

## Armenia and U.S. sign document on Strategic Partnership



Armenia and the United States have signed a document on strategic partnership. The agreement was signed by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The signing ceremony took place in Washington as part of a meeting between the Armenian Foreign Minister and the U.S. Secretary of State.

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken emphasized that the signing of the document is a significant milestone in the relations between Armenia and the US.

“We are establishing a US-Armenia Strategic Partnership Commission. This Commission gives us framework to expand our bilateral cooperation in a number of key areas economic matters, security and defense, democracy, justice..” Blinken said.

According to the US Secretary of State, this charter will contribute to a more resilient, more peaceful, more secure, and more independent South Caucasus.

“The Armenia-U.S. Strategic Partnership Charter provides a solid foundation and makes our cooperation more ambitious. It covers various areas, including strengthening economic and energy ties, improving communications, deepening defense and security cooperation, enhancing democratic institutions, promoting justice and the rule of law, developing innovations and high technologies, and expanding people-to-people contacts,” said Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan.

Mirzoyan emphasized that relations between Armenia and the United States, grounded in shared values and mutual interests, have significantly developed in recent years.

“They have reached a level where the establishment of a strategic partnership not only reflects current realities but is also crucial in the context of operating in complex geopolitical conditions,” he added.

The Armenian Foreign Minister thanked U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his team for their efforts in advancing cooperation between the two countries to a new level.

*Armenia-U.S. relations in 2024 were marked by active political dialogue and valuable achievements. Notably, on April 5, a trilateral Armenia-U.S.-EU meeting took place, and on June 11, the concluding session of the Armenia-U.S. strategic dialogue was held in Yerevan, where a vision for deepening relations was outlined, aimed at elevating the bilateral dialogue to a strategic partnership.*

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## Armenia's EU steps discussed during Pashinyan-Putin call, says Kremlin

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed Yerevan's recent steps towards the European Union in a phone call on January 17, according to a readout issued by the Kremlin.

The Armenian Premier's office made no mention of the discussion in its [readout](#).

"Following the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council held in December 2024, some pressing issues of further deepening integration cooperation, primarily in the energy sector, were



discussed. Significant practical benefits from joint work within the Eurasian Economic Union, including for the Armenian

economy, were noted. Nikol Pashinyan explained the situation related to Yerevan's recent steps in the context of relations with the European Union. The Russian leader gave relevant comments and assessments," the Kremlin said in its readout of the call.

On January 9, the Cabinet approved the bill seeking to launch the process of EU integration. The bill, which is set to be discussed in parliament, was initiated by several civic organizations through a petition which garnered enough votes to be considered as a bill.

## Armenia can count on Slovakia's support towards the EU, says Permanent Representation

Armenia's Ambassador to the EU, Luxembourg and Belgium Tigran Balayan has met with Slovakia's Permanent Representative to the EU Juraj Nociar. During the meeting the ambassadors discussed the possibilities of strengthening Armenia-Slovakia relations, EU partnership, as well as the latest developments in the South Caucasus.

"Armenia can count on Slovakia's support towards the EU," Slovakia's Permanent Representation



to the EU said in a post on X. "PR Amb.

Juraj Nociar today discussed with Ambassador of Armenia to the EU, Tigran Balayan recent developments in South Caucasus and the possibilities of strengthening Slovakia – Armenia bilateral cooperation."

Ambassador Balayan thanked Nociar for the discussion, saying "Thank you Ambassador Nociar for comprehensive and sincere discussion on deepening of Armenia-EU partnership and Slovakia's support in rapprochement with European Union."

## Prime Minister's Chief of Staff and Indian Ambassador discuss strengthening bilateral relations

Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister's Office Arayik Harutyunyan received Nilakshi Saha Sinha, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to the Republic of Armenia.

According to the Prime Minister's Staff, both sides praised the ongoing development of bilateral relations and highlighted

the importance of further deepening the existing potential to elevate the Armenia-India friendship to a new level.

The meeting focused on expanding cooperation in sectors such as education, culture, and tourism. The significance of organizing high-level mutual visits between the two countries was also



emphasized.

## Foreign policy pursued by Armenia is reaching its primary milestone, says PM Pashinyan



The balanced and balancing foreign policy pursued by the Republic of Armenia is reaching its primary milestone, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a post on social media.

“Our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are more substantive than ever before. These relations are based on natural interests, which is the most reliable basis for cooperation and guarantee for stability.

Our relations with Georgia are in the

orbit of strategic partnership, opening new prospects and potential for development.

A visible basis for mutual understanding has been formed with Turkiye.

The Republic of Armenia has proposed constructive solutions to all existing issues in relations with Azerbaijan. Armenia has not merely introduced proposals, but solutions. In this context, all efforts to provoke escalations in the region lack legitimacy and basis, which means that attempts to escalate the region will not succeed.

Our relations with the Russian Federation are more pragmatic than ever before, focusing on concrete issues without emotional packaging. We are determined to develop these relations based on mutually beneficial cooperation and sovereignty.

Our friendship with France has strengthened and evolved.

Our relations with the European Union are closer than ever before, which is recorded also in Brussels.

A strategic partnership has been launched with the United States of America.

Our relations with India have gained new weight and meaning.

Our relations with China are evolving and deepening.

New opportunities for partnership have been created in the Middle East.

This positioning creates a solid foundation for successfully serving the agenda of Armenia’s independence, sovereignty, and statehood’s perpetuity, which will be implemented in the upcoming stages of balanced and balancing foreign policy,” the Prime Minister said.

## US Customs and Border Patrol team will travel to Armenia next month – Blinken

A U.S. team specialized in customs and border security is set to visit Armenia in the coming weeks to collaborate with Armenian counterparts on enhancing border security capabilities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated during his speech at the signing ceremony of the Armenia-U.S. Strategic Partnership Charter in Washington.

Blinken noted that the U.S. is also cooperating with Armenia in the areas

of security and defense, specifically supporting efforts to safeguard Armenia’s independence and sovereignty within its own territory.

U.S. Secretary of State mentioned that a US Customs and Border Patrol will visit Armenia in the coming weeks to work with Armenian counterparts on border security capacity building, strengthen security cooperation, and enhance Armenia’s peace-keeping capabilities through exercises like

Eagle Partner.



## Armenian, Azerbaijani border commissions hold 11th meeting, agree to start delimitation in the north

On January 16, 2025, the 11th meeting of the Commission on Delimitation and Border Security of the State Border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia was held on the border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic

of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev.

During the meeting, the Parties continued to exchange views on the sequence of sections/segments of the borderline for further carrying out delimitation works and agreed on starting the complex of works on the delimitation of the state border from the northern section: from the point of intersection bordering the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of

Azerbaijan and Georgia, and then in the southern direction, from North to South: to the border of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Parties discussed the drafts of respective guidelines for the procedures on carrying out delimitation works.

The Parties agreed to set the date and location of the next meeting through working-level consultations.

## French ambassador reiterates unconditional, unwavering support for Armenia

French Ambassador to Armenia Olivier Decottignies has reiterated Paris' unconditional and unwavering support for Armenia.

Speaking at a press conference on January 13, the Ambassador reiterated French support to Armenia. He said that the "support provided to Armenia, as presented by President Emmanuel Macron, is

unconditional, complete and unwavering." Ambassador Decottignies reiterated French commitment to peace in Armenia. "This is a commitment to lasting and just peace in the region, but also a commitment to support Armenia, to preserve its territorial integrity and inviolability," the French Ambassador said.



## Russia Cautious About New U.S.-Armenian Agreement

**(RFE/RL) - Russia on January 14 reacted cautiously to the impending signing of a U.S.-Armenian agreement on "strategic partnership" while warning of further damage to its relations with Armenia.**

"It is the absolute sovereign right of our Armenian friends to develop relations in all directions," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "We continue to proceed from the main thing: we have our own bilateral relations with Armenia, we value these relations, and we intend to develop them further."

Speaking to journalists hours before the scheduled signing of the agreement in Washington, Peskov said at the same time that the United States "has never played a particularly stabilizing role in the South Caucasus" and keeps "trying in every way to pull more and more countries into its wake."

"The main thing is not what you signed or how you signed it but what stems from it," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a separate news conference in Moscow. "We also used the term 'strategic



partnership' in a number of agreements with Western countries, but they never required one or another participant to act against a third party."

Lavrov claimed that Yerevan will come under U.S. pressure to take such action against Moscow and, in particular, join Western sanctions imposed on Russia since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Armenian entrepreneurs have taken advantage of those sanctions by re-exporting goods to and from Russia. This has been the main driving force behind robust economic growth registered in Armenia for the last three years.

Russian-Armenian trade has skyrocketed since 2022 despite a deepening rift

between the two longtime allies. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's administration has been seeking to reorient Armenia towards the West in response to what it sees as Russia's failure to honor security commitments to the South Caucasus country.

Pashinyan froze the country's membership in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) a year ago. His government officially announced last week plans to join the European Union, prompting stern warnings from Moscow.

Lavrov repeated those warnings, saying that accession to the EU is "incompatible" with Armenia's continued membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a Russian-led trade bloc that gives it tariff-free access to Russia's vast market.

Still, the top Russian diplomat spoke of a continuing "dialogue" with Yerevan. He revealed that Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has accepted an official invitation to visit Moscow.

"I hope that the visit will take place soon," added Lavrov.

## Armenia summons Russian Ambassador over TV program

Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin has been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Yerevan has handed over a note of protest to the Ambassador over a television broadcast containing 'artificially generated narratives' against the Armenian sovereignty, the foreign ministry said.

"The Ambassador of the Russian Federation Sergey Kopyrkin was summoned

to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on January 15 on the occasion of the Weekly News program broadcast on nationwide state television in the Russian Federation on January 12, 2025, which contained artificially generated narratives against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia. During the meeting the relevant note of protest was handed over to the

Ambassador," the foreign ministry said.



## EU Mission to Armenia hosts 22 ambassadors from EU member states

The European Union Mission to Armenia, led by Markus Ritter, Head of the Mission, hosted the ambassadors of 22 EU member states accredited to Armenia on January 17 and briefed them on the latest developments in the mission's activities.

"EUMA had an honor to host ambassadors from 22 EU nations to Armenia and give them overview on our latest developments



on operations, mandate and plans. We are grateful to member nations for their steadfast support and continuous contribution," the EU Mission in Armenia said in a post on X.

Earlier, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies, announced that on Friday they will visit the Vayots Dzor region with ambassadors from European countries.

## India appoints new Defense Attaché to Armenia

Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India to Armenia, Ms. Nilakshi Saha Sinha, accompanied by newly appointed Defense Attaché to Armenia, Air Force Group Captain Manish Tolani, and the outgoing Defense Attaché, Brigadier General Naveen Nijhawan.

Minister Papikyan extended his congratulations to Group Captain Tolani on his appointment, wishing him success in his mission and highlighting the significance



of having an Indian Defense Attaché with residence in Yerevan for the first time.

The meeting focused on defense cooperation between Armenia and India, as well as regional and international security issues.

Minister Papikyan expressed his gratitude to Brigadier General Naveen Nijhawan for his valuable contributions to the enhancement of defense cooperation between the two nations. The Minister awarded Brigadier General Nijhawan the Medal for Military Cooperation at the conclusion of the meeting.

## Crossroads of Peace is absolutely correct and wise response to Azerbaijani claims, says Stefan Müller-Altermatt



Stefan Müller-Altermatt, Member of the National Council of Switzerland's Federal Assembly, has described the Armenian government's Crossroads of Peace project as an "absolutely correct and wise response" to the claims and demands formulated by Azerbaijan.

In written comments for Armenpress,

the Swiss legislator said that from a rational point of view, no one can oppose this initiative.

"The 'Crossroads of Peace' is an absolutely correct and wise response to the claims formulated by Azerbaijan. From a rational point of view, no one can oppose this initiative, and the fact that Armenia has presented a serious peace project clarifies the role of the aggressor - which is to be found in Azerbaijan," he said when asked about the Crossroads of Peace project and the Azerbaijani government's claims in this regard.

The Swiss MP added that while the Crossroads of Peace project promotes peace, it also excludes issues that are also

relevant to Armenians.

"With 'Crossroads for peace', Armenia has presented a project that promotes peace, but also excludes issues that are also relevant to Armenians. It is imperative that the international community works towards ensuring that the injustice committed in Artsakh is not simply forgotten. It is clear that the Pashinyan government cannot make any demands in its peace plans in the country's great distress. It is therefore important that the international community not only demands 'Crossroads for Peace', but also the right of return of the Karabakh Armenians, their right to self-determination and the protection of their cultural heritage," he said.

## Armenia-U.S. agreement on mutual assistance between customs bodies approved by parliamentary committee

The Armenian parliament's committee on economic affairs endorsed on Wednesday the ratification of the Armenia-U.S. agreement on mutual assistance between customs bodies.

The agreement was signed in June 2024.

Deputy Chairman of the State Revenue Committee Raphael Gevorgyan told lawmakers that the agreement is an important



achievement in promoting transparency

and information exchange.

He said that aside from the information exchange agreement the cooperation with the U.S. government also involves major re-equipment projects. "All these processes are properly advancing," he said.

Gevorgyan expressed hope that this year significant improvements will be made, including through the U.S. support, in several border crossing points.

## Armenia, US commence negotiations on nuclear cooperation agreement

Armenia is starting negotiations with the United States on a nuclear cooperation agreement, known as the 123 Agreement, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan announced during his speech at the signing ceremony of the

Armenia-US Strategic Partnership Charter in Washington.

"We also commence negotiations on a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US, commonly known as 123 Agreement. It will provide a framework for cooperation

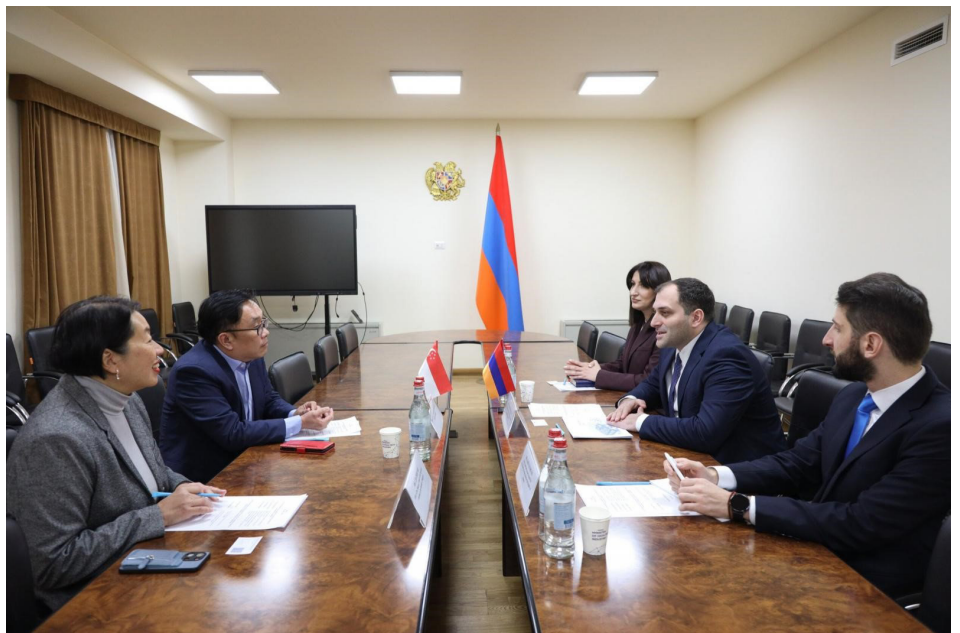
in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and mark our commitment to peaceful nuclear development under the highest standards of safety, security, and non-proliferation," Mirzoyan said.

## Armenia's High-Tech Deputy Minister and Honorary Consul to Singapore discuss technological cooperation

First Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia, Gevorg Mantashyan, received Tim Jin Cheng, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia to Singapore.

According to the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia, Mantashyan presented the ministry's activities, highlighting initiatives in digitalization, cybersecurity, telecommunications, defense technologies, artificial intelligence, postal services, and other areas.

Tim Jin Cheng expressed his gratitude for the reception and commended Armenia's achievements in the high-tech industry. He stated his willingness to promote cooperation between the two countries in the technological sector, suggesting the exploration of opportunities



for collaboration with sectoral companies, including startups.

Mantashyan underscored Singapore's

impressive achievements in the high-tech sector, noting that Singapore's experience is highly valuable for Armenia.

## Ameriabank Raises \$200 Million from IFC, Marking the Largest Transaction by IFC ever with a Financial Institution in Armenia

Ameriabank has signed a \$200 million long-term loan agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to support climate finance initiatives, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and women-owned MSMEs in Armenia. The agreement, the largest ever



signed between IFC and a financial institution in Armenia, represents a significant milestone in advancing Armenia's green transition, enhancing climate resilience, and aligning with both national and global climate goals. Half of the funding will be allocated to climate finance projects, a quarter to MSMEs, and another quarter to women-led MSMEs.

This partnership and transaction reflects Ameriabank's commitment to promoting sustainable development and driving transformative change, reinforced by its leading position as the financial institution with the largest loan portfolio in Armenia and its impressive green finance achievements.

Over the coming years, the investment is expected to generate thousands of jobs and significantly reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 40,000 tons of CO2 equivalent.

**Artak Hanesyan**, CEO of Ameriabank, said: "This long-term loan agreement stands out as the largest of its kind ever signed between IFC and a financial institution in Armenia. Beyond its scale, the agreement is significant for its purpose: supporting business initiatives and services that address climate change challenges, empower women entrepreneurs, and contribute to a sustainable future for Armenia."

He added: "We deeply appreciate IFC's decade-long partnership and our shared commitment to creating opportunities for businesses and people in Armenia."

In Armenia, IFC aims to close infrastructure gaps and reduce carbon footprints through investments in renewables and climate adaptation. Additionally, IFC works to improve access to finance for MSMEs and supports the growth of a greener economy in partnership with financial institutions.

"This partnership is part of IFC's strategy to boost private investment in sustainable development," said **Marcelo Castellanos**, IFC's Senior Regional Manager for the Financial Institutions Group in Europe. "Ameriabank, a leader in climate financing, is a strategic partner in advancing these goals. By providing long-term funding, we aim to demonstrate the viability of climate finance products and inspire replication and scaling across Armenia's financial sector."

As the largest lender to Armenia's economy, Ameriabank boasts a total gross loan portfolio of AMD 1,1 trillion, including an SME gross portfolio of AMD 252 billion as of September 2024. The latter reflects an impressive 25% growth from the previous year and a three-year CAGR of 21.6%. Over the past three years, the number of SME clients has increased by

45%, now representing a 25% share of the market.

Since 2009, the bank has financed energy efficiency and renewable energy projects worth over USD 250 million with the support of international financial institutions and impact investors. To date, Ameriabank has secured USD 1.4 billion in financing from various international

financial institutions, directing these funds toward Armenia's vital economic sectors.

### About Ameriabank

Ameriabank is a leading financial institution in Armenia, a major contributor to the Armenian economy with assets exceeding AMD 1 trillion. The Bank has adopted a customer-focused approach to ensure service quality and modern banking experience in an evolving digital environment. Ameriabank is committed to doing business responsibly and advancing Armenia's transition towards a sustainable future. For more information, visit: [www.ameriabank.am](http://www.ameriabank.am)

*The Bank is supervised by the CB of the RA.*

### About IFC

IFC — a member of the World Bank Group — is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2024, IFC committed a record \$56 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging private sector solutions and mobilizing private capital to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet. For more information, visit [www.ifc.org](http://www.ifc.org).

## Full text of Armenia-US Strategic Partnership Charter published

On January 14, the signing of the Strategic Partnership Charter between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America took place in the U.S. Department of State in Washington.

On behalf of the Republic of Armenia, the document was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan, and on behalf of the United States, by Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The full text of the Charter is presented below.

### Charter on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the United States of America

#### Preamble

The Republic of Armenia and the United States of America:

1. Affirm the importance of our relationship as friends and strategic partners. We intend to deepen our partnership to the benefit of both nations and expand our cooperation across a broad spectrum of mutual priorities.
2. Emphasize that this cooperation between our two democracies is based on shared values and common interests. These include advancing democracy and economic freedom, defending sovereignty and territorial integrity, strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, supporting innovation and technological advances, and bolstering energy security.
3. Stress our mutual desire to strengthen our relationship across the diplomatic, economic, energy, high-tech, educational, scientific, cultural, legal, defense, and security fields.

#### Section I: Principles of Partnership

This Charter is based on core basic principles and beliefs shared by both sides:

1. Support for each other's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity constitute the foundation of our bilateral relations.
2. Our friendship derives from our common commitment to democratic values and our shared belief that democracy is the chief basis for political legitimacy and therefore, stability.
3. Cooperation between democratic partners will help promote peace and stability.
4. A strong, independent, sovereign, and democratic Armenia, capable of defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of internationally recognized borders is essential for lasting regional security and prosperity.

5. Armenia's continued democratic and economic reforms can unleash the full creative potential of its industrious citizens and thereby catalyze prosperity throughout the region and beyond.

6. The United States welcomes efforts by Armenia to deepen its political, economic, security, and social ties with other nations of the Euro-Atlantic community and broader community of democracies.

7. A dignified and durable peace is essential for a more stable and prosperous future of the South Caucasus. The United States supports the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including in the border delimitation process based upon the Alma Ata Declaration of 1991.

8. The United States supports the unblocking of regional transport communications in the South Caucasus, based on full respect for the countries' sovereignty and jurisdiction.

9. Recognizing that the flow of goods and people across borders leads to interdependencies and mutual benefits for neighbors, the United States also intends to continue to advocate for the normalization of relations between Armenia and its neighbors.

#### Section II: Economic, Trade, Transport, and Energy Cooperation

Armenia and the United States intend to expand cooperation to enhance job creation and economic growth, support economic/market reform and liberalization, promote transport connectivity, improve the bilateral business climate, and improve market access for goods and services. We recognize that fair, worker-centered, and sustainable trade is essential to promoting resilient supply chains, equitable development, freedom, and prosperity. The United States supports Armenia's efforts to integrate into the global economy.

1. Acknowledging the importance of increased trade and investment to economic growth and development, Armenia and the United States intend to identify strategic opportunities to increase bilateral trade and investment.
2. Recognizing the importance of a well-functioning, resilient, and secure market-oriented energy sector, Armenia and the United States intend to explore opportunities to increase and diversify Armenia's energy production and supplies. This includes the development of a civil nuclear power program with the highest standards

for nuclear safety, security, and non-proliferation; efforts to enhance energy security and efficiency, including through a significant increase in the share of renewables in Armenia's energy mix; and measures to increase Armenia's energy connectivity to regional and European markets.

3. Armenia and the United States intend to initiate a working group to strengthen enforcement of export controls for dual-use goods, align policy frameworks, and share information. Armenia and the United States also intend to initiate a joint dialogue on greater access to U.S. Commerce export-controlled technology by trusted companies operating in Armenia.
4. Understanding the importance of trade diversification to address food security and promote economic growth, Armenia and the United States intend to explore opportunities to cooperate on areas that will support a strengthened environment for agricultural trade.
5. Recognizing the multifaceted challenges faced by Armenia due to its landlocked position and limited access to global trade markets, Armenia and the United States intend to deepen cooperation aimed at the integration of Armenia into wider regional transport networks and connectivity initiatives, in particular through strong political support and promotion of Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" project.

#### Section III: Defense and Security

The United States supports an independent, sovereign, and democratic Armenia. A peaceful South Caucasus is foundational to Armenia's continued economic growth and democratic development, and that of the region. Defense and security cooperation between Armenia and the United States benefits both nations and the region.

1. Recognizing the persistence of threats to global peace and stability, Armenia and the United States intend to expand the scope of their defense and security cooperation programs, including through establishing bilateral defense consultations within the next year and assisting the Armenian military through professional military assistance training.
2. The United States recognizes Armenia's important contributions to

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peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, and Mali.

Deepening Armenia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions is a mutual priority, and we plan to expand security cooperation and reform programs intended to increase Armenian interoperability and to strengthen Armenia's defense.

3. Acknowledging the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Armenia and the United States plan to explore means to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous technologies through adherence to international nonproliferation standards, effective enforcement of export controls, and strengthened enforcement of such controls. To this end, the United States intends to support the capacity building of the Armenian Border Guard Service and State Revenue Committee.
4. Recognizing the persistent threat to government, business, and the public from malicious cyber actors, Armenia and the United States intend to work towards an innovative, secure, and rights-respecting digital future. Armenia and the United States plan to continue to hold regular consultations on existing and new cyber threats.
5. The United States intends to continue to foster rights-respecting institutions, including by supporting Armenia's efforts to reform and modernize its Ministry of Internal Affairs and law enforcement agencies. Such support is expected to include police education and other measures to provide for public safety, to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for abuses, and to combat transnational crime and corruption.

#### **Section IV: Strengthening Democracy, Justice & Inclusion**

Recognizing Armenia's significant achievements to date, our two countries commit to work together to foster the rule of law buttressed by an impartial, independent judiciary, and to further strengthen freedom of expression, including for the media, good governance and accountability, public administration reform, fair and transparent electoral competition, a free and active civil society, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and anti-corruption efforts in Armenia. Armenia and the United States recognize the importance of building resilient, inclusive societies so that our governments are fully responsive to the needs of all.

Armenia and the United States plan to

cooperate to bolster independent media, freedom of expression, and access to objective news and information.

1. Armenia and the United States plan to cooperate to strengthen Armenia's efforts to advance the rule of law and the policy making processes in this area, including by working to increase judicial impartiality and independence, public trust, and transparency, as well as to develop Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms. Through enhanced law enforcement and judicial branch relationships, as well as a strengthened institutional framework for crime prevention and criminal justice, we plan to address common transnational criminal threats such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in persons and narcotics, money laundering, and cyber-crime.
2. Armenia and the United States intend to cooperate on Armenia's anti-corruption initiatives and efforts and the policy-making process in this area, including by working to strengthen anti-corruption institutions and integrity in all areas of public services.
3. Armenia and the United States plan to work together to improve the legal and regulatory frameworks for human rights protections in Armenia and strengthen Armenian human rights institutions. The United States plans to support Armenia as it works to enhance its legal framework on anti-discrimination.
4. Armenia and the United States plan to work together to promote good governance by increasing transparency and accountability, improving public administration in Armenia, and working on effective communication of reforms, as well as expanding citizen and media access to government information in Armenia.
5. Armenia and the United States plan to work together to increase political pluralism and transparent, fair political competition in Armenia, including by encouraging the development of political parties, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations, supporting their participation in developing legislation and enacting reforms to create a more competitive electoral environment.
6. Armenia and the United States plan to work together to strengthen the capacity of Armenian civil society to develop and analyze public policy, advocate on behalf of citizen interests, participate in the legislative process, and provide oversight of public officials.

7. Armenia and the United States intend to fulfill their Summit for Democracy Commitments.

8. The United States plans to support Armenia as it implements a plan to prevent and combat all forms of human trafficking in Armenia.
9. Recognizing that Armenia has dealt with a displacement crisis since September 2023, the United States plans to continue to support Armenia as it provides assistance to displaced persons and refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh.

#### **Section V: Increasing People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges**

Armenia and the United States share a desire to increase our people-to-people contacts, including through the Armenian American community, and enhance our cultural, creative, educational, scientific, and professional exchange programs that promote democracy, democratic values, and the rule of law, and increase mutual understanding.

1. Recognizing the importance of increased contact between the people of Armenia and the United States, both sides intend to promote further cultural and social exchanges and activities through initiatives such as the Fulbright Program, the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX), Undergraduate Exchange (UGRAD), Legislative Education and Practice (LEAP), the International Visitor Leadership Program, the English Language Teaching and Learning Program, and others.
2. Stressing the necessity of innovation and dynamism to the future of our two countries, Armenia and the United States intend to promote increased cooperation in higher education, business, and scientific research. The United States plans to facilitate the application process for U.S. visas consistent with U.S. laws and procedures so that qualified individuals in cultural, educational, business, and scientific activities are given the opportunity to participate.
3. Armenia and the United States acknowledge the potential of Armenia's Academic City as a hub for academic collaboration and innovation, furthering shared goals in education and research.
4. Armenia and the United States intend to support joint initiatives for preservation of cultural heritage in Armenia.

## Aliyev's show trials echo Stalin's tactics in suppressing opposition -

Luis Moreno Ocampo

Former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, has addressed the show trials organized by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's regime, comparing them to Stalin's tactics in the 1930s.

In [an article](#) published on his official website, Ocampo emphasized that the criminal trials set to begin in Baku on January 17 against former high-ranking officials of Nagorno-Karabakh are already predetermined.

The article is presented below:

"Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has resurrected one of Joseph Stalin's most sinister tools: the show trial. Just as Stalin's purges in the 1930s relied on forced confessions and sham trials to kill his rivals and strengthen his totalitarian grip on power, Aliyev is using judicial theatre to mask his crimes.

Stalin's infamous show trials targeted his closest allies—old Bolsheviks, military generals, and secret police operatives. These spectacles culminated in executions, while the media of the time failed to see through the facade. Notably, The New York Times correspondent Harold Denny dismissed the trials as genuine efforts at justice, tragically endorsing Stalin's propaganda. History cannot afford to repeat such errors. Can we do it better in 2025?

On January 17, Azerbaijan will stage criminal trials against Armenian of Nagorno-Karabakh, including former

presidents and civilians, alongside a separate trial for former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan. These proceedings are predetermined; the accused are already convicted in all but name. The charges, as hollow as they are grotesque, serve as a cover-up of the crimes committed by the regime in Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh including the prisoners.

Since December 2022, more than 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh were systematically starved under Azerbaijan's blockade. In September 2023, they were subjected to a brutal military assault, instilling conditions to destroy the ethnic group as such and produce serious mental harm – two material forms of committing genocide under Article 2 (c) and (b) of the Genocide Convention. Azerbaijan's Parliament has made its intentions clear, advocating for the erasure of Armenian as a nation and claiming its territory as "West Azerbaijan."

If Aliyev had genocidal intentions, then the Nagorno-Karabakh "ethnic cleansing" should be considered a genocide, if not, it is a crime against humanity of persecution, force-displacement, and deportation.

Hundreds of Azerbaijani dissidents remain imprisoned under Aliyev's regime, stripped of any prospect of a fair trial. On January 6, 2025, a criminal trial against a French national, Martin Ryan, started in Azerbaijan, exposing the tensions between

both countries. Ryan stands accused of espionage—allegedly gathering intelligence on Azerbaijan's military collaborations with Turkey and Pakistan and recruiting French-speaking Azerbaijanis for French intelligence. Prosecutors claim he also acted as an intermediary, facilitating contact between French intelligence and Azad Mammadli, an Azerbaijani citizen now on trial for high treason. The charges against dissidents or French citizens, dubious at best, could be characterized as a systemic attack against the civilian population, and consequently, as crimes against humanity.

This is not an isolated incident. Independent reports from the European Court of Human Rights, the US State Department, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom House all agree -Azerbaijan lacks an independent judiciary. In a rare instance of judicial independence in 2021, Judge Mehriban Suleymanova ruled against a government-backed entity. Her punishment was swift—she was fired.

The international community must act. These Stalin-era show trials in modern Azerbaijan are not merely a domestic charade but a calculated attempt to distract from Aliyev's crimes and tighten his grip on power. Every judge's strike of gavel in Baku's courts resounds with injustice, and every conviction shames the global community that allows this to continue.

It is time to expose Aliyev's dictatorship for what it is and shame its allies."

## Two German politicians on trial for bribery over Azerbaijan scandal

The trial of two German politicians over a corruption scandal known as the Azerbaijan affair began in Munich on Thursday, DPA International reports.

Axel Fischer and Eduard Lintner, both former lawmakers from the centre-right CDU/CSU bloc, face bribery charges at the Munich Higher Regional Court.

The pair have denied taking bribes aimed at influencing decisions in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in favor of Azerbaijan, according to prosecutors.

Lintner, who spent 33 years in Germany's parliament and was a member of PACE until 2010, allegedly received "several million euros via 19 foreign letterbox companies" from two firms until 2016, according to prosecutors.

He allegedly passed some of the payments on to other politicians who were supposed to influence decisions in favor of Azerbaijan.

Fischer, who was active in PACE as group leader for the conservative European People's Party (EPP) faction from

2010 to 2018, allegedly made favorable speeches in the interests of Azerbaijan and forwarded confidential documents, according to prosecutors.

In return, he allegedly received a five-figure bribe in 2016.

In addition to Lintner and Fischer, two other defendants are on trial for aiding and abetting, while another former lawmaker who was also under investigation has since died.

The court has initially scheduled 39 trial days until August 22.

## Human Rights defenders call for international monitoring of trials of Armenian prisoners in Baku

Over two dozen Armenian human rights NGOs and individual defenders have issued a joint appeal to international organizations and foreign ambassadors in Azerbaijan, urging them to monitor the trials of Armenian detainees that began in Baku today.

The appeal was addressed to high-ranking officials and prominent organizations, including the United Nations Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Commission, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Fair Trials, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and other key stakeholders. Additionally, the letter was sent to the ambassadors to Azerbaijan from the United States, France, Great Britain, and several other nations.

"We, human rights defenders and representatives of Armenian civil society, express our grave concern over the ongoing detention and criminal proceedings against Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian detainees currently held in Azerbaijan. Given the severity of the charges and the extensive violations of human rights observed during these legal proceedings, we formally request international monitoring to ensure that principles of justice and fair trials are upheld for Armenian defendants," the letter

states.

The appeal highlights significant concerns regarding Azerbaijan's judicial processes, particularly in cases involving Armenian detainees. The letter underscores that these trials have been marred by severe procedural violations, including: a presumption of guilt without evidence, denial of access to case files in a language the defendants understand, inadequate legal representation, complete absence of the right to an independent and impartial tribunal.

Moreover, the letter notes that legal aid provided by Azerbaijan lacks independence and effectiveness and independent lawyers are intimidated and obstructed from performing their duties.

"These fabricated cases and show trials not only undermine the rights of the accused but also perpetuate state-sponsored Armenophobia and hate propaganda against Armenians, as documented by international human rights organizations," the letter warns. It further emphasizes that Azerbaijan's judiciary has long been criticized for its lack of independence, with substantial evidence pointing to its subordination to the executive branch, rendering it an instrument of state power rather than an impartial arbiter of justice.

"We appeal to you with a request to immediately cooperate with the Azerbaijani authorities to organize independent monitoring and publication of the outcomes of the ongoing and upcoming trials involving Armenian detainees. This monitoring must include unrestricted access to the trials

and ensure public availability of their results. Such oversight is crucial to ensuring that the legal rights of ethnic Armenian POWs and detainees are safeguarded, that they receive fair trials, and that international standards of justice and impartiality are upheld," the letter concludes.

### *The letter has been signed by:*

International and Comparative Law Center NGO  
 Union for Protection of the Interests and Rights of the Artsakh People NGO  
 Protection of Rights without Borders NGO  
 Democracy Development Foundation  
 Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center  
 Helsinki Citizens' Assembly — Vanadzor  
 Law Development and Protection Foundation  
 Peace Dialogue NGO  
 Public Journalism Club NGO  
 "For Equal Rights" Educational Center NGO  
 Helsinki Association for Human Rights NGO  
 Disability Rights Agenda NGO  
 Women's Support Center NGO  
 Centre for Community Mobilization and Support NGO  
 Tufenkian Foundation  
 Human Rights Defender Ara Ghazaryan  
 Human Rights Defender Philippe Kalfayan  
 Human Rights Defender Arpi Avetisyan  
 Human Rights Defender Gegham Stepanyan

## Ruben Vardanyan is the embodiment of honesty and compassion, qualities that inspire - Nicolas Aznavour

Nikola Aznavour, co-founder of the "Aznavour" Foundation and chairman of its board of trustees, issued a statement regarding the trial of former Nagorno-Karabakh official Ruben Vardanyan, who is unlawfully detained in Azerbaijan.

"It is a great honor for me to know Ruben Vardanyan for many years. I speak with deep admiration about a man who has always stood out as a visionary figure and devoted patriot.

With the implementation of charitable initiatives and educational programs,

Ruben has proven that real success is improving people's lives and creating values. The establishment of the "Aurora" award testifies to his deep belief in the power of compassion, human endurance and hope.

Today we are facing a painful reality. Ruben has been in custody in Azerbaijan for 471 days. These illegal actions, which have an exclusively political motive, are a violation of justice and human rights.

Ruben Vardanyan's dedication to the Armenian people and universal values is truly exceptional. He is the embodiment of

honesty and compassion, qualities that inspire. I am proud to call Reuben my friend and I look forward to the day when he can continue to implement initiatives that change the world for the better.

Today, more than ever, we are obliged to stand by Ruben. His courage and dedication not only deserve our support, but also require our united efforts to ensure his freedom and protect the values he embodies," the statement said.

## Demonstrators submit petition to UN office in Yerevan asking intervention to release Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan



Demonstrators in Yerevan gathered outside the UN Armenia office on Friday to demand intervention to achieve the release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

Participants of the demonstration included former Nagorno-Karabakh officials and representatives of several organizations. They submitted a petition to the UN office calling for practical steps to release the prisoners, to preserve the Armenian heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, to ensure the right to return of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and implement mechanisms to determine the fate of the missing persons.

Narine Aghabalyan, the NK program leader of Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, said it is important to once again raise their voice about the crime against

justice and draw the world's attention on the Azerbaijani government's criminal conduct since the trial of the Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan will start on January 17. The judicial process against the Armenians is widely seen as a show trial.

"Ruben Vardanyan's latest statement highlights the alarming situation and the embarrassing condition of the justice system in Azerbaijan. Vardanyan's statement was a call on all of us, both the Armenian society and the international community, to take appropriate steps," she said.

Gegham Stepanyan, the former Human Rights Defender of Nagorno-Karabakh, said that all their efforts are aimed at stopping as soon as possible the torture of the unlawfully detained Armenians in Baku and achieving their release.

In 2023, armed forces of the Government of Azerbaijan invaded Nagorno-Karabakh, leading to the forced displacement of nearly 120,000 Armenians. During the flight of the refugees, Vardanyan and seven other former officials were arrested and have been facing politically motivated, fabricated charges. Other detainees include the former presidents of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan has also been unlawfully holding other POWs.

Ruben Vardanyan, the former State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh, has vehemently denied all charges against him which include "financing terrorism" and "illegally entering" Karabakh. Vardanyan, as well as many experts, have described the charges as falsifications. The former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Luis Moreno Ocampo recently once again slammed the charges as bogus, emphasizing that Baku is using the show trials to cover up its crimes in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In a [statement](#) issued on January 16, Ruben Vardanyan reiterated his complete innocence and the innocence of the other Armenians also being held as political prisoners and demanded an immediate end to the politically motivated case. He warned that all protocols bearing his signature are falsifications because he hasn't given any testimony. Vardanyan said his lawyer and interpreter were coerced into signing the documents.

## Russian, Iranian presidents sign strategic partnership treaty

The Russian and Iranian presidents, Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian have signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty. The ceremony was held following the talks in the Kremlin, Tass reports.

The document is expected to bring relations between Moscow and Tehran to a new level: it enshrines their



status as strategic partners. The agreement also establishes a legal framework for the further development of cooperation in the long term.

According to Russian and Iranian officials, the agreement covers all spheres, including defense, counter-terrorism, energy, finance, transport, industry, agriculture, culture, science and engineering.

## Ruben Vardanyan issues address to global community ahead of court hearing in Baku



Nagorno Karabakh's former Minister of State Ruben Vardanyan has issued an address to the global community, to those who care about what is happening in the region, those opposed to religious persecution worldwide and those who wish for a lasting and genuine peace.

Ruben Vardanyan has been kept at the Detention Center of the State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan since September 27, 2023 – more than 470 days in total, including 340 days in solitary confinement and 23 days in a punishment cell.

"I would like to make an official statement before the start of the trial. If you are reading these words, it means that I have exhausted all other means to convey the truth about what is happening here," Vardanyan said in a statement.

"A court hearing of my case is scheduled for January 17 at 3:00 PM. I have been informed that I am facing 42 charges, some of which carry sentences up to life imprisonment. However, I have not been granted the opportunity to fully review the official indictment. My lawyer and I were merely allowed to skim through 422 volumes of the case files, all written solely in the Azerbaijani language, which I do not understand, within a very short timeframe – from December 9, 2024, to January 8, 2025. I only received the list of

charges in Russian on January 8, 2025," he added.

Moreover, Vardanyan said, pressure has been exerted on him, his lawyer, and his interpreter to force them to backdate and sign documents, including falsified protocols and records of interrogations that never took place.

"I officially declare: I have given no testimony since the day of my arrest, except during the first interrogation, where I only stated my name and surname. Let me reiterate: all protocols bearing my signature are falsifications. These documents do not exist in reality. My lawyer and interpreter were coerced into signing these documents," he stated.

Ruben Vardanyan reiterated his complete innocence and the innocence of his Armenian compatriots also being held as political prisoners and demanded an immediate end to this politically motivated case against them.

Vardanyan added: "Despite our innocence and the political motivation of this trial, it is most likely that the prosecutor will ignore my plea and pursue a trial against us, in which case I demand and ask for your support in ensuring that I am afforded the following:

1. Allow me and my lawyer adequate time and opportunity to prepare for my defense. In particular, provide us with the opportunity to thoroughly review the case materials in a language I understand.
2. Eliminate all procedural violations and falsifications. Specifically, deem inadmissible all falsified documents and records of interrogations that never took place, as I have not provided any testimony

since the day of my arrest.

3. Make my trial, and those of the Armenian political prisoners, public. I insist on the most open trial possible, with the participation of international journalists and representatives of humanitarian organizations.

4. Consolidate my case with the cases of the others accused. More than 400 of the 422 volumes in my case concern episodes from the general case of which only 6 are specifically related to false accusations against me. Separating my case into a separate proceeding is an artificial and unfounded decision.

I bear no anger or hatred. On the contrary, I genuinely empathize with all those who violate laws, moral principles, and the teachings of the Quran and other holy texts.

I am convinced that true peace will only be possible when the leaders of the countries involved in the conflict, with the support of their societies, can come together to lay flowers on the graves of all those who perished in this war."

Ruben Vardanyan promised to do everything possible to ensure this happens during his lifetime. "As the great Mahatma Gandhi said, the only way to save the world from self-destruction is to live by the principles of nonviolence, truth, and love. Through compassion for all people, regardless of their skin color, nationality, or religion, we can achieve true peace."

"Thank you all for your support! I love and thank you all for your kindness toward me. Know that I am standing strong and believe that the truth will prevail," he concluded.

## Turkey commends Armenia's cooperation as two criminals extradited

Turkey has commended Armenia's cooperation in detaining two criminals.

On 19 January 2025, Armenia extradited two individuals involved in organized crime activities in Turkey, in response to a request from Interpol under its Red Notice.

The operation to find them was coordinated by several Turkish agencies, including the Justice and Foreign Ministries, as

well as the Interpol-Europol Department of the Interior Ministry's Directorate General of Security.

The Interior Ministry said on X that Yilmaz, who is linked to the Baris Boyun criminal organization, has been wanted in Turkey for the past 15 years with 43 arrest warrants and internationally for 14 years following the Interpol red notice for his capture.

Kaymak, a member of the criminal network, had been wanted in the country for six years with 10 arrest warrants and internationally for a year.

The two were transported to Turkey to "face justice," the ministry said.

"Turkey appreciates the cooperation demonstrated in this matter by Armenia," the Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement.

## “Music is the Universal Language of Mankind,” Believed the Great Aram Khachaturyan

*An Interview with Samvel Arakelyan, Renowned Violinist*

*In this exclusive interview, celebrated violinist Samvel Arakelyan reflects on his career, his deep respect for the works of composer Aram Khachaturyan, and the life lessons music has taught him. Arakelyan shares his thoughts on the role of performance in his life, the balance between artistry and audience expectations, and the personal sacrifices behind pursuing a musical career.*

The world of music is vast and infinite. It is beautiful precisely because it can be approached from so many angles. These are entirely different types of musical activity: performance brings its own challenges, adrenaline rushes, and artistic goals, all of which are incredibly fascinating to me. The repertoire for a trio is fundamentally different—it’s a new level of philosophy. Performing A. Khachaturyan’s compositions requires the right partners. When everything aligns, it’s an incredible feeling.

### **Q: You always speak warmly about your colleagues...**

It’s like family life, with its joys, successes, and milestones. We don’t even evaluate each other in terms of good or bad. It’s a given, a state in which we exist.

### **Q: Since we’re talking about family, has it helped you in life that your parents are not musicians?**

I know many examples of people who came from outside the musical community. After all, internal reserves and talent sometimes outweigh the environment. Of course, being born into a musical family gives you a different level of preparation and foundation, and you understand what music truly is from the very beginning.

### **Q: It’s often said that if a family has a gifted child, the family must make significant sacrifices. How was it for you?**

A family planning to guide a child into a professional field has a tough road. They must make serious decisions and change plans.

### **Q: At what point did you realize that music was your calling?**

That question never even arose for me. Everything unfolded very harmoniously. I’ve been playing the violin since I was six and never thought I was in the wrong

field or needed to try another profession. However, the pleasure from playing and practicing came much later, around the age of 14–15, when I began to understand the nuances of the instrument.

### **Q: What is the most important aspect of a concert for you—the performance itself or the aftertaste?**

I’ve never thought about it in those terms. If I had to choose, I’d say the moment of performance. Let’s not deceive ourselves: we all enjoy applause—it’s not very pleasant to leave the stage to



the sound of your own footsteps. But ultimately, the music we play is more important than our feelings, satisfaction, or self-realization. Composers are far greater than performers. Since I’ve never composed music, I deeply respect those who have, and I strive to be a conduit for their thoughts and ideas, while also adding something of my own.

### **Q: These days, people often come to concerts not just to listen but also to watch. If the visual aspect were removed, pure sound might not suffice. What’s your take on this trend?**

A sense of proportion is crucial here. Performing on stage is, undeniably, a public act. You can’t forget that you’re doing it for the audience present in the hall. Your profession is partly theatrical; the question is, what drives your performance? If it’s about showcasing yourself, then specific behaviors and non-musical elements designed to attract the audience emerge. This creates a different perception of you as an artist. But if your primary goal is to seek the truth in music, then adding subtle theatrical elements can help convey your ideas to the listener.

### **Q: How do you react to what**

### **happens in the audience during a performance?**

I don’t react at all. For me, there’s no physical connection between the audience and the stage. If someone coughs, stands up, or talks, I hear it, but it doesn’t affect me—it’s just background noise. What matters is the collective breath of the audience, whatever it may be. I execute the will of the composer, so I don’t take negative moments or unacademic behavior personally, and it doesn’t affect the performance.

### **Q: When you have the opportunity to create your own concert program, what takes precedence?**

Exclusively my desire to perform certain pieces and how they fit together in the program.

### **Q: Personal desires without considering the audience can be risky. Does that risk ultimately pay off?**

The risk lies in how well our vision resonates with that of the audience. You can’t manipulate public opinion to be more successful—it’s a path to nowhere. If the goal is to make more money, you’re better off doing something else. Music, in this sense, is an ungrateful and economically unprofitable way to earn a living: it requires lengthy training with no guaranteed payoff. Chasing the audience to appear better, more attractive, or more successful is a losing strategy in the long run. The only path is to offer your own vision, born of struggle and thought. People will either come to it—or they won’t.

### **Q: Strings often break during performances. What goes through your mind when you lose an entire range of sound but still need to finish the piece?**

Once, a string broke during a performance, and I managed to finish the piece effectively on the remaining strings. The adrenaline rush is incredible—you calculate countless options in fractions of a second. In that moment, you feel a wave of support from the audience, which is an amazing sensation!

### **Q: You’ve been touring extensively, especially across various U.S. states. How has this changed you?**

I believe touring enriches a person with diverse experiences and emotions. For musicians, like actors, it’s essential to constantly draw on new information and feelings.

## Applications now open for the DiasPro professional volunteer program

The Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia is now accepting applications for the DiasPro Professional Volunteer Program for 2025.

The program invites Armenians from the Diaspora to share their expertise in support of Armenia's state and local self-government bodies.

DiasPro aims to foster and strengthen collaboration between Diaspora specialists and the aforementioned bodies, promote deeper Homeland-Diaspora connections, and harness the professional expertise of the Diaspora to support the initiatives undertaken by these institutions.

Diaspora specialists will contribute through professional consultations, experience sharing, training sessions, and other forms of expertise.

While most activities can be conducted online, certain tasks may require on-site involvement.

The involvement of specialists in the program will be coordinated in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs and the relevant state entities of Armenia.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A specialist is considered eligible for the program if they meet the following basic requirements:

Hold a higher education degree  
Apply for a position in a field where they have at least one year of professional work experience  
Proficiency in Armenian is desirable.

Preference will be given to specialists with expertise in the following areas for professional work:

Project Management  
MS Office Specialization  
Foreign Language Expertise (English, Russian, French, Spanish, and other languages)

Graphic Design

### APPLICATION

Applications are open from January 14th to March 1st, 2025. Selected candidates will be invited to participate in online or onsite interviews.

Learn more about the program on the official website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs under the "Programs" section: <http://diaspora.gov.am/en/programs/39>

Apply now using the following link: <https://shorturl.at/E5KnT>

\*The program is entirely voluntary and does not provide any financial compensation.

For any questions about the program, please contact the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs:

Email: [diaspro@gov.am](mailto:diaspro@gov.am)  
Tel.: +374 10 515 522, +374 10 515 514

## Rep. Dina Titus slams sham trials in Baku, calls for sanctions on Aliyev regime

Member of US Congress Dina Titus has condemned the trials that began on January 17 against Armenians held in Baku prisons on illegal and fabricated charges, urging the U.S. State Department to impose sanctions on the Aliyev regime.

"Eighteen Armenian political prisoners stood trial today in secret proceedings following Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Artsakh.

I condemn these sham trials and urge the State Department to consider the use of Magnitsky sanctions to target the human rights abusers in the Aliyev regime," Rep. Dina Titus said in a post on X.

*Azerbaijan has illegally arrested former*



*Defense Davit Manukyan, and former State Minister Ruben Vardanyan on trumped-up charges.*

*False charges have also been brought against Vasily Beglaryan, Erik Ghazaryan, Davit Alahverdyan, Gurgen Stepanyan, Levon Balayan, Madat Babayan, Garik Martirosyan, and Melikset Pashayan. The criminal case against Ruben Vardanyan was separated from the others, and his trial was*

*Nagorno-Karabakh Presidents Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, Arayik Harutyunyan, former MP Davit Ishkhanyan, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Babayan, former Minister of Defense Levon Mnatsakanyan, former Deputy Minister of*

*held separately. The trials for both Ruben Vardanyan and the others took place on January 17.*

*The next court hearing for Vardanyan will be held on January 27, while the hearing for the others is scheduled for January 21.*

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Noyan Tapan introduces: "Discussion" welcoming the founding president of Upforarmenia charity organization, Davit Mnatsakanyan



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