

PM Pashinyan, President Putin discuss issues of Armenian-Russian strategic relations



Russia-- Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin meet at the Kremlin in Moscow, April 7, 2021

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on April 7 for talks that focused on bilateral ties and the implementation of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped last year's Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Putin emphasized the "strategic character" of Russia's relationship with Armenia in his opening remarks at the meeting held in the Kremlin. He also noted the "solid" volume of Russian-Armenian trade, expressing confidence that it will grow again after shrinking last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Putin went on to mention the "post-war situation" in the Karabakh conflict zone and, in particular, renewed transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan envisaged by the ceasefire agreement which he brokered in November.

He said the reopening of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for commercial traffic will give Armenia "new opportunities for the country's development." "In my view, this is an extremely import-

ant thing," he told Pashinyan.

Pashinyan complained, for his part, that Azerbaijan is continuing to hold many Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives in breach of the truce accord. "I am very glad that we have no differences regarding how to resolve this problem," he said.

Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev failed to reach an agreement on the prisoner release during their trilateral meeting with Putin held in Moscow on January 11. They only agreed to set up a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani working group tasked with working out practical modalities of restoring transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states has held several meetings since January 30. Its Russian co-chair, Alexei Overchuk, visited Baku and Yerevan last week.

No concrete agreements were announced after Putin's and Pashinyan latest talks.

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PM receives RF Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received RF Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov on April 8 who has arrived in Armenia on a working visit.

The Prime Minister welcomed the Prosecutor General's visit to Yerevan and expressed confidence that it would help develop and strengthen cooperation

between the Prosecutor General's Offices of the two countries. Nikol Pashinyan stressed the importance of close interaction between the respective law enforcement authorities in fighting crime and countering the emerging challenges.

The Premier appreciated Igor Krasnov's efforts towards ensuring the return of Armenian prisoners of war, hostages and other detainees from Azerbaijan. Nikol Pashinyan presented Igor Krasnov with a letter of gratitude for personal contribution in this matter, as well as for effective cooperation in the field of law enforcement.

Thankful for appreciation and kind remarks, the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation noted that the ongoing cooperation with their Armenian partners is based on mutual trust. Igor Krasnov advised that the two countries' PG Offices

keep in close touch in order to facilitate cooperation in the fight against crime.

The Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation stressed the need to comply with Clause 8 of the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020, which states that hostages, prisoners of war and other detainees should be exchanged without preconditions. Igor Krasnov assured that he will continue his efforts in this direction and will do everything possible to tackle the matter.

Prime Minister Pashinyan said his government attaches particular importance to the continuous development of strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation in the long run, and in this regard, he described the outcome of yesterday's talks with President Putin as quite productive.

Protection of Armenian cultural heritage discussed at the National Commission for UNESCO

The sitting of the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"As you know, due to the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression, after the November 9 trilateral statement, along with other humanitarian issues, one of the urgent issues has been the proper and guaranteed preservation of the Armenian historical, cultural and religious heritage in the territories under Azerbaijani control," Chairman of the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ara Aivazian said in his opening remarks.

"Thousands of historical, cultural and religious monuments in the territories of Artsakh, which came under the military control of Azerbaijan, face the threat of destruction. These monuments, which are the material evidence of the centuries-old history of the Armenian people in the region, are of great value not only in terms of Armenian but also world cultural heritage," Minister Aivazian said.

"The danger of destruction of the Arme-



nian cultural heritage of Artsakh is real, taking into account the numerous precedents of their deliberate damage by Azerbaijan, the decades-long anti-Armenian policy and the systematic destruction of the Armenian cultural heritage. This is evidenced by the destruction of about 28,000 monuments of Nakhichevan's rich Armenian cultural heritage," he added.

Minister Aivazian stressed that from the very first days of the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression, all the necessary work had been done to draw the attention of the international community to the importance of protecting the historical and cultural

monuments of Artsakh. Touching upon the business trip of the UNESCO mission to Artsakh, the Foreign Minister stressed that the Armenian side is in a constructive dialogue with the organization.

The Minister reaffirmed that the Armenian Foreign Ministry will continue its follow-up work on the protection of Artsakh's historical and cultural heritage.

The Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia Vahram Dumanyan presented to the participants the works carried out by the Ministry for the protection of the monuments and museums of Artsakh under the control of Azerbaijan. Minister Dumanyan emphasized that the issue of guaranteeing the security of the Armenian cultural values, which are universal values, is constantly raised in the relevant international platforms, in contacts with partners.

During the meeting the participants exchanged views on the implementation of the programs on the agenda of the commission session.

Armenia slams Azerbaijan's fake agenda of minefield maps

Azerbaijan has made every effort to disrupt the implementation of demining programs in Armenia and Artsakh, Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan says.

The comment come after the Azerbaijani authorities in their recent statements accused the Armenian side of refusing to provide maps of minefields of the territories currently under the Azerbaijani control

"As you know, the Azerbaijani authorities are blatantly violating the international humanitarian law and their commitments under the provisions of the November 9 statement to repatriate Armenian prisoners of war and civilians

who are still being held in captivity. In fact, in response to the pressure of the international community on this issue, the Azerbaijani side is trying to create grounds for justifying its non-compliance by putting forward a fake agenda of minefield maps. The fact that the Azerbaijani officials are raising this issue exclusively in the public field is a case in point," Naghdalyan stated.

"Throughout the conflict, the Azerbaijani side didn't make any proposal to cooperate on demining issues; moreover, it made every effort to disrupt the implementation of demining programs in Armenia and Artsakh. It is enough to

recall that Azerbaijan in 2016 blocked the extension of the mandate of the OSCE Office in Yerevan under the pretext of the latter's support to demining p," the Spokesperson continued.

"We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to refrain from attempts to mislead the international community and to undertake tangible steps to fulfill its commitments undertaken by the November 9 trilateral statement and under the international humanitarian law, which entails the immediate, unconditional release of all prisoners of war, captured civilians and their repatriation," she concluded.

Baku accused of breaking deal on Armenian prisoner release

(RFE/RL) - Armenian officials accused Azerbaijan on April 9 of renegeing on a pledge to free Armenian soldiers and civilians remaining in Azerbaijani captivity five months after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenian government representatives said late on Thursday that a new group of Armenian prisoners is about to be set free and repatriated. However, none of them was on board a Russian plane that arrived from Baku to Yerevan shortly after midnight.

“Unfortunately, the return of prisoners is again delayed,” the office of Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan said in a statement posted on Facebook. It said that Azerbaijan is continuing to violate one of the key terms of the truce agreement.

“Negotiations mediated by Russia are continuing and we hope that the Azerbaijani side will at last respect the statement signed by it and implement the humanitarian agreement,” added the statement.

Andranik Kocharyan, a senior lawmaker representing the ruling My Step bloc, said that Baku pledged to free more Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian captives as a result of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s latest conversations with Arme-

page 1 ➔ Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said late last week that Armenia’s forthcoming snap parliamentary elections will also be on the meeting’s agenda.

Pashinyan has pledged to hold the elections in June in a bid to resolve a domestic political crisis sparked by Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war.

Moscow has expressed concern at the deepening crisis. Putin discussed it with Pashinyan in a February 25 phone call.

Neither leader mentioned the Armenian elections at the start of Wednesday’s meeting.

Pashinyan cited instead the need to ascertain “some nuances” of Russian-Armenian military cooperation. He also announced that Armenia will receive on Thursday the first 15,000 doses of Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine against COVID-19.

“We need more than a million doses,” the Armenian leader said, implicitly asking Putin to facilitate their delivery.

“Our [vaccine] production is gaining momentum,” replied Putin. “We are talking about a fairly large volume of production of this vaccine. So, I think that we will solve this problem.”

Azerbaijan’s Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov again claimed on Thursday that all of them were captured after the truce accord took effect on November 10 and are therefore not covered by it.

ANDRANIK KOCHARYAN

He said Baku regards them as “terrorists” and does not intend to release them.

More than 50 of the remaining POWs were captured in early December when the Azerbaijani army occupied the last two Armenian-controlled villages in Artsakh’s southern Hadrut district. They all are army reservists who were drafted from Armenia’s Shirak province during the six-week war.

Scores of their angry relatives blocked on Friday morning the roads leading to Shirak to demand an urgent meeting with Pashinyan. Many of them gathered at Yerevan’s Erebuni airport late

on Thursday after hearing reports about the impending release of their loved ones.

Relatives of other POWs and missing soldiers blockaded, meanwhile, the Defense Ministry compound in Yerevan. Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutiunyan and chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff, Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan, offered to receive their representatives.

The protesters rejected the offer, demanding that Harutiunyan and Davtyan emerge from the compound and talk to them on the spot.

They tried at one point to break into the compound but were stopped by riot police. The chief of the Armenian police, Vahe Davtyan, arrived at the scene to talk to the protesters.



nia’s and Azerbaijan’s leaders.

Putin met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Moscow on Wednesday and had a phone call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev the following day.

Kocharyan claimed that Lieutenant-General Rustam Muradov, the commander of Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in Artsakh, travelled to Baku to “escort the prisoners back to Armenia.”

Muradov, who reportedly arrived in Yerevan on board the Russian plane early on Friday, categorically denied that, however. “It was an ordinary working visit,” he told the Armenian newspaper “Hraparak.”

Asked to comment on the Armenian officials’ statements about the impending release of prisoners, Muradov said: “They are misleading the population.”

For lasting peace in the region, Turkey needs to change this aggressive policy towards Armenia – PM

The nature of Armenian-Russian relations does not depend on the outcome of future early elections, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in an interview with Interfax ahead of his visit to Moscow.

“The Armenian-Russian strategic allied relations are quite rich and extensive. They are based on the historical proximity of our friendly peoples. The nature of these relations does not depend on the outcome of future early elections,” PM Pashinyan said.

To what extent does the process of establishing economic ties in the region now depend on the political factor, in particular, on the normalization of relations with Turkey?

Commenting on the establishment of economic ties and normalization of relations with Turkey, the Prime Minister reminded that the Armenian-Turkish border was unilaterally closed by Turkey back in 1993.

“Armenia has always advocated the normalization of relations with Turkey

without preconditions, but this was rejected by Turkey itself. Such a hostile policy of Ankara gained new scope during the 44-day aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh. In particular, Turkey provided Azerbaijan with direct military-political and military-technical support, having also transferred foreign armed terrorist fighters to the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” Pashinyan said.

He stressed that to establish a lasting peace and restore the economic image in the region, Turkey needs to change this aggressive policy towards Armenia.

Does Armenia plan to continue purchasing Russian weapons, in particular, Su-30SM fighters and weapons for these aircraft?

Asked whether Armenia plans to continue purchasing Russian weapons, he said: “Armenia is focused on broad and long-term military-technical cooperation with the Russian Federation, which follows from the long-term strategic interests of the two states.”

“Taking into account that, in accordance



with interstate bilateral agreements, two Armenian-Russian groupings have been created on the territory of the Republic of Armenia – the United Group of Forces and the United Regional Air Defense System in the Caucasian region of collective security, and, in addition, both countries are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, it is clear that Armenia is extremely interested in supplies from Russia in order to have a modern and compatible weapons and ammunition,” the Prime Minister noted.

“For the same reasons, we are also interested in the delivery of weapons and ammunition to Armenia in the same configuration as for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation,” he added.

Criminal proceedings against Kocharyan and others terminated

A Yerevan court of general jurisdiction has announced the criminal proceedings against Armenia’s former President Robert Kocharyan, former Chief of the General Staff Seyran Ohanyan, former Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Khachaturov and former Secretary of the Security Council Armen Gevorgyan will be terminated.

The decision can be appealed at the



Court of Appeal.

Defendants had demanded the termination of the criminal prosecution on the grounds of absence of a crime.

The four were charged with overthrowing constitutional order under Article 300.1 of the Criminal Code.

Last month the Constitutional Court ruled the Article unconstitutional.

Kocharyan again sues Pashinyan

Former President Robert Kocharyan has filed another defamation lawsuit against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan just days after being cleared of coup charges.

A lawyer for Kocharyan, Hayk Alumyan, told RFE/RL’s Armenian service on April 8 that he is seeking 4 million drams (\$7,500) in damages and a public retraction of what he regards as slanderous claims made by Pashinyan during a March 1 rally in Yerevan.

Addressing supporters at the city’s Re-

public Square, Pashinyan accused Kocharyan of ordering security forces to shoot and kill opposition protesters in Yerevan in March 2008. He again claimed that investigators have solved the killings of eight protesters and two police servicemen during the post-election unrest and that the ex-president is dragging out his trial to obstruct justice.

Alumyan said Pashinyan slandered his client and violated the latter’s presumption of innocence.

Kocharyan had already sued the prime

minister in September 2018 and April 2020. He withdrew the first suit in June 2019 after Pashinyan clarified through a lawyer that he did not publicly accuse the ex-president of “organizing the killings.”

The second suit followed Pashinyan’s allegations that Kocharyan and other former senior officials “plundered” Armenia while in office. A Yerevan court has yet to rule on it.

Pashinyan did not immediately react to his political foe’s latest legal action.

Members of Congress call on Biden to recognize the Armenian Genocide

The Armenian Caucus has started collecting signatures on bipartisan U.S. House letter calling on President Biden to join with Congress in clearly and directly recognizing Armenian Genocide in his April 24 statement.

Last month, 38 U.S. Senators called on President Biden to do the same.

Full text of letter:

Dear President Biden: Later this month, on April 24, the world will mark the 106th anniversary of the first days of the Armenian Genocide, the systematic murder of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, and the displacement of millions more. Yet for decades, while leaders around the world recognize the first genocide of the 20th Century, the President of the United States has remained silent. We join with the proud Armenian American community and all of those who support truth and justice in asking that you clearly and directly recognize the Armenian Genocide in your April 24 statement.

We know that this is an issue you are



well acquainted with from your time in the Senate and as Vice President, including shepherding S.J.Res. 212 (designating April 24, 1990, as a National Day of Remembrance of the 75th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide) through the Judiciary Committee in 1989. We also appreciate that as Vice President you attended the centenary anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 at the National Cathedral. It was during the centennial that His Holiness Pope Francis at Mass in St. Peter's Basilica said this about the Armenian Genocide: "concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it."

The historic fact of what occurred

a century ago is not in serious dispute. American diplomats of the period documented the mass slaughter of the Armenians, though they had no word for what they were witnessing. It was only decades later that Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide", and did so specifically with the attempted extermination of the Armenian people in mind.

In accurately describing the Genocide this year, you will be joining both the House and Senate which overwhelmingly passed resolutions doing so in 2019. Additionally, the Library of Congress has already taken the important step of cataloging books on the subject under historically accurate Armenian Genocide subject heading.

Mr. President, as you said last year in your April 24 statement, "Silence is complicity." The shameful silence of the United States Government on the historic fact of the Armenian Genocide has gone on for too long, and it must end. We urge you to follow through on your commitments, and speak the truth.

Europe should open its eyes: MEP François-Xavier Bellamy visits Yerablur



All of Europe should open its eyes, and finally come out of the silence, Member of the European Parliament François-Xavier Bellamy said after a visit to Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan.

"Yerablur military cemetery. Under each of these thousands of flags, a soldier who died last year defending Armenia in the face of aggression. Most of them were barely twenty years old. All of Europe should open its eyes, and finally come out of the silence," the French lawmaker captioned photos on Facebook.



He also cited a poem by French poet Louis Aragon, which reads:

"Goodbye pain and pleasure, goodbye roses

Goodbye life, goodbye light and wind

Get married be happy and think of me often

You who will remain in the beauty of things

When it will all be over later in Erivan."

Armenia highly values partnership with EBRD - Pashinyan tells Bank President during video talk



Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan held a video talk with President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Odile Renaud-Basso.

Congratulating Odile Renaud-Basso on appointment as the EBRD President, Pashinyan stated: "Armenia highly values the partnership with the EBRD, the efficiency of which is evidenced by the successful projects being implemented in financial market, SME, energy, agriculture and other sectors. I would like to highlight the importance of constant dialogue between the Armenian government and the EBRD in the context of supporting the structural reforms in our country, improving and making competitive the investment climate".

Pashinyan praised the fact that the investment portfolio volume of the Bank in

Armenia comprised 160 million Euros in 2020, which is the biggest annual package during the whole partnership period.

The Armenian PM touched upon the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the recent war, the socio-economic situation and presented the government's actions aimed at overcoming all those problems. He noted that Armenia spares no effort for solving the humanitarian problems in Artsakh caused by the Azerbaijani military aggression, but stated that the response of the international community, the financial organizations to the humanitarian crisis is also highly important. In this context he drew the attention of the EBRD President on the assistance opportunities.

The EBRD President said the Bank attaches importance to the reliable partnership with Armenia and is interested in deepening the cooperation in infrastructure, energy, private sector and financial structures' development, funding new programs. Odile Renaud-Basso called the work with the Finance Ministry of Armenia as effective, which serves as a firm base for expanding the partnership with the country

and successfully implementing joint initiatives.

The officials exchanged views on the current cooperation agenda and the further programs. Both attached importance to the cooperation aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the private sector. The EBRD President highlighted the initiatives aimed at promoting women's economic activeness. Pashinyan said the government encourages women's active engagement on different areas.

Issues relating to infrastructure programs, including the construction of North-South road corridor were discussed at the meeting.

Pashinyan touched upon the unblocking of regional communication routes, stating that the re-opening of communication infrastructure can be prospective for joint programs.

PM Pashinyan reaffirmed Armenia's support to the EBRD's 5-year strategy, the priorities of which, he said, are in accordance with that of the government. He added that Armenia will be happy to host the 2024 EBRD annual meeting, the decision over which has already been made.

Azerbaijanis move about 50 meters back in the area of Sotk mine

Azerbaijanis have moved about 50 meters back in the area of the Sotk mine, Sotk community head Hakob Avetyan told Public Radio of Armenia.

He emphasized that it was done as a result of border adjustments.

"The Azerbaijanis had advanced and deployed in this area by an approximate calculation. As a result, about 60 percent of the mine had passed to them. Now they have moved about 50 meters back. They are still in the mine area, but the opportunities for the Armenian side to exploit the mine have slightly increased," Avetyan said.

According to the head of the community, in any case, it will be impossible for



the Azerbaijani side to operate the mine in the area under their control, as it will require excessive costs, resources, infrastructure and a train line.

Now the rival is only physically present in the mine area. The Armenian armed forces are stationed in the middle part of the mine between the two countries, as a result of which there is no problem with

the safety of the mine workers, the mayor stressed.

At the same time, Avetyan confirmed that about 280 out of more than 700 workers at the mine have been fired, as the volume of mining work has also been reduced.

The Mayor of Sotk said that public hearings are underway to replace the open pit mine with a closed one. The initial conclusion is positive.

In the past, during the closed operation, there were strong underground structures, which can still be useful today. The mine is currently operating normally but to a limited extent. The equipment left in the territory of the Azerbaijani side has been transferred to the Armenian territory.

US provides additional \$1,000,000 to support vaccination efforts in Armenia

The United States government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing an additional \$1,000,000 to support the efforts of the Government of Armenia to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, bringing USAID's total funding to date to combat COVID-19 to more than \$11 million. This includes emergency funding to address immediate health needs and efforts to address the secondary and tertiary impacts of the pandemic on democratic development and economic growth.

USAID is awarding the funds to UNICEF to provide targeted technical assistance to support and ensure effective implementation of COVID-19 vaccination efforts in Armenia, in accordance with the National Deployment Vaccination Plan.



Lynne M. Tracy, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, stated: "Throughout the pandemic, the United States has partnered with Armenia in its fight against COVID-19. Through this new assistance, we will continue working together to overcome COVID-19 and prepare for future public health threats."

The United States has worked closely with Armenia throughout the duration of the pandemic to protect public health and

strengthen the response to COVID-19. This cooperation includes: providing funding to strengthen laboratory capacity and management of severe cases; securing essential equipment; supporting vulnerable households and children; bolstering the Government of Armenia's crisis communications; enhancing emergency preparedness and response; and promoting resilience and economic stability through grants to small businesses, civil society, and media.

The United States continues to demonstrate its global leadership in public health and humanitarian assistance in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, building on the more than \$140 billion in U.S. Government support for global health programs and increasing the capacity of local healthcare systems since 2001.

Armenian Government to increase funding for science

The Armenian Government has redistributed the state budget, providing additional funding to the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

The changes will see the sums provided to the implementation of scientific and scientific-technical activity increased by over 2.7 billion AMD.

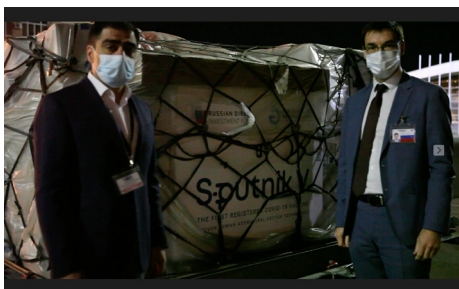
The increased funds will be directed to thematic scientific research, infrastructure modernization programs (laboratories, modernized equipment, etc.).

Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan said the salaries in the field will also increase on all levels.

The change aims at attracting the youth into the sphere.



First batch of Russian Sputnik-V vaccine delivered to Armenia



The first batch of the Russian Sputnik-V vaccine has arrived in Armenia, the Yerevan office of Russia's Federal Agency for the

Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) reported.

The first shots will be given to people in risk groups.

"This is the continuation of the large-scale assistance provided to Armenia in fighting the coronavirus. This is the brightest example of the close cooperation

and brotherly relations between our nations," said Pavel Kurochkin, the Adviser at the Russian Embassy in Armenia.

Earlier it was reported that the first batch consists of 15 000 doses of Sputnik-V.

Russia had earlier donated a small number of the vaccine to Armenia in early 2021 and it was used for voluntary vaccinations among health workers.

American support needed to resolve a POW crisis in the Caucasus – Armenian Ambassador

American support is needed to resolve a POW crisis in the Caucasus, as Azerbaijan continues to illegally hold some 200 Armenian troops and civilian captives, Armenia's Ambassador to the US Varuzhan Nersesyan writes in an article published by Defense One.

“One of the most important principles of international humanitarian law is the humanitarian treatment, timely release and return of prisoners of war following the cessation of active hostilities. This has been a foundational element of any hope for lasting peace, a humanitarian check against the practice of leveraging human lives as hostages for conflict related gains,” the Ambassador writes.

He reminded that this past fall, a 44-day war was launched by Azerbaijan with the direct involvement of Turkey against the Republic of Artsakh and its people. In the aftermath of the war, the Armenian side followed its obligations and quickly released all Azerbaijani soldiers it had captured. However, almost five months after the establishment of a ceasefire, Azerbaijan is still illegally holding an estimated 200 Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives and refusing to release them.

This is not only contrary to its Nov. 9 ceasefire statement, but immoral and a violation of international law, including human rights law.

“The Biden-Harris administration has expressed a commitment to reestablishing American leadership in upholding international law, human rights, and protecting democracies, and we would argue this is an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate that,” Ambassador Nersesyan writes.

“To date, many in the international community have spoken up – including the U.S. State Department and members of Congress – but Azerbaijan continues to illegally hold and openly abuse the issues



related to Armenian prisoners of war and civilian captives. However, the alternate reality spun by Azerbaijan falls apart as soon as it is actually examined,” he adds.

“Consider Azerbaijan’s words compared to reality during the recent war. They were flatly denying the reports that Turkey was recruiting and deploying thousands of foreign terrorist fighters from Syria to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone to fight for Azerbaijan only to have their lies exposed by multiple sources, including major news outlets and the governments of numerous countries and captured foreign terrorist fighters themselves. Moreover, when Armenia and Artsakh flagged that American F-16 aircraft were being used by Azerbaijan in violation of terms of sale to Turkey, both Turkey and Azerbaijan labeled the allegations as false. Then came the satellite images showing American-made F-16s stationed on Azeri air bases,” the Ambassador further notes.

“Now, it comes to the issue of nearly 200 prisoners of war and civilian captives. For months, Azerbaijan has denied this, and tried to use loopholes in international law to claim anyone who is still being detained is a “terrorist.” Then Human Rights Watch issued a damning report showing the extent of Azerbaijan’s lies and inhumane treatment of prisoners of war. In interviews with the limited number of prisoners of war who have been returned, they described regular

beatings, electric shocks, constant psychological torture and humiliation. Extrajudicial killings, beheadings, torture, humiliation, and other war crimes systematically perpetrated by the Azerbaijani military personnel have also been documented,” he continues.

“Statements by the Azerbaijani side concerning the Armenian POWs – particularly their intentional misrepresentation — lead us to conclude that we face a hostage-taking situation. Setting aside the needless suffering of Armenian POWs and their families, these tactics undermine international law meant to protect prisoners of war all over the world. For example, 64 Armenian soldiers that Azerbaijan now refers to as “terrorists” were captured when they were defending civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh against Azerbaijani military attacks after the Nov. 9 ceasefire,” Varuzhan Nersesyan writes.

According to him, there is a dangerous precedent being set that threatens all prisoners of war, both in the present and future. “International law provides ironclad protections for POWs that enjoy broad-based compliance by armed forces around the world. The law of war is not merely guided by values of humanity, but also the desire to protect members of our own armed forces in conflict.”

“Armenia is grateful to friends in Congress who have seen this farce for what it is. Earlier this month, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez condemned Azerbaijan’s unlawful detention of Armenian prisoners, and in a letter, more than one hundred members of the House urged the Biden-Harris administration to put pressure on Azerbaijan. Additionally, a bipartisan House resolution drafted on March 16 called on Azerbaijan to release all POWs and captured civilians. If adopted, this resolution provides a path for the

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United States to help end this injustice,” he notes.

“As the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues recently noted, the longer the delay, the more Azerbaijan shows its disregard for human rights and international law. Further, the longer this injustice is allowed to continue, the more all prisoners of war around the world become less secure,” the Ambassador emphasizes.

He reminds that in defining America’s place in the world recently, President Biden spoke eloquently of a diplomacy rooted in America’s most cherished democratic values — such as upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity.

“While it is encouraging that the State Department acknowledged and expressed its deep concern over allegations by Human Rights Watch, Azerbaijan’s intransigence

runs deep. Armenians have known more than our fair share of tragedy throughout our long history. We will overcome the trauma of the recent war. To expedite that process and create the foundation for lasting peace, we ask our American friends to continue to act swiftly to achieve the release the Armenian POWs and to avoid a dangerous precedent for the other prisoners of war all over the world,” the Ambassador concludes.

Azerbaijani military again throwing stones at Armenian cars – Ombudsman

On April 6, the media widely reported that between 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning, the Azerbaijani military, stationed on the section of Davit Bek-Shurnukh villages on the Kapan-Yerevan interstate highway, threw stones at a civilian car with an Armenian license plate, Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan informs.

Immediately after the publication of the information, the Human Rights Defender initiated a fact-finding mission with the participation of the Syunik division of the Defender’s staff. As part of this effort, the investigation of the incident on the road between the villages of Davit Bek-Shurnukh confirmed that Azerbaijani troops were stationed at the site.

The information about the incident was



confirmed to the Human Rights Defender by the head of Kapan community, noting that the car was a civilian vehicle occupied with passengers and an Armenian license plate.

The Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia emphasizes that what occurred clearly testifies to the real threat to the internationally recognized rights of

the citizens of the Republic of Armenia enshrined in the Constitution.

This, is in specific reference to people’s rights to life, physical and mental health, integrity, property and other vital needs.

The information about this incident clearly substantiates the Human Rights Defender’s concept that there should be a security zone in Syunik to guarantee the rights of the RA citizens.

There should be no Azerbaijani soldiers, signs or flags on the roads between the communities near the villages of the Syunik region. The RA Human Rights Defender will dispatch the information about this incident separately to the various international structures, and will incorporate it in the security zone concept.

Events in Maragha the logical continuation of regular genocidal actions committed by Azerbaijan against Armenians

The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Artsakh remembers and condemns the Massacre of the Armenian Population of Maragha Settlement

29 years ago, on April 10 the armed forces of Azerbaijan committed Genocide of the Armenian civilian population of Maragha settlement of the Republic of Artsakh.

The Azerbaijani troops invaded Maragha, tortured and killed the local civilian population, including women,



children, and the elderly. Azeri soldiers beheaded 45 villagers, burnt others, took more than 100 women and children away as hostages.

Azerbaijani authorities awarded the

perpetrators with high state awards. Their commander was conferred the title of National Hero of Azerbaijan. All it testifies that the Armenophobic and genocidal policy in Azerbaijan is encouraged at the highest state level.

The events in Maragha became the logical continuation of regular, systematic persecutions and genocidal actions committed by Azerbaijan against the Armenians.

Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations and must be prosecuted and punished.

Why President Biden should recognize the Armenian Genocide

By Prof. Roger Smith

Turkey, as usual, gets all wound up in the month of April, as Armenians around the globe commemorate Turkey's genocide of up to 1.5 million of its Armenian citizens starting in 1915 and ask the world to remember with them. Armenians do this to raise awareness of the historical fact of the crime of genocide committed by then Ottoman Turkey against the Armenians and to ask the world for a measure of healing, as Turkey has continued persistently to deny the Genocide to this day.

The late Turkish journalist, Mehmet Ali Birand, noted on April 24, 2012, "Again, as happens every year, the 70-million-person population of Turkey [now 84 million] will wonder what others are saying about the Armenian issue. What will Washington say? Which country will accept the Armenian genocide claims? Days will pass in stress... Turkey, as it has done before, will react harshly. It will utter threats, but they will remain ineffective."

Birand's statement was written in relation to the publication of the Turkish language edition of official documents of the German Foreign Office which clearly exposed Turkey's responsibility and Germany's complicity in the Armenian Genocide. After the original German language edition appeared in 2005, the German parliament voted to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide and did so conclusively in 2016.

Canada officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2004 over Turkish threats that "Canada would suffer economically [and] that Armenians would make claims against Turkey for confiscated land."

The Turkish machinations against recognition by Washington have been strenuous and sordid, even involving alleged bribery of the Speaker of the House in 2000. What will be Turkey's ploy this year to deter the US from recognition?

One likely option, as suggested by Washington Post Turkish analyst Asli Aydintasbas, will be Turkey's declaration of the border with Armenia open. She notes, "Critics say Turkey's apparent magnanimity smacks more of its recent efforts to fix its battered ties with Washington without



making the concessions that are actually being demanded of it, namely, to get rid of its Russian S-400 missiles immediately."

With Turkey's participation in Azerbaijan's war against the Armenians in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh), including the use of Syrian jihadists, to help Azerbaijan win the war, they could use that victory to deceive other countries that there is no longer a conflict between Turkey and Armenia.

The United States and Switzerland were burned once already in 2009, when Turkey signed what was then hailed as a historic set of accords, they had helped broker with Armenia to forge diplomatic ties and re-open their common border, only to have Erdogan cave to Azerbaijani pressure and walk away.

Aydintasbas insists, however, that Azerbaijan no longer poses an obstacle. According to Al-Monitor, a senior Armenian diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity, contends that the Turkish overtures were linked to President Joe Biden's vow to join the growing number of nations that have formally recognized the mass murder of more than a million Ottoman Armenians in 1915 as a genocide.

The West's indifference to Turkish collective state violence against its Armenian civilians from 1894 through to the genocide of 1915 by Ottoman Turkey is well known. Less well known is its genocide of its Assyrian population at the same time and often the same places. Similarly, during the years 1912 to 1923, Turkey repeatedly massacred the Greeks of Asia Minor and Pontus, and since the founding of the Turkish Republic, its Kurdish citizens. Its persecution of its Jewish minority, and so many other ethnic and religious groups is also well documented and still is ongoing against the Kurds not only within Turkey,

but beyond its borders in Syria and Iraq.

President Biden's full-throated acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide is especially important not only to show support for a democratically run country surrounded by dictatorships; it is also a matter of US credibility. It was US ambassador Henry Morgenthau who warned the American Government in 1915 of Turkey's plan for "racial extermination" of the Armenians.

In 2019, both houses of Congress approved by overwhelming majorities Resolutions (783 and 780) recognizing publicly the Armenian Genocide. The Senate's summary is as follows:

"that it is the sense of the Senate that it is the policy of the United States —

(1) to commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance;

(2) to reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide; and

(3) to encourage education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, including the role of the United States in humanitarian relief efforts, and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity."

Perhaps most importantly, the US should not give Turkey a free pass on its denial, as it would only serve to embolden Turkey and other perpetrators of genocide to commit mass violence in the future and get away with it, as Turkey has been doing against the Kurds (not only in Turkey but against those beyond its borders, and most recently the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh). The US will be on firmer ground when responding to countries like China violating basic human rights and engaging in genocidal policies.

Prof. Roger Smith is the Chairperson of the Academic Board of Directors, Zoryan Institute. He is the Founder and Past President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

Museum of Neon Art honors Armenian Genocide victims in neon display



For Armenian History Month, the Museum of Neon Art exhibits a light and poetry-based display to honor the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

Throughout the month of April, the Museum of Neon Art will display a new window-based public display in honor of Armenian History Month, Asbarez reports.

The exhibit presents an excerpt of a poem in Armenian and English under neon lights representing the Armenian flag; it faces the paseo in front of the museum and will be best viewed when the sun sets. The exhibition was created by MONA and Leaf Cutter Studio.

The display features the tricolors of the Armenian flag – red, a symbol of sacrifice and will to survive; blue for the blue skies of the ancestral homeland under which Armenians dream to live peacefully; and orange, for the fields of the Armenian Highlands and the hardworking nature of the Armenian people. Accompanying the neon flag is a verse from Armenian poet Paruyr Sevak’s book of poems, *Anreli Zangakatun*, in Armenian and English.

“Anreli Zangakatun literally translates

as the Bell tower that is incapable of being silenced. Bells and bell towers are a call to action or a warning of danger ahead, but they fall silent when the call to action is over, or the danger has passed. In this case, the bell tower represents the inability to stay silent because the call to action – the call for justice – has not yet been concluded,” said MONA Curator of Engagement and Education, Ani Mnatsakanyan.

Visitors will have the opportunity to pause for a moment of silence in honor of the 1.5 million Armenians massacred during the Armenian Genocide and the millions of others who were orphaned and displaced globally as a result of the state-sanctioned massacres. This April 24th will mark the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire. To this day, the government of Turkey denies their role in the genocide.

The chosen verse from the poem *Chime of Revelation* is a reminder of the silence of the American government in regards to the genocide, and each President’s empty promise to officially recognize the 1915 massacres as Genocide. The poem and

display honor the Armenian-American community’s persistent dedication to genocide awareness in order to heal the open wounds of their ancestors, and seek justice. A genocide forgotten is a genocide repeated, and acknowledgement of the past helps other marginalized communities escape a similar fate.

“The 44-day war in 2020 that was waged against the indigenous Armenians in Artsakh by Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, retraumatized Armenians globally, because it brought up unresolved emotions about the continuous denial and cultural erasure of the Armenian people by Turkey and Azerbaijan. This year’s Genocide commemoration will be especially difficult to cope with as a result of that, but the support for the community through artistic means is meant to highlight the resilient spirit of the Armenian people and provide some light during these dark times through the arts,” said Mnatsakanyan.

“May this shine like a beacon to those souls lost from the Armenian Genocide and be a symbol of strength for those that look upon it today,” stated Dave Otis Johnson of Leaf Cutter Studio.

“Art is a way to process trauma, remember loss, and imagine a new world. Unfortunately, this past year so many of us have faced great fear, loss, and pain. Paruyr Sevak uses light as a metaphor to speak about loss, xenophobia, and brokenness, themes that are unfortunately universal. Sevak’s words are also very specific, connected to the Armenian struggle for recognition and remembrance of their ancestors and the state violence they faced. MONA is proud to stand in solidarity and remembrance with our Armenian community and neighbors. Through the metaphor of light, and the use of bright beckoning neon lights we hope to provide a place to think critically, heal, and remember,” said Executive Director Corrie Siegel.

LA Times editorial: President Biden, call it by its name – the Armenian genocide

President Biden has an opportunity this month to use honest and accurate terminology in describing the Ottoman Empire's killing of more than 1 million Armenians a century ago, the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board writes.

"When the anniversary of the start of the massacre arrives, he can and should call it a genocide, a term that only one president — Ronald Reagan — has previously used in that context. And even then, Reagan made the reference as an aside in a proclamation about another atrocity, the Holocaust, the editorial reads.

The editors say it's dumbfounding that calling what happened to the Armenians "genocide" is even debatable. It's like saying, "You know, if we don't call the time when the river water raged down Main Street a flood, then the damage wasn't so bad."

"And it was bad, a crime against humanity whose pain resonates all the more through history because global governments have been slow to recognize it and some factions have intransigently refused to acknowledge the truth," the article reads.



"Why is whether to call the massacre of Armenians a genocide even an issue? Because the Turkish government has steadfastly refused to accept that its forebears in the Ottoman Empire committed genocide, a position unmoored from the facts and the overwhelming consensus of serious historians," LA Times writes.

"The Turkish government may cling to this delusion, but the rest of the world does not, and should not, have to indulge it. And, in fact, many governments don't. More than two dozen have taken formal stances declaring the Armenian genocide," the article continues.

The editors say President Obama had a golden opportunity to fulfill a campaign

promise and drop the pretense in 2015, the centenary of the start of the Armenian genocide, but stopped short despite using the Armenian term for it, *meds yeghern*, and stating that "beginning in 1915, the Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire were deported, massacred and marched to their deaths. Their culture and heritage in their ancient homeland were erased. Amid horrific violence that saw suffering on all sides, one and a half million Armenians perished." The Trump administration stuck with that position, too.

"That brings us to Biden, who arguably entered the Oval Office with the deepest and broadest understanding of U.S. foreign policy of any newly inaugurated president since George H.W. Bush. But he also has historically positioned himself as a moderate pragmatist. To be sure, foreign policy can be a multidimensional chess match in which the idea isn't necessarily to win, but to make sure your opponents lose. But here, what's important is the truth and an honest recognition of history. Biden needs to call the Armenian genocide by its name," the article concludes.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti calls on President Biden to recognize the Armenian Genocide

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti has called on US President Joe Biden to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

"It's time to speak the truth. It's time to remember the tragedies of history so that we do not repeat them. It's time for all of us, for my friend President Biden, to leaders across LA, the United States and around the world to declare in one voice – we recognize the Armenian Genocide," Mayor Garcetti said in a video message.

"We mourn the more than 1.5 million Armenians brutally murdered in a cam-

paigned of systemic terror, we'll always stay by Armenian people's pursuit of justice, safety and peace," he added.

"We must remember the reality of our past in order to forge a better future," the Mayor stated.

Eric Garcetti urged everyone to join the "Yes, it's Genocide" petition on Change.org.



Armenian benefactor Hirair Hovnanian dies aged 91



Member of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund's Board of Trustees and a true friend of the Armenian people Hirair Hovnanian passed away aged 91, Hayastan All-Armenian Fund informs.

For decades, Mr Hovnannian was a staunch supporter of our Homeland playing an invaluable role in its development through the work of the Hovanannian Foundation as well as the Armenian Assembly of America and the Hayastan All Armenian Fund.

"Our Nation has lost a great man and true philanthropist. Our deepest condolences are with his family," Hayastan Fund said.

A 1956 Villanova University graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering, Mr. Hovnanian began his career with a consulting firm constructing the Connecticut Turnpike. In 1958, after seeing a cousin's home being built in Toms River, New Jersey, Mr. Hovnanian moved there and started building homes. He was later joined by his brothers. After several successful years working with his brothers, Hirair Hovnanian broke out on his own and formed Hovsons, Inc. in 1963.

Within the first year, Mr. Hovnanian had built 74 homes and noticed that eighty percent of his buyers were retirees. That was an epiphany that changed his future. Mr. Hovnanian is referred to in books as one of the innovators of the concept of large-scale adult communities of single-family homes located on individual lots. This bold move became very successful, and the communities grew and grew later becoming mixed use communities including recreational, medical and commercial facilities. Over tens of thousands of adult community

homes and home sites have been built by Mr. Hovnanian. Over the last five decades, his business activities have diversified to include the development and construction of health care facilities, major retail centers, office complexes, rental apartments and a 7,200-acre mining business.

In addition to his corporate business achievements, Mr. Hovnanian is involved in numerous charitable and civic activities.

Mr. Hovnanian has also contributed greatly to the Armenian community worldwide with a variety of civic, charitable, educational, and philanthropic activities. He serves as Chairman of the Armenian Assembly's Board of Trustees and is a founding member of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund. Mr. Hovnanian also directly managed the construction of four housing component factories in Armenia after the 1988 earthquake, on behalf of the Armenian Assembly of America. Along with his contributions of time, his charitable contributions to date exceed \$40 million.

Armenian Bar Association Again Urges UN Special Rapporteurs to Protect Armenian Cultural Heritage in Artsakh

The Armenian Bar Association—in partnership with Holy Etchmiadzin, and joined by the Society for Armenian Studies, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes—recently issued a second report to the UN Special Rapporteurs in the Fields of Cultural Rights and Freedom of Religion and Belief.

This second report supplements the Armenian Bar's earlier communique to the Special Rapporteurs on the exigencies of preserving Armenian cultural heritage and churches in Artsakh, now under Azerbaijani control. The purpose of the second report was to highlight Azerbaijan's most recent attacks following the conclusion of the 2020 War, demonstrating the continued threat not only to Armenian culture and symbols of Christianity, but to worshippers seeking to visit Armenian religious sites. The report also urges the Special Rapporteurs to urgently and immediately intervene, visit the indigenous Armenian sites under Azerbaijani control, and demand accountability from the Azerbaijani government.

Submitted in conjunction with an earlier, detailed report of Azerbaijan's longstanding destruction of Armenian heritage,



The Zoravor Surp Astvatsatsin (St. Mary's) Church in Mekhakavan before (top) and after

the most recent report calls attention to those sites already eradicated or vandalized by the Azerbaijani government since seizing power in the region only a few months ago. Not long after the Armenian Bar's submission of the initial report in January, 2021, the Zoravor Surp Astvatsatsin Church, located near the village of Mekhakavan (Jebraïl) in Artsakh, was intentionally destroyed.

Photos published just weeks ago by the BBC depict vacant land where Zoravor once stood. Prior to its destruction, a video circulated depicting a mercenary pronouncing the Islamic call to prayer while standing on the bell tower of the church. The church was consecrated in 2017. Also featured in the report is another video, showing the Azerbaijani military vandalizing the church of St. Yeghishe in Mataghis, Artsakh (built in the 19th century). Experts predict Azerbaijan's cultural genocide of Armenian heritage will occur incrementally over many years, if not decades.

Lucy Varpetian, Chairwoman of the Armenian Bar Association, thanked the following attorneys who generously contributed to both reports: Taline Sahakian, Grant Petrosyan, Yelena Ambartsumian, Lusine Chinkejian, Armen Hovannisian and Sonya Nersessian.

The report concludes by urging intervention by the Special Rapporteurs to prevent further acts of destruction and that the Armenian Bar Association and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin are willing to discuss the pressing needs of the Armenian community in Artsakh with the Special Rapporteurs.

Monument to Charles Aznavour to be installed in Varna



The Aznavour Foundation and AGBU Varna have signed a memorandum for the construction of a memorial of the great artist, philanthropist, benefactor for his homeland and people, Ambassador for Peace, Charles Aznavour, AGBU Varna informs.

The memorial will be located in the heart of Varna. The initiative will be blessed by His Eminence Srpasan Tatev, Bishop of

the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church in Bulgaria and Romania.

The project will be implemented with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Bulgaria and an Initiative Committee which includes intellectual and political figures of Varna.

Work

Names of 2021 Aurora Humanitarians to be announced on April 24

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will organize a series of events in April 2021 to honor the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, to recognize this year's Aurora Humanitarians and to



further contribute to the resolution of the humanitarian crisis in Artsakh. The events will bring together both local and international stakeholders and will help them join forces, maximizing the impact.

On April 24, 2021, representatives of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, including Lord Ara Darzi, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Chair, will participate in a flower-laying ceremony at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan, Armenia to pay tribute to those who perished during the Armenian Genocide in 1915-1923 and to express their gratitude to those who helped the persecuted to survive.

Later that day, the names of the 2021 Aurora Humanitarians will be announced during a special event at the Matenadaran, the national repository of ancient manuscripts. The nomination process for the 2021 Aurora Prize lasted from April 24, 2020, till October 31, 2020, yielding hundreds of submissions featuring 585 unique candidates. In accordance with the tradition, the names of the 2021 Aurora Humanitarians will be inscribed in Chronicles of Aurora, a unique 21st century manuscript containing the depictions of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative activities.

On April 25, 2021, the Aurora Dialogues event titled "Partner-

ship for Artsakh" will take place at UWC Dilijan. It will bring together the Initiative's partners from the Aurora for Artsakh program, representatives of local and diaspora organizations, NGOs and charity founda-

tions, Artsakh officials, and the media.

The event will feature several workshops focused on health-care, education and culture, economic development, and social issues. The sessions will be moderated by Ara Babloyan, Scientific Director and Chairman of the Management Board of the Arabkir Joint Medical Center-Institute of Child and Adolescent Health; Narine Aghabalyan, Head of Aurora for Artsakh program and Former Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Artsakh; Vahe Keushguerian, Advisor to the President of Artsakh for Development Programs and Co-founder and Chairman of the Board of Impact Hub Yerevan, and Mira Antonyan, Chair of the Armenian Association of Social Workers and Executive Director of the Children Support Center-Foundation, Fund for Armenian Relief.

The participants will have an opportunity to contribute to insightful discussions in order to address the humanitarian crisis caused by the 2020 Artsakh war, to analyze the primary needs of the affected people, to exchange the best practices of acting in an emergency and to join forces for an efficient partnership. Since the launch of Aurora for Artsakh, the Initiative has already allocated almost \$1.7 million to support 75 projects implemented by local and international partners and intends to expand the program.

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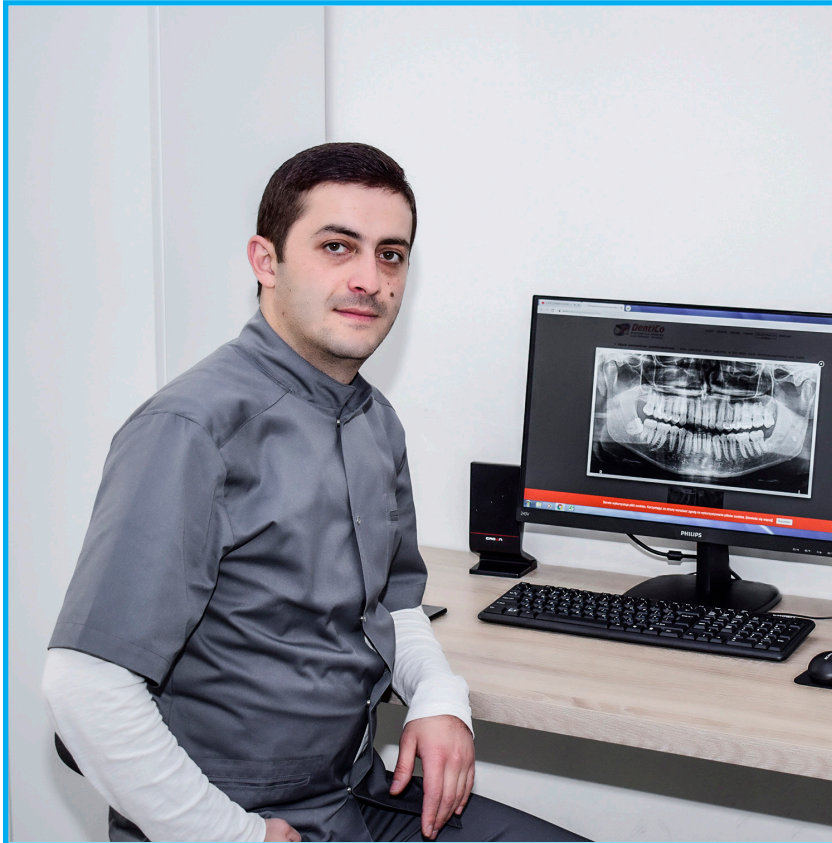
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