on July 17 met with President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk.

Greeting Armenia's Prime Minister, the President of Belarus referred to the ongoing cooperation and the bottlenecks faced in the Eurasian Economic Union. "Frankly speaking, there are numerous problems in the EAEU due to the fact that we have not implemented our agreements. There are still several barriers left to the point that the business community has started to voice concerns about that. It seems that there are no borders at all, but the tensions do not die down on the borders. You can see that yourself. There is much to be done in this respect. I would like very much to see that the meeting of the Prime Ministers has solved some of those problems. The Eurasian Intergovernmental Council was a real step toward deepening relations in the EAEU zone: at least, I would like it to be so. There was a serious exchange of opinions. As far as I can understand, you were the driving force of that meeting," the President of Belarus said, noting that Belarus and Armenia are facing nearly the same problems in the EAEU.

"We rely on the real economy; we do not have large resources like some of our partners. Perhaps, the Kyrgyzs are in the



same situation, although it may be easier for them to some extent. We do not have hydrocarbons, which makes us work harder to keep abreast. Even with falling prices, Kazakhstan and Russia have adequate alternatives. Yet, we do not have such opportunities," Alexander Lukashenko said.

Thankful for the warm reception, Prime Minister Pashinyan said, "I am pleased to see you again. We had not met for a long period due to the pandemic. I hope we will be back to the normal state of affairs and will meet on a regular basis. At today's meeting, we listened to the report on lifting the unnecessary barriers. And I can say that we have quite good results. I can cite Armenia's example. We had to remove two obstacles, and we have already done so. One of the decisions has come into force, while the other has been adopted but will

become effective later. Russia, too, has removed two barriers just like our other partners.

We heard a report on ten barriers, eight of which have already been removed in principle. Very important issues were discussed regarding the participation of EAEU enterprises and organizations in government tenders. Either in this matter, we came to a pretty good decision. I am sure that today's meeting will help us address this issue. It was an effective meeting. Yes, it lasted longer, but I think that it was worth working on projects considering that issues of common concern were to be solved. I know that there are issues important for Belarus, and there are issues that are of paramount importance to Armenia. I feel that if we manage to preserve the political will at this level, all issues will be solved. We have just to work to that effect."

The interlocutors discussed other issues of mutual interest, exchanged views on the possibilities for overcoming the coronavirus pandemic.

Touching on the recent escalation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Prime Minister Pashinyan gave details to his Belarusian colleague.

## Azerbaijan's threat to withdraw from negotiation process neither surprising nor impressive – Armenian MFA

Azerbaijan's threat to withdraw from negotiation process neither surprises nor impresses us, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan said in a statement.

The comments come after the statements recently made by the Azerbaijani leadership regarding the peace process.

"The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has three parties that have signed the ceasefire agreement. In the past, Azerbaijan negotiated with both Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia. Then Azerbaijan refused to negotiate with Nagorno-Karabakh.



And now if Azerbaijan refuses to negotiate with Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is not clear with whom this country will negotiate. We don't know whether

Azerbaijan intends to resume negotiations with the Nagorno-Karabakh side or not," the Spokesperson said in comments to Interfax.

"Recently, Azerbaijan has been trying to resort to the threats of war presented in different wrappings. If this recent threat to withdrawal from the negotiations is yet another manifestation of those threats, then it neither surprises nor impresses us," she added.

Naghdalyan stressed that Armenia rejects the language of threats and stands for a peaceful solution of the issue.



present our retaliatory actions as an attack the civilian population,” Pashinyan stated. “It is very important to emphasize the meaning and context of the events that are taking place, because the offensive actions of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces must have an explanation; therefore, it is important to answer the following question: What does the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan want to do and why?,” he added.

In recent months, the Prime Minister said, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s long-standing military rhetoric has intensified. He is threatening to solve the Karabakh conflict by force more aggressively, openly demonstrating his intention to abort the talks within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group chairmanship.

“Against this background, he was developing the thesis about the strength and invincibility of the Azerbaijani army, trying to justify the failure to direct the billions of dollars spent under the pretext of the development of the army to the welfare of the Azerbaijani people over the past one and half years,” Pashinyan noted.

“The military-political leadership of Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated that it is waiting for an order from Ilham Aliyev to resolve the Karabakh conflict by military means. This continuous rhetoric had to get some expression. Naturally, against the background of the aggressive statements of the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan, the vigilance and attention of the Artsakh Defense Army should have been doubled. Therefore, Azerbaijan decided to strike in the direction we least expected,” he added.

According to the Prime Minister “there

was one goal: to materialize the myth of the invincibility of the Azerbaijani army with an unexpected blow, to crush the moral and psychological positions of the Armenian side with a military success, and to attack the Republic of Artsakh in that situation.”

“The Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, however, showed an exceptionally high level of combat readiness, not only ensuring

the inviolability of Armenia’s borders, but also shattering the myth built by the incumbent President of Azerbaijan for a decade and a half about the combat effectiveness of the Azerbaijani army,” he stressed.

At the same time, he added, with these actions, Azerbaijan caused significant damage to the countries, which it has extensive military-technical cooperation with, because during this last week our Armed Forces have damaged weapons, which are considered invulnerable all over the world.

“The biggest surprise in this story, however, is the contemptuous attitude of the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan towards the lives of its own soldiers, who are being sent to predictable death even when the task set before them is clearly unachievable,” he added.

“The provocation undertaken by the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan also has a much broader geopolitical context. The Azerbaijani propaganda, in an attempt to cover up its own failure, has begun to develop a thesis that the Armenian armed forces are positioned to disrupt and destroy the international energy infrastructures originating in Azerbaijan. This is done to present Armenia as a global threat,” Nikol Pashinyan continued.

“But the most important proof of the absurdity of this idea is that Armenia theoretically had the opportunity to take such an action even before the events of last week. But it has never had such a goal; it has never been on our political agenda, we never sought to create economic, political, military-political or security instabilities in the region and in the world,” he stated.

“Our task is to ensure our sovereignty, our borders, the security of our country and people, and to promote global security. It has become clear in recent days that Azerbaijan poses a threat not only to Armenia but also to global security. An Azerbaijani official stated a few days ago that their country could launch a missile attack on Metsamor nuclear power plant,” Pashinyan added.

He stressed that Armenia is capable of ensuring its own security, including the Metsamor nuclear power plant, but this is a statement that should be unequivocally considered a crime against humanity, because such an action is a threat to commit terrorism against humanity, it should be given an appropriate international response and probe.” As for the next steps, the Prime Minister said “we must all get out of the vicious cycle of mere statements about ceasefire violations: an international system of reliable ceasefire monitoring needs to be established.”

“And next, the negotiations held in the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing format should be continued, and Azerbaijan should finally adopt a constructive position,” he added.

And finally, PM Pashinyan expressed his satisfaction with the high efficiency of the Armenian Armed Forces and stated that the Government’s army development policy, including the development of the military-industrial complex, has fully justified itself. There is no doubt that we will continue along this line. As I have said on many occasions, the development of our armed forces is not a priority for us, but the priority of priorities.”

“And I would like to address a crucial issue that we have raised in this context, that is, the return to the state of ill-earned money obtained through corruption, and the investment of that money for the development of Armenia’s Armed Forces. This objective has not been met in full as of yet. But we will be consistent on this way: specific legal mechanisms have already been established to that effect, which will come into force in the near future,” he concluded.

## Pashinyan says 3rd party is interested in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in a meeting with Mishustin

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan is confident trade turnover volume between Armenia and Russia will soon be restored, Pashinyan said during his meeting with Prime Minister of Russia Mikhail Mishustin in Belarus.

Pashinyan noted that as a result of coronavirus, a number of potential meetings with the Russian PM had been cancelled.

“Of course, there are many issues on the agenda of the two countries. I think our allied and strategic relations are consistently developing”, Pashinyan said.



According to Pashinyan, 2019 was a very productive year, since for the 1st time trade turnover between the two countries had reached over 2 billion USD and a 14% increase was recorded in 2019. “This pace was continuing in January-February, but unfortunately, it failed to continue as a

result of coronavirus. But I am confident we will restore it very soon”, Pashinyan said.

During the meeting PM Pashinyan also referred to the situation on Armenia-Azerbaijan border. “It happened so that our meeting coincided with the tensions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. I hope you are informed that the Azerbaijani forces have decided to attack Armenia (the reason is not known yet). I will present you the current situation.

I want to emphasize that these developments are motivated by a 3-rd side and it’s still necessary to understand who has such interests and for what reason. It’s also a very important issue”.

## Azerbaijan’s aggressive policy aimed at escalating tensions leads nowhere – Armenian PM tells EAEU leaders



Azerbaijan’s aggressive policy aimed at escalating tensions in the region leads nowhere, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the sitting of the Eurasian Inter-Parliamentary Council.

“As you know, Azerbaijan, ignoring the numerous calls for an end to armed conflict in a pandemic, including those reflected in the Joint Statement of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on April 14 and

Pashinyan said. “Unfortunately, provocations continue to this day, contributing to the preservation of tension and unpredictability of the situation,” he stated. According to him, Azerbaijan’s aggressive

the statement of the UN Secretary-General on March 23, undertook military action in the north-east direction borders of Armenia. The armed forces of Armenia could not but respond to these provocative actions of Azerbaijan,” PM

policy aimed at escalating tensions in the region leads nowhere.

“It will not be able to break the determination of our people and force us to make unreasonable and unilateral concessions in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. A forceful solution to the conflict does not exist and there is no alternative to peaceful negotiations, which is in the interests of all the peoples of our region,” the Armenian PM said.



## Putin ‘very concerned’ By Armenian-Azeri clashes



*Russia – Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via teleconference at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow, July 17, 2020.*

The White House on Wednesday said that its policy on the Armenian Genocide, or “Meds Yeghern” as it is being called, “remains unchanged.”

“The President has reaffirmed that the Meds Yeghern was a historic atrocity and tragedy for the Armenian people, as well as our commitment to stand with the Ar-

menian people,” a White House official told Asbarez.

The clarification of the policy comes two days after the White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany referred to the “Armenian Genocide Memorial” during her daily briefing on Monday when decrying protesters desecrating memorials across the country resulting from the nationwide social justice movement.

“There seems to be a lack of understanding and historical knowledge when the Armenian genocide memorial, remembering victims of all crimes against humanity, including slavery, is vandalized,” McEnany said Monday in an apparent reference to the recent defacing of the Armenian Genocide memorial in Colorado, which is on the grounds of the state’s capitol and was vandalized along with other monuments there during last month’s social justice protests.

## Azeri FM sacked for ‘meaningless’ talks with Armenia



(Reuters) - Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev sacked his foreign minister on July 16 after accusing him of “meaningless negotiations” with neighboring Armenia amid a flare-up in hostilities between two South Caucasus countries.

fought a war in the 1990s over the mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Aliyev said on Wednesday Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov did not do enough to try to resolve the conflict.

Eleven Azeri soldiers and a civilian and four Armenian servicemen have been killed in border clashes between two former Soviet countries that

“What was the foreign minister doing? Where he was? We were all at work after the July 12 events ... and I could not find him,” Aliyev told a government meeting of the start of the clashes on Sunday.

“... Unfortunately, recently our diplomacy is not compatible with the successful development of our country. In some cases, it is engaged in meaningless work, meaningless negotiations.”

Mammadyarov, 60, has been foreign minister since April 2004.

According to the president’s decree, former Education Minister Jeyhun Bayramov was appointed to succeed Mammadyarov.

## EAEU proved its viability in crisis situations – Armenian PM says in Minsk

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) proved its viability during the coronavirus crisis, showing how important role it places in the life of its member states, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in his remarks at the session of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Belarus.

Pashinyan said this is the first meeting after a long pause because of the novel coronavirus. “In this respect I want to praise the fact that our Union has resisted this trial with an honor. It proved its viability in crisis situations and showed how important role it plays in the life of our countries. The Commission has not stopped its activity at any moment. And the sessions of the Commission’s Council, the Intergovernmental council and the Eurasian Supreme Eco-



nommic Council, which were held online, not only allowed us to exchange information about the situation in our countries, but also enabled to continue the discussion of issues and adoption of decisions which were very vital for the future of our integration”, the Armenian PM said.

He said the cooperation within the Union would not have been so effective if there wasn’t the firm friendship between the

member states and their peoples. “For me it’s very important to highlight the high level of cooperation and mutual support we felt these days by all our partners of the Union, with no exception. I want to specifically thank the Russian Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for the quick response to all issues, in particular for the uninterrupted transportation communication of Armenia with Russia. This had a strategic significance for our economy”, Pashinyan said.

He also highlighted the work of Belavia airline and reminded that during these months the company continued operating regular flights to Armenia, despite the fact that all the remaining airlines have suspended their operation in Armenia.

## PM Pashinyan refers to gas pricing during Eurasian Intergovernmental Council session

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan expressed satisfaction over the works done in the direction of establishing common gas market in the Eurasian Economic Union and hoped that the future constructive works in this direction will be accelerated based on mutual understanding and respect for the interests of all EAEU-Member States, during his speech in Belarus at the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council session.

“I would like to dwell on the following agenda issues: First, I wish to state my overall satisfaction with the work done to create a common gas market for the Eurasian Economic Union, which is reflected in the report.

We are hopeful that the ongoing constructive efforts will be stepped up based on mutual understanding and respect for the interests of all EAEU-member States. Transition to market-based pricing mechanisms and setting tariffs (prices) for gas transmission services in the common market are among the topical objectives of this Program. We are confident that these principles constitute a key prerequisite for attaining the goals

of the unified gas market formation”, Pashinyan said.

Referring to the development of agro-industry and industrialization, Pashinyan said that Armenia highlights having large projects in the mentioned spheres that would imply interstate cooperation, mutual deliveries of raw materials or finished products, as well as projects aimed at developing and implementing innovative technological solutions.

“As regards the Union’s industrialization map, it may become a mechanism to further stimulate cooperation and promote joint import-substitution projects, as well as to assess the potential of member countries’ industries. The industrialization map will help us make a better use of resources in each member state and support those enterprises cooperating with their partners from other member states”, Pashinyan said.

## Armenian-made drones effectively used in action for first time

During the provocations by Azeri military forces, the UAVs made by Armenian companies were enabled for the first time in the field, with excellent level of efficiency, Armenia’s High-Tech Minister Hakob Arshakyan says.

According to him, Armenian engineering companies have designed many types of surveillance, fire control

and strike UAVs for various defense needs and purposes, the Minister said.



## IFC, EBRD, and EU Partner with Fotowatio renewable Ventures to support first solar plant in Armenia



IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the European Union (EU) have signed on to support the development of the first utility-scale solar power plant in Armenia, which is also the first for the Caucasus. The 55-megawatt power plant facility, located in Mets Masrik municipality, Gegharkunik Province, will boost Armenia's supply of renewable energy and will help the country reduce its reliance on imported fuels.

The plant is being developed by Fotowatio Renewable Ventures (FRV), part of Abdul Latif Jameel Energy, a global leader in utility-scale renewable energy projects. The company will receive a \$35.4 million debt financing package consisting of two \$17.7 million long-term loans, one each from IFC and the EBRD. The project will also receive a €3 million investment grant from the European Union, mobilized by the EBRD. The IFC financing package includes an \$8.9 million loan from IFC's own account and an \$8.9 million loan from the Finland-IFC Blended Finance for Climate Program.

The Masrik solar plant is expected to generate more than 128 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually at a competitive tariff of €4.19 per kilowatt-hour. The electricity will be sold under a power purchase agreement to Electricity Networks of Armenia, a utility responsible for distribution of electricity. The project will displace the release of 40,000 tons of carbon emissions annually. Right now, nearly 70 percent of Armenia's

electricity generation depends on imported fossil fuels. As the country's demand for electricity grows, renewables are expected to provide a sustainable and low-cost alternative source of energy and the

Masrik plant is designed to set an example for the rest of the Caucasus.

"Armenia has great potential when it comes to the development of renewable energy, in particular solar energy, and the country is a strategic priority for FRV," said Mikel de Irala, Managing Director, Middle East and Africa, FRV. "The financial close of our first solar project in the Caucasus-region is a milestone for FRV and it allows us to expand our reach and continue leading the utility-scale solar power industry worldwide. In connection with this project, we are extremely proud to contribute to the country's sustainable economic growth, local generation of wealth and local employment, thus helping to build a more sustainable future."

Aida Sitdikova, EBRD Director, Energy Eurasia, Sustainable Infrastructure Group, said: "EBRD is delighted to support this landmark project, which builds on our active policy engagement and investments in the Armenian power sector since 1993. Following EBRD's financing of electricity networks, private generation, and privatizations, we are pleased to provide financing for this first utility-scale solar project, as we are working with authorities on developing further renewable auctions in wind and solar. We are deeply grateful to our partner, the European Union, for co-financing this remarkable project with us."

"The Masrik Solar Energy Project will play a fundamental role in Armenia achieving its energy and climate objectives in line

with the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also has the potential to provide a range of new jobs, create new industrial opportunities in the region and contribute to economic growth, just as the EU promotes with the new European Green Deal," said Andrea Wiktorin, EU Ambassador, EU Delegation to Armenia.

Cheryl Edleson Hanway, IFC's Regional Senior Manager for Infrastructure and Natural Resources, said: "Energy security is critical to business activity, which is why supporting Armenia's renewable energy plan is an important part of IFC's mission. The Masrik solar project is an additional milestone in IFC's support of Armenia's efforts over the years to attract private sector investment to power generation. It is the first step in the country's ambitious solar power plans and will serve as an example to be followed by many more projects in the years to come."

The project—which includes the development, construction, and operation of a 55-megawatt power plant and a nine-kilometer transmission line—is the first competitively-tendered solar-photovoltaic project in Armenia. The World Bank helped the government prepare the project and provided transaction advisory support. The bidding process, backstopped by the Scaling up Renewable Energy Program and the World Bank, was highly competitive.

The Masrik project comes after 15 years of collaboration between the World Bank Group and Armenia that has helped implement sweeping reforms to deliver more efficient power supply to consumers. IFC, the EBRD, and the EU have supported Armenia's power sector through attracting private investment, bringing in global experience, and supporting the newest technologies. The increase of renewable energy capacity represents an important objective under the EBRD's and IFC's country strategies for Armenia.

## Turkey cannot play a role in Nagorno Karabakh peace process – Armenian MFA

Turkey cannot be involved in any international processes related to the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

‘On July 12, following the attack by the Azerbaijani armed forces in the direction of the Tavush region of the Republic of Armenia, the leadership of Turkey, including the President, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defense issued a number of official statements.

“These statements not only contain commitment of unconditional support to Azerbaijan, but also exhibit clear regional ambitions towards the South Caucasus, which the President of Turkey, along with other officials, attempt to substantiate by referring to Turkey’s “historic mission” in



the region,” the Foreign Ministry said.

“Invoking its historical mission and ethnic or religious affiliations, Turkey has already destabilized the situation in a number of neighboring regions: The Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa causing immeasurable sufferings to the peoples of those regions,” the Ministry added.

It noted that in the 21st century, Turkey builds its policy in the region on the traditions of kinship, justification of the Armenian Genocide and the impunity of that crime.

“Turkey’s provocative and biased stance seriously undermines the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and proves that Turkey cannot be involved in any international processes related to the conflict and first and foremost within the OSCE framework,” the statement reads.

With its approaches, Turkey is a security threat for Armenia and the region, and broad regional and international cooperation is needed to counter it”, reads the statement.

## Co-Chairs welcome willingness of Armenian and Azerbaijani FM's to hold substantive negotiations

After the meeting of the OSCE Minsk Group on July 16, its Co-Chairs (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) and Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (PRCIO) Andrzej Kasprzyk, released the following statement:

In accordance with the information available, the situation on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border remains relatively calm as of early morning 15 July. The Co-Chairs and the PRCIO



welcome the decrease in hostilities and appeal to the sides to make every effort to continue de-escalation.

The Co-Chairs urge the sides to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and attempts

to change the situation on the ground. The Co-Chairs continue to stress the necessity of building up an atmosphere conducive to the restoration of the peace process.

The Co-Chairs welcomed the confirmation of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan to hold substantive negotiations on crucial aspects of a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement as soon as possible and emphasized the importance of returning OSCE monitors to the region as soon as circumstances allow.



## Interview of Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Foreign Minister of Armenia, to Al Jazeera

Question: Civilians are being caught up in this fighting. What efforts have been made to put a stop to it?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: This was a very dangerous development of the past days since 12th of July, when there was an attempt of infiltration by the Azerbaijani forces to the Armenian territory, to the north-east of Armenia and the use of large caliber artillery has amplified the dangers of escalation which we have now. The attempts to de-escalate are a priority now. This is what we are working for, this is what we are working with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, which comprises France, Russia and the US. This is the priority now.

We need to de-escalate, because while Armenia has full capacity to defend, Armenia remains the security guarantor to Nagorno-Karabakh, but war is not the alternative. There is no alternative to the peaceful settlement. We remain committed to this and we will work towards the de-escalation and the establishment of the environment, the atmosphere, which helps peace and which favors the negotiating process.

Question: What kind of detail can you give us about the efforts to try to de-escalate this? What is the process that is happening and how fast is it going to happen given the fact that people are dying for this fighting is carrying on?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: I should say that it is encouraging that we have a relative calm over the past, I think, now it's about 12-14 hours. We are in constant touch with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, with Russia and other partners, United States and France. We are trying to work out the modalities that will sustain this relative calm and will re-establish the ceasefire regime – as you mentioned, a regime, which has been established in 1994, fully in force



since then, the document signed by Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. And our priority now is to re-establish fully the ceasefire regime.

Question: It was being reported that Armenia had asked the CSTO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is led by Russia, to meet on this and take action on it, but the response to that seems to have been somewhat lackluster. What was Armenia's reaction to that response?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: Well, I would not agree with that assessment. Armenia is a member of the CSTO, it's a Collective Security Treaty Organization, and with our partners we are obviously raising the questions which concern the territory of the CSTO, of which Armenia is a part. We are briefing our partners about the developments and we will raise the question as we did necessary to raise the question of collective action now. Obviously as an organization, with its Charter, we have all the instruments in our hands but we assess the situation, assess the acts as per the situation. We are in contact, we are in touch and we are consistently in dialogue with our partners in the CSTO.

Question: There were talks in 2019 to try to find some sort of solution to this situation. It's reported that Armenia's Prime Minister at the time has said that "Nagorno Karabakh is Armenia", and he wanted to change the negotiation format of the talks,

which essentially allegedly undermines the process of the talks. How much responsibility does Armenia carry for the failure of the stalling of these talks?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: Again, I would rather disagree with such assessment, because the Prime Minister of Armenia has been very clear in the context of Armenia being the security guarantor for Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia bearing responsibility for the security, very physical existential security of our compatriots in Nagorno-Karabakh.

We remain fully committed to the peace process and obviously Armenia has its development agenda, Armenia has its agenda to secure the prosperity of its nation. Nagorno-Karabakh, its population is under conditions, which are not favorable. Every attempt is made to cut them off from the world, and this is not acceptable and Armenia obviously provides every support that Nagorno-Karabakh people can live in security, and in peace, and in development. It is in that context.

However, I would underline that the Prime Minister of Armenia has been very consistent in his statements that the peace is possible when we achieve such a compromise, such a solution, which is acceptable to all people – to the people of Armenia, to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and the people of Azerbaijan. And we are still awaiting for a reciprocation of such an approach, a compromise-based approach from the leadership in Azerbaijan, because now what we are facing is the maximalist approach, which ignores the basic fundamental priorities of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

So, our position is a position of seeking and establishing a solution which is acceptable to all and we are working in that direction.

## Azerbaijanis instigate violence at London's Armenian Embassy

Asbarez – A violent scuffle broke out Friday in front of the Armenian Embassy in London, when a group of Azerbaijanis, who had gathered there to protest what they called “Armenian Aggression” began hurling insults to Armenian community members and throwing punches at them.

According to Annette Moskofian, the chairperson of the Armenian National Committee of London, the community became aware of the Azerbaijani protests through social media, promoting members of the Armenian Youth Federation, the Armenian Community Council of London and Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, the Primate of the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland, to go to the Embassy building, located in the Kensington neighborhood, to prevent any potential damage that might have been caused by the demonstrators.

The Azerbaijani protesters, who had gathered across the street, immediately began



hurling vulgar insults and cussing at the Armenians, who were chanting “we want peace,” Moskofian told Asbarez on July 17.

The Azerbaijani protesters crossed the street and began attacking the Armenians and fighting ensued in the street, which, according to Moskofian, the police was unsuccessful at containing and controlling the crowd. She explained that there were not enough police officers at the scene, prompting her to urge them to call for back. She explained that once more officers arrived that Azerbaijani protests were separated

away from the Armenians and the Embassy building.

The police told Moskofian that the entire incident, including the Azerbaijani protesters' violations were recorded and would be available to the Armenian Community Council.

The protest was dispersed after an hour.

There is a large Azerbaijani community in London, mainly comprised of students and their families, Moskofian explained, adding that their activities and the Azerbaijani lobby in general is well funded by Baku.

A day earlier, a motion to condemn “Armenian Aggression” was introduced in Parliament, but if failed, only garnering four votes in favor. The ANC of London is calling on the community to contact their representatives in Parliament to urge them to condemn Azerbaijani aggression, in a campaign fittingly called “change the narrative.”

## Kindergarten in Armenian village comes under Azerbaijani shelling

The kindergarten in the village of Aygepar in Armenia's Tavush came under shelling, as Azerbaijan resumed the hostilities this morning, Governor of Tavush province told a briefing on July 16.

He said the villages of Aygepar, Nerkin Karmiraghbyur, Chinari, Movses and Tavush and the city of Berd have been targeted.

More than ten houses, as well as some infrastructures, including a water pipeline in Tavush-Nerkin Karmiraghbyur section has also been damaged, the repairing is under way, the governor said.



“All civil defense groups of the region were mobilized early in the morning. Intensive work is under way in all directions of civil defense to ensure the security of our residents,” Chobanyan added.

He said a commission has been set up to assess the damage, which will on daily basis provide information on the amount of damage, and the reconstruction of the damaged houses is expected to start tomorrow.

New houses will be constructed in place of the ones not subject to reconstruction, the Governor said, calling on residents who have seen their houses damaged, to rest assured that their housing issues will be solved in the shortest terms.

Hayk Chobanyan said there is no panic in the region, the situation is stable and under control.

## U.S. House to vote on Speier Amendment restoring military aid parity to Yerevan and Baku

The U.S. House of Representatives is set to consider an amendment offered by Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) early next week to restore the principle of parity to the level of U.S. military aid provided to Armenia and Azerbaijan, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

In recent years, the Administration has materially breached this principle, providing Baku with more than \$100 million in military assistance, while allocating Armenia less than \$5 million in security assistance during this same period.

“We strongly support Congresswoman Speier’s principled, powerful and timely stand for parity in U.S. military aid to Armenia and Azerbaijan,” said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “Parity promotes stability, helps maintain the regional military balance, and strengthens America’s hand as an honest broker in the peace talks. The current, reckless imbalance in U.S. military aid only emboldens Azerbaijan to further escalate its aggression against Armenia and Artsakh – as we saw this week, during the most deadly Azerbaijani attack since 2016.”

The Speier Amendment (Amendment



#330 to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act – H.R. 6395), has been cosponsored by Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Brad Sherman (D-CA).

Amendment #330 would restore the long-standing policy of parity that had been in place for decades, which was reversed by a State Department waiver in 2018 under Section 333 Building Partner Capacity funding. In 2018 and 2019 combined, Azerbaijan received over \$100 million in security assistance under Section 333, while Armenia did not receive Section 333 funding. Funding under Section 333 is the main driver of the large disparity in the amount that Azerbaijan and Armenia receive in total assistance from the U.S.

While Section 333 funding can only be used for defensive, not offensive purposes,

it allows Azerbaijan to re-allocate money that it would have budgeted for defensive purposes towards offensive efforts, including deploying U.S.-trained forces for offensive purposes against Armenia and Artsakh.

In addition to the Speier Amendment, the House will also consider the Sherman Amendment (Amendment #66 to the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act – H.R. 6395), offered by Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA). This measure would mandate that no funds authorized by this bill are used to transfer defense articles or services to Azerbaijan unless the President certifies to Congress that the transfer of such defense articles or services does not threaten civil aviation.”

The government of Azerbaijan has issued a standing threat to shoot down any civilian airplanes traveling between Armenia and Artsakh’s Stepanakert airport. This measure is cosponsored by Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), and TJ Cox (D-CA)

Other Azerbaijan related amendments may also be voted on when the House considers the NDAA bill as early as the morning of Monday, July 20th.

## Issues of Azerbaijan’s threat to target Armenian NPP raised with IAEA Director General

On July 17, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the Vienna International Organizations, Ambassador Armen Papikyan met with the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi.

The Ambassador briefed IAEA Director General on the situation created as a result of the hostilities unleashed by Azerbaijan against Armenia since July 12 and the extremely dangerous threats voiced by official Baku in that context.

In particular, Ambassador Papikyan expressed Armenia’s deep concern over the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry’s threat to



launch a missile strike on the Metsamor nuclear power plant, noting that such statements simply violate all norms of international humanitarian law and pose a serious challenge not only for Armenia’s security but for the entire region.

“Azerbaijan’s condemnable statement on targeting the nuclear power plant is nothing but an open manifestation of state terrorism.

Ambassador Papikyan expressed hope that within the framework of its mandate, the IAEA will express its position on such irresponsible and dangerous statements by Azerbaijan.

Expressing concern over the developments, the interlocutors once again stressed the imperative of security and safety of the Armenian nuclear power plant, in that sense emphasizing the effective cooperation between the agency and Armenia, which has been developing for years.

## I stand with my fellow Armenians: Kim Kardashian condemns Azerbaijan's unprovoked attacks

TV personality and entrepreneur Kim Kardashian has condemned the Azerbaijani attacks against Armenia amid the global pandemic and called on her supporters to contact the Congress.

“Despite the ongoing global pandemic, Azerbaijan has violated the UN’s appeal for global ceasefire by unprovoked attacks against the Republic of Armenia,” she said in a Twitter post.

“Civilian structures in Armenia have been targeted, and Azerbaijan has now threatened to bomb the nuclear power plant in Armenia,” she added.



In the meantime, she continued “congressional amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act will be voted next week to ensure that the US does not enable Azerbaijan with military aid that would be used against Armenia and Artsakh.”

She stressed the need for the international

community to pay attention and intervene now with such political and diplomatic measures to prevent unnecessary escalation and the loss of human life.

“I stand with my fellow Armenians and pray for those that are involved in recent tension on the border of the country. I urge for a peaceful resolution for these unprovoked attacks during this already very difficult pandemic,” Kardashian stated.

She asked millions of social media followers to contact Senators and Representatives to support Armenia.

## Armenian Government Cautiously Upbeat on Curbing COVID-19

The Armenia government hopes to significantly reduce the daily number of new coronavirus cases by September and reopen schools as a result, according to Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan.

Speaking in the parliament on July 13, Avinyan said Armenia’s COVID-19 infection rate has already fallen in recent weeks thanks to more people wearing face masks in public and practicing social distancing.

“In case this trend continues, it is projected that we will have 140 new infections a day in early September,” he said during a parliament session that discussed the government’s decision to extend the coronavirus-related state of emergency in Armenia by another month.

But he also cautioned: “The projections are very tentative and do not mean that the downward trend will necessarily continue



because there are many factors at play.”

The daily number of COVID-19 cases registered by the Armenian health authorities has averaged between 500 and 600 for the past month after growing steadily since mid-April.

The authorities have reported a total of 32,490 cases and 581 deaths caused by the virus as of Tuesday morning. The official toll does not include the deaths of 184 other people also infected with the disease. The Armenian Ministry of Health says that they

died primarily because of other, pre-existing conditions.

Avinyan said that the government would have re-imposed a nationwide lockdown had the spread of the virus continued unabated this summer. The government now hopes that it will be safe enough for schools, theaters and other cultural institutions to reopen their doors this autumn, he said.

Liana Torosyan, a senior official from the Armenian National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, likewise spoke on July 14 of a “certain stabilization” of the coronavirus situation in the country.

“If this trend continues ... we will have satisfactory results in September,” Torosyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian service. “But let’s wait and see how the situation develops and whether we all will be following the safety rules.”

## Members of U.S. Congress condemn Azerbaijani attack on Armenia



Senate and House Leaders Condemn Azerbaijan's Attacks Against Armenia

Congressional condemnation of Azerbaijan's latest attack against Armenia continued to grow today, as reports emerged from the region of more than 15 casualties during the worst cease-fire violation since the April, 2016 Azerbaijani incursion against the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"Azerbaijan is once again attempting to start a war with Armenia," said Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone (D-NJ). "Azerbaijan's constant use of caustic rhetoric aimed at Armenia and Artsakh are part of a concerted effort to provoke another conflict."

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) shared his support for Armenia's right to territorial integrity and Artsakh's calls for self-determination. "I stand with Ar-

menia as they protect their territorial integrity. Azerbaijan and Turkey must respect the Armenian/Azeri border, respect the aspirations of the Armenian people of Nagorno Karabakh, and should deescalate this conflict immediately," stated Sen. Markey.

Central California Congressman TJ Cox (D-CA) noted "Azerbaijan's recent attack on the region of Tavush, Armenia is a violation of the cease-fire agreement between the nations, as well as a result of Azerbaijan's refusal to allow international monitoring of their borders. The US must take a firm stance in condemning this threat to peace." Rep. Cox cited his support for an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, led by Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), that would prohibit funds from being used to send defense articles or services to Azerbaijan.

Senior House Foreign Affairs Committee Member Brad Sherman (D-CA) noted, "I am very concerned by Azerbaijan's provocations along the #Armenian border. Such actions put the lives of soldiers and civilians at risk. Unfortunately, these actions do not come as a surprise given Azerbaijan's increasingly bellicose rhetoric towards Armenia & #Artsakh."

House Select Committee on Intelligence Chair Adam Schiff (D-CA) was the first U.S. House member to condemn Azerbaijan's attack. "I am very concerned by the recent provocative and destabilizing actions taken by Azerbaijan in recent days along the Armenian border, including the shelling of Armenian soldiers," stated Rep. Schiff. "These acts risk the lives of soldiers and civilians and raise the danger of a spiraling conflict that could be devastating to the region, particularly in the midst of a global pandemic. These actions must also be viewed in context of Azerbaijan's consistently bellicose rhetoric towards Armenia and Artsakh, and its refusal to allow international monitoring of their borders. I urge the State Department to make clear to all parties the need for restraint and diplomacy, and reduced tensions," concluded Rep. Schiff.

"The ANCA welcomes these powerful Congressional condemnations of Azerbaijan's attack," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian, "We thank each of these Senate and House leaders and look forward to supporting legislative opportunities in the coming days and weeks to more forcefully challenge Baku's escalating aggression."

## Senators Menendez and Booker condemn Azerbaijan's attack against Armenia

Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker have condemned Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia and called for cutting-off all U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan.

Full text of their joint statement is below:

"We are deeply concerned about the reports of violence along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Azerbaijan, with Turkey's support, has chosen a path of violence instead of the peaceful, negotiated process spearheaded by the OSCE Minsk Group. We urge a stop to the fighting



and immediate resumption of peace talks.

"Baku's recent actions have only exacerbated violence and hindered efforts

to reach lasting stability and peaceful end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, forcing us to once again raise serious questions about our current levels of military assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan. Providing nearly \$120 million in security assistance to a regime that flouts a peace process co-chaired by the U.S. is absurd. We call on the Trump administration

to immediately halt this assistance and fully respect Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act."

## 190-year-old Armenian church in northern Turkey becomes storage space



A 190-year-old Armenian church in the northern province of Çorum in Turkey is being used as a storage space as owner cannot obtain permission to make alterations. The church is believed to be constructed by a large Armenian family who lived in the area until the early 20th century, Duvar reports.

The nearly two centuries old Saint George Armenian Church in the northern Turkish province of Çorum will be used as a storage space after its owner could not obtain permissions from the Culture and Tourism

Ministry to complete renovations.

Known by locals to have been constructed in the early nineteenth century, the structure belongs to a local family by the name of Şamlı.

Part-owner Ferhat Şamlı said that he inherited the property from his family, but cannot alter or renovate the structure as he has not received the necessary responses from the Culture and Tourism Ministry.

An official from the ministry who wished to remain anonymous said that there is no official record of the property being used as

a church, but added that locals believe that this was its historical use.

“I think this was a church, that’s what we all know: It was built in the Ottoman times and was used as a church for a while,” said a local business owner.

Former residents of the northern province, the Kiryopi family is suspected by locals to have built the 190-year-old chapel.

The Kiryopi family lived in downtown Çorum until the beginning of the 20th century, and are rumored to have left for Istanbul and Ankara after the foundation of the republic in 1923.

One of the wealthiest local families of their time, the Kiryopi family is said to have owned thousands of hectares of land and to have raised animals.

The deliciousness of the family’s milk, yoghurt and cheese is still spoken of even in nearby towns.

The family were also known for their goodwill, and stories remain of them voluntarily filling up gas lamps on the streets.

The family is said to have built Çorum’s first apartment building, which stood at around four or five stories.

Located in the city’s Çepni Neighborhood, the apartment building stands close to the Saint George Armenian Church.

Descendants of the family are thought to be buried near the local Çomar Reservoir.



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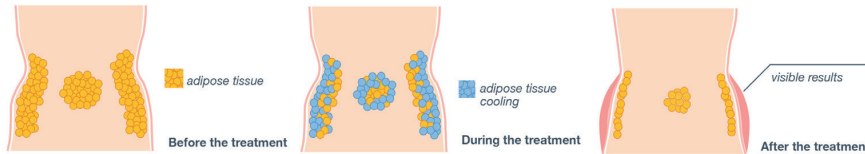
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