

Tribute to the memory of the April War victims



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Accompanied by the Minister of Defense David Tonoyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the Yerablur military pantheon on April 2 and paid tribute to the memory of the heroes who fell in the April four-day war and the Artsakh liberation war.

The Prime Minister laid flowers at the graves of the victims of the April war, General Andranik Ozanyan and Commander Vazgen Sargsyan.

Nikol Pashinyan laid a wreath at the memorial to the fallen freedom fighters.

Later the same day, at the beginning Cabinet session Nikol Pashinyan touched upon the 2016 April War and stated that there are various assessments on it. The PM said the War gave the answer to the most important question.

“And that question was the following: to what extent the independence generation is ready to protect the security and sovereignty of its own homeland. That answer was given in an eloquent way because the soldiers of our independence generation, of course, not only them, became examples of unexampled heroic deeds, with this eventually responding to the most important question.

Armenia, Artsakh, the Armenian people should be confident that a new generation has come to supplement our representatives of the first generation of the Artsakh liberation war, this new generation is just as determined to stand in the positions for defending the homeland”, Pashinyan said.

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Armenia denounces Azerbaijani disinformation on situation along shared border

Armenia has denounced the systematic dissemination of disinformation by the Azerbaijani authorities concerning the situation along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, as well as on the line of contact between Artsakh and Azerbaijan.

“The actions aim to cover-up or justify Azerbaijan’s own violations of the ceasefire and international humanitarian law,” Spokesperson for the Armenian Foreign Ministry Anna Naghdalyan said in a statement.

The statement comes after the Azerbaijani side claimed Armenian forces had opened fire in the direction of Azerbaijani defense posts, villagers and farmers.

The Spokesperson reminded that on



March 30, a minor of Voskevan village of Tavush region and two servicemen were wounded as a result of the ceasefire violation by the armed forces of Azerbaijan. During this military incident, the Azerbaijani armed units targeted the child within a civilian infrastructure, which is a clear violation of the international humanitarian law. “Obviously, Azerbaijan attempts to use

the suspension of monitoring exercises by the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, which is due the spread of COVID-19, in order to violate the ceasefire regime and disseminate disinformation.

“We once again reiterate our commitment to respect the calls of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the United Nations Secretary-General to strictly observe the ceasefire and refrain from any provocative action during this period,” Naghdalyan said.

She noted that such developments particularly emphasize the importance of implementing the agreements on risk reduction and the establishment of effective international mechanisms to this end.

President Sarkissian, Dr. Eric Esrailian discuss perspectives of cooperation in fighting COVID-19

President Armen Sargsyan had a telephone conversation with Dr. Eric Esrailian, a well-known American-Armenian physician and co-chair of the David Geffen Medical Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Erik Esrailyan is also an active public figure, a member of the Central Board of Directors of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, and the producer of the Hollywood film Promise about the Armenian Genocide.

President Sarkissian and Dr. Esrailian touched upon the issues of coronavirus pandemic and the opportunities for coop-



eration in the fight against it in Armenia. The President called for joint efforts, exchange of experience and mutual assistance in overcoming the current situation. In this context, they discussed issues of making more effective use of the opportunities created by charity programs in Armenia and

Diaspora.

Eric Esrailian said that since March, one of the new projects of The Promise Armenian Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, led by Professor Alina Doryan, has launched cooperation aimed at preventing coronavirus outbreak between the California School of Health at the Los Angeles School of Health and the Armenian Ministry of Health.

The team of Professor Doryan includes experts from the University of California, Los Angeles and other reputable institutions who, thanks to the efforts of The Promise Armenian Institute, support Armenia in developing a public health strategy.

Armenian engineers working to design new lung ventilation devices

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visited the “Engineering City” accompanied by Minister of Defense David Tonoyan and Minister of High Technology Industry Hakob Arshakyan,

The Prime Minister was first introduced to the Armenian specialists’ solutions and development of military equipment. Then the Prime Minister got acquainted with the repair works of artificial lung ventilation devices.



neers in the above-mentioned directions and noted that the government, in its turn, is ready to support the effective implementation of the programs.

Representatives of the Engineering Association of Armenia noted that they are currently working on designing artificial respiration devices, developing their complete or partial production, and will submit concrete proposals to the Ministry of High Technological Industry. At the same time, it was noted that specialists successfully restore devices that were previously in storage.

Prime Minister Pashinyan praised the work of Armenian engi-



Government approves more cash handouts to struggling families

The Armenian government approved on April 2 cash payments to more people who have been hit hard by economic disruptions resulting from the coronavirus epidemic.

The fresh financial assistance will be provided to the underage children of those Armenians who had no officially registered jobs or businesses or did not receive poverty benefits when the unprecedented shut-downs began on March 12. Their parents will receive 26,500 drams (\$52) per child.

The government already allocated on April 30, 68,000 drams to registered workers who have lost their jobs during the crisis. The employees of hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, clothing stores and other businesses closed since March 13 will



be paid up to 136,000 drams.

The government initially planned no such one-off payments to people involved in the informal sector of the Armenian economy.

Labor and Social Affairs Minister Zaruhi Batoyan said the government will now also help “those citizens who could not benefit from the measures announced by us” ear-

lier. Speaking during a cabinet meeting in Yerevan, she gave no estimates as to the number of the new recipients of the government aid.

As part of its efforts to cushion the economic impact of the coronavirus lockdown, the government also decided last week to allocate grants to many private firms and subsidize commercial bank loans to small businesses and farmers.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Thursday that this aid package “will help hundreds of thousands of our compatriots to overcome this crisis.”

Pashinyan’s political opponents have dismissed these measures as insufficient.

Armenia's Civil Aviation Committee denies reports on being stripped of license

The Armenian Civil Aviation Committee has dismissed media reports claiming that the Committee had been stripped of license.

“Armenia is a sovereign state and no structure can deprive a government agency operating under the law of the Republic of Armenia of its right to exercise its powers,” the Committee said in a statement.

The comments come after some media outlets in Armenia claimed that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) had deprived the Armenian Civil Aviation Committee of license.

The Committee further clarifies that between February 3 and 7, 2020, experts from the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Union visited the country to evaluate the activity of the Committee and two air companies. On March 6, 2020, the two companies and the Committee received the preliminary evaluation results from EASA, on which the EASA expected to receive the Committee's opinion to finalize the report on the evalu-



ation results. The Committee will send its observations to the Agency on April 6.

The European Commission plans to present the Agency's observations and the Committee's clarifications, at the hearings of the European safety team meeting to be held in Brussels on May 12-14, 2020.

Armenia's aviation authority reminds that it has repeatedly stated that the Committee has serious problems that are not new, they have a very long history, and time and resources are needed to modernize the structure. Serious and drastic steps are already being taken in that direction.

The Committee notes that the two air companies that were evaluated will temporarily be deprived of the right to fly to Eu-

ropean destinations, but may continue their flights to other countries.

Furthermore, the Committee says the decision only applies to airlines registered in Armenia, which make a limited number of flights to European destinations, and this decision will not affect the flights operated by other international companies. In addition, the Committee says it is working closely with the management of the airlines to find solutions to the situation.

The Civil Aviation Committee has also published an open letter by the Regional Officer for Air Traffic Management (ATM) at ICAO Asia and Pacific (APAC) Office, to the Armenian people.

In the letter Mr. Wicks notes that the problems at the Armenian Civil Aviation Committee are due to long-term systemic issues going back many years. He voices confidence that the leadership of Ms. Tatevik Revazyan, Chair of the Committee, will enable Armenia to make positive changes, which will strengthen and grow the vital Armenian aviation sector.

Armenia, Israel to consider possible cooperation in medical engineering

Dr. Asher Salmon, Director of the International Relations Department of the Israeli Ministry of Health, who coordinates the anti-COVID-19 measures in the country, has briefed President Armen Sarkissian on the steps taken in Israel to overcome the coronavirus epidemic.

The issue of Israel's possible assistance to Armenia was discussed, Armenia's needs were clarified during the phone conversation.

President Sarkissian and Dr. Salmon agreed that a video conference will be organized between Armenia and Israeli specialists in the coming days to clarify specific



directions of further cooperation and take practical steps.

During the telephone conversation, President Sarkissian also touched upon the steps taken towards the development of medical

engineering in Armenia and the possible cooperation with Israel in this sphere. Israel has a modern medicine and a developed healthcare system that can be instructive for Armenia., he said.

Last week Armenia's Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan and Dr. Asher Salmon, Coordinator of Israel on COVID 19 issues discussed the experience of the two countries in the fight against coronavirus and agreed to continue professional contacts. Israel's experience in combating coronavirus can be beneficial for Armenia.

Elections in Artsakh Republic free, fair and in line with high democratic standards – Armenia MFA

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has congratulated the authorities and the people of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) on holding free and fair elections on March 31, which were in line with high democratic standards.

“The people of Artsakh have indeed earned the right to live free in dignity, to shape together a democratic and modern society. In this regard, these nationwide elections, which were held in an environment of free competition and civil solidarity, have been case in point,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“Those elections once again demonstrated that human rights, particularly the right to vote and to take part in a government, are inalienable and universal. The fundamental human rights instruments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights, clearly establish that in exercising human rights no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of any territory and that all peoples can freely determine their political status by virtue of their right to self-determination and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,” the statement reads.

The right of the people of Artsakh to



self-determination is the foundation for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Ministry said, adding that “this reality has been fully reflected in the principles and elements of settlement presented by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, which envisage the determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will.

Referring to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs’ statement on the Artsakh elections, the Foreign Ministry said they once again reiterated the role of the population of Artsakh in determining their future, in the context of principles and elements of the settlement of the conflict.

“The incoming authorities of Artsakh – those who have already received the mandate of the people of Artsakh at the

parliamentary elections and those who will receive that very mandate at the second round of the presidential elections, have a special responsibility and role in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process,” the statement reads.

Active engagement of the elected authorities of Artsakh as a main party of the resolution of the conflict will significantly increase the effectiveness of the negotiation process and will ensure progress in the key issues of the conflict resolution, the Foreign Ministry of Armenia said.

“Elections in Artsakh are also important in terms of strengthening democracy, human rights and civil society in the region. It once again emphasizes that the conflict cannot serve as an insurmountable impediment for building democratic society,” it continued.

“On these days, we also pay tribute to the memory of the victims of the military aggression and atrocities committed by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh four years ago. In this context, it should be underlined that the democratic development of all countries in the region and accountability of authorities before their own peoples is a prerequisite for the regional security and peaceful resolution of the conflict,” the Foreign Ministry congratulated.

Azerbaijan bears international legal responsibility for April aggression – Artsakh MFA

Azerbaijan bears international legal responsibility for both unleashing the April aggression and for the criminal acts committed by its servicemen during the aggression against Artsakh, the Foreign Ministry of Artsakh said in a statement on the 4th anniversary of the our-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan.

Four years ago, on April 2, 2016, in flagrant violation of the ceasefire agreement, the Azerbaijani armed forces attacked the Republic of Artsakh. They targeted not only the front-line positions of the Defense Army of Artsakh, but also the civilians.

The intensity and scale of the hostilities, the number of forces and military equipment deployed by Azerbaijan, as well as the actions of the Azerbaijani side taken prior to the attack to deliberately escalate the tensions and disrupt the peace process indicate that the April 2 aggression was a carefully planned and prepared military operation.

Azerbaijan’s aggression was accompanied by gross violations of international humanitarian law and the rules of warfare. These crimes were documented in detail by the Office of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Artsakh and presented to

the international community in two special reports.

“The aggression in April 2016 was another attempt by Azerbaijan to resolve the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict by force. Only thanks to the decisive actions of the Artsakh Defense Army, as well as the support by all Armenians, it was possible to disrupt the military plans of Baku and to force the Azerbaijani side to comply with the ceasefire regime,” the Foreign Ministry stated.

“Azerbaijan’s attack on Artsakh became a challenge not only for our Republic, but also for the peace process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmanship, for the peaceful settlement of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict. It is noteworthy that shortly before the April aggression, on March 19, 2016, the President of Azerbaijan openly accused the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen of “using their destructive activities to freeze the conflict, and therefore the faith of the Azerbaijani people in their activities is completely undermined,” the statement continued.

“Azerbaijan bears international legal responsibility for both unleashing the April aggression and for the criminal acts com-

mitted by its servicemen during the aggression against Artsakh. The fact that the Azerbaijani servicemen, who had committed war crimes, were personally awarded by the President of Azerbaijan is another confirmation that these actions were committed either on the instructions, or under the leadership or control of the Azerbaijani authorities. Given that such crimes have no statute of limitations, the Republic of Artsakh will continue exerting consistent efforts to bring those responsible to justice,” the Foreign Ministry added.

It said the April aggression only strengthened the determination of the people and authorities of the Republic of Artsakh to continue the chosen path of further consolidation and development of their statehood, which is the best guarantee for the safe existence and peaceful development of the people of Artsakh.

“Today, we pay tribute to all those that deceased, repelling the Azerbaijani aggression in April 2016, or became innocent victims of the military adventure of Baku. We also express our gratitude to all and everyone who supported the people of Artsakh during these tragic days,” the Ministry concluded.

EU to provide €51 to support Armenia's fight against COVID-19

The European Union announced on April 2, 51 million euros (\$55 million) in assistance designed to help Armenia deal tackle the coronavirus epidemic and its severe socioeconomic consequences.

The EU Delegation in Yerevan said this includes 18 million euros in “new funds” allocated to Armenia and 33 million euros that will be “redirected” from other projects which it had planned to finance in the country.

It said the aid package will be used for supplying medical equipment, training medical personnel, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and providing



humanitarian assistance to socially vulnerable groups of the population.

“More is yet to come through access to important regional banking facilities and further restructuring of projects,” the delegation added in a statement.

According to additional information posted on the mission's Facebook page, the EU will spend 30 million euros on supporting Armenian businesses by improving their “access to cheap loans, working capital and guarantees.”

It also says: “Over 3,000 vulnerable households with elderly people, people with disabilities and large families in Shirak, Tavush and Lori regions will receive humanitarian aid packages.”

The EU announcement marks the largest coronavirus-related aid allocation secured by Armenia so far.

World Bank provides 3 million USD to Armenia to fight COVID-19 spread

In response to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, and recently in Armenia, the World Bank is supporting the Government's response to protect its people amid the coronavirus outbreak.

At the request of the Ministry of Health of Armenia, the World Bank has allocated \$3 million to address the country's urgent needs for equipment and supplies needed for the intensive care of people with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis. These funds are supporting the procurement of 50 artificial pulmonary ventilation (APV) devices worth \$1.35 million under the ongoing Disease Prevention and Control Project (DPCP).

This procurement became possible due to the application of the streamlined procedures of the World Bank in emergency situations. The technical expertise provided by the World Bank helped to carry out rapid market analysis to ensure value for money amid acute shortages in global supply of medical equipment and increasing prices. As a result, Armenia's health system will be equipped with additional high-quality devices necessary for treating an increasing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases.



“In these dramatic times the Bank stands ready to support the country's response to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic,” says Sylvie Bossoutrot, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia. “I would like to recognize the unprecedented dedication of health professionals in Armenia to protect the people. I would also like to strongly encourage each citizen of Armenia to strictly abide by the requirements of these emergency times and observe social distancing and isolation measures aimed at minimizing the impact of the pandemic.”

Similar arrangements will be applied to purchase additional ventilators, as well as personal protective equipment to address immediate healthcare needs. In addition, the World Bank stands ready to reprogram parts of its active ongoing portfolio in Armenia to support the government's response to COVID-19 in various

areas.

The World Bank's financial and technical support is closely coordinated with that of other international organizations and development finance institutions. In particular, the above equipment will be procured directly through United Nations agencies' supply channels in view of the current constraints for these types of medical emergency equipment in the global market.

The World Bank Group is rolling out a \$14 billion fast-track package to strengthen the COVID-19 response in developing countries and shorten the time to recovery. The immediate response includes financing, policy advice and technical assistance to help countries cope with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. The IFC is providing \$8 billion in financing to help private companies affected by the pandemic and preserve jobs. IBRD and IDA are making an initial US\$6 billion available for the health-response. As countries need broader support, the World Bank Group will deploy up to \$160 billion over 15 months to protect the poor and vulnerable, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery.

Armenian Gas operator seeks gas price rise

Armenia's national gas distribution company owned by Russia's Gazprom giant on April 1 asked public utility regulators to raise its retail prices set for households and corporate consumers.

"The [Gazprom Armenia] company wants an 11 percent increase in the existing average tariff," Garegin Baghramyan, the chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC), told RFE/RL's Armenian service.

According to a Gazprom Armenia application publicized later in the day, the company is seeking a more than 16 percent increase in the gas price set for manufacturing and agricultural firms. At the same time, it is ready to slightly cut the price for the majority of households, which currently stands at an equivalent of \$290 per thousand cubic meters. Still, it wants to scrap a sizable price discount enjoyed by low-in-



come families.

Under Armenian law, the PSRC has to make a decision on the requested tariff revision within the next 80 days.

The cost of Russian gas supplied to Armenian consumers remained unchanged after Gazprom raised its wholesale price for Armenia from \$150 to \$165 per thousand cubic meters in January 2019. This translated into additional major expenses for Gazprom Armenia, which already reported growing financial losses in the course of 2018.

Baghramyan acknowledged that the gas

distribution network has reason to seek price rises given the extra costs incurred by it. But he said this will no longer be the case if Gazprom lowers the wholesale price of Russian gas for Armenia.

The Armenian government requested such a price reduction on Tuesday in apparent anticipation of the application filed by Gazprom's Armenian subsidiary.

In a letter to Gazprom Chairman Alexei Miller, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan argued that international oil prices, which greatly determine the cost of natural gas, have fallen sharply over the past month. Grigoryan also said that economic disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic will significantly reduce energy consumption levels in Armenia unless they are offset by a lower gas price.

Modular section with 42 wards built next to infectious hospital in Yerevan

A modular building with 42 wards has been built next to the Nork Infectious Clinical Hospital in Yerevan.

It took just ten days install the 14 modules and equip the infrastructure with air conditioning, heating, fire alarm and internet systems.

The modular section will serve as an isolation facility for coronavirus patients with no



symptoms and those waiting to be tested.

Armenia has so far confirmed more than 600 coronavirus cases, 33 patients have recovered and been discharged from hospital. Five coronavirus-related deaths have been reported.

Nine medical institutions across Armenia have been re-profiled to serve COVID-19 patients only.

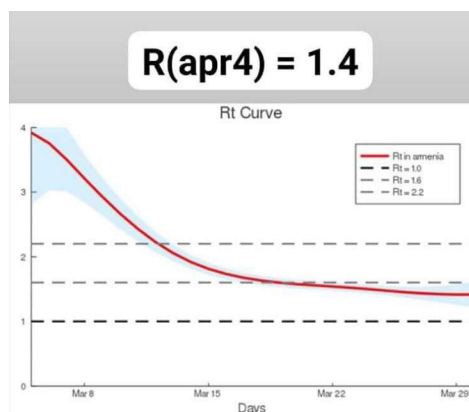
Reproductive number (Rt) of COVID-19 in Armenia reduces from 2 to 1.4

The temporal reproductive number (Rt) of COVID-19 in Armenia has reduced from 2 to 1.4 due to effective management, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan informs.

The coefficient shows how many people one infected person can potentially infect. The higher the number, the more people get infected.

Failure to reduce the coefficient will lead the spread of the infection at a growing rate.

This is the reason why social distancing and restriction of people-to-people contacts are considered important means of fighting the spread of the infection.



"The restrictions of the movement of people and suspension of activity of a number of enterprises since March 25 it has been possible

to reduce the reproductive number from 2 to 1.4," Tigran Avinyan says.

According to him, the task in the coming week should be to strictly follow the rules and restrictions of the state of emergency.

"We should try to reduce Rt to lower than 1. This will mean that the spread of coronavirus infection is manageable, and the health-care system will be able to effectively handle potentially serious cases. As a result, we will be able to gradually ease the limitations and gradually return to normal life," the Deputy PM says.

Fitch revises outlook on Armenia to negative due to “coronavirus shock”

Fitch Ratings has revised the Outlook on Armenia’s Long-Term Issuer Default Ratings (IDR) to Negative from Stable and affirmed the IDRs at ‘BB-’.

Fitch says the coronavirus shock negatively affects the Armenian economy due to its exposures to commodities (a majority of exports), the Russian economy (for remittances, trade and FDI) and to tourism, only partially offset by the benefit of a lower oil price. This is in the context of Armenia’s relatively high net external debt and structural current account deficit, which is only partly financed by non-debt creating capital inflows.

Despite a robust macroeconomic policy framework and continuing commitment to reform, the economic shock has put public debt on a markedly higher trajectory, and there are downside risks to the forecasts should the COVID-19 outbreak not be contained in 2H20 in line with Fitch’s current baseline assumption.

“We forecast the coronavirus shock will drag down GDP growth from 7.6% in 2019 to 0.5% this year. Growth accelerated in 2H19 to 7.9%, and momentum remained



strong in 2M20, providing some offset to the sharp contraction expected in 2Q20. The government has announced a state of emergency, with a support package totaling 2.3% of GDP, and the central bank has cut interest rates by 25bp to 5.25% following a fall in inflation to an average -0.1% in the first two months of 2020,” Fitch says.

Fitch projects that GDP growth partially recovers in 2021, to 5.5%, supported by a rebound in external demand, investment catch-up, and revival of private consumption and employment growth, with a moderate drag from fiscal tightening.

Fiscal stimulus and weak growth will push out this year’s general government deficit to a forecast 5.0% of GDP in 2020, up from 1.0% in 2019. The government’s

coronavirus stimulus package has a focus on social support, subsidized lending, and loan refinancing and risk-sharing, with a high degree of uncertainty over how much will ultimately fall on the government balance sheet.

“Fitch anticipates additional fiscal measures including to directly support employment, partly offset by under-execution on capital projects and some reprioritization of non-essential recurrent spending this year. We forecast the general government deficit will narrow to 3.5% of GDP in 2021, on the back of stronger GDP growth and a partial unwinding of support measures, underpinned by the government’s strong commitment to its medium-term fiscal targets,” Fitch said.

General government debt is projected to rise from 53.6% at end-2019 to 59.2% of GDP in 2020 before falling back to 56.0% in 2021, upward revisions of 9.4pp and 7.4pp, respectively, since the last review, and well above the current ‘BB’ median of 46.5%.

April War: Azerbaijan’s failure on the use of military force as a foreign policy tool

(Armenpress) - On the night of April 2, 2016, Azerbaijan launched a large-scale attack on Artsakh in southern, southeastern and northeastern directions. The Defense forces of the Artsakh Republic successfully thwarted the offensive and launched a counteroffensive. At noon on April 5, an oral ceasefire was reached between the chiefs of the General staffs of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Moscow. In the outcome of the military operations on April 2-5, the human and material losses of the Azerbaijani army significantly exceeded the losses of the Artsakh Defense Army.

Despite the enormous amount of human force and armored vehicles, including the ones Azerbaijan had bought during the recent years, the Military forces of Azerbaijan failed to complete the assigned tasks; achieve operational depth and refraction in the negotiation process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Artsakh



Defense Army managed to inflict a strategic defeat on Azerbaijan due to competent defensive and counter-offensive military operations.

The initiation of the April 2016 War by Azerbaijan, was the largest flare-up of anti-Armenian hatred policy, or, in other words, Armenophobia, since the beginning of the truce in 1994.

In a Security Council meeting convened on April 2, President Aliyev tried to justify the offensive initiated by Azerbaijan, announcing: “...All conflicts must be resolved on a single principle. The principle

of self-determination of nations must not violate the territorial integrity of countries. This is what the Helsinki Final Act states”.

This statement is proof itself, that Azerbaijan has given huge importance to the initiation of military actions in the scope of its state strategy.

As a result of large-scale military actions on April 2-5, Azerbaijan managed to occupy a few combat positions in the Northern and Southern directions. Despite this, Azerbaijani Military forces failed to fulfill its military tasks, suffering heavy combat and human casualties. By the virtue of the counter-offensives of the Artsakh Defense Army, some of the above-mentioned positions were recaptured and Artsakh was able to repel the alleged main attack of the Azerbaijani Armed forces in the central direction.

In particular, Armenian forces were able to thrust back

Turkey Ignores its Highest Court's Verdict on Armenian Patriarch's Election



By Harut Sassounian

Forum 18 News Service of Oslo, Norway, published a lengthy article by Dr. Mine Yildirim on March 25, explaining the Turkish government's interference in the election of the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court that the government's interference "was not prescribed by law and not necessary in a democratic society."

Two Armenians of Istanbul, Levon Berj Kuzukoglu and Ohannes Garbis Balmumciyan, had initially filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court on March 27, 2012. The Court rejected the lawsuit, stating that the Patriarchal election can only take place after the death or resignation of the Patriarch who was in a coma, even though the 1863 Ottoman-era regulations stated that the Armenian Patriarch's election can take place in the case of "the death of the Patriarch, resignation and other." The applicants appealed this decision, but the Court of Cassation rejected it on November 23, 2015.

The two Armenians then appealed to the Constitutional Court claiming that the state's refusal of their request for the election of a new Patriarch violated their right to freedom of religion. The Court made its judgment in favor of the Armenians five years later in May 2019. However, the Turkish leaders ignored the Court's decision. "While the judgment includes important findings related to the state's unjustified interference in the internal affairs of the Armenian community, it also raises

questions about whether the Constitutional Court is an effective domestic remedy or an actor that conveniently blocks applications to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, thus closing the door to international supervision," Dr. Yildirim wrote. "The state had prevented the Armenian community from electing its religious leader between 2009, when the then Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan could no longer perform his duties due to illness, and 2019, when the community finally elected Bishop Sahak Mashalyan as the new Patriarch."

It is more than a coincidence that the Constitutional Court gave its verdict on May 22, 2019, following the state's approval of the Patriarchal election after the March 8, 2019, passing away of Patriarch Mutafyan. The timing of the decision was intended to give the impression that the state was not interfering in the election of a new Patriarch and the Court was not telling the government what to do.

In its ruling, the Constitutional Court referred "to the 1863 Regulation for the Armenian Millet (ethno-religious community) and international legal provisions, including the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) and the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty's provisions on the protection of non-Muslims in Turkey," according to Dr. Yildirim.

Throughout the existence of the Republic of Turkey, the government made some arbitrary changes during the 1950, 1961, 1990, 1998 and 2019 Patriarchal elections. "The election Directives were based on the Cabinet Decree of 18 September 1961 which had been issued only for that year's Patriarchal election and which included no provisions for future elections. Despite this, the Interior Ministry has continued to use this Decree," Dr. Yildirim wrote. The Interior Ministry's submission to the Constitutional Court stated that the measures taken by the authorities derive from "the state's positive obligation to organize the religious field."

The Constitutional Court countered that argument by ruling that its verdict is based on Article 24 of the Turkish Constitution which protected religious freedom, Article 38 of the Lausanne Treaty which referred to the practice of religion, as well as the

various rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court ruled that "the appointment of a Patriarchal Vicar-General (in 2010) occurred not as a result of a process that took place within the competing civilian and spiritual initiatives in the Armenian community, but as a result of 'state pressure that was unconstitutional,'" according to Dr. Yildirim. "In conclusion, the Constitutional Court found that the state has not been able to demonstrate a pressing social need that overrides the 'spirit of Armenian traditions' and the 'Armenian community's will.' Therefore, the interference in the applicants' right to freedom of religion or belief by way of refusing the request to hold Patriarchal elections cannot be considered compatible with the requirements of a democratic society, and Article 24 of the Constitution had thus been violated."

However, even after the ruling of the Constitutional court, the state continued to interfere in the Patriarchal election. The Turkish Interior Ministry came up with a new restriction, ruling that only those Turkish Armenian bishops who were serving in Turkey at the time could be candidates for the Patriarchal election, thus reducing the number of eligible candidates to two. "This is 100% in contradiction to the Constitutional Court's judgment," said Sebu Aslançil, the lawyer in the case. Nevertheless, the Armenian Steering Committee for the Patriarchal election decided not to contest the Interior Ministry's ruling in order not to further delay the election of a new Patriarch.

Dr. Yildirim concluded: "The judgment raised the profile of the Constitutional Court as a high court delivering a judgment in line with ECHR jurisprudence. Yet, due to its timing, the judgment had no impact on rectifying the injustice that the Armenian community experienced. It also closed the door for an application to be made to the ECHR in Strasbourg, thus blocking international supervision of the implementation of the judgment."

In effect, as the legal axiom states, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

April War: Azerbaijan's failure on the use of military force as a foreign policy tool

the attack planned in the direction of Akna (Aghdam). Following this, Azerbaijan's Minister of Defense Zakir Hasanov ordered Azerbaijan's armed forces to be ready to launch heavy combat attacks on Stepanakert and other Armenian settlements.

The same day, heavy flamethrower systems TOS-1A were used in combat operations for the first time. Besides this, the BM-21 "Grad" and longer-range BM-30 "Smerch" multiple launch rocket systems were also put into operation.

The analysis of the first day of the military actions shows that Azerbaijan had adopted the tactics of a rapid breakthrough with the use of mobile groups for special purposes. In particular, the 052 separate special forces brigade of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces was involved in the Northern direction of Talysh. However, despite the successful sabotage penetration in the primary segment, the brigade then found itself in a blockade and lost more than 30 soldiers, including junior and senior officers.

The harmonization of special purpose groups and combined arms forces failed. Due to this, the tactic of providing a breakthrough with a surprise attack came to naught. Therefore, Azerbaijan put heavy artillery into action, thereby transferring the military attack to a positional battle and failing the primarily initiated military action. It's important to note that these artillery systems, and "Smerch" in particular, completely lacked in their implementation.

These turnouts made a ceasefire desirable for Azerbaijan and after the oral ceasefire agreement of April 5 between the Chiefs of General of Staff of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the military actions were put at a halt. Azerbaijan's aggression against Artsakh was successfully prevented.

Azerbaijan did not provide accurate and final data related to its human losses, as usually hiding the real number of casualties, but it became clear by open source investigation that the Azerbaijani armed forces lost at least 93 soldiers during the military operations. To be more exact, at least 70 losses were reported in the northern

direction, in Talish, and at least 22 losses in the southern direction, in Fizuli. It is also worth noting that a significant number of special force combatants were among the fatalities of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces.

"There are literally dozens of casualties each year, and as you may know, fighting flared up dramatically in early April, April 2 to April 5 – so-called 4-day war – with hundreds of casualties – an estimated 350 casualties including civilians", stated the US State Department officials, on their special briefing on May 16, 2016. According to the same statement, Azerbaijan has had much more losses, compared to Armenia as well. This allows us to confirm our assessments related to the number of casualties of the Azerbaijani side.

According to the reports from Artsakh Defense Army, Azerbaijan has also had more losses of military equipment, including 24 tanks, 1 TOS-1A multiple launch rocket, 1 IFV, 6 armoured vehicles, 1 Engineer Vehicle, 1 "Grad" multiple rocket launcher, 2 helicopters (Azerbaijan reports only 1 of them), 12 Unmanned aerial vehicles. Artsakh Defense Army reported the loss of 64 soldiers and 13 volunteers. As for the equipment, Artsakh DA reported 14 tanks (6 of which were later repaired and put into operation again), 4 IFVs (BMP), 1 "Shilka" ZSU (radar-guided anti-aircraft system).

The Armenian side reported 800 hectares of land losses, which the President Serzh Sargsyan also did confirm in an interview. Despite this, Azerbaijan claims to occupy a territory of more than 2000 hectares.

Hrant Mikaelyan, a researcher at the Caucasus Institute, published an article on Kavkaz-uzel.eu website where he mentions that Artsakh lost a total of 9.93 sq km or 993 hectares of land, based on an analysis of maps (according to his first assessment, Armenian side's land-loss was 795 hectares). In any case, it should be noted that this data is not accurate, as it is based on maps and may definitely differ from the actual measurements. It's also important to consider that Artsakh's overall terri-

tory currently is about 11,500 sq km, and the above-mentioned 800-900 hectares or 8-9 sq km land is only 0.07 % of its total territory. Clearly, one cannot consider the capture of such a relatively small territory as success especially when taking into account the fact that Azerbaijan mobilized huge amounts of forces and military equipment.

During the April War, Azerbaijan has repeatedly violated its international obligations and a number of international conventions. In particular, Azerbaijani soldiers brutally murdered 3 elderly residents of Talish village; Valeri Khalapyan, his spouse and 92-year-old Marusya Khalapyan, and maimed their corpses. Vagharshak Grigoryan, a schoolboy born in 2004, was killed in Azerbaijani shelling in front of his school located in Zoravan village (Nerkin Tchar-tar). 2 other children were also wounded. Besides this, according to the 2016 report prepared by the Artsakh's Ombudsman office, 90 % of the 28 soldiers of the Artsakh Defense Army who were caught in the control zone of Azerbaijani forces, were also brutally killed and their corpses were mutilated; many amputation cases were also reported (both alive and after death). 3 cases of decapitation were registered.

A footage of how the Azerbaijani soldiers were showing Yezidi Kyaram Sloyan's cut off head to a group of villagers and proudly celebrating their "heroic act" was dispersed on the Internet. Some time later the official website of the President of Azerbaijan posted a picture where Ilham Aliyev was awarding the soldier who had committed that act of "heroism".

The above-mentioned facts also clearly state that the policy of using military force adopted by Azerbaijan not only does ignore its international obligations but also encourages racism and war crimes which was clearly demonstrated during the military operations in April 2016.

April war once again confirmed that the security of the population of Artsakh can be guaranteed by its own armed forces only.

Viva-MTS – Thinking About the Nation, Especially in the Hardest Times...



By George Chakhalyan

...A couple of days ago I received a call from my friend, People’s Artist of Armenia, Laureate of the State Award of Soviet Armenia, Professor, a world famous violinist E.T., who, speaking to me, in a “by the way” manner said that on 1 April their landline phone was switched off as, he, under strict quarantine, being aged more than 70 years old, missed a time to pay...

He also mentioned that, “surprisingly”, his Viva-MTS mobile phone has been NOT cut off as E.T. had no chance pay for Armenia’s leading telecom operator services as well...

Let’s remind that Viva-MTS was the very first company providing public services, and, why not, among businesses that let the customers to postpone payment, in contrast to “the some” including telecom operator companies...

We strongly believe that here the following proverb is a proper one: “Like Master, like man” (Hopefully, we think the Reader can surely guess who is the Master in this context...)

Application and website for digital textbooks without extra charge for Internet available for Viva-MTS subscribers

Given the current situation and the need for distance learning, Viva-MTS provides all pupils, teachers, parents and, in general, all its subscribers with the opportunity to use schoolbooks via modern technologies with no extra charge for the use of Internet (textbooks are guaranteed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Republic of Armenia). Textbooks are available online through the “Armenian Schoolbooks” app and at <http://schoolbooks.am/>. When using these plat-

forms, there is no charge for the used Internet MB.

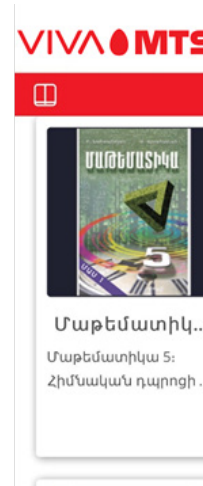
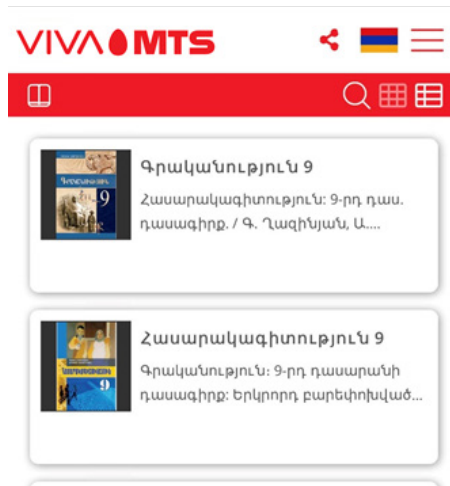
“Armenian Schoolbooks” project for digitization and dissemination of textbooks has been implemented as a result of the joint collaboration of “Mer Soft” Company’s “bonee.net” system and “DSHH”. Aiming to offer up-to-date technology

people who do not have textbooks nearby at hand. I think the opportunity to use this integrated system of digital textbooks is a good solution to stay in the loop of educational processes,” said Viva-MTS Founding General Manager **Ralph C. Yirikian**.

“I am glad that we succeeded in contributing to the development of the Armenian educational system.

The main goal of the project is to make the textbooks public and to activate our country’s educational processes, ensuring their consistency with the challenges and demands of the time,” said Co-founder of “Mer Soft” Company and co-author of the “bonee.net” platform **Tigran Manukyan**.

Textbooks are available anytime and anywhere via the system.



solutions in a most comfortable way to its subscribers, Viva-MTS has started collaborating with project’s implementing parties.

All the state-approved textbooks for 5th-12th grades are available through the free “Armenian Schoolbooks” app available at Google Play Market and [AppStore](https://www.apple.com/appstore), as well as via <http://schoolbooks.am/>

“Viva-MTS continuously demonstrates a responsible approach within business-state-society cooperation chain. I am convinced that regardless of the situation in the country, companies with corporate social responsibility value systems should manifest this kind of approach. The “Ar-

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menian Schoolbooks” program promotes online education and is a great option for

Tatev Baroyan: An Armenian Rising Star of the American Opera

By Gourgen James Khazhakian
Chief Correspondent



Tatev Baroyan, 25, was born in Yerevan, Armenia in the dark and cold years, a spark waiting to ignite with passion for the classical world. Having five generations of musicians in her family, you could say her love of music was born with her. At the age of five she was accepted to the Tchaikovsky Music School of Yerevan for gifted students as a pianist to follow in her mother's footsteps. Tatev thrived on stage during piano class concerts and recitals as well as with the Armenia State Choreographic Academy where she took ballet. Although so young, she always found comfort on stage. Unlike her classmates, she enthusiastically waited for her turn to go out and share her joy with the audience. In 2007, Tatev joined her mother, **Zaruhi**, in the United States.

(Zaruhi Baroyan was born in Yerevan, Armenia in the family of prominent musicians. She graduated from the Komitas Yerevan State Conservatory with Master's degree (piano),



and then she became PhD in music. Within the following years Mrs Baroyan was accompanist for the ballet troupe of the Al.Spendiaryan Natl Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan and participated in various intl competitions with diplomas and prizes. In 1999, with a group of Armenian musicians, Zaruhi Baroyan received an invitation from Columbia Artist (USA) to take part in Andrew Lloyd Weber's Music Nationwide Tour Starring Michael Bolton. From 2004 to present she has been the company pianist of Sarasota Ballet of Florida.)

Tatev Baroyan continued her education in Sarasota, Fl, and rediscovered her passion for music through an unfamiliar approach; classical singing. In 2009, when enrolled in Riverview High School she became a part of the choir as a student accompanist and slowly discovered her voice and her potential. She participated in numerous concerts, performances, and state competitions as a member of a chamber choir.

A major milestone in the beginning of her career was the opportunity she was given with the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism to sing a solo part with the choir, thus initiating her work as a soloist. Such community support also made it



possible for Tatev to graduate from the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan with a B.M.

Now, as an emerging artist, she continues her intensive work with her teachers **Hasmik Hatsagortsyan**, a prominent opera singer of Armenia, **Robert Lischetti** and her mother **Zaruhi Baroyan**, taking her first big steps into a career of a professional classical singer. Along with private lessons in the years of her studies, she has taken master classes and coachings with the following people: **Daive L. Jones**, **Lee Dougherty Ross**, **Joy McIntyre** and **John Fisher**.

Professor at the Weill Music Institute, **Claudia Friedlander** said, "You have a beautiful, flexible soprano voice, and you demonstrate a terrific sense of style in Puccini as well as wonderful charisma.". The Gerda Lisser Foundation commented, "Great quality voice and dark, full sound.". Tatev was reinvented to Sarasota Opera as a Soloist for the 2019 Winter Season to debut the role of Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflote* and spent the 2019 Summer Festival with Teatro Nuovo where she covered the role of Alaide in Bellini's *La Straniera*.

Currently, Tatev is in very close relation, through her contribu-

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Tatev Baroyan: An Armenian Rising Star of the American Opera



tion, with the Armenian Church of St. Hagob in St. Petersburg, Florida, where in addition to a substantial solo concert in November 2017, she has repeatedly performed in the community where she is an awaited guest. Thanks to the support from these two communities, the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism and St. Hagob, Tatev had the privilege of returning to Armenia once again to not only further her professional experience through an internship

with Yerevan State Opera and Ballet Theater, but also debuting in her home land with a solo concert. This concert carried exceptional meaning not only as a major milestone in Tatev's career but also as it took place in the historical House-Museum of the world famous Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian on his 115th birthday.

Presently Tatev's repertoire includes the works of Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, Dvorak, Donizetti, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff as well as the works of famous Armenian composers such as Komitas, Babajanyan, and Harutyunyan. She has also taken part in the production of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Bellini's *Norma*, D'Albert's *Tiefland (The Lowlands)*, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Verdi's *Nabucco*, and Puccini's *Turandot*.

Through her training and dedica-

tion, Tatev reached new heights and recognition in competition. She was a one of the finalists and the recipient of a very prestigious Erin Morley encouragement awarded at the 2019 Premiere Opera Foundation +



NYIOP International Vocal Competition in New York. *"The rejoicing, warm quality of her voice worked well with the venue as her series of calls reverberated with a lovely ease. Her brisk, excited phrases lifted her from the tumult of the middle section as she worked up to a soaring conclusion."* (OperaWire)

Tatev was also the 2019 Florida district Winner of The Metropolitan National Council Competitions which took place in Winter Park, FL.

Tatev strives to continue gaining the experience she needs to unleash her full potential in the classical world.

In The Highlights next issue essential extracts of a Tatev Baroyan's interview with Sputnik Armenia will be published.



ANCA calls on Secretary Pompeo to reprogram \$25 million in Armenia aid to fight COVID-19

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) today called on Secretary of State Michael Pompeo to immediately reprogram \$25 million from the Congressional appropriated aid package for Armenia as part of an expanded U.S. assistance program to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic with urgently needed medical equipment and supplies, technical assistance, and support for at-risk families.

In a letter sent today to the State Department making this \$25 million request, ANCA Chairman Raffi Hamparian shared thanks for the Administration's initial \$1.1 million emergency allocation and expressed the Armenian American community's appreciation for all those at the Department of State and partner agencies who are striving selflessly to represent the United States, protect American citizens, support our allies, and help end this pandemic.

Hamparian noted that the European Union recently announced that it is reprogramming over 30 million Euros in existing funding to help Armenia bolster its COVID-19 efforts, and also making additional funds available for Armenia to acquire medical devices and equipment, support small and medium-sized businesses, and help ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches low-income families.

The full text of the ANCA letter is provided below and available here:

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I am writing on behalf of the Armenian

National Committee of America (ANCA) to request that you reprogram at least \$25 million in funds already appropriated by Congress to assist the Republic of Armenia effectively and efficiently respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ANCA appreciates the initial tranche of funds (\$1.1 million) made available by the U.S. Department of State to Armenia in response to the pandemic following President Trump's signing of H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act into law on March 27, 2020.

In this regard, we also appreciate the remarks you delivered on March 26, 2020, when you stated that "our leadership in the COVID-19 response is another example of how America—our government, our businesses and organizations, and our people—continues to be the world's greatest humanitarians.

Between existing resources, supplemental funding, the private sector, and the generous spirit of the American people, the United States is leading – and will continue to lead – the effort to combat this dangerous pathogen and its threat to global health and security."

Today, we urge the Department of State, in cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other relevant agencies and departments—to immediately reprogram funding already appropriated for Armenia to assist the nation's Ministry of Health, which is charged

with battling the pandemic. Specifically, we encourage USAID to reprogram existing foreign aid funds to make them available to: a) allow Armenian officials to procure necessary medical equipment and supplies; b) bolster tracking efforts to rapidly bend the curve to level off COVID-19 cases among the general population, and; c) provide financial assistance to well respected non-profit organizations serving families in need across the Republic of Armenia, with a focus on seniors, the disabled, and children.

As you may know, several days ago the European Union announced that it is both reprogramming 33 million Euros in existing funding to help Armenia bolster its COVID-19 efforts, and also making an additional 18 million Euros available for Armenia to acquire medical devices and equipment, support small and medium-size business, and help ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches low-income families.

During the Centennial of United States – Armenia relations, President Donald Trump celebrated this enduring friendship by expressing his hope that "our partnership, that started 100 years ago, will further strengthen." In this spirit, we call on you to direct the immediate reprogramming of at least \$25 million in funds already appropriated by Congress to assist the Republic of Armenia to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CSTO Secretary General expresses concern over Azerbaijani ceasefire violation at Armenia border

CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas has expressed concern over the ceasefire violation that took place on March 30th at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border which resulted in two Armenian soldiers and one civilian – a 14-year-old child – being wounded.

Zas told ARMENPRESS the fact that this incident is taking place when the international community is unitedly combating the coronavirus pandemic is perplexing.

ARMENPRESS: Days ago, as a result of the Azerbaijani ceasefire violation at the border with Armenia two Armenian servicemen and one 14-year-old resident of the Voskevan village were wounded. As CSTO Secretary General, how would you comment on this type of a provocation against a CSTO mem-

ber country?

Zas: I've been informed by the Armenian side about the incident that took place at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. The fact that this has resulted in two servicemen and the [14-year-old] resident of Voskevan being wounded is very concerning. At the same time, I would like to express concern regarding this kind of an incident in the CSTO zone of responsibility – at the border of a member country of the organization.

It is perplexing that the escalation is happening at a time when the international community is waging a united battle against the coronavirus pandemic. In this regard I am calling on the parties to the conflict to heed to the UN Secretary General's calls on a global

ceasefire. By the way, as far as I know Armenia has officially endorsed this call. I would also like to underscore the importance of the implementation of the agreements reached by the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in terms of ceasefire in the conflict zone, and I wish the victims of the incident speedy recovery.

On March 30, the Azerbaijani military attempted a subversive incursion in the direction of Armenian positions in the Noyemberyan region of Tavush province. The adversary attack was thwarted, but the Azerbaijani troops also opened fire at civilian settlements, wounding a child.

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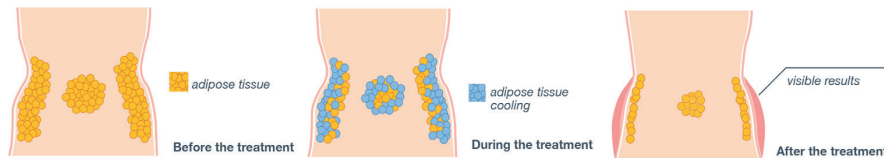
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