

“OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs ready to facilitate Pashinyan-Aliyev meeting”



The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs say they are ready to facilitate a meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders.

“The Co-Chairs have taken positive note of President Aliyev’s and Prime Minister Pashinyan’s public statements expressing their readiness in principle to meet with each other under the auspices of the Co-Chairs,” OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Stephane Visconti of France, Andrew Schofer of the United States of America, and Igor Khovaev of the Russian Federation said in a statement released October 8. “The Co-Chairs look forward to

engaging the sides on modalities and details of such a meeting and reiterate their willingness to visit the region in the near future to discuss next steps in the process.”

The statement comes after the Co-Chairs held consultations with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Vice President Gilles Carbonnier in Geneva.

“The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office (PRCiO) Andrzej Kasprzyk also participated in the meetings. All participants stressed the importance of full, unimpeded access by in-

ternational humanitarian organizations to carry out their work.

In light of the recent constructive meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the margins of the UN General Assembly, the Co-Chairs welcomed Azerbaijan’s release of one Armenian serviceman and also discussed possible de-escalatory and humanitarian measures, including with regard to detainees, missing persons, and the voluntary return of all displaced persons. The Co-Chairs emphasized their intention to continue working with the parties to find areas of agreement.”

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Armenian Minister, Indian Ambassador discuss cooperation opportunities in the sidelines of North-South project



Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia Gnel Sanosyan received Ambassador of India to Armenia Kishan Dan Dewal.

ARMENPRESS reports the Minister thanked the Ambassador for the opportunity

to discuss issues related to the Armenian-Indian cooperation.

During the meeting, the Ambassador stressed that the Indian side is interested in infrastructure development programs in Armenia and will be glad to discuss cooperation opportunities in that direction.

According to the Ambassador, there are quite large companies in India that have succeeded in this direction, which can participate in the implementation of programs in Armenia.

Gnel Sanosyan highlighted the active work with the Indian side and the strength-

ening of the Armenian-Indian cooperation, emphasizing that the Armenian-Indian friendly relations have deep historical roots. During the conversation, the sides also referred to the investment program of the North-South Road corridor, the opportunities provided by the port of Chabahar for Armenia.

An agreement was reached to exchange information and to discuss the opportunities for cooperation within the framework of the North-South Road Corridor investment program.

La Francophonie willing to support Armenia in solving the humanitarian crisis caused by 44-day war

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Louise Mushikiwabo, Secretary General of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

The interlocutors exchanged views on international issues, regional security and peace. Nikol Pashinyan highlighted the solution of the humanitarian issues caused by the 44-day war, in particular, the immediate release of Armenian prisoners of war, civilian hostages, as well as the proper protection of the Armenian historical, cultural and religious heritage and expressed gratitude to the OIF Secretary-General for the support and solidarity with our country and the Armenian people in autumn 2020.

Louise Mushikiwabo reaffirmed the

readiness of the OIF to continue the support aimed at the solution of the humanitarian crisis caused by the 44-day war.

The Prime Minister highlighted the participation of the OIF in the observation mission for the first time in the parliamentary elections of 2021. The interlocutors referred to the activities of the Organization during the coronavirus pandemic and the emerging challenges. Issues related to the preparation for the forthcoming IOF summit were touched upon.

The parties reaffirmed their readiness to deepen cooperation and discussed the activities in that direction. Both sides highlighted the deepening of French language teaching in Armenian schools, universities,

among civil servants, the implementation



of educational initiatives among the youth, which will be a link between the youth of the Francophone area.

After the meeting, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Secretary General of the OIF issued a joint statement.

Pashinyan, Putin discuss developments in the region

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

PM Pashinyan congratulated Vladimir Putin on birthday and wished him good health and inexhaustible energy for the implementation of all programs and goals in his high post of the head of state.

Prime Minister Pashinyan stressed that Armenia and the Armenian people highly appreciate the efforts of Russian President Vladimir Putin, his exceptional role in



maintaining peace and stability in the region, and expressed gratitude for his atten-

tion to our country.

Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked the Armenian Prime Minister for the warm congratulations and stressed that Russia attaches great importance to close cooperation with Armenia, a strategic ally.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the agenda of Armenian-Russian relations. Reference was made to the situation in the region and the developments taking place.

Prime Minister Pashinyan meets with Georgian PM



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Georgian PM Irakli Garibashvili, who is in Armenia on a working visit.

Welcoming his Georgian counterpart, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia once again offered condolences on the tragic incident in Batumi and expressed solidarity with the Government of Georgia and the Georgian people. Nikol Pashinyan thanked Irakli Garibashvili for not canceling his visit to Armenia despite that emergency situation.

The Prime Minister of Georgia thanked the Armenian PM for his words of support.

Nikol Pashinyan and Irakli Garibashvili

stated that the high-level intensive bilateral contacts testify to the dynamic development of the Armenian-Georgian relations and the high level of political dialogue.

The interlocutors discussed the agenda and prospects of Armenia-Georgia cooperation. The sides exchanged views on the regional situation and developments. The parties reaffirmed their readiness to further deepen friendly ties and agreed to continue the active dialogue.

Armenia, Italy deepen cooperation in justice sector: memorandum signed in Rome

Justice Minister of Armenia Karen Andreasyan met on October 6 with Italian Justice Minister Marta Cartabia in Rome, the Armenian ministry said in a statement.

At the meeting minister Andreasyan thanked his Italian counterpart for the opportunity to meet and stated that the government of Armenia is interested in boosting the relations with Italy.

He emphasized that the justice reforms are one of the key directions of the government's agenda and introduced his Italian counterpart on the actions taken within the past three years, as well as presented



Armenia's anti-corruption agenda, human rights, police and other reforms.

Karen Andreasyan said that the Armenian government managed to create new and transparent institutions with the sup-

port of international, including the European partners. In this respect he thanked Italy for the introduction of a program "Strengthening anti-corruption reforms in Armenia", by which the OSCE helps the Armenian government to create an Anti-Corruption Committee. Italy is the main donor country of the program.

The minister invited his Italian counterpart to visit to Armenia.

The meeting was followed by a signing ceremony of a memorandum of cooperation between the Justice Academies of the two countries.

Opposition disputes constitutionality of community enlargement law at high court

The two opposition blocs of the Armenian parliament – Hayastan and Pativ Unem – have applied to the Constitutional Court to dispute the constitutionality of the government-backed community enlargement bill passed by parliament on September 24.

Hayastan MP Artsvik Minasyan said they've formally submitted the application with the required 1/5th of lawmakers.

Minasyan also accused President Armen Sarkissian for signing the bill into

law, describing the move "unconstitutional".

The new law will merge 441 communities into 37 enlarged communities. The government says that the current administrative divisions hinder community development, especially in cases of communities which have a population below 3000. But opposition lawmakers say the community enlargement is politically motivated and the incumbent authorities seek to strengthen their positions in all territories.



The bill was adopted by parliament on September 27 with only the ruling party taking part in the voting. The opposition blocs boycotted the vote.

Iran warns against redrawing of South Caucasus borders



(RFE/RL) - Iran strongly opposes any redrawing of borders in the South Caucasus, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said after meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on October 6.

Amir-Abdollahian visited Russia amid Iran's mounting tensions with Azerbaijan that followed Baku's decision last month to levy hefty fees from Iranian trucks transporting goods to and from Armenia.

He said on his arrival in the Russian capital late on Tuesday that Tehran expects Moscow to "react to possible changes in regional countries' borders." He also echoed Iranian allegations that Baku is harboring Middle Eastern "terrorists" as well as Israeli security personnel near Iran's borders.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev angrily denied the accusations on Monday. He earlier criticized large-scale Iranian military exercises that began along the Azerbaijani border last week.

Earlier on Monday, a senior Iranian parliamentarian reportedly accused Aliyev of trying to "cut Iran's access to Armenia" with the help of Turkey and Israel.

The Azerbaijani leader has repeatedly threatened in recent months to forcibly open a land "corridor" that would connect

Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia's Syunik province bordering Iran. All Armenian roads leading to Iran also pass-through Syunik.

Speaking at a joint news conference with Lavrov held after their talks, Amir-Abdollahian reiterated that any "changes in the region's map" are unacceptable to Iran. He indicated that the issue was on the meeting's agenda.

The Russian foreign minister said they discussed "the situation in the South Caucasus" but did not comment on the unprecedented Azerbaijani-Iranian row. He said only that Moscow, which has deployed Russian troops in Syunik over the past year, is against any "provocative" war games in the region.

"Azerbaijan is expressing concern over recent military exercises held by our Iranian friends near its borders," Lavrov told journalists.

Amir-Abdollahian countered that Azerbaijani and Turkish troops have held six joint drills in Azerbaijan so far this year.

Lavrov also stressed the importance of "unblocking all transport and economic links in that region" after last year's Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

"That will benefit not only Armenia and Azerbaijan but also Georgia ... as

well as Iran, Russia and Turkey, the nearest neighbors of the three South Caucasus republics," he said. "In this context, we discussed today the [Turkish] initiative to create a 'three plus three' format: the three South Caucasus countries and their three big neighbors: Russia, Iran and Turkey. Our Iranian friends have a positive attitude to this initiative."

Amir-Abdollahian flew to Moscow on Tuesday one day after meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in Tehran. The latter accused Baku of misrepresenting Russian-brokered agreements that call for the opening of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"In this regard, we highly appreciate Iran's position on Armenia's territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders," Mirzoyan said after talks with his Iranian counterpart.

Armen Grigorian, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, likewise insisted on Wednesday that any road and/or railway connecting Nakhichevan to the rest of Azerbaijan would be under full Armenian control.

"There will be no sovereign corridor in Armenia," Grigorian told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "That is, Armenia will control its entire territory."

Armenia delivers statement on protection of humanitarian law in armed conflicts at UN Human Rights Council



In the framework of the 48th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council taking place in Geneva, the Republic of Armenia delivered a joint statement dedicated to the protection of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during armed conflicts. The cross regional group of nineteen countries joined the statement.

Referring to the UN Charter basic principles of the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and refraining from the threat or use of force the statement strongly condemns gross violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of in-

ternational humanitarian law during armed conflicts and urges States to hold accountable the perpetrators of such crimes.

It particularly states that the unlawful use of force is often preceded or accompanied by hate speech, large-scale propaganda of war, statements by political leaders and public figures that express support for the affirmation of the superiority of a race or an ethnic group, disseminating hostility and prejudice against ethnic, religious or racial groups, or condone or justify violence against them.

The States reaffirm the right of the victims to be assisted by humanitarian organizations, as set forth in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and other relevant instruments of international humanitarian law, and call for safe and timely access for such assistance.

The countries reiterate that prisoners of war and internees must be treated in ac-

cordance with international humanitarian law and must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities. The hostage-taking, prolonged detention of prisoners and internees for bargaining purposes, is prohibited under international humanitarian law.

The Joint statement encourages the implementation of effective legislative, administrative, judicial, or other measures to prevent, terminate and punish acts of enforced disappearance.

The States call upon the UN's appropriate bodies to assume a more active role in the promotion and protection of human rights in ensuring full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law in all situations of armed conflict, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Armenian Ombudsman presents reports on Azerbaijani atrocities to Pope Francis

Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan has presented evidence of Azerbaijani torture of Armenian captives to His Holiness Pope Francis.

The Ombudsman was introduced to the Pope by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. Tatoyan thanked the Pope for his calls to stop the war unleashed by Azerbaijan

against Artsakh, and the call to release the Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan.

The Human Rights Defender then noted that some of the Armenian captives are still being illegally held in Azerbaijan and spoke about the violations of the rights of the border residents of Armenia by Azerbaijan.

He handed over reports proving the



atrocities to the Pontiff. The Pope said he had discussed the issue with His Holiness Karekin II and expressed gratitude for the important reports. Pope Francis instructed his assistant to study them separately and present to him.

The first of the reports presented the "Trophy Park" – an open-air museum of human suffering, based on anti-Armenian sentiment. The report proves that the park encourages more hatred.

The second report provided solid evidence on Azerbaijan's responsibility for torturing Armenian captives, and the third was about the ban on using the captives' testimonies received through torture and inhuman treatment, as the basis for a criminal case.

Basque Parliament adopts resolution, demanding immediate release of Armenian POWs

The Basque Parliament has unanimously adopted a resolution. According to the resolution, it is time to demand from Azerbaijan:

- The immediate release of Armenian prisoners
- Respect for the ceasefire
- The end of their military intrusions in Armenia



Iranian Minister upbeat on transport links with Armenia



The Iranian minister of roads and urban development indicated on October 7 Iran will fully restore soon its transport links with neighboring Armenia which have been disrupted by an Azerbaijani checkpoint setup on the main road connecting the two states.

In a Twitter post, Rostam Qassemi predicted a complete change of “the transit map of the region.”

Qassemi’s deputy Kheirollah Khademi visited Armenia earlier this week to discuss with Armenian officials the ongoing

reconstruction of an alternative road in Armenia’s Syunik province which will allow Iranian trucks bypass the Azerbaijani roadblock. Khademi said Tehran is ready to help Yerevan refurbish this and other Syunik roads leading to the Iranian border.

Khademi said on his return to Iran that work on the bypass road will be completed soon. Speaking with reporters at the Nurdz crossing on the Iranian-Armenian border, he said Iran and Armenia also reached agreements on extending that road northwards.

“Thanks to special instructions issued to the deputy minister, the issue of the road running from Nurdz to Armenia and the Caucasus corridor will be solved,” tweeted Qassemi.

“Those who caused problems must know that no road can remain closed for us. But ‘burned bridges’ will not be restored easily,” he said in an apparent message to Azerbaijan.

The Armenian government controversially ceded to Azerbaijan a 21-kilometer section of the existing main highway connecting Armenia to Iran shortly after last year’s war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani police and customs set up the checkpoint there on September 12 to levy hefty fees from Iranian trucks transporting cargo to Iran. Tensions between Tehran and Baku have run high since then.

The Iranian military launched last week large-scale military exercises on the country’s border with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has criticized the drills. He has also rejected Iranian claims that Baku is harboring Middle Eastern “terrorists” as well as Israeli security personnel near Iran’s borders.

Baku-Nakhijevan flight carried out through Armenia’s airspace, Civil Aviation Committee confirms

Armenia’s Civil Aviation Committee has confirmed that on October 6 a flight on the Baku-Nakhijevan route was carried out over the airspace of the Republic of Armenia.

The use of the airspace of both Armenia and Azerbaijan has never been restricted for civilian aircrafts, except during the 44-day war, the Committee said in a statement.

Flights on the mentioned route were regularly carried out before November



8, 2014, after which the Azerbaijani side chose to stop using the airspace of the Republic of Armenia.

At the same time, the Civil Aviation Committee said flights from Zvartnots Airport to other countries and in the opposite direction have been carried out all this time.

It added that the transit aviation permits are not issued by the Armenian aviation authorities, as according to the procedures, no permit is required for the implementation of

transit flights by civil aircrafts.

The right to choose the routes is reserved for the aircraft operators.

World Bank forecasts 6.1% economic growth in Armenia in 2021

Armenia's economy is on course to grow by just over 6 percent this year after contracting sharply last year, according to the World Bank.

"The economic recovery in 2021 has been faster than anticipated, and the economy is likely to return to pre-COVID output levels by mid-2022," the bank said in a report released this week.

"Following a faster-than-expected recovery in [the first half of the year,] the projected GDP growth rate for 2021 has been revised to 6.1 percent, up from 3.4 percent in April 2021," it said, adding that the economic upswing will continue to be primarily driven by private consumption.

The International Monetary Fund has also signaled a significant improvement of its economic outlook for Armenia. A senior

IMF official, Nathan Porter, forecast last month a 6.5 percent growth rate after holding virtual talks with Armenian officials.

The Armenian economy shrunk by 7.6 percent last year due to the coronavirus pandemic and the war with Azerbaijan.

The Armenian government had projected modest economic recovery until this spring. It now expects much faster growth not only in 2021 but also in the coming years.

The government's five-year policy program approved by the parliament in August says GDP should increase by 7 percent annually. And a draft state budget unveiled by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's cabinet last week commits Armenian tax authorities to increasing state revenue by as much as 25 percent in 2022. This would not only

finance a 15 percent rise in public spending but also cut the country's budget deficit that widened significantly during last year's recession.

The World Bank report says, however, that Armenian growth will likely slow down to 4.8 percent next year and only slightly accelerate in 2023. It also lists "downside risks" to this scenario: "limited progress in COVID-19 vaccinations, rising COVID-19 cases, geopolitical tensions, and a delayed recovery among major trading partners."

The IMF's Porter sounded a similar note of caution: "Downside risks remain elevated, including from geopolitical tensions, a slowdown in external demand, and heightened global financial market volatility."

Armenian Podcastle company raises \$7M in funding

Podcastle, a Yerevan, Armenia-based platform for podcast creators which helps them record, produce and publish their content, raised \$7M in funding, TechCrunch reports.

The round was co-led by RTP Global and Point Nine, with participation from S16 VC and previous investors Sierra Ventures and AI Fund.

Podcastle says it has around 150,000 creators so far, but says it's adding to that number quickly with easy-to-use tools for podcast creators such as enabling studio-quality remote interviews using consumer-grade mics, multitrack recording and editing, and the ability to isolate the speech in the podcasts and improve it. It can also convert text to speech and vice-versa, allowing creators to edit their audio like text documents.

Artavazd Yeritsyan, founder and CEO of Podcastle and former VP of Engineering at Picsart, said: "In 2022, the average time spent listening should rise to 1 hour and 37



minutes per day, meaning the industry becomes one of the most influential categories in storytelling. We at Podcastle strive to remove all technical barriers and allow creators to focus on the thing that really matters — producing and delivering content they'd like to share with others".

He says that while Descript is an editing tool, Podcastle is closer to a "creation" platform where creators can start with the remote interviews and continue editing without leaving the platform. "It's like comparing Microsoft doc with Google

Docs. Or Sketch versus Figma. In those cases, we are Google Docs and Figma," he told TechCrunch's Mike Butcher.

Alexander Pavlov, managing partner at RTP Global said: "The podcasting market reached \$11.46 billion in 2020, and Podcastle offers a unified solution to satisfy aspiring hosts and creators. We see the huge potential behind the platform and are happy to further support Podcastle on its way to success".

Louis Coppey, partner at Point Nine Capital said: "At Point Nine, we've invested in several creative software over the past few years such as PlayPlay in Paris, GravitySketch in London or Shapr3D in Budapest. These three businesses are radically simplifying the creation of videos and designs in VR or 3D. Podcastle is paving the way for the democratization of audio content production."

Podcastle offers four pricing plans and its base features are available for free.

US donates new X-Ray machine to Ashtarak medical center in Armenia

US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy joined a medical delegation from the United States in unveiling a new X-Ray machine donated to the Ashtarak medical center, the US Embassy in Armenia informs.

"The donation and the medical mission,

comprising healthcare volunteers from across the United States, is a testament to the close ties between the Armenian and American people and underscore the strength of the US-Armenia relationship," the Embassy said in a Facebook post.



It is extremely difficult to imagine peaceful coexistence of two peoples when Baku builds “trophy-parks” - Alen Simonyan



President of the National Assembly of Armenia Alen Simonyan gave an exclusive interview to the Russian “RBK” TV channel within the framework of his official visit to Russia.

During the extensive conversation with Ilya Doronov, Alen Simonyan referred to the allied nature of the Armenian-Russian relations, the agreements reached during the meetings with high-ranking Russian officials, spoke about the steps aimed at establishing peace in the region and ways to overcome the consequences of the 44-day war.

The head of the parliament stressed that

the Armenian side is not in favor of military solutions, the issues should be resolved peacefully.

“It is very important that my first foreign visit took place to a country which is an ally of the Republic of Armenia, and for me personally it was very important to come to Moscow first.

I think the visit is completely successful,” Alen Simonyan said, adding that during the meetings he offered to find concrete solutions to the problems. An agreement has been reached to discuss positions in advance to work more coordinated at international platforms”, Simonyan said.

Ilya Doronov inquired about the process of overcoming the consequences of the war in Armenia.

“It is difficult to come to normal life when we learn about prisoners of war every day, when relatives are waiting for their children, brothers and spouses. It is very difficult when Turkey and Azerbaijan

hold military exercises in the region every month literally a few kilometers away from us”, Simonyan emphasized.

Touching upon the regional issues and possible contacts with Azerbaijan, the National Assembly President stated. “It is extremely difficult to imagine the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples in a situation when, for example, in Baku, so-called ‘trophy parks’ are being built, mannequins of burning or killed Armenian soldiers are being displayed.”

The November 9 declaration and the events of the following period were touched upon. Alen Simonyan spoke about the unconstructive attitude of Azerbaijan, the Armenian prisoners of war held in that country and the necessity of an immediate return of the captured and missing persons.

“The Azerbaijani soldiers are in the territory of Armenia. We offered to withdraw forces simultaneously until the borders are clarified, but the Azerbaijani side has not done so yet. These are the most important issues along with the return of the captives,” Alen Simonyan said.

Azerbaijan’s provocations aim at disrupting the Russian peacekeeping mission – Artsakh MFA



Artsakh’s Foreign Ministry has called on the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair states to take active steps to hold the Azerbaijani party accountable for ceasefire violation that saw a civilian killed.

On October 9, a civilian of the Republic of Artsakh was fatally wounded by an Azerbaijani sniper fire in an agricultural

area near the town of Martakert.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Artsakh has strongly condemned such aggressive behavior and provocative actions of Azerbaijan “aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear among the peaceful population of the Republic of Artsakh and emigration of Armenians from the country.”

“Azerbaijan also pursues far-reaching goals – that is to disrupt the implementation of the peacekeeping mission of the Russian Federation and to question the effectiveness of the peacekeepers’ activities,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“This and all the previous incidents,

which resulted in casualties among civilians or damage to their property, are manifestations of Azerbaijan’s coordinated anti-Armenian policy and another proof that the Azerbaijani authorities’ peaceful calls on the people of Artsakh and claims for peaceful coexistence are nothing but an attempt to mislead the civilized world and weaken the vigilance of the Armenian parties,” the statement reads.

“We call on the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair states to take active steps to hold the Azerbaijani party accountable and exclude such incidents in the future,” the Ministry concluded.

Erdogan files motion to strip Garo Paylan, three other opposition MPs of immunity



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has filed a motion to lift parliamentary immunity of ethnic Armenian MP Garo Paylan and three other Members of Parliament.

A presidential summary of proceedings seeking the removal of the parliamentary immunity of four opposition deputies has made its way to the Turkish parliament, the Stockholm Center for Freedom reports.

Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputies Meral Daniş Beştaş, Hüda

Kaya and Garo Paylan and Democratic Regions Party (DBP) lawmaker Salihe Aydeniz are likely to face prosecution if their immunity is lifted.

The prosecution of members of Parliament has been possible since the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) lent support to a 2016 proposal submitted by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) on removing deputies' immunity from prosecution. The immunity of all deputies who faced prosecution was lifted in May 2016.

The political and legal assault on the HDP, which intensified after a truce between Kurdish militants and the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan broke down in 2015, grew even stronger after Erdogan survived a failed coup attempt in July 2016 that was followed by a sweeping political crackdown.

The chief prosecutor for the Supreme Court of Appeals on March 17 had asked the Constitutional Court to ban the HDP, arguing in an indictment that the pro-Kurdish party was trying to "destroy the indivisibility between the state and the people."

Hundreds of HDP politicians, including the party's former co-chairs, are behind bars on terrorism charges, while most of the 65 HDP mayors elected in the predominantly Kurdish Southeast in 2019 have been replaced by government-appointed trustees.

Selahattin Demirtaş, who co-led the HDP and twice ran for president, has been in prison since November 2016 due to multiple cases and remains behind bars despite orders from the European Court of Human Rights to release him. Former co-president Figen Yüksekdağ has also been in prison since 2016.

Armenian Ambassador briefs Dutch politicians on situation caused by Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression against Artsakh



Armenia's Ambassador to the Netherlands Tigran Balayan received members of the foreign affairs commission of the Dutch CDA headed by President Wim van de Camp, an ex-member of the European Parliament.

In his welcome remarks the Ambassador briefed the attendees about the centuries-old contacts between the Armenian and the Dutch peoples, dynamics of the flourishing bilateral relations and the scheduled events for the next year in the framework of the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations.

Referring to the tense atmosphere in the Caucasus region the Ambassador told

the attendees about the dangerous situation caused by the repercussions of the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression against Artsakh, refusal of Azerbaijan from implementation



of its commitments, violations of the international humanitarian law and perpetrated war crimes.

The Ambassador underlined the importance of imposing EU sanction upon the political-military leadership of Azerbaijan and the judges engaged in trumped-up trials of Armenian prisoners of war as the only effective means to fostering peace and building an atmosphere of confidence and reconciliation between the peoples of the

region.

To this end the ambassador emphasized the importance of more than a dozen motions adopted by the Dutch Parliament, particularly phrasing initiatives and consistent support from CDA to those motions and expressed a hope that the new Government of the Netherlands will undertake necessary measures to implement their provisions.

Participants held an active discussion on internal political developments in the Netherlands, as well as on the bilateral agenda and development of cooperation in political, trade-economic and educational fields.





The Cathedral of Shushi is one of the most important centers of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Artsakh, and the servants and followers of the Armenian Church should have an unimpeded access to this sanctuary, Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vahan Hunanyan said in a statement on the anniversary of the strikes on the place of worship by Azerbaijan during the aggression unleashed against Artsakh in the fall 2020.

On October 8, 2020, during the military aggression unleashed against Artsakh and its people, the Azerbaijani armed forces launched double air strikes on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi with high-precision weapons, causing significant damage to the latter. A few days after the Trilateral Statement of November 9, the same church was vandalized and desecrated. Along with the physical damage of the Shushi Cathedral, Azerbaijan continues the attempts of distorting the Armenian

Followers of Armenian Church should have unimpeded access to Shushi Cathedral: One year after the attack

identity of the church by changing the architectural appearance of the church under the pretext of renovation.

“The repeated deliberate strikes on a place of worship is not only a condemnable crime under international law, in particular the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its Second Protocol (1999), but also as a symbolic demonstration of the intent. It is a clear manifestation of Azerbaijan’s policy aimed at annihilating any trace of the Armenian presence in Artsakh,” the Spokesperson said.

He noted that a year after the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, the fate of around 1,500 historical and cultural heritage sites and places of worship, as well as thousands of museum specimens in the territories of Artsakh fallen under the control of Azerbaijan, remains uncertain and endangered.

“There are many documented cases of deliberate destruction and vandalism of Armenian churches, other cultural and religious mon-

uments by the Azerbaijani armed forces. Besides, along with their physical destruction, we are observing the falsification of historical facts and distortion of the identity of Armenian monuments by Azerbaijan,” Hunanyan added.

“In this context, apparently, it’s no coincidence that Azerbaijan continues blocking or, as far as possible, restricting the access of the UNESCO expert mission to the endangered Armenian cultural heritage sites, attempting to conceal its war crimes,” he noted.

The Spokesperson stressed that the vandalism against historic-cultural monuments and places of worship representing people’s cultural and spiritual heritage, are flagrant violations of international law, contradict universal values and are strongly condemnable.

“The Cathedral of Shushi is one of the most important centers of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Artsakh, and the servants and followers of the Armenian Church should have an unimpeded access to this sanctuary,” he concluded.

International Republic Institute ready to support Armenia’s reforms agenda

Lilit Makunts, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States received IRI (International Republic Institute) President Daniel Twinning and Eurasia Regional Director Stephen Nix.

Daniel Twinning reaffirmed the organization’s readiness to support the agenda of reforms aimed at strengthening democracy in Armenia, and in that regard highly assessed the commitment undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the National Assembly towards the implementation of the reforms.

The interlocutors referred to the results of the recent polls conducted by the organization on the early parliamentary elections in Armenia, the security environment and the pandemic, adding that new polls are planned to be organized by the end of the year.

Ambassador Lilit Makunts stressed the importance of the activities of the organization, which provides an additional



opportunity to address the issues raised by citizens through polls. Ambassador Makunts presented the five-year program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, emphasized the spheres of reforms reflected in it, particularly in judiciary, police branches and fight against corruption.



We are our strongest weapon: President Sarkissian meets with Armenians in Italy

we faced our catastrophe last year, the war, I received the support and the word of the President of Italy. “

Speaking about the war and its aftermath, President Sargsyan expressed deep

sorrow for the loss of thousands of young lives. “Last year was a very difficult year, we lost many young lives,” the President said. “We could actually win or lose. In both cases, there is no doubt that all those who fought were patriots, did not spare their lives for the homeland. In the early 1990s, we were three times better prepared for war, and we won. Unfortunately, we did not turn that victory into a lasting peace, and there was a second war. Azerbaijan, using its capacities, natural resources, built a modern army with the direct support of Turkey. The question was not about courage, the devotion of the fighters. Yes, this is a great tragedy, the consequences of which are still there: captives, missing. These are the consequences of the war. During my meetings in Italy, I raised all the difficult issues that concern us: the issues of border demarcation, the issues of captives and the missing. I asked for the support of the Italian side.”

President Sarkissian expressed confidence that our people will be able to find the strength to straighten their backs after these painful events. “In just 30 years, our people have had both a great victory and a defeat. But we are sure of one thing. Our people are a surviving people. We survived the Genocide, after which we stood up, spread all over the world, rebuilt our lives, created again. We are one of the few nations that, being far from the homeland, first build a church, then a school and then the rest,” the President emphasized.

“I am sure that together we will not

only survive, but also recover. Of course, we have to talk and reflect on the mistakes we made. This is a discussion in which the society should participate, but first of all the politicians who are responsible. Let’s sit down and discuss honestly what prevented us from winning this time,” he noted.

President Sarkissian stressed that in order to succeed, it is necessary to use the entire collective strength of our people, including the potential of the Diaspora. “I am sure that our people have the will, the power, the opportunities to live, create and overcome today’s difficulties. The Armenian people have one natural wealth – the Armenian people. For Armenia it is called Diaspora, for the Diaspora – it is called Armenia. I think it is high time that we stop making this division, stop dividing ourselves. It is high time we realize that we are our strongest weapon.”

“We in Armenia, with your help, must think about how to use our advantage. In Armenia, we must seriously discuss how to change ourselves, from the Constitution to the attitude, to use our natural resource, the people, so that Armenia becomes everyone’s homeland. Armenia is the homeland of all of us, we are all responsible for everything that happens in Armenia – for the good and the bad. I am sure that the 21st century can finally be our century. The man will be the greatest value, we must be ready to work on it seriously, especially in the fields of mathematics, physics, programming, artificial intelligence. Those who are fast will win in the economic, cultural and military competition. Economic success will be linked to knowledge. And our people can do it, having a policy in Armenia and the Diaspora, which is aimed at the future.”

On a state visit to Italy, President Armen Sarkissian and his wife Nouneh Sarkissian visited the Levonian Armenian College in Rome, where they met with representatives of the Armenian community of Italy.

President Sarkissian briefed the attendees on the results of the meetings and discussions held within the framework of the state visit, referred to the Armenian-Italian friendly relations, spoke about the 44-day war and Armenia’s development prospects, as well as the need to fully utilize the potential of the Diaspora.

Touching upon the significance of the state visit, President Sarkissian particularly noted that after the epidemic, for the first time in the last 2.5 years Italy receives a president on a state visit, it is not the visit of any superpower, but the visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia.

“I am proud of that.” I am proud to represent you, our people, the citizens of Armenia,” the President said. “Apart from personal relations, in addition to friendship, there is also a fundamental issue: the attitude of the Italian state and, in particular, President Mattarella to our people, our state and statehood. We must be well aware that this is a friendship.”

The President noted that during the epidemic, when Italy was in a difficult situation, he was in constant contact with President Mattarella, trying to support him as much as possible. “Even a small word of a friend, anxiety is appreciated and remembered. In exactly the same way, when



On October 7, at the amphitheater of the Colosseum in Rome (Italy), His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, participated in the annual traditional peace prayer organized by the community of Sant'Egidio, which was attended by the Heads of the Sister Churches, leaders and officials from different countries. During the inter-church prayer for peace, His Holiness conveyed his message to those present.



"The gift of peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he left to his disciples about two thousand years ago, is given to us today to distribute to Christians in the twenty-first century, to all people, especially in these days of violence, war, ethnic discrimination, and religious extremism,"

Catholicos of All Armenians conveyed his message to the inter-church prayer organized by Sant'Egidio community

His Holiness said.



His Holiness referred to the catastrophic aftermath of the 44-day war. "We come from a country where the Christian testimony has been concentrated in every stone and grain of history through the omnipotent hand of the Almighty," the Catholicos said.

"My Armenian nation knows well the price of peace that it has paid and continues to pay. Last year, our people crossed the Path of the Cross again. To protect the right to live freely and independently, the right to God-given peaceful life, the children of my nation suffered the horrors of the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan with the help of Turkey and the involvement of terrorist groups," the Catholicos said.

The Patriarch of All Armenians than-

ked the Sister Churches for condemning the injustice and genocide during the war and expressed confidence that they would continue to speak out against the seizure of the right of the Armenians of Artsakh to live independently, and for the sake of freedom of the captives, for the preservation of the Armenian religious and cultural heritage on Armenian lands currently under Azerbaijani control, for the re-establishment of lasting peace in the region.

Messages from religious and church leaders were heard during the ceremony. At the end, after the message of Pope Francis, those present observed a minute of silence in memory of the victims of all the wars, then the children conveyed the message of peace to the participants.



Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan presented the report on the Azerbaijani torture and ill-treatment treatment of the Armenian captives after the September-November 2020 war to members of the Human Rights Protection Committee of the Italian parliament. He stressed the urgency of the return of

Armenian Ombudsman briefs Italian MPs on ill-treatment of POWs by Azerbaijan

the Armenian captives held in Azerbaijan, emphasizing that the international requirements have been ignored, and the hostages are being kept for military-political bargaining.

He referred to the illegal deployment of Azerbaijani servicemen on the roads between the communities of Armenia after the war, which endangers the lives and health of people, while cases of theft of animals of border residents, due to intrusions into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, thefts of animals of border residents, threats against civilians, shootings and other criminal acts have been reported.

"At the heart of human rights abuses, including torture and inhuman treatment, is the policy of hostility and Armenophobia, which continues with the manifestations of fascism," the Human Rights defender said.



Hovhannes Tumanyan's bust to be installed in Sant Andrea Park next to Italian Presidential Palace in Rome



On a state visit to Italy, the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian met with the Mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi.

Expressing gratitude for the hospitality and emphasizing that he came to Rome from another ancient city, Yerevan, President Sarkissian noted that the purpose of his visit to Italy was to develop relations and cooperation between Yerevan and Rome.

"We can do a lot together. We have a great potential for cooperation, especially in the preservation of cultural, educational and historical heritage and in many other spheres,"

the President said.

Mayor Virginia Raggi noted that they will be happy to deepen cooperation and friendship with Yerevan. "The millennial history of our peoples is a good basis for the development of future partnerships," the Mayor said, adding that they are ready to share their experience and knowledge in preserving the historical heritage with friends.

The meeting focused on the deepening of cultural ties between the two capitals, the implementation of joint events and programs, and the need to intensify contacts.

The Armenian President thanked the Mayor of Rome for accepting the to the proposal of the Armenian side to install the bust of Hovhannes Tumanyan in the park of Sant Andrea next to the Italian Presidential Palace, and voiced hope that the bust of the great Armenian writer would become one of the evidences of Armenian-Italian friendship.

The President of Armenia thanked for the placement of Hovhannes Tumanyan's bust in the park of Sant Andrea next to the Italian Presidential Palace, for the consent of the Armenian side to the proposal of the Armenian side, and hoped that the bust of the great Armenian writer would become one of the evidences of Armenian-Italian friendship.

President Sarkissian also praised the unanimous recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Rome City Council in 2020. He also attached importance to the installation of a bronze monument "Armenian Mother" dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by Armenian sculptor Vigen Avetis in the Armenian Genocide Park near Augusto Lorenzini Square in Rome.

At the end of the meeting, President Sarkissian left a note in the Book of Honorary Guests of the City Hall of Rome.

La Sapienza University of Rome to offer Armenology classes

On a state visit to Italy, Armenian president Armen Sarkissian visited La Sapienza University of Rome.

La Sapienza, one of the leading universities in Italy with a history of 700 years, is also one of the oldest and largest universities in Europe. In the international rankings, it is among the best educational institutions, especially in the fields of archaeology, classical and ancient history, art and humanities, as well as physical-mathematical and aerospace engineering.

During the visit of the President of Armenia, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and La Sapienza University. The start of Armenology classes at the university was also announced. The document was signed by Armenian Ambassador to Italy Tsovinar Hambardzumyan and Rector of La Sapienza University Antonella Polimeni.

"Whatever is happening today is a big event. I am proud to say that Armenia is one of the oldest, unique countries



in the world, which has accumulated great knowledge during its millennia-long existence, it is our duty to share that knowledge with others," President Sarkissian said.

"I am happy to be here today, not as a president, but simply as an Armenian, as someone who values knowledge, education and science, and the fact that there will be Armenology classes in the heart of Rome, in this university. Maybe at first only the Armenian language will be taught, then the scope can be expanded," the President said, adding that the program will be a strong bridge between Rome and Yerevan.

"I hope that this small start will be the

beginning of a big initiative. And I can assure you that I will be one of those who will fully support this start," he added.

President Sarkissian discussed with the Rector of the University Antonella Polimeni issues related to the expansion and continuity of the Armenology course.

La Sapienza University had a chair of Armenology since the early 2000s. Armenology has deep roots in Italy, it has been operating in 6 Italian universities for many years, and in some of them there are still chairs of Armenology. The Chair of Armenian Language and Culture at La Sapienza University had been closed for the last ten years due to lack of funding. In the past year the Armenian Embassy has done a huge work to ensure the re-opening of the chair of Armenology, and due to the efforts of the parties, the teaching of Armenology will start in the high-ranking Department of Classics and Ancient History of the university.

Winners of 18th Golden Apricot International Film Festival announced



Belgium). *A New Old Play* (dir. Qiu Jiongjiong, Hong Kong/ France) gained jury's special mention.

FIPRESCI Award named after Peter van Bueren was awarded to *Taming the Garden* (dir. Salomé Jashi, Switzerland/ Germany/ Georgia).

Golden Apricot in Apricot Stone competition was awarded to *The World* (dir. Christine Haroutounian, USA/ Armenia). Silver Apricot in the same competition was awarded to *Storgetnya* (dir. Hovig Hagopian, France/ Armenia). Special Award after Gennadi Melkonian was awarded to *Handstand* (dir. Ovsanna Shekoyan, Armenia).

Cornell Mundruzo, Hungarian

theater and film director, laureate of dozens of other prestigious film festivals in Cannes, Locarno was this year's president of the Golden Apricot 18th Yerevan IFF jury. The jury of the feature film competition comprised producer François D'Artemare, director of the Krakow International Film Festival Krzysztof Gierat, film critic Larisa Malyukova and composer Robert Amirkhanyan.

The Apricot Stone regional short film competition jury consisted of actress Romanna Lobach, author of this year's "Golden Apricot" posters, visual artist Vahram Muratyan, and festival director Philippe Jalladeau.

The FIPRESCI jury consisted of film critics Alexander Melyan, Dominic Schmid, Mike Naafs.

The winners of the 18th Golden Apricot Film Festival were announced at the closing ceremony on October 9.

Pebbles (director Vinodraj P.S., India) won Golden Apricot in International Full-Length Competition. The Silver Apricot was awarded to *Downstream to Kinshasa* (dir. Dieudo Hamadi, Congo/ France/

Noubar Afeyan 212th on Forbes list of America's 400 richest

Armenian American entrepreneur, inventor and philanthropist Noubar Afeyan has been listed 212th on the Forbes list of 400 richest Americans.

"It has been a terrible year for many, but the good times keep on rolling for the nation's richest. The 400 wealthiest Americans saw their collective fortune increase 40% over the last year, to \$4.5 trillion. Nearly all are richer than they were a year ago," Forbes says.

There are 44 new names on the list, which now requires a minimum net worth of \$2.9 billion, up \$800 million from a year ago.

Noubar Afeyan is the founder and CEO of Cambridge, Mass. life sciences innovation firm Flagship Pioneering.

He's also the chairman and cofounder of biotech firm Moderna, known for its Covid-19 vaccine which was authorized by the U.S. FDA in December 2020.



Afeyan has helped start more than 70 public and private healthcare and life sciences companies over the course of his career.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1962 to Armenian parents, he and his family fled the Lebanese Civil War to move to Montreal in 1975.

Beyond his stake in Moderna, he also owns shares in more than a dozen publicly traded biotech companies in the U.S.

Afeyan is a lecturer at Harvard Busi-

ness School and also taught at MIT's Sloan School of Management from 2000 to 2016.

The richest person in America, for the fourth year in a row, is Jeff Bezos. The founder and, since July, chairman of online retailer and cloud computing juggernaut Amazon is worth \$201 billion—\$22 billion more than last year's list. This marks the first time anyone on The Forbes 400 has been worth \$200 billion or

more.

Close behind at number two is Elon Musk, worth \$190.5 billion—almost triple what he was worth on the 2020 list, due to the huge runup in the price of electric car company Tesla's shares.

Mark Zuckerberg took the third spot, thanks to a 63% jump in Facebook stock since last year's list. Bill Gates clocks in at number four, the first time he hasn't been in one of the top two spots in three decades.

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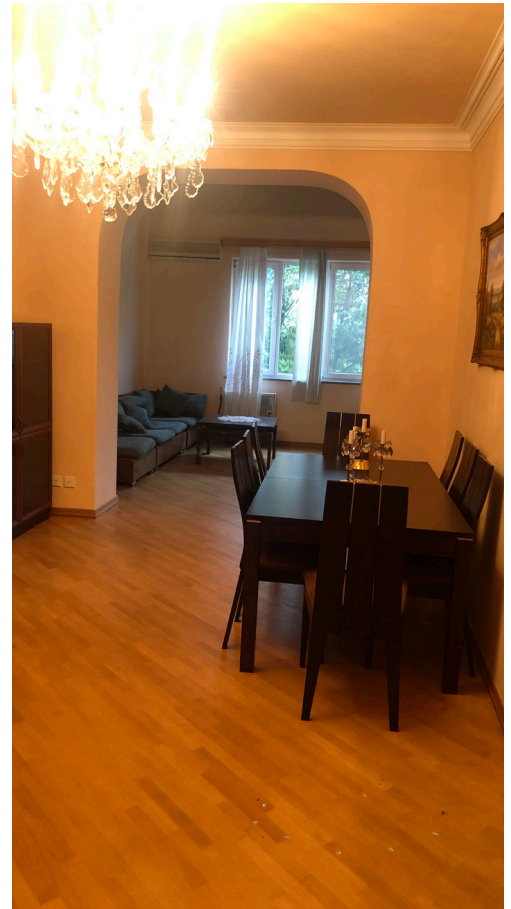
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