

## We highly value Armenia’s commitment to strengthen cooperation with Brussels- Italian Deputy Foreign Minister



Rome hopes that a new partnership agenda will be established between Brussels and Yerevan.

Italy’s Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Giorgio Silli said, addressing the question of Paolo Formentini, Vice President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber

of Deputies.

At the April 11 session, Paolo Formentini inquired about the measures the Italian government intends to take in the current situation to encourage Armenia’s further rapprochement with the Euro-Atlantic West, also considering Italy’s important national interests, particularly

of energy and commercial nature, in the South Caucasus.

In response to the question, Giorgio Silli said: “The relations between the European Union and Armenia are experiencing special dynamics. We highly appreciate Armenia’s commitment to strengthening cooperation with Brussels,

➡ page 7

Finland to continue supporting Armenia’s territorial integrity- Finnish Foreign Minister

p. 2

India to post Defense Attaché in Armenia

p. 4

Armenia hopes for positive response from Azerbaijan to peace treaty proposals -Pashinyan

p.3

EU observation mission’s activity in Armenia could be extended for another 2 years - PM

p. 5

## Finland to continue supporting Armenia's territorial integrity- Finnish Foreign Minister



During his working visit to Finland, Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia, Armen Grigoryan, met with the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Elina Valtonen.

Issues related to Armenia-EU relations were discussed at the meeting. In particular, reference was made to the Armenia-Finland bilateral agenda.

Elina Valtonen noted that Finland will continue to support the process of democratic reforms in Armenia, as well as the territorial integrity of Armenia.

Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia and the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs also addressed the regional developments and Armenia's efforts to establish stable peace.

## PM Pashinyan, German Chancellor Scholz discuss Armenia- Azerbaijan peace process

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Issues related to Armenia-Germany cooperation, further development of Armenia-EU relations were discussed, the Prime Minister's office said in readout.

Reference was made to the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. Prime Minister Pashinyan noted that Armenia is ready to go to solutions based on the

principles agreed on October 6, 2022 in Prague, May 14 and July 15, 2023 in Brussels, as well as October 5, 2023 in Granada. Nikol Pashinyan considered any attempt to distort these principles unacceptable.

Prime Minister Pashinyan thanked Chancellor Scholz for supporting democratic reforms in Armenia, the development of Armenia-Germany, Armenia-EU relations.



## Pashinyan states recording of internationally recognized border to be vital for Armenia's security

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, during his speech at the parliament meeting, stated that following the attack on Armenia by Azerbaijan in September 2022, he realized that the internationally recognized border of Armenia could become an additional and decisive factor in ensuring the short-term, medium-term, and long-term security of the Republic of Armenia.

"The government and I have personally come to the conviction that historical Armenia and present-day Armenia are not only incompatible but also frequently in conflict with each other, sometimes posing serious threats to each other. Being the bearers of the psychology and tradition of historical Armenia for a long time, in 2022 we recognized that a key factor in ensuring the security of Armenia had been

neglected, and this neglect has been ongoing since the early years of our statehood.

That factor is the internationally recognized borders of Armenia. Only after the September 2022 war did I become unequivocally and unreservedly convinced that the demarcation of the internationally recognized territory of Armenia can become an additional and decisive factor in ensuring the short-term, medium-term, and long-term security of our country. From that moment, an actual political and psychological process has begun, which can be called a demarcation process between real Armenia and historical Armenia," said Pashinyan.

"The process of delimitation between real and historical Armenia is not easier than the process of delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Accordingly,

historical Armenia does not recognize the territorial integrity of present-day Armenia, as the territorial integrity of present-day Armenia is a limiting factor for historical Armenia and does not give it the opportunity to manifest itself," said the Prime Minister.

According to the Prime Minister, historical Armenia resonates with several countries that harbor ambitions for the sovereignty, independence, and territories of present-day Armenia, as the territorial integrity of present-day Armenia, the internationally recognized border, acts as a limiting factor for the aspirations of those countries.

According to Nikol Pashinyan, historical Armenia holds key importance in the relations of the Republic of Armenia with several countries.

## Armenia hopes for positive response from Azerbaijan to peace treaty proposals -Pashinyan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan emphasized in his address on April 10 during the parliamentary debates on the performance of the Armenian government in 2023 that the further guarantee for the development of Armenia's sovereignty and statehood lies in the regulation and deepening of relations with its neighbors. However, Pashinyan stated that it faces both internal and external challenges.

"One of those challenges is, of course, the ongoing aggressive policy of Azerbaijan, which is expressed in rhetoric, border provocations, the continuous occupation of the sovereign territories of Armenia, acquisitions of weapons worth tens of millions," said Pashinyan.

According to the Prime Minister, Azerbaijan's statements about the reforms of the Armenian army, the formation of new defense structures, and the acquisition of ammunition are an inseparable part of that aggressive policy.



"In other words, what is Azerbaijan's presumption that the Republic of Armenia should not have an army to defend its own country?"

I have stated, and I want to emphasize again, that having a combat-capable army is the sovereign right of every country. On the other hand, we also believe that provoking an arms race in the region cannot lead to positive outcomes. However, the reality is that we do not want to engage in an arms race with Azerbaijan.

And if Azerbaijan does not agree, we have a proposal for this situation, which

we have previously discussed. We propose to establish a mechanism for mutual control of weapons and to carry out a mirror-like withdrawal of troops from the border line. This approach, by the way, would solve the issues concerning the four villages mentioned by Azerbaijan as well as our 31 villages.

We have suggested demilitarizing the border areas and entrusting the protection of the entire border to the border guard troops, while relocating units of the Ministry of Defense to their permanent bases. This can also be implemented in the case of the concept of a mirror withdrawal of troops," Pashinyan noted.

According to him, all these proposals from Armenia have gone unanswered by Azerbaijan. "We hope to receive a positive response regarding the 8th edition of the peace treaty, which was submitted to Azerbaijan on March 14," concluded Pashinyan.

## Armenia has not made any mistakes in relations with Russia – PM

Relations between Armenia and Russia are going through difficult times, but Yerevan has made no mistakes in relations with Moscow, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the National Assembly, when presenting the report on the implementation of the government's 2023 Action Plan.

"Interstate relations between Armenia

and Russia are not going through the best of times, but their importance for our statehood, sovereignty, security and economy cannot be overestimated. We truly have not made a single wrong step in our relations with Russia. There is no place where our colleagues could blame us for failure to fulfill their obligations, but the opposite cases are numerous," he said.

According to the Prime Minister, it is important to understand what is happening in Armenian-Russian relations. "There is a transition from Historical Armenia-Russian relations to real Armenia-Russian relations. Sometimes this is as painful as our internal transformation from Historical Armenia to real Armenia," he stated.

## Security Council chief, OSCE PA President discuss Armenia-EU rapprochement



On a visit to Finland, Secretary of Armenia's Security Council Armen Grigoryan had a working breakfast with Finnish Parliament Member, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Kimmo Kiljunen and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma.

The interlocutors discussed the process of implementation of democratic

reforms in Armenia, rapprochement of Armenia-EU relations in different spheres, as well as Armenia-Finland cooperation.

The participants of the meeting highlighted the role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the process of establishing peace between countries.

## Armenia Calls for Dialogue in Mideast After Iran's 'Retaliatory' Strike Against Israel



Escalating tensions in the Middle East are a cause for grave concern, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said after Iran delivered what it described as a retaliatory strike against Israel over the weekend.

"We urge to prioritize dialogue. Further confrontation must be avoided," the Armenian ministry said in an April 14 post on X (formerly Twitter).

Late on Saturday Iran carried out a large-scale drone and missile attack

against Israel in retaliation for an Israeli strike against its consulate in Damascus, Syria, earlier this month, which killed senior commanders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Israel said that the vast majority of the nearly 300 drones and missiles launched by Iran were intercepted by its forces and allies, with "very little damage" caused.

Tehran, on the contrary, described its attack as a success, claiming that it struck most of the military targets it had intended. Iran added that it was not going to continue the operation, while Israel vowed to retaliate.

According to a White House official, the U.S. president warned the Israeli prime minister that Washington would not

participate in a counterstrike against Iran if Israel decided to retaliate. A number of countries, including France, Russia, China, Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and others, have called for restraint.

Some flights from Yerevan to Tehran and back operated by commercial airlines were canceled in the wake of Iran's strike on April 14.

Earlier Armenia also voiced its "deep concern" over the April 1 attack against Iran's consulate in Syria. "The inviolability of diplomatic representations is a must and should not be questioned under any pretext. We express our sincere sympathy to victims and wounded," Armenia's Foreign Ministry said in an X post on April 2.

## India to post Defense Attaché in Armenia

In a sign of expanding focus on military diplomacy, India is set to send Defense Attachés (DA) to a number of its missions in different countries, including Armenia, news agency [PTI](#) reported on April 10, citing people familiar with the matter.

New Delhi will appoint new defense attaches in the African countries of Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and Djibouti. This decision is in line with India's priority to expand its strategic engagement with the continent, according to PTI.

Furthermore, India will post defence attaches in the Philippines, Armenia, and Poland as well.

A total of 16 defense attaches from the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force will assume their new positions shortly.

The [PTI](#) report added that India was also planning to rationalize the strength of its teams comprising military officials at its high commission in London and the embassy in Moscow. As part of this process, a number of defense attaches posted



in these two countries will be deployed elsewhere based on New Delhi's foreign policy priorities and for optimum use of available manpower.

## French Ambassador discusses security situation with Syunik governor, visits Kapan Airport

As part of his visit to Syunik Province, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies, met with the governor, Robert Ghukasyan.

"Meeting with the governor of Syunik Province, Mr. Robert Ghukasyan: security situation, infrastructure development, medical cooperation, and partnership



with the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region," Olivier Decottignies said in a post on X, publishing photos.

The Ambassador with the governor also visited Kapan Airport.

"Visit to Kapan Airport in Syunik Province, which is a sovereign infrastructure of Armenia," said the French Ambassador.

## EU observation mission's activity in Armenia could be extended for another 2 years - PM



The activity of the observation mission of the European Union in Armenia can be extended for another 2 years, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, said during his speech at the parliament meeting.

Pashinyan considered the deployment of the EU civilian mission along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border an important result of the Prague quadrilateral meeting on October 6, 2022, the term of which was later extended for 2 years.

Now, the issue of extending the mission's term for another 2 years is under discussion. PM Pashinyan stated that the quadrilateral meeting in Prague is generally of key importance for achieving stability and peace in the South Caucasus.

"Extremely important decisions were made during the quadrilateral meeting in

Prague. That is, Armenia and Azerbaijan recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration," the Prime Minister said.

Pashinyan considers the next most important agreement of the Prague meeting to be that Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to demarcate the border between the two countries based on the Alma-Ata Declaration.

This means that in the process of delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan no new border will to be created, but the borders confirmed by the Alma-Ata declaration and later reaffirmed by the parties should be reproduced on the ground.

The Prime Minister emphasized that recently the President of Azerbaijan has reaffirmed his commitment to the Prague Agreements and the Alma-Ata Declaration. According to Pashinyan this could indeed become the basis for long-term stability and peace.

Pashinyan also considers the deployment of the EU civilian mission along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border an important

result of the Prague quadrilateral meeting on October 6, 2022, the term of which was later extended for 2 years.

"Now, the issue of extending the mission's term for another 2 years is under discussion," said the PM.

"The quadrilateral meeting in Prague is of key importance in achieving a stable and peaceful South Caucasus, and it provides a plan with a realistic and robust legal and political basis for establishing peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I haven't had the opportunity to say it until now, but I must now say that the role of French President Emmanuel Macron in reaching these agreements is simply enormous.

Moreover, against this backdrop, targeting President Macron and France is surprising; it is incomprehensible and unacceptable to me and the Armenian government. If Macron is accused of providing a long-term mandate for the EU civilian mission, then this decision was made by consensus within the EU," said Pashinyan, thanking the leaders of all EU countries for the decision that was made at Armenia's request.

## Armenian Ambassador briefs Irish lawmakers on Crossroads of Peace initiative

On April 10th, Ambassador Nersesyan met with Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Irish Houses of Parliament, Mr. Charles Flanagan, and other members of the committee.

In the wake of Azerbaijan's persistent ceasefire violations, which continue to undermine peace and stability in the region, Ambassador Nersesyan stressed the importance of adherence to the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, as well principles of international law.

The Ambassador reiterated Armenia's



unwavering commitment to the peaceful coexistence and prosperity of all peoples in the region. In this regard, Ambassador Nersesyan presented Armenia's Crossroads of Peace initiative, as a framework

designed to promote dialogue, cooperation, and sustainable peace in the South Caucasus.

Furthermore, Ambassador Nersesyan emphasised the significance of Ireland as a valued partner to Armenia and expressed the mutual aim to continue nurturing and strengthening bilateral relations between the two nations. In this context, he underlined the positive dynamics in Armenia-Ireland cooperation both within the European Union and other multilateral organizations.

## Representatives of 30 French companies due in Armenia to discuss investment programs, expansion of trade and economic ties



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the delegation led by Martine Vassal, President of the Departmental Council of Bouches-du-Rhône of France.

The Prime Minister welcomed the visit of the French delegation to Armenia and highly valued Mrs. Vassal's contribution to the consistent development of Armenia-France relations. Nikol Pashinyan noted that currently there is a new spirit

and level of cooperation between the two countries, and the regions of France that maintain strong ties with the regions of Armenia also contribute to this. At the same time, the Prime Minister attached particular importance to the development and strengthening of bilateral economic cooperation and in that context emphasized the need for close cooperation between governments and local self-government bodies.

Martine Vassal referred to the cooperation with Armenia in the economic, healthcare, social and humanitarian spheres, as well as the opportunities and steps for their expansion. In particular, the President of the Departmental Council of Bouches-du-Rhône informed that today representatives of 30 companies

operating in various fields will arrive in Armenia from France, who will discuss with Armenian partners the possibilities of implementing investment programs and expanding trade and economic ties. It was also mentioned that "Tumo" Center for Creative Technologies will be opened in Marseille in the near future.

The interlocutors also emphasized the cooperation between the cities of Armenia and France, the promotion of mutual tourist visits.

Reference was made to the humanitarian problems of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and the steps to solve them. In this regard, the implementation of support programs by international partners was highlighted.

## Opening of Armenia-Turkey border would be epoch-making event for the region – PM Pashinyan

Opening of Armenia-Turkey border would be epoch-making event for the region, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the National Assembly, when presenting the report on the implementation of the government's 2023 Action Plan.

"In the relations with Turkey, Armenia is waiting for the implementation of the agreements reached and officially recorded, i.e. opening of the land border for nationals of third countries and diplomatic

passport holders," PM Pashinyan said.

He stressed that the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border would be an epoch-making event for the region, and stressed that efforts in that direction should continue.

"Here I cannot but refer to a socio-psychological nuance. It is very important to fix that I am now talking about relations between Armenia and Turkey, not Armenian-Turkish relations. These two formulations have their common features, but

they are not the same," Pashinyan noted.



## Armenia's cooperation with EU and US not directed against any country or union – Deputy PM

Yerevan's cooperation with the United States and the European Union is not directed against the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan told [RIA Novosti](#).

"The Republic of Armenia has announced its intention to further diversify its trade and economic relations. Almost all countries are pursuing such an economic policy today, and this is not being done against any country or union,"

Grigoryan said.

"The policy of diversifying trade and economic relations is not directed against any unions, especially against the EAEU," Grigoryan said, when asked to comment on whether close interaction with the US and the EU interferes with Armenia's participation in the EAEU and whether the country is going to leave the union.

A joint meeting between the EU and

the United States with Armenia was held on Friday in Brussels with the participation of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, as well as the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the head of EU diplomacy Josep Borrell. Before the meeting, von der Leyen promised to allocate 270 million euros in development assistance to Armenia over the next four years.

## SADA: Armenian-founded company named Google Cloud's 2024 Global Sales Partner of the Year



SADA, an Insight company, a leading business and technology consultancy and award-winning Google Cloud Premier Partner, has been named Google Cloud's 2024 Global Sales Partner of the Year.

This milestone marks the seventh consecutive year the company has been recognized for its outstanding accomplishments in the Google Cloud ecosystem and its success in providing expertise and high-value services to global organizations.

SADA also received Google Cloud's 2024 Partner of the Year award for Specialization: Location-Based Services, thanks to its commitment to serving clients with Google Maps solutions and its foundational technical knowledge in Maps APIs.

"We are deeply honored to receive two Google Cloud Global Partner of the Year awards this year," said Tony Safoian, CEO of SADA. "We are dedicated to transforming businesses globally through cutting-edge technology solutions, and this award is a testament to our entire team's hard work and dedication. We look forward to continuing to drive success for our clients and impact their growth while furthering our partnership with Google Cloud."

In 2023, SADA became one of Google Cloud's leading partners in the GenAI pipeline, achieving a 4X increase in GenAI consumption across hundreds of customers. With a focus on accelerating customers' time to value, SADA's robust competencies in migrations and implementations, end-user adoption and change management, supported by a catalog of professional services and solutions, have earned it the support of global brands, including Carvana, Stagwell, and Digital Turbine.

"Google Cloud's Partner Awards celebrate the transformative impact and value that partners have delivered for customers," said Kevin Ichhpurani, Corporate Vice President, Global Ecosystem and

Channels at Google Cloud. "We're proud to announce SADA as a 2024 Google Cloud Partner Award winner and recognize their achievements enabling customer success from the past year."

SADA, An Insight company, is a market leader in professional services and an award-winning solutions provider of Google Cloud. Since 2000, SADA has been committed to helping customers in healthcare, media, entertainment, retail, manufacturing, and the public sector solve their most complex challenges so they can focus on achieving their boldest ambitions. With offices in North America, India, and Armenia providing sales and customer support teams, SADA is positioned to meet customers where they are in their digital transformation journey. SADA is a 7x Google Cloud Partner of the Year award winner with 10 Google Cloud Specializations and was recognized as a Niche Player in the 2023 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for Public Cloud IT Transformation Services. SADA has been named to Inc. Magazine's Best Workplaces four years in a row.

page 1 and it is important to encourage Yerevan's progress in such fundamental areas as the strengthening of democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights.

The existing cooperation instruments, the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, and the Eastern Partnership Regional Mechanism, provide the institutional framework within which dialogue and cooperation can be deepened. Italy hopes that we can reach the establishment of a new partnership agenda between Brussels and Yerevan. This would contribute to the complete emancipation of Yerevan from Russian 'tutelage'."

Giorgio Silli also noted that Italy firmly supports the mediating role of the

European Union and, in particular, European Council President Charles Michel in advancing the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which, in his opinion, is a prerequisite for future peace, stability, security, and prosperity in the Caucasus region and closer ties with Europe.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Italy also noted that Armenia has had official relations with NATO since 1992. "From the point of view of political dialogue, these relations took into account the difficulties related to Armenia's closeness with Moscow, especially after the aggression against Ukraine. However, the cooperation has never ceased. After Armenia has frozen its participation in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, a

new phase may open.

"Secretary General Stoltenberg visited Yerevan last March, where he met with President Khachaturyan and Prime Minister Pashinyan. Stoltenberg encouraged both Armenia and Azerbaijan (during his visit to Baku) to reach an agreement that would regulate their relations, emphasizing the importance of the issue for security in the Euro-Atlantic area," he said.

In his speech, Giorgio Silli referred to the bilateral relations between Armenia and Italy, noting that they intend to strengthen cooperation with Yerevan in various fields.

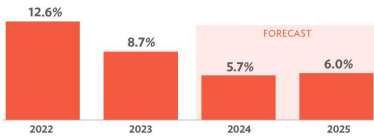
In his speech Silli noted that Italy had paid special attention to the humanitarian situation caused by the influx of refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia.

## Armenia's economy to moderate in 2024, rebound in 2025 – ADB

Asian Development Outlook April 2024  
GDP GROWTH FORECAST

ADB

### Armenia



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Armenia's economic growth rate is forecast to slow in 2024 due to a decline in external demand before recovering slightly in 2025, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Released today in its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2024, ADB projects Armenia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth to moderate to 5.7% in 2024 from 8.7% last year. That figure is forecast to rise again in 2025 to 6% on the successful implementation of the government's expanded investment programs for infrastructure and housing.

"Following strong economic growth in 2022, slower monetary inflows from the Russian Federation last year cut growth in private consumption," said ADB Deputy Country Director for Armenia Luke Fochtman. "This brings added impetus to the

government's housing and infrastructure programs which should propel growth next year as those investments take hold."

Despite slower growth overall, expansion in construction and consumer services will remain robust. Services are projected to grow by 9.3% in 2024 and 9.4% in 2025, supported by higher tourism inflows and reflecting strong but moderating gains in finance, recreation, retail trade, transport, and information and communication.

Industry, including construction, is projected to expand by 6.2% in 2024 and 7.4% in 2025. Growth in mining and quarrying will depend on developments in global commodity prices and the opening of new mining sites. Growth in construction is projected to rise to 16.3% in 2024 and 18.1% in 2025, in line with the government's plans to further increase capital outlays and make substantial public investments in roads and social infrastructure.

Inflation is anticipated to rise to 3% in 2024 from 2% last year, before accelerating further to 3.5% in 2025.

"One area where policy interventions can improve the quality of life for Armenians is in health care," added Mr. Fochtman. "With comprehensive health reforms and a universal health insurance system, the government will be able to stabilize health care financing, lower out-of-pocket costs, promote access to high-quality care, and improve financial protection for the population. We believe that implementing these reforms will enhance accessibility, affordability, and the quality of health care services."

Since Armenia joined ADB in 2005, the bank has become one of the country's largest multilateral development partners. Through almost 2 decades of partnership, ADB has supported the government's priorities in transport, public sector management, finance, energy, water, and other urban infrastructure.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

## Armenia will appoint a military attaché to the United Kingdom

Armenia will appoint a military attaché to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The draft decision has been included in the agenda for the April 12 session of the government.

The rationale highlights the ongoing expansion of Armenia-UK cooperation in the field of defense, evident in the increasing number of Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia personnel and Armed Forces members undergoing English language training, as well as leadership courses for senior and junior United



Kingdom command staff.

Additionally, it encompasses participation in multinational peacekeeping and demining operations, along with

the conduct of annual defense, strategic, and military-political consultations.

"The great potential of cooperation between the two countries in the military and military-technical sphere and the great interest shown by the British in deepening the cooperation in the recent period are due to the need to have a military attaché of the Republic of Armenia in the United Kingdom,"

it is stated in the rationale.

The military attaché will commence his duties on January 1, 2025.



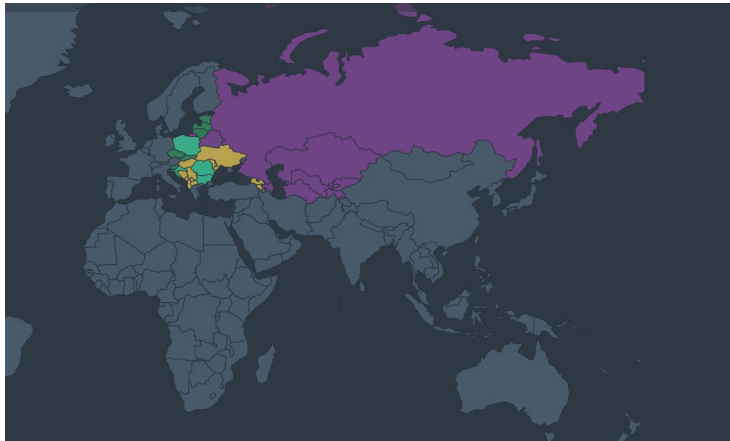
## Armenia's democratization efforts adversely affected by Azerbaijani regime's brutal offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh – Freedom House

Armenia's Democracy Score has declined from 3.11 to 3.07 in the Nations in Transit 2023 report published by the Freedom House.

"In the South Caucasus, Armenia's democratization efforts were adversely affected by the Azerbaijani regime's brutal offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh, which prompted the more than 120,000 ethnic Armenians living there to flee west. They

have now settled mostly in Armenia itself, where the government is attempting to address their humanitarian needs while also defending its own territory, consolidating power amid domestic criticism, and responding to the demands for better governance that sparked the country's 2018 revolution," the report reads.

In the region Armenia and Georgia are classified by the Freedom House as



"transitional or hybrid" regimes, while Azerbaijan is referred to as "semi-consolidated authoritarian regime."

According to the report, democratic governance in the Nations in Transit region declined for the 20th consecutive year in 2023. The continued assault on basic freedoms by Eurasian autocracies and the deterioration of democratic institutions in countries ranked as Hybrid

Regimes—those with a mix of autocratic and democratic features—easily outweighed the modest gains by European democracies over the past year. Of the 29 countries covered in this report, 10 suffered declines in their Democracy Score, while just five earned improvements.

"A geopolitical reordering is underway in the region stretching from Central Europe to Central Asia. Moscow's ongoing attempt to destroy Ukraine and

the Azerbaijani regime's inhumane conquest of Nagorno-Karabakh demonstrated once again the deadly consequences of autocracy's expansion. These and other events in recent years have accelerated a geopolitical reordering in the region, with countries sorting themselves into two opposing blocs: those committed to a liberal, democratic order and those that violently reject it," the Freedom House says.

## Council of Europe launches €2.8 million package for Armenia in response to refugee influx

The Council of Europe has launched a €2.8 million comprehensive response package to the refugee influx in Armenia. It includes four new initiatives and incorporated additional components into two ongoing projects.

"The response package aims at protecting the human rights of refugees, resilience of the local communities, social rights, children and women, and support to human rights institutions," underlined Claus Neukirch, Director of Programme Coordination of the Council of Europe.

"The response package supports authorities with addressing capacity constraints in many areas that are critical not only to refugees but to all people with vulnerabilities," added David Best, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG).

"Following the influx of refugees in September 2023, the Government of



Armenia did its best to provide a quick response to the refugee. The response includes short-, mid-, and long-term measures of support. Now we are in the stage of long-term measures. Cooperation with the Council of Europe is very important to us, and we highly value the support of the Council of Europe and its response package to the refugees' influx", stated Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia Narek Mkrtychyan.

New projects to be launched as part of the package include:

Strengthening Human Rights

### Safeguards

Enhancing Social Human Rights

Protecting Children's Rights

Support to Host Communities

Ongoing projects with new components added include:

Promoting Gender Equality and Ending Violence against Women

Protection of Human Rights in Biomedicine

The package of measures is a result of the visit by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) in October 2023, during which specific areas for support were jointly identified with the national authorities. The package is in line with the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia (2023-2026) and the Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons within the context of migration and asylum (2021-25).

## Lemkin Institute calls for protection of Armenian land and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem

The Lemkin Institute said in a statement it is dismayed by the recent assault on and incursion into the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem by Israeli police and settlers.

In January 2024, the Lemkin Institute published a statement condemning the attack on the Armenian Quarter in East Jerusalem by armed mobs associated with an Israeli-Australian businessman, Danny Rubenstein.

“This recent assault follows the Israeli state’s repeated attempts to evict indigenous Armenians from the Quarter. Amid the ongoing provocations by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia in the South Caucasus, this attack represents another effort to compromise Armenian autonomy and sovereignty. The disturbing level of Armenophobia present in genocidal regimes from Azerbaijan to Israel is alarming and places Armenians in a state of constant peril,” the Lemkin Institute said.

“The Armenian community in Jerusalem, specifically the Patriarchate, acts as a crucial custodian of Christian holy sites in the city, representing both Christian and Armenian culture in Jerusalem. Attempts to buy land at the heart of the Quarter mirror a past scandal involving the Greek Orthodox Church, in which the Church sold two Palestinian-run hotels to foreign companies acting as a front for Jewish settlers. The sale generated uproar and concern around the globe, resulting in the ousting of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Irenaios I,” it added.

The Institute highlights that the 1,600-year-old Armenian community residing in the historic Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem has been embroiled in a tense standoff against armed settlers since last summer. The conflict escalated following the revelation that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem had struck a

previously undisclosed land lease deal with Xana Gardens, a real estate company allegedly associated with settler interests, to develop a luxury hotel in the “Cows’ Garden” area, which encompasses crucial parts of the Armenian Quarter. The community, already grappling with a significant decline in population over the years, reacted with outrage upon learning about the details of the deal.

On 26 October 2023, the leader of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem announced the cancellation of the land lease deal. Yet, tensions at the Cows’ Garden continue to remain high. Representatives from Xana Gardens have sent contractors, armed settlers, and bulldozers to seize the land – which, along with the parking lot, includes Armenian Church property and the homes of the Nalbandian family as well as four others. These provocations have led to numerous confrontations, including altercations between armed settlers and Armenian residents. For months, Armenian community members in Jerusalem have peacefully camped in the Cows’ Garden to protect the Armenian Quarter from settler incursions. The peaceful protestors have often been met with violent force by Israeli settlers and police, with Armenians frequently being injured or arrested. In February, the Armenian community of Jerusalem officially launched a lawsuit to invalidate the real estate deal negotiated by the Patriarch.

Wednesday’s [assault](#) took place at 11am with an incursion by Israeli police and settlers into the Cows’ Garden. No permits or court orders were shown. Subsequently, there were illegal evictions and damage inflicted on Armenian Patriarchate assets, as well as attacks targeting religious figures and native Armenians. Assaf Harel was the commanding officer overseeing the eviction.

The Armenian community, deeply rooted in the Old City for centuries, sees the attempted land takeover as an existential threat to its cultural heritage and identity. Residents fear that losing control over the Cows’ Garden area would jeopardize their homes and undermine the historical significance of the Armenian Quarter, which has served as a refuge for Armenians for centuries.

The Armenian community’s determination to safeguard its land and heritage has garnered widespread local and international support. In response to ongoing demolition attempts and intimidation tactics by Xana Gardens and its associates, the Armenian residents have demonstrated remarkable resilience and solidarity while organizing protests, maintaining a constant presence in the disputed area, and refusing to back down despite facing arrests and threats from Israeli authorities and settlers.

The Lemkin Institute calls for the protection of historically and culturally Armenian land and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. “The continued effort to dispossess the Armenian community from their ancestral and historic lands in Jerusalem is fueled by the same eliminationist and settler-colonial process we see throughout the West Bank. The Lemkin Institute calls on Israeli courts to immediately invalidate any deal between the Armenian Patriarchate and Xana Gardens. Further, we demand the Israeli authorities respect the minority rights of Armenians and Christians throughout Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Israel. Whether the targets are Palestinian Muslims or Armenian Christians, Israel must cease all efforts to expand Jewish settlements at the expense of non-Jews and commit to the protection of all peoples and faiths throughout the region.”

## Kazakhstan seeks to expand cooperation with Armenia: Exclusive Interview with Kassym- Jomart Tokayev

Ahead of his visit to the Republic of Armenia, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, has given an exclusive interview to “Armenpress” news agency.

- Mr. Tokayev, this September marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Armenia and Kazakhstan. How would you describe the current dynamics of the development of Armenian-Kazakh relations?”

- This year is indeed special and symbolic for bilateral relations, marked by significant dates and meaningful developments. The fundamental interstate document adopted by Kazakhstan and Armenia in 1999, the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, laid a reliable foundation for Kazakh-Armenian multilateral relations. Over these years, we have observed its provisions, continuously expanding and deepening the ties between our countries and peoples in every possible way.

At the current stage, relations between Astana and Yerevan are characterized by an open political dialogue, dynamic growth of cooperation in the trade and economic sphere, and comprehensive development of cultural and humanitarian contacts.

Our countries have accumulated positive experience of joint work on international platforms.

There is mutual support for our initiatives and candidacies when they are put forward in various international institutions. Close cooperation has been established within such multilateral platforms as the UN, CIS, EAEU, CSTO, OSCE, and others.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to wish success to the Armenian chairmanship in the Eurasian Economic Union.

Interparliamentary partnership is



developing systematically. Interaction at the intergovernmental level is dynamically progressing.

The contractual and legal framework is gradually expanding. During my upcoming visit to Armenia, we will adopt a number of new documents.

Trade and economic cooperation establish the basis of relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia. Over the past five years, mutual trade has increased by 3.5 times. In 2023, turnover increased by 23 percent. Of course, trade volumes do not fully correspond to our potential, but there are objective reasons for this, related to the complex transport logistics between the countries. However, export-import opportunities indicate the presence of serious potential for significant expansion of mutual trade. A clear evidence of this was the recent business forum held in Yerevan with the participation of entrepreneurs from Kazakhstan and Armenia.

Here, the key institution of interstate interaction is the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. By the way, it has also been 25 years since its establishment.

We are firmly committed to further deepening and expanding our ties. A practical confirmation of our intentions is the decision to open additional offices of honorary consuls of Kazakhstan this year in the Ararat and Aragatsotn regions of Armenia.

I'm sure that the existing plans to establish sister city relations between Astana and Yerevan, as well as other cities, will also contribute to this.

The opening of direct flights on the “Aktau - Yerevan - Aktau” route in 2023 will promote the development of business cooperation and tourism. However, our plans to increase official and business trips require the establishment of direct air communication between the two capitals.

The cultural and humanitarian sphere is also of practical significance, encompassing art, sports, tourism, education, healthcare, and much more.

Overall, the level of Kazakh-Armenian relations, built on friendship, trust, and mutual understanding, aligns with the interests of both peoples. I am confident that, through joint efforts, we will be able to give a new impetus to the full spectrum of multifaceted relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia.

- Mr. President, how do you envision the future of Armenian-Kazakh cooperation? What priority areas of interaction would you highlight, particularly in terms of economic cooperation?”

As I have already mentioned, there is great potential for further deepening cooperation in various fields. The socio-economic successes of the Republic of Armenia are commendable. Your country has achieved outstanding results in all key sectors of the economy, ensuring high rates of development among EAEU countries. This is confirmed by Armenia's GDP growth last year, which reached 8.7 percent, accompanied by the lowest level of inflation (consumer prices increased by only 2%).”

In this regard, we attach great importance to the further comprehensive development of economic ties.

Today, our country is ready

page 11 to increase the export of 70 products, including both raw materials and finished products, with a total value of 350 million dollars. These include products from the metallurgical, petrochemical, food processing, construction, and agricultural sectors.

Taking into account that until 2011, wheat was one of the leading products of Kazakh exports to Armenia, I consider it important to restore the supply of wheat and other food products to the extensive trade networks of Armenia. I believe that our Armenian partners also have similar proposals.

Industrial cooperation is also promising. It is important for us to establish joint projects connecting our countries.

Our investment cooperation requires intensive development and promotion. Today, a favorable investment environment has been created in Kazakhstan. All necessary instruments are available to support foreign investment.

We also see great opportunities in the field of digitization. Kazakhstan is pursuing a targeted policy to become one of the largest digital hubs in the Eurasian area. In just the last 3 years, the export of our IT services has tripled, reaching \$500 million. By 2026, it should reach at least \$1 billion.

An important factor in deepening economic cooperation is the establishment of profitable and efficient ground logistics between our countries. The expansion of

air transportation will enhance mobility for businesses and citizens, opening up new opportunities in the tourism sector.

All the sectors I have mentioned should become integral components of economic interaction.

Directly addressing your question, I see the future of our relationship in the strict adherence to bilateral commitments and the expansion of legal-contractual field, strengthening of friendly ties and cooperation between our peoples, deepening of contacts in the trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

The full interview is available in [the original language](#).

## City of Glendale announces Annual Armenian Genocide Commemorative Event

The City of Glendale has announced its Annual Armenian Genocide Commemorative Event, taking place on Sunday, April 21, 2024, at 4:00 PM, at the iconic Alex Theatre. This year's theme, "1.5 Million+," pays tribute to the enduring strength of survivors while honoring the memory of the countless victims of the 1915 Genocide.

This year's program features an enlightening experience, with carefully curated segments aimed at educating and engaging the audience. The event will kick off with a solemn acknowledgment of the ongoing atrocities in Artsakh, underscoring a commitment to raising awareness of humanitarian crises. Attendees can expect firsthand accounts of the persistent challenges and displacement confronting Armenians as produced by Nairi Bandari including footage from Zartonk Media. The event will showcase traditional performances by the Character Dance Group and the Haikian Chamber Choir.

The City will welcome distinguished guests, including Karnig Kerkonian, an esteemed international lawyer and founding member of the Committee on the Protection of the Fundamental Rights of the



Artsakh People and Astrid Kamalyan, author of the recently-published children's book, "Bábo," which delves into the rich rug tradition originating from her family's ancestral village in Artsakh.

The program will be emceed by Glendale local and admired reporter, Ellina Abovian.

### Week of Remembrance

In the spirit of solidarity with victims of genocide around the world, the City of Glendale acknowledges and remembers those who have endured other tragic events. While the primary focus of this week is on the Armenian Genocide, the City stands in solidarity with others affected by genocide, reaffirming the City's commitment to never forget and to work towards a future free from such atrocities.

The City invites the community to come together to honor, remember, and

stand in solidarity by attending one or all of the following free events:

Saturday, April 20 at 11:00 AM: **Bábo: A Reading and Book Signing with [Astrid Kamalyan](#)**, on Artsakh Avenue, between Broadway and Wilson Avenue, Glendale, CA 91206.

Saturday, April 20, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM: **[Before and After: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide](#)** presented by Glendale Library Arts and Culture ReflectSpace Gallery at 222 E Harvard Street, Glendale, CA 91205.

Sunday, April 21 at 4:00 PM: City of Glendale's 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Armenian Genocide Commemorative Event at the Alex Theatre at 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale, CA 91203.

Thursday April 25 at 6:00 PM: Poets Against Genocide hosted by [Glendale Poet Laureate, Raffi Joe Wartanian](#) at The Center for Armenian Arts at 250 N. Orange Street, Glendale, CA 91203.

Friday, April 26 at 7:00 PM: Film screening of Songs of Solomon and Discussion with Producer Asko Akopyan at Look Dine-In Cinema at 128 Artsakh Street, Glendale, CA 91206.

## COAF breaks ground for new school in Armenia's Debed

The groundbreaking ceremony for the primary school in Debed by the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) took place on Wednesday, April 10.

The event was attended by Araksia Svajyan, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Aram Ghazaryan, governor of Lori Province, Suren Kostandyan, Head of the extended Pambak community, and COAF's Managing Director, Liana Ghaltaghchyan.

The construction of the school is being realized within the scope of COAF's Rural Communities Holistic Development programs, creating the opportunity for hundreds of children and youth to receive quality education tailored to the demands of the 21st century and the best conditions for study.

COAF undertook the commitment to build a new primary school in Debed taking into account the dilapidated state and seismic risks of the existing building. The new school, the construction for which COAF is investing over \$1.7 million, will result in a modern educational facility including bright and colorful classrooms, specialized laboratories, and interactive rooms that are designed not only to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, but also to encourage the active involvement of children in the process.

In her opening remarks, COAF's



Managing director Liana Ghaltaghchyan noted that "along with the various programs and construction projects implemented in Lori Province by COAF, today marked the start of construction for the Debed School. Our goal is to support the creation of the infrastructures necessary for obtaining quality education as much as possible. I would like to highlight that, like our other projects, the construction of the Debed School goes hand in hand with training its staff. We are not only building the school's structure, but also aim to create an environment where children and teachers will be able to discover and realize their own potential, work and learn in a setting that fosters creativity, and form broadened horizons."

Araksia Svajyan, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports gave a welcome speech, in which she expressed "Currently, the educational system is in a period of rather extensive

reforms. One of the most important programs implemented in this context is the Government's "300 schools and 500 kindergartens" program and I think that the construction of this school comes to supplement the mentioned program. Naturally, this would not have been possible if the Children of Armenia Fund did not actively work with benefactors. Our big thanks to the foundation and to all those who want to contribute to our country, particularly in school construction and programs aimed at changes in the field of education."

The governor of Lori province, Aram Ghazaryan emphasized the importance of establishing a new quality educational institution in Debed village, noting "It is not for nothing that it is said that one of the important prerequisites for the development of the state is the provision of the best education, and for that, the creation of a favorable educational environment is also important. In this regard, I congratulate the residents of Lori Province, particularly of Debed, on the start of the construction of a modern school. In a short time, we will have an innovative and advanced educational structure that will help each student to discover their potential in a creative environment, to develop their abilities by receiving a quality education."

## Maragha massacre represents yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's policy of hatred towards Armenians – Geghard SAF



On the 32nd anniversary of Maragha Massacre Geghard Scientific and Analytical Foundation has released a statement saying that this massacre represents yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's policy of hatred and enmity towards Armenians.

"32 years ago, on April 10, 1992, units

of the Azerbaijani armed forces massacred the Armenian civilian population in the village of Maragha, located in the Martakert region of Artsakh.

"Early in the morning of April 10, following prolonged shelling, Azerbaijani armed units attacked Maragha village, slaughtering civilians and destroying the village. At least 50 people were killed as a result of the pogroms in Maragha, with several dozen residents captured; the fate of 19 of them remains unknown.

"The Maragha massacre represents yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's policy of hatred and enmity towards Armenians. Furthermore, Shahin Tagiyev, the

commander responsible for the Maragha massacre, was awarded the title of "national hero," and served as an example for Ramil Safarov, as well as other Azerbaijani war criminals of the 2016 April War and the 2020 Artsakh War.

"After 2020, Azerbaijan continued its aggressive and genocidal actions, including the forced deportation of Armenians from Artsakh and the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. The international community must condemn Azerbaijan's actions, and those responsible for war crimes must be held accountable," the statement reads.

## Rwandan children singing Armenian songs hope to visit Armenia one day - Morioxkids founders share exclusive details



For several weeks now, the young dancers of the Morioxkids Foundation, founded in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, have been captivating Armenian social media platforms. The foundation's mission is to assist impoverished families by discovering the talents of children.

These children dance to Armenian songs, sometimes even singing the refrains. Their videos have gone viral, flooding the Internet with thousands of comments about "captured hearts".

"For now, dancing and singing are our primary activities. Our mission is to assist children from impoverished families in achieving a better life through their talents," the founders of the group, Kayitare Steven and Shema Blaise, said in an exclusive interview with "Armenpress".

They mention that the increased number of followers from different countries growing day by day, inspire them to strive for more, to spread love and joy to a great number of people each day. They express happiness in receiving feedback and praise, and they aspire to turn their hobby into a profession, raising funds for essential needs through music, acting, and sports.

Kayitare Steven and Shema Blaise noted that the main goals of the foundation are to help children from impoverished families connect with the world. "Our primary focus is education. We aim for these children to attend good schools, supported by sponsors who will care for them. Dancing, singing, and other activities are not only enjoyable but also improve their lives. We hope that one day we will have our own school (Moriox School), which will support more talented children."

The foundation's name carries a message. The founders have explained its meaning for the Armenian followers:

M (mighty) stands for strength, your inner power;

O (objective) signifies being objective, always impartial;

R (rich)- being rich in love;

I (intellect) represent your high capacity for knowledge;

O (openness) symbolizes openness, it is refreshing;

X, reflects the mysterious side of a person.

"Armenian songs are pleasant, very rhythmic, which makes us deepen our love towards them. And the warmth and love of the Armenians towards us made us feel that Armenia is our home. Armenian artists are always thrilled to see our dances to their songs. We cannot describe the love we have for Armenian music merely with words. We are grateful for the love we have received from Armenia, which gives us wings and the motivation to strive for improvement. We hope to have the opportunity to visit Armenia one day and meet its people," the founders conveyed the wishes of the children of the group.

One can follow Morioxkids on various social media platforms under the same name. It has 105,000 followers on Instagram, 132,000 on YouTube, 10,000 followers on Facebook, and 65,000 followers on TikTok.

## Sydney's Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians unite to demand recognition of 1915 genocides

Sydney's Armenian, Assyrian and Greek communities will once again rally together in Sydney's central business district, calling on the Australian Prime Minister and Federal Government to recognise the 1915 Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides.

The annual [#MarchForJustice](#) will take place on Sunday, 21 April, with community members gathering at the Hyde Park Archibald Fountain at 2pm before descending into the streets of Sydney's CBD.



March For Justice organising committee member Nanor Shokayan, who also serves as the Chairperson of the Armenian

Youth Federation of Australia Central Executive, said, "A crime unpunished is a crime repeated – that is what the descendants of survivors of the 1915 Genocides are witnessing, our compatriots living in their ancestral homelands remain under threat from the criminal and brutal regimes of Turkey and Azerbaijan."

"Until they are held accountable for their actions 109 years ago, they will never stop," Shokayan added.

# ARMENIA

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