

## PM presents Armenia's digital agenda at Almaty forum



PRESS OFFICE OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA  
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Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan made a speech at the “Digital Agenda in Globalization Era” conference in Almaty. Introducing Armenia’s digital agenda, the Prime Minister emphasized that digital transformation is not only a step toward technological progress, but also the only opportunity to become a country with efficient governance and economy in a short period of time, and there are no alternatives here.

“The IT sector is actively developing in Armenia. Over the past few years we have had about 25% growth in this field. We have not yet summed up last year’s results, but we expect 28-30% growth,” Karen Karapetyan said. In his speech, the Premier touched upon the educational sphere,

noting that chess, robotics and information technologies are taught at all the schools of Armenia, even in distant regions. In addition, business and finances will be taught from this year on.

Karen Karapetyan spoke about the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, noting that in 2016 it was recognized as the best innovative school in the world, and the Center is currently expanding both within and outside the country. The Paris City Hall recently announced the opening of such a center.

Coming to Armenia’s digital agenda, the Prime Minister said that digitization is gaining momentum in 6 main directions: digital governance, digital skills, infrastructure,

cyber security, private sector and institutional bases.

“In order to effectively manage and coordinate the national digital agenda, the Armenian government established the Digital Armenia Foundation in 2017, and developed Armenia’s digital transformation agenda for 2018-2030. In accordance with the digital agenda, we intend to achieve 100% and 80% growths respectively in public-private sector cooperation and digitized public-private sector services by 2030,” Karen Karapetyan said.

The conference was attended by heads of government from Eurasian Economic Union-member countries, international experts and IT specialists.

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## Karabakh peace should be at the forefront of Armenia's foreign policy – President

The peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict will remain at the forefront of Armenia's foreign policy agenda, President Serzh Sargsyan said at a meeting with the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"We'll continue to support the efforts towards peaceful settlement within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship format. Our positions have considerably strengthened thanks to the consistent work carried out over the past ten years. We have managed to fix the right for self-determination as a basic principle of conflict settlement," President Sargsyan said.

He added, however, that Armenia's foreign policy should not be limited to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

"National interests of the Republic of Armenia should always be at the core of our foreign policy, and Armenia's active involvement in urgent issues on global agenda will have a positive impact on promoting our views," Serzh Sargsyan stated.



The President called the attention of the Foreign Ministry leadership to the important events expected this year – the Francophonie Summit, the events dedicated to the 100th

anniversaries of the Republic of Armenia and the heroic May battles, celebrations of the 2800th anniversary of Yerevan and the Second Global Forum against Genocide.

## Armenian FM urges not to look for "logic" in Azerbaijani statements

The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs will visit Armenia, Azerbaijan and Artsakh in the coming days, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian told a press conference on January 29.

Speaking about the agreement on the expansion of the mission of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Minister said "Armenia has always been a proponent of it.

"It is the only mission of an international community in the conflict zone and if the intensity of the monitoring increases, it will contribute to the mitigation of tensions and help observe the

ceasefire agreements reached in 1994 and 1995," Minister Nalbandian noted.

He reminded that an agreement on expanding the monitoring mission was reached in Vienna, but was not implemented because Baku created obstacles.

"In Krakow we agreed in principle to make one step forward to add seven more people to Andrzej Kasprzyk's team. Both Armenia and Minsk Group Co-Chairs announced this in respective statements, while Azerbaijan keep silent," he added.

As for the creation of an investigation mechanism, Minister Nalbandian said the issue remains on the agenda. He hopes such mechanism will be created in the future, because it can be an important tool not only in the sense of monitoring of incidents, but also for reducing tensions.

The Foreign Minister urged not to look for logic in the statements of Azerbaijani officials, even if they use the work "logic."

The Minister said that according to Azerbaijani logic, they reach agreement, and step back, turn down the proposals of the Co-Chairs, agree to mitigate tensions and resort to new provocations.

According to Edward Nalbandian, Azerbaijan has a "unique" logic, which does not match that of the international community.

Minister Nalbandian also stated that the Co-Chairs have declared on many occasions that the Karabakh conflict should be solved on the basis of principles and norms proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs as a "package." Attempts to single out any of the principles will make it impossible to solve the issue, he said.

Minister Nalbandian added, however, that the "package solution" implies a step-by-step implementation.





## Armenian Cabinet to meet only in closed session



Journalists will no longer be able to watch cabinet meetings in Yerevan live, under a new bill approved by the Armenian government on February 1.

The bill drafted by the Justice Ministry specifies the structure and powers of governments to be formed after Arme-

nia becomes a parliamentary republic in April. It also stipulates that cabinet meetings must be held behind the closed doors. The prime minister could only make "a part of a meeting" open to the press, it says.

The draft also bars government mem-

bers from publicizing details of any issue discussed by the government without the premier's permission.

Armenian reporters have for years been able to watch weekly cabinet sessions through monitors placed in a press room of the prime minister's office. Justice Minister Davit Harutiunyan claimed that this has deterred ministers from voicing critical opinions about decisions or policies proposed by their colleagues.

"It's one thing when you argue with your wife within your family," he told reporters. "But if a third person watches you, your dispute will have a different nature."

Harutiunyan said he does not know of any other country where cabinet meetings are open to the media. He argued that even in established Western democracies governments meet in closed session.

Accordingly, the minister insisted that the new rules planned by the government are not undemocratic.

## Next Armenian PM to run National Security Body



The next Armenian prime minister will head a Security Council tasked with formulating the country's policy on national defense, according to a government bill approved on January 25.

The bill drafted by the Justice Ministry stems from Armenia's transformation into a parliamentary republic which will be completed when Presi-

dent Serzh Sargsyan serves out his final term on April 9. The parliamentary system of government will make the prime minister, not the president of the republic, the commander-in-chief of the Armenian Armed Forces.

The bill approved by Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan's cabinet underlines the next premier's status as the country's most powerful official. The

Security Council to be chaired by them will be more powerful than a similar presidential body currently advising Sargsyan on national security.

It will comprise the deputy prime ministers, the ministers of defense and foreign affairs, the heads of Armenia's police and National Security Service and the chief of the Armenian army's General Staff. Significantly, Armenia's next president as well the parliament speaker and the Constitutional Court chairman will not sit on the council.

Under the bill, the council will be empowered to determine "the main directions of defense policy." It will act in a more advisory capacity on broader security matters.

The Armenian parliament, which is controlled by the ruling Republican Party (HHK), will almost certainly pass the bill before the end of Sargsyan's decade-long presidency.

The outgoing president has still not publicly clarified whether he will become prime minister in April. He has not ruled out such a possibility.

## Erdogan recalled the history of Kurds and Armenians



It seems that the forecasts of IA REGNUM regarding the development prospects of the Turkish military operation “Olive branch” in the north of Syria towards Afrin-Manbij are realized again. The Americans rested. They refuse to support Ankara in its fight against Syrian Kurds. They say they will continue the fight against IGIL (an organization whose activities are banned in the Russian Federation), which, in their opinion, is not over. In direction of Afrina, the advance of the troops of the Syrian government army continues. At the same time, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the Turkish Armed Forces “will release Manbidge from Kurdish militants, with whom the US military is deployed”.

According to the New York Times, “there is a growing likelihood of a military conflict between Turkish and US troops if Ankara moves eastward” – and this “circumstance may become unprecedented for NATO”. Washington said Turkey continues to discuss “Operation Olive Branch” issues at all levels, insisting on “time and scope limitation” and focuses on the fight against LIH (organization, whose activities are prohibited in the Russian Federation). As many Turkish experts note in this connection, Turkey found itself in Syria “in a war in which there are other wars”. However, the Syrian Kurds, unexpectedly for Ankara, can become one of the challenges of Turkey’s foreign policy.

Thus, the Air Force, commenting on developments in northern Syria, recalled the time when this territory was under French mandate. The British corporation points to the military map of Syria drawn up in 1935 by the French, which marks the religious and ethnic communities that existed before “how France transferred part of the Mediterranean coast – Alexandret Sanjak” to Turkey. The Turks renamed this territory “Hatay”, its population then included about 50% Arabs, 40% Turks and 10% Armenians. “Now it’s an area in southern Turkey, but Syrian maps still designate the border with Khatai as temporary,” says the Air Force. – Afrin, next to the hut to the east and Idlib province in the north – one of the victims’ claims on territorial control: Turkey is again trying to get out of the area of the local Kurds, which considers like terrorists.

Today, we can say the following about the Armenians of Kha-

tai. Many of the five thousand people who lived there left their villages and settled in Lebanon, establishing Anjar there. Related raises Kuwaiti edition Al Rai Kuwait: “In Syria, in the context of bizarre international discord, hushing the problem of minority rights and insufficient to ensure their security in the Armenian history of the Ottoman Empire is repeated in Afrin with the Kurds. And under the previous historical pretext: the fight against terrorism! Even if all the regional forces oppose the division of Syria, which suffers from internal wars, this “counter” should in no way be a pretext to exterminate the people “. Thus, as we can see, forces have emerged in the West and in the Middle East that consider it necessary for world politics to return to the relatively recent tragic pages of regional history. In addition, Erdogan himself started getting skeletons from the first historical firms.

He said that “if we stop at this decisive moment, as we try to rebuild the world and our region, then we will have to face the Treaty of Sèvres”. Recall that the Treaty of Sèvres was signed in August 1920 between the government of the Sultan of Turkey and the victors of the First World War, the Allied States. Turkey has recognized Armenia as a “free and independent state”, however, within the other borders in which Armenia is now located in Transcaucasia. The treaty did not exclude the emergence of the Kurdish state in the Middle East. And recently Erdogan, during his visit to Greece, questioned the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, which established new borders for Turkey, formally formalizing the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. And in this historical context, in a totally different light, the factor of the noticeable intensification of French politics in the Syrian direction begins to appear.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned Ankara that his operation “Olive Branch” against Syrian Kurds “should not become an opportunity for an invasion of the country”. Perhaps Macron wants to make Paris in the Middle East first among those involved not only in resolving the Syrian problem. According to the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet, this may prepare Ankara for many unexpected geopolitical surprises, especially if the French president enters the game, with Kurdish, and the Armenian map. The Turkish community of experts has long recognized that “the Kurdish question in the Middle East is historically linked in one way or another to the problems that the Armenian community and Syrian Orthodox have encountered in the past”. And what’s next?

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said “unexpectedly” that “the intensification of military actions in the de-escalation zone of the Syrian region of Idlib will lead to a new influx of refugees from this region”. In turn, the International Crisis Group (ICG) issued a report stating that “violence in Turkish cities between host communities and Syrian refugees has increased dramatically”. Qatar’s foreign minister, Muhammad bin Abdurrahman al-Thani, warns that IGIL (an organization whose activities are banned in the Russian Federation) is able to “raise its head”. And the New York Times is confident that “the war in Syria will last until 2022”. There is so much to come.

*Stanislav Tarasov, Regnum*



## Macron pledges to add Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day to French calendar



Emmanuel Macron was the guest, on January 30, at the dinner of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF). The French president promised to include a Day of Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in the calendar. It was a campaign promise, AFP reported.

“The fight for justice and recognition is our fight, we are leading it by memory by supporting the Republican calendar of a day for the commemoration of the genocide,” said the head of state, who stressed that it was “es-

sential that the national representation recovers from this subject in the coming months”.

Emmanuel Macron, who will visit Armenia in October at the Francophonie Summit in Yerevan, was the guest of honor at this dinner hosted by André Manoukian, which brought together 500 people from the Armenian community in a Paris hotel. Also present were the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, the President of the Île-de-France region Valérie Pécresse, the French elected officials of Armenian origin as Patrick Devedjian or

the Mayor of Lyon Georges Képénékian, the Turkish deputy of Armenian origin Garo Paylan (HDP), as well as Jewish community leaders.

CCAF Co-Chairs Ara Toranian and Mourad Papazian asked Emmanuel Macron to condemn Turkey, which they accused of threatening minorities, including Armenians, and also urged him to visit Nagorno-Karabakh.

“On Turkey, I engaged in a regular and demanding dialogue with President Erdogan, sometimes safe from the media,” replied the head of state. “On terrorism, the migration crisis,” we need allies, including those who do not share our values,” he said.

The president defended his policy of dialogue with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whom he received at the Elysee Palace in early January, as well as his neutrality in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. “I will not accompany you to Karabakh” because “I will lose all the use France has done for this conflict as a mediator.”

“I hope to come with you the day we have settled all this,” he concluded, to applause.

France “supports the courageous voices that rise,” the President argued. He warmly greeted Garo Paylan, whom he promised to support “so that his voice can win.”

## Armenia expects European Parliament to ratify new deal by 2019



Armenia expects the European Parliament to ratify the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement this year.

“We expect that the European Parliament will ratify the new Agreement with Armenia until the European Parliament elections, 2019,” Chairman

of the Armenian National Assembly’s Standing Committee on Foreign Relations Armen Ashotyan said at a meeting with Cristian Dan Preda, Coordinator of the Foreign Affairs of the EPP Faction of the European Parliament.

The interlocutors also referred to the challenges of the regional security and the effective cooperation between Armenian and European lawmakers.

Within the framework of the visit Armen Ashotyan had meetings with Sajjad Karim, Co-Chair of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) and Sandra Kalniete, Vice Chairwoman of the EPP Political Group of the European Parliament.

## PM instructs to remove customs clearance barriers imposed for encumbered property or accounts

A Cabinet sitting was held on February 1, chaired by Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan. Before proceeding to the agenda, the Prime Minister issued a number of instructions

The Premier gave the heads of central executive agencies and Marz governors 20 days to present to the public detailed reports on the activities and priorities carried out in 2017, as well as the tasks set for 2018, including the proposed deadlines and expected results.

Karen Karapetyan's next instruction had to do with the results of his participation in the World Economic Forum in Davos. In particular, the Chief of Government Staff, the Executive Directors of the Center for Strategic Initiatives and the Development Fund of Armenia were tasked to forward the outcome report and general information on his visit to the authorities concerned within a seven-day period.

In order to eliminate the customs clearance barriers applicable in case of a person's property or money arrest, the Premier instructed the Minister of Justice and the Chairman of State Revenue Committee to work out and submit to the Government Staff within 20 days a proposal to that effect.

"In fact, I cannot see the point of applying import restrictions against those

individuals whose bank accounts are under arrest," the Prime Minister said. Karen Karapetyan's fourth instruction was about the activities of the State Register of Legal Entities. "As a result of the reforms implemented in the field of state registration of legal persons, registrations are made in short terms and mostly online, which was mentioned as a positive achievement in the 2018 Doing Business report. At the same time, it is necessary to simplify the bases of all decisions made by the State Register of Legal Entities, rule out the practice of demanding a copy of the license from business entities, as well as to facilitate access to and use of digital instruments," the Head of Government said. He gave the Minister of Justice two months to develop and submit proposals and recommendations on simplifying the registration process, substantiating the grounds for refusal of reorganization requests, facilitating the liquidation procedure and the exercise of other rights, reducing CJSC registration deadlines and so on.

The meeting approved a number of Government's legislative initiatives. In particular, the bill "On organization and activities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia" defines the Government's composition and structure, streamlines the formation of the govern-

ment, the terms of office, the powers and the reshuffling of Cabinet members, and the resignation procedure. The bill also streamlines the authorities vested in the prime minister, deputy prime ministers, government members and ministers. Provisions are envisaged for Cabinet sittings and the decision-making process. There are specific provisions regarding the incompatibility of government members' position and responsibilities, as well as on the guarantees for the exercise of their activities.

The draft law "On public administration authorities" and the related laws provide the general description of State governance bodies and the order of their formation. They define the range of the agencies subordinated to the government, the prime minister and the ministries, and prescribe a unified procedure to follow in appointing heads and deputy heads of public agencies, set minimum requirements for the statutes of public administration bodies.

The package of amendments to the Land Code and two other laws provides that the Government of the Republic of Armenia shall be vested with the authority to define the order of prime grounding (soil replenishment) for road construction purposes. A number of loan programs are currently being





implemented in Armenia, which need prime grounding for road construction. Surveys have shown that the prime soil is part of the land cover and the subsoil use regulations can not be applied to the latter. Note that the terms and conditions for soil replenishment are not regulated by the applicable legislation.

Touching upon the legislative initiative, the Prime Minister stated in part, "Within the framework of the North-South Road Corridor Investment Program, both the contractor and the donor organization raised the question of getting materials necessary for road construction, which calls for a prompt and operational solution. In particular, this issue has been raised by the Bank and the Chinese Ambassador."

To that end, the Premier suggested holding a joint discussion with Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of International Economic Integration and Reforms Vache Gabrielyan, involving representatives from the ministries of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources, Transport, Communication and Information Technologies and Nature Protection and, on behalf of the Government

of the Republic of Armenia, answer the questions raised by our partners from Asian Development Bank and report back the results

Zinuzh (Armed Force) Media State Institution will be established with a view to tackling the bottlenecks and implementing a professional reform in the media field. Zinuzh Studio, Armenian Soldier and House of Officer State institutions will unite and operate in a single area.

The government's next decision provides that the State Revenue Committee's Prerelease Control Department will be reorganized and merged with the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Ararat customs authorities. The decision is aimed at maximizing the process of transporting goods through Armenia's customs border.

The Prime Minister highlighted the decision and noted, "It is a very bold and correct measure. We thereby give our confidence to business, allowing them to move freely on the border. This shows that the SRC has the needed strength and control mechanisms to prevent and detect any breach of our arrangement."

In order to improve the family vulnerability assessment system and increase the effectiveness of social programs aimed at raising livelihood (family allowances, welfare benefits, and emergency care), the Government recommends alternative options for assessing the income and socio-economic conditions of target families by getting information about their members' credit record and actual savings.

At the end of the meeting, the Prime Minister once again referred to the reports due from government departments and Marz governors. "Each agency, each governor must submit a report in a clear numerical way, in a language understandable to the citizen in order to report on what has changed, what foreign languages have been introduced as mandatory subjects in schools, how much construction permits have been granted and how many square meters have been developed in construction projects. It is important for us to understand citizens' concerns and respond to their needs and queries. Please take this quite seriously and with a sense of utmost responsibility," the Prime Minister said.

## Armenia looks to ratify new EU deal in April – FM



Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian has said Armenia could ratify the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the Europe-

an Union in April.

"The agreement is an important milestone in the relations between Armenia and the European Union," Minister Nal-

bandian told a press conference on January 29.

He said "today we focus on the process of ratification of this important document."

"Armenia has declared it is taking steps to have the document ratified by April," Minister Nalbandian noted.

He voiced hope there would be no obstacles to its ratification by EU member states.

The Foreign Minister said the temporary implementation of the agreement will start after it is ratified by Armenia. "This may possible start from May 1 or June 1," Edward Nalbandian stated.

The Foreign Minister said Armenia will maintain involvement in a number of programs with the EU, including Horizon 2020, COSME, Creative Europe, Common Aviation Area, etc.

He also attached importance to the efforts for further deepening of relations with EU member states.

## Police News



By  
**Gourgen James  
Khazhakian**

**Chief  
Correspondent**

### Tribute to the memory of Aram Manukyan

On 29 January, the 99th anniversary of the death of the state and national figure who was the Minister of Internal Affairs of the First Republic of Armenia (1918-20) **Aram Manukyan** was marked.

Led by the Police Chief Colonel-General Vladimir Gasparyan, members of the Police Board, high-ranking officers, politicians and guests presented their gratitude to the memory of Aram Manukyan who was a legend during his lifetime. Tribute to the patriotic figure, due to whose efforts self-defense of Van was organized and so the Armenians of Vaspurakan (Western Armenia) were saved from the massacre, a man who made the great contribution



to the proclamation of the First Republic of Armenia.

Aram Manukyan assumed the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Government of the First Republic of Armenia. And the choice was not accidental: he was the one who was capable of keeping order and tranquility in the country.

And, in Vladimir Gasparyan's words, for the current shift of the police that (the police) passed a century-long road, the way of Aram Manukyan is a message of the state worship, and the requirement ...

### Deepening Armenian-Iranian Cooperation

On Tuesday, 30 January Head of Police of the Republic of Armenia, Police Colonel-General **Vladimir S. Gasparyan** received the delegation led by the Am-

bassador of the two countries and assured of the Armenian side's readiness to further deepen the ties which will facilitate combating crime with common efforts.

Ambassador Seyyed Kazem Sajjad expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and highly assessed the work done by the Armenian Police in the field of ensuring safety of tourists under the conditions of tourism expansion.

During the meeting the two sides discussed issues related to the further development of cooperation, exchange of experience, joint struggle against crime and other issues of mutual interest.

### Clarification

RA National Assembly Deputy **Nikol Pashinyan** has posted on his Facebook page that Italian Police has besieged his ho-



bassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Armenia Mr. **Seyyed Kazem Sajjad**.

Welcoming the guests, Vladimir Gasparyan expressed satisfaction with the well-established cooperation between the police structures

tel room in Rome to arrest him.

According to Pashinyan, the fact that he was declared wanted by Interpol in 2008 has served as a basis for the above-mentioned police operation.

We would hereby like to inform you that after Nikol Pashinyan presented himself in the RA law enforcement authorities on 01.07.2009, on 21.07.2009 the INTERPOL NCB in Armenia informed the INTERPOL General Secretariat to cancel the searches for the person in subject, after which all the member states of INTERPOL were informed about it by the General Secretariat.



## **Geopolitical Situation in the Caucasus after NATO Deputy Secretary General's visit**

**Expert assessment of the Academy of Geopolitics**

We already wrote about important discussion which took place between **Deputy Secretary General of the NATO - Ms. Rose Gottemoeller Vs Honorary Consul of Macedonia - Arayik Sargsyan. Rose Gottemoeller Vs Arayik Sargsyan: Deputy Secretary General of the NATO Vs Honorary Consul of Macedonia. Yerevan, Armenia. 18.12.2017.** - see please:

<https://twitter.com/Gottemoeller/status/949262377035489281> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3HBWckhj1A>

In Brussels in 2018 The summit, scheduled for July, offers the Alliance NATO - Georgia a new level of NATO - Armenia relations. 2018 NATO summit will be held in summer, from which Georgia and Armenia are waiting for a great deal.

Georgian Foreign Minister Janelidze said after meeting with NATO Secretary General, the progress made during the meeting gives grounds to assume that the Assembly will be successful for Georgia.

"At the Warsaw Summit, it was unanimously stated that Georgia has all the practical tools necessary for NATO membership and we use them," he said.

Moscow is concerned over the expansion of Georgia's military cooperation with the United States and NATO. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin and Georgian government spokesman Abashidze said in a statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Moscow believes that Tbilisi's course threatens normalization of bilateral relations.

Earlier, the American analytical Heritage Foundation published a report in which it is believed that Georgia may be offered membership in accelerated mode. "In Brussels in 2018, The summit, scheduled for July, suggests the Alliance to raise NATO-Georgia relations to a new level, fixing strong commitment of Georgia to full membership," the report says.

Our academics are concerned that Georgia's accession to NATO will mean an inevitable war with Russia. Georgia may be proposed to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty by supplementing Article 6 and temporarily excluding Abkhazia and Ossetia, occupied

by Russia, from Article 5. This provisional measure will function as long as the internationally recognized area of Georgia has not been restored by peaceful and diplomatic means.

Georgia's accession to NATO in the face of US confrontation can be perceived as a break in Russian policy. Russia, trying to keep the post-Soviet space in its sphere of influence, loses one after the other. Georgia can become the most painful blow.

The West, apparently, has changed the tactics of Russia. It is possible to accelerate the accelerated integration of the countries into the western blocs, which Russia considers its influence zone. Particularly, the European Union intends to propose to join the six Balkan countries at once to fight against Russia's influence and migration flow (Look at our analysis on this matter: "Russia in a geopolitical paradigm of Macedonia" - <http://www.nt.am/en/news/235730/> and <http://www.prezidentpress.ru/news/4563-rossiya-v-geopoliticheskoy-paradigme-makedonii.html>)

If the Balkan countries become the EU, and Georgia, NATO member, the ring around Russia will be tightened.

In case of possible Georgia's accession to NATO, Armenia may be regarded as Russia's "last outpost".

If Georgia joins NATO, relations between Armenia and Georgia may change. So far, the "pipes" linking Russia and Georgia are mainly "Armenian", the gas pipeline and the Lars highway. Will these roads be closed in case of tough confrontation between Russia and Georgia? On the other hand, in this case, the closer relations between Georgia and Armenia can be established, given that their interests are Russia's interests.

In the background, it was interesting to note that in May this year Armenia will hold NATO exercises before the Brussels summit. It should be added that from March 2th Armen Sargsyan, British special services agent becomes as the new President in Armenia and the picture will be completed.

Arayik Sargsyan, academician, Honorary Consul of Macedonia, President of Academy of Geopolitics, the Representative of AIC in the Countries of the Middle East.

## **BBC Radio 3 airs episode on Armenian resistance of Musa Dagh**

BBC Radio 3 aired an episode about the Franz Werfel's "40 Days of Musa Dagh" on January 28. In the episode Maria Margaroni explores the life and words of the Bohemian Jewish writer Franz Werfel and his great novel – the epic of the Armenian people, "The 40 Days of Musa Dagh."

In 1933 Franz Werfel's epic novel "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" was published to huge acclaim. The story of a guerilla army of Armenian villagers holding out against overwhelming Turkish forces on the mountain of Musa Dagh in 1915, before evacuation by French forces to Port Said in Egypt. The mass murder of more than a million Armenians during this period had led to an international outcry during the war and, after 1919,

the beginning of a campaign of denial by the Turkish government that succeeded the collapsing Ottoman Empire.

Germany, former ally of the Ottoman empire, also rejected any guilt by association but the assassination of Talaat Bey, former Ottoman Minister of the Interior and the key architect of the Armenian extermination, who was gunned down in Berlin in 1921 by an Armenian, caused a furor. The subsequent trial became a major media event and exposed the knowledge of the German government about the massacres. The fate of the Armenians was widely discussed and many on the right explicitly linked them with the 'Jewish question' as Hitler rose to power.

Franz Werfel, already a famous poet and

well-known author, touring the Middle East in 1929 with his new wife, Alma Mahler, encountered pathetic Armenian refugee children. Their plight was the spark for his vast work. For both Werfel and its many readers "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" was not just an epic tribute to Armenian resistance and survival but a warning. Werfel's works were burned and banned after Anschluss and in 1938 he and Alma Mahler fled to America. Hollywood's attempts to film it soon after publication began a decades-long campaign of long-distance censorship by the Turkish government. Maria Margaroni tells the extraordinary story of an extraordinary book and its impact as Europe descended into barbarism.

## President visits Homeland Defender's Rehabilitation Center



disabled servicemen, shall address social integration, education and employment-related issues. Furnished with state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment, the center is the only such institution in the region.

Armen Muradyan thanked Serzh Sargsyan for the initiative of creating the center, his firm belief in its feasibility and the opportunity to serve the State and the people through this noble and highly responsible initiative.

The Rector said that the President's July 12, 2017 visit was a breakthrough in the implementation of the project which, according to him, added momentum to the activities underway at that time.

President Sargsyan thanked all those who had helped materialize this crucial idea and, above all, the servicemen under treatment for great devotion and selfless service to Homeland. The President urged the disabled

President Serzh Sargsyan visited the Homeland Defender's Rehabilitation Center at Heratsi Hospital Complex N1, located in Yerevan's First City Hospital, which was established as a result of cooperation between the Yerevan State Medical University and the Ministry of Defense with the support of the President of the Republic of Armenia, numerous benefactors and citizens.

Accompanied by Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan, YSMU Rector Armen Muradyan and a number of philanthropists, the President of Armenia toured the rehabilitation center to inspect the work done within a very short period of time following his previous visit - in just a few months. The Head of



State got acquainted with the center's ongoing activities and development plans. Serzh Sargsyan talked with the Homeland defenders being treated at rehabilitation center.

According to YSMU Rector Armen Muradyan, the center will be functional as an integrated rehabilitation complex, which in addition to providing medical services to



soldiers to demonstrate the same will in the course of treatment and do their utmost for soonest possible rehabilitation together with the center's professional team.



## New biography portrays Kirk Kerkorian as 'The greatest deal maker'



**Harut  
Sassounian**

William Rempel, a veteran investigative reporter, just wrote a comprehensive biography of industrialist and philanthropist Kirk Kerkorian published by Harper Collins. The book is titled, "The Gambler: How Penniless Dropout Kirk Kerkorian Became The Greatest Deal Maker In Capitalist History."

Rempel has meticulously pieced together the details of Kerkorian's phenomenal and extremely private life through war records, business archives, court documents, recollections and recorded memories of longtime friends and associates.

Although both are Billionaires and casino owners, Kerkorian and Donald Trump had very little in common. Rempel wrote: "Fellow casino owner Donald Trump called Kirk 'the king' and told friends: 'I love that guy.' However, Kirk was Trump's polar opposite in style and temperament. Kirk was soft-spoken and understated with a paralyzing fear of public speaking. He wished, he said, that he 'could talk like Trump.' Kirk also wanted his name on nothing — not on buildings, not on street signs, not even on his personal parking spot at MGM Studios. And Kirk never defaulted on a loan and always regarded his handshake as a binding contract."

When Kerkorian's new multi-billion dollar 'CityCenter' hotel-casino complex at the heart of Las Vegas ran into financial trouble in 2009, Rempel wrote that Trump initially expressed some sympathy: "I love Kirk and hope it works out for them." Trump then turned around and called the 'CityCenter' project "an absolute catastrophe" during an interview on CNN's Larry King Show. Trump later stated: "It will be the biggest bust in the history of real estate... too bad." Of course, Trump was wrong in his prediction. Kerkorian, once again, bounced back on his feet and 'CityCenter' became a great

financial success!

While Kerkorian was on the Forbes magazine's billionaires list in 1989, Trump was also initially on that list. However, soon after, Forbes dumped Trump from its list of billionaires explaining that "they had been misled by incomplete information provided by Trump.... The future U.S. president's net worth was then, said the editors, 'within hailing distance of zero.'"

A press release issued by Harper Collins described Rempel's biography of Kerkorian as the "rags-to-riches story of one of America's wealthiest and least-known financial giants, self-made billionaire Kirk Kerkorian — the daring aviator, movie mogul, risk taker, and business tycoon who transformed Las Vegas and Hollywood to become one of the leading financiers in American business."

One of the key advantages of this biography is the extensive coverage of Kerkorian's philanthropy for the Armenian-American community and the Republic of Armenia. In the past two years, I spent several hours with author William Rempel to brief him about Kerkorian's contributions to American-Armenian charitable organizations and major projects in Armenia. Rempel described me in the book as: "Publisher of the California Courier, an English-language Armenian weekly based in Glendale, California, was also president of the United Armenian Fund [now Armenia Artsakh Fund] and the driving force behind Kirk's Armenian charity efforts." In reality, Kerkorian himself was the driving force behind his charitable giving! He really cared about the Armenian community's well-being and Armenia's prosperity."

Although Kerkorian remains a very well-known and highly respected name among Armenians worldwide, many non-Armenians are unaware that he was an Armenian-American. Fortunately, Rempel's biography devotes three chapters to Kerkorian's Armenian heritage and philanthropy.

Chapter 12 of the book is titled: "The Armenian Connection." It describes Kerkorian's chance meeting in Las Vegas with Manny Agassi in 1963, a waiter at Tropicana hotel and a fellow Armenian originally from Tehran, Iran. Manny became a close friend of Kerkorian and named his future son, Andre Kirk Agassi, who became a famous tennis player. Rempel also described

Kerkorian's business dealings with George Mason (Elmassian), his longtime stockbroker, and the founder of the California Courier newspaper in 1958.

In chapter 31, Rempel described the tragic earthquake of December 7, 1988, in Northern Armenia and how Kerkorian agreed to join the United Armenian Fund in sending over 150 airlifts for the next 25 years to transport \$700 million of humanitarian aid initially to the survivors of the earthquake, and subsequently to the entire population of Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh). The biographer Rempel also described how the United Armenian Fund was founded, a coalition of the seven largest Armenian-American charitable and religious organizations, including Kerkorian's Lincy Foundation. Alex Yemenidjian was Chairman of the United Armenian Fund and Harut Sassounian was its President.

Chapter 36 is titled: "Genocide and Generosity." It described Kerkorian's first-ever visit to Armenia in 1998 on his private jet accompanied by Harut Sassounian. The chapter relates conversations about Turkey and the occupied Armenian lands during the flight to Armenia and discussions to fund new projects by Kerkorian's Lincy Foundation. I was subsequently appointed Vice Chairman of the Lincy Foundation to oversee \$242 million of infrastructure projects in Armenia and some in Artsakh. This revealing book also includes amusing anecdotes about Kerkorian's uncomfortable stay in an old Soviet-style mansion which forced him to switch to the Marriott Hotel, and his traumatic visit to the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan!

Kirk Kerkorian's biography is the fascinating story of a unique human being. He was a brilliant businessman, an extremely modest philanthropist, a true American as well as a true Armenian. As a last indication of his kindness and generosity, he departed this world in 2015 at the age of 98, leaving his entire fortune of \$2 billion to charity, in addition to the \$1 billion he had already donated to American and Armenian charitable causes through the Lincy Foundation.

I recommend that every Armenian buy a copy of Kirk's biography and suggest it to their non-Armenian neighbors, friends and colleagues. Kerkorian's incredible accomplishments bestow a great honor upon Armenians worldwide!

## Support for Nagorno Karabakh's freedom and independence to keep growing – Samvel Farmanyan



In an address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Armenian lawmaker Samvel Farmanyan referred to the forthcoming 30th anniversary of the Karabakh movement, and blamed Azerbaijan for the state policy of massive falsification of history and attempts of re-inventing own past:

Samvel Farmanyan's speech in full is provided below:

The coming February will mark the 30-years anniversary of a democratic movement that has been coined in history as Karabakh movement: an unprecedented democratic and peaceful consolidation of millions of Armenians at the southern shore of the giant empire of the Soviets. Along with the independence movements in the Baltic States, Solidarity movement in Poland and similar democratic uprisings in other eastern European countries, Karabakh movement and the inability of the Soviets to provide any meaningful response to the democratic wave came to challenge the very foundations of the socialist camp and the Soviet Union itself fueling its final dissolution at the end of 1991.

At the very doorstep of this historic anniversary it would be useful

not only for historians but also for politicians to look back onto reflections of this democratic consolidation in world media and political institutions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Application to history is important not only for putting the facts together while considering a possible comprehensive solution to an existing problem but also for smelling the air of that time. It gains even more significance given the useless attempts of the Azerbaijani state policy of massive falsification of history and attempts of re-inventing its own past as a part of on-going process of nation-building – a process that is unfortunately built on a platform of anti-Armenian hatred.

In its resolution on January 12, 1989 the European Parliament names Nagorno-Karabakh as a region that “has been arbitrarily given by Stalin to Azerbaijan.” In another resolution of January in the same 1989 the European Parliament concluded “the conflict now taking place is largely the result of dividing up the territory imposed by Lenin in Transcaucasia and particularly the forced integration of Nagorno-Karabakh into Azerbaijan in 1923.” In a resolution of November 10th of 1994 this Assembly of the Council of Europe called on Azerbaijan “to immediately end the blockade of Armenia.” In its decision of October 24th of 1992 US House of Representatives concluded “United States assistance may not be provided to Azerbaijan unless the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Hundreds of other resolutions and statements by different international organizations and national parliaments, well-known intellectuals and rising leaders of democratic movement across Europe, thousands of publications in the world media, came to reflect the large scope of sympathy and support of the democratic world of late 80s and early 90s to the desire of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh to enjoy freedom and independence. This massive support continues today and will certainly continue tomorrow against the ongoing nightmare of democracy and increasing darkness in Azerbaijan.

## Kremlin Report: US Treasury identifies three Russia-based Armenian billionaires as “oligarchs”

Three Russia-based Armenian billionaires – Samvel Karapetyan, Danil Khachaturov and Sergey Galitsky – are among Russia's 96 richest people the US Treasury has identified as “oligarchs.”

In a Kremlin Report the US Treasury also singled out 114 top figures from the government and state companies but underlined that the roster “is not a sanctions list.”

The first part lists a total of 114 Russian political figures, including Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, head of the Presidential Administration Anton Vaino, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, and First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, as well as all Russian ministers, including Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and other senior officials.

Apart from Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and his deputies, the ‘Kremlin List’ features other top security officials, including head of Russian Security Service (FSB) Aleksandr Bortnikov.

The Russian business world also has its fair share, with 96 businessmen, including the heads of the biggest banks – such as Sberbank and VTB – making the list. The heads of state gas

company Gazprom and state oil company Rosneft, as well as the heads of major transport companies such as Russian Railways and Aeroflot are on the list.

According to the report, people featured in the list were selected on the basis of “individuals’ official position in the case of senior political figures, or a net worth of \$1 billion or more for oligarchs.”

The Treasury said, however, that “it is not a sanctions list, and the inclusion of individuals or entities in this report... does not and in no way should be interpreted to impose sanctions on those individuals or entities.”

The report adds that it does not create any other restrictions, prohibitions or limitations on dealing with such persons by either U.S. or foreign persons.

Kremlin reacted angrily. Those included on the lists “are de facto being named as enemies of the US,” spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on a conference call. “This could potentially do harm to the image and reputation of the businessmen and politicians on the list.”



# Achievements of “Ars Lunga” Duo within the Frames of the Anthology of Armenian Chamber Music Project Due to Support from Armenia’s Leading Telecom Operator

*There is no need to say once more that for many years already VivaCell-MTS has been the great friend and supporter of the Armenian culture, for many and many artists, troupes and ensembles. Among them is “Ars Lunga” Duo.*

In the course of seven years, owing to VivaCell-MTS support, “Ars Lunga” Duo has released 22 CDs presenting works of over hundred Armenian composers written for piano duo and trio.

*nesov, Eduard Hayrapetyan, Alisa Sargsyan, Svetlana Aleksanyan and performed by violinists Siranush Asatryan (Germany), Teresa Nacharyan, Anna Petrosyan and Mary Margaryan.*

“Ars Lunga” has participated in the Armenian-German music festival in Karlsruhe, performed in Shiller Concert Hall in Offenburg, as well as participated in a number of concert programs in Yerevan.

*long-term support of VivaCell-MTS,” said the President of “Ars Lunga” Duo Aram Talalyan.*

*“It is very important to introduce fresh ideas and reveal new names in classical music. Newness and novelty are not easy to cultivate: it takes time, creative talent and devotion. In case of high art even that does not suffice: constant support is needed for bringing those innovative ideas to life and presenting them to the*



The Anthology of Armenian Chamber Music encompasses a wide range of traditions of Armenian academic music, and, most importantly, features not only well-known composers, but also still undiscovered talents of the younger generation and composers from Diaspora, whose names are not so familiar to the society.

In 2017, the Duo has recorded 2 CDs including piano trios written by **Karen Ananyan, Ashot Aryan, Madat Ava-**

*“The project is significant not only in terms of revealing new names among Armenian composers, but also in terms of reviving classical music works which have been long forgotten. The project has drawn accolades from art lovers all over the world. The Anthology of Armenian Chamber Music is an unprecedented project in the history of Armenian music aimed at the development, preservation and propagation of Armenian culture and implemented owing to the*

*public. VivaCell-MTS realizes that preservation of musical traditions and their propagation play an important role in the preservation of the national identity,” VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian** said.*

The leading telecommunications company in Armenia, VivaCell-MTS has supported the shooting of television films featuring piano duos written by Armenian composers and recordings of works written for “Ars Lunga”.

## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



### Aries (March 20–April 19)

Mars, your ruling avatar, entered your 9th house on Jan. 26 for 7 weeks. You will notice a shift into a new direction. It will likely be related to contacting people at a distance, preparing to travel, seeking professional advice, or focused on education. You may spend more time on the internet than you have in the recent past. Drive within the speed limit.



### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Early in the week an opportunity to expand your social life brings smiles. You may be invited to a party or you might meet someone new. This aspect is from Venus, goddess of love and creativity. The muse may be at your side as you produce a particularly creative idea or solution to a problem.



### Gemini (May 20–June 20)

Mercury is your ruling planet. This week it shifts into your house of exploration, travel, the internet, publishing, education and matters of the law. You probably will experience increased energy when dealing with these areas. You have a need to broaden your mind and move to a big picture perspective.



### Cancer (June 21–July 21)

In some way old issues related to sharing and to intimacy are surfacing. You have learned better than to react, but because we are in an eclipse season, it is a challenge to control yourself. You are more easily rattled now than most other times. Remember this so you can challenge the old sense of being vulnerable. Let the past remain in the past.



### Leo (July 22–August 21)

Developments with your partner may feel uncomfortable, like some old behaviors that should have been buried long ago. You may be feeling unnerved. You forget better, but when anxious, you know to continue with your more mature self. Partners can press that button along with certain people from your history.



### Virgo (August 22–September 22)

Your planetary ruler is moving into new territory. Take up whatever activities you need on a daily basis to promote better mental and physical health. You may feel a compulsion to clean up files, closets, or other areas of detail. It is one way of organizing your mind. It is a good time to catalogue, classify, and coordinate details for your next project



### Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

You are in an optimistic and generous frame of mind. You may party a little (or a lot). The temptation is to overdo on anything that seems positive and fun. If finances are an issue, leave the credit cards at home to prevent you from making impulsive purchases. If you really want that item, it will be there tomorrow.



### Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

You are entering a new phase of attention which will continue through mid-April. Issues of money and resources, or matters of personal values will be prominent as motivators. Be aware of the temptation to overly identify with things that you deem important, whether it is a material object or an idea. Do not confuse your individual identity with these things of the world.



### Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

Mars, the warrior, entered your sign last week and will be traveling with you for seven weeks. This energy is especially helpful in defining our boundaries. Periodically we need to examine who we are as well as who we are not. Often something is eliminated. In general, it increases your courage and physical strength.



### Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

Your commitment to self-discipline and ability to persevere will help you to build something of real value in your life over the next two years. This plan may take a long time and it cannot be accomplished overnight, so be kind to yourself and take breathers once in a while.



### Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

Mercury travels rapidly through your sign between March 29 and April 12. During this period there likely will be greater emphasis on communications, errands, and other short distance travels. Your mind will be quick and your attitude persuasive. One or more people from your past may get in touch.



### Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Unseen help will assist and cause you to thank your lucky stars for the blessings. Your Guardian Angel helps you out of a difficult place. Spend some time focusing on your spiritual beliefs. You might be called upon to assist another toward a healing path. It is an opportunity to “pay it forward”. Don’t bypass it.



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