

Armenian MP appeals to women leaders in Europe to force Azerbaijan to release Maral Najarian from captivity



Lebanese-Armenian Maral Najarian who settled in Shushi after Beirut blast was kidnapped on Nov. 10 & Is in Azeri captivity.

Member of the Armenian National Assembly Naira Zohrabyan has appealed to women leaders in Europe, requesting to call on Azerbaijan to release Lebanese Armenian Maral Najarian from captivity.

Maral Najarian moved to Berdzor, Artsakh, after the explosion in the port of Beirut. She was taken captive on the Goris-Stepanakert road on her way to Berdzor to transport her personal belongings to Yerevan before the region would be handed over to Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has officially confirmed the fact of Maral's captivity, and she is supposedly kept in the Gubistan prison, about 70 km from Baku.

Naira Zohrabyan from the opposition Prosperous Armenia faction has appealed to European women leaders, human rights

activists and all organizations dealing with women's issues to force Azerbaijan to return Maral and all prisoners of war.

"I have appealed to all women at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to call on Azerbaijan and Aliyev's wife, a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, to return Maral Najarian, a civilian, to Armenia immediately," Zohrabyan said in a Facebook post.

"I have appealed to UNESCO, which gives the title of a goodwill ambassador to the wife of the president of a war criminal country, so that UNESCO demands within its mandate that its Azerbaijani goodwill ambassador not spit on international humanitarian law and keep Armenian prisoners of war and Maral Najarian as a "political currency, to immediately return all prisoners of war to Armenia under the 3rd Geneva Convention," Zohrabyan said.

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Armenian, Russian FM's discuss implementation of November 9 statement

Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan had a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on February 5.

In the follow-up to the previous communication, the Foreign Ministers discussed in detail issues of regional security and stability.

Ministers Ayvazyan and Lavrov touched upon the process of full implementation of the provisions of the November 9

trilateral statement.

Minister Ayvazyan especially emphasized the importance of addressing the humanitarian situation in Artsakh on the spot.

The interlocutors exchanged views on issues of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In this context, reference was made to the schedule of consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries.



Armenia strongly condemns Turkey's policy of misappropriation of Armenian cultural heritage

Armenia strongly condemns the policy of consistent destruction and misappropriation of Armenian cultural heritage by the Turkish authorities, Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan has said.

The comments come in the wake of Turkish media reports on the [sale](#) and [destruction](#) of the Armenian churches in Turkey. There are numerous facts about the destruction of Christian churches and graves, which receive no response from the relevant bodies of Turkey.

"We are familiar with the reports in Turkish media about the sale of Armenian churches in Turkey. In particular, the Armenian Catholic Church in Sebtash district of Bursa was put up for sale for 6 million Turkish lira, while another Armenian church in Bursa was put for sale for 6,3 million Turk-



ish lira. Moreover, the Armenian St. Toros Church in the western Turkish province of Kutahya was destroyed," Naghdalyan said.

"We strongly condemn the policy of consistent destruction and misappropriation of Armenian cultural heritage by the Turkish authorities that gained new momentum, and urge Turkey to strictly adhere to its obligations under the international agreements," she added.

The Spokesperson noted that the calls on cooperation for regional peace and stability by a state which demonstrates such attitude towards historical-cultural monuments at least cannot be credible.

Referring to Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu's "advise" to Armenia to "learn lessons from history," Naghdalyan said "no one has the right to speak disrespectfully with the language of threat and give lessons of history to the nation who survived genocide."

"Turkey's authorities must clearly realize that a relevant environment of trust is needed for a dialogue, and the destruction of the Armenian historical-cultural heritage definitely does not contribute to the establishment of such an environment," the Spokesperson concluded.

Armenia, Kyrgyzstan keen to deepen cooperation



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who was paying a working visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan, met with newly appointed Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Ulukbek Maripov early on February 5.

Nikol Pashinyan congratulated Ulukbek Maripov on his appointment to the post of Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan and wished

him every success in his activities. The Armenian Prime Minister said Armenia and Kyrgyzstan boast close cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral formats within the framework of integration unions. In this context, he stressed that our country is interested in the furtherance of cooperative ties.

Thanking his Armenian counterpart for appreciation and kind remarks, the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan noted that his country is keen to build closer ties of partnership with Armenia. In his words, the two countries traditionally boast warm relations and extra efforts should be made to deepen cooperation, including the trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian spheres.

Highlighting the current high level of political dialogue, the parties reaffirmed their willingness to further strengthen the bilateral relations. Nikol Pashinyan and Ulukbek Maripov exchanged views on the development of trade and economic cooperation. In this context, they referred to the opportunities that can be created following the reopening of transport communications in the region, and the prospects for infrastructure development.

Information and views were exchanged on the ongoing measures to counter the global pandemic. The parties agreed to intensify the high-level mutual contacts in parallel with the stabilization of the epidemiological situation.

Armenian Defense Minister receives French Ambassador



On February 5, the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Vagharshak Harutyunyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France in the Republic of Armenia Jonathan Lacotte accompanied by the Military Attaché of the French Embassy in the Republic of

Armenia Danny Pitt (residence in Tbilisi).

During the meeting issues related to regional security and bilateral cooperation in the field of defense were discussed. The RA Minister of Defense also presented the security environment of the region, the existing threats and the expected developments.

In his turn, Ambassador Lacotte noted that during the hostilities and after their cessation, the situation has always been in the focus of the French leadership, concerns were raised, and efforts are being made to finally stabilize the situation. Speaking about bilateral cooperation in the field of defense, the Ambassador informed

about the proposal of a number of programs aimed at the multilateral development of cooperation, which was accepted by the Minister of Defense.

An agreement was reached on the implementation next month of a number of measures to promote cooperation.



Armenia prioritizes the development of a common approach to the protection of EAEU internal markets – Nikol Pashinyan

On a working visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on February 5 attended a regular session of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council (EIC) in Almaty.

The event was also attended by RF Premier Mikhail Mishustin, Belarus Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Ulukbek Maripov, as well as by heads of government from Eurasian Economic Union observer states: Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba Manuel Marrero Cruz and Acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Aureliu Ciocoi (both via videoconference), and Eurasian Economic Commission Board Chairman Mikhail Myasnikov.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reiterated Armenia's active participation and support to the creation and realization of the Eurasian Economic Union's digital agenda.



Speaking at a prime ministerial meeting of the union in Kazakhstan, he praised the Digital Forum which was taking place within the framework of the session. "I am sure that today's forum will have important contribution in identifying the priority directions and efficient toolbox for cooperation in the high tech and digital technology sector between our countries. In this context I'd like to gladly mention the successful launch of the Travel Without COVID-19 mobile application program. This program, which was launched on February 1, enabled us to find mutually acceptable solutions regarding passenger transportation between Armenia, Belarus and Russia,

which is of rather important social and economic significance for our country," Pashinyan told the prime ministers of the fellow EEU countries.

He also mentioned that the perfection of the mechanisms for implementing special protective, anti-dumping and countervailing actions in the union could be effectively used for protecting domestic producers from the negative impacts of growing imports from non-EEU countries or unfair competition.

Pashinyan said that Armenia is ready for close cooperation with EEU colleagues in terms of integration to identify the ways to develop common approaches for using the abovementioned measures.

The EEU heads of government are discussing the elimination of obstacles in the domestic market of the union, the perfection of the mechanisms of implementing anti-dumping and countervailing measures, the macroeconomic situation and proposals for the sustainable development of the economies.

Russian envoy meets Serzh Sargsyan

(RL/RFE) - The Russian ambassador in Yerevan, Sergei Kopyrkin, reportedly met with former President Serzh Sargsyan on February 3 to discuss political developments in Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armen Ashotyan, the deputy chairman of the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), said on Thursday that the meeting took place “at the initiative of the Russian side.”

He said Sargsyan thanked Russia for helping to maintain the ceasefire regime in the conflict zone and providing humanitarian assistance to Karabakh.

The ex-president also stressed the importance of continued Russian involvement in international efforts to achieve a “final peaceful settlement” of the Armeni-



an-Azerbaijani dispute, Ashotyan wrote on Facebook.

“At the ambassador’s request, President Sargsyan addressed issues relating to the internal political situation as well as new geopolitical realities in the region,” he said, adding that Kopyrkin presented Moscow’s positions on the issues discussed by the two men. He gave no other details.

The conversation came one day after Sargsyan and several other leaders of an Armenian opposition alliance met to discuss their joint efforts to force Prime Min-

ister Nikol Pashinyan to resign over his handling of the recent war in Karabakh. Former President Robert Kocharyan, another bitter critic of Pashinyan, was also in attendance.

Two of those leaders said on Wednesday that the alliance called the Homeland Salvation Movement will resume anti-government protests soon.

Meanwhile, Kocharyan was due to visit Moscow for the second time in less than two months. A spokeswoman for the ex-president said he will attend a meeting of the board of a major Russian company.

Kopyrkin met with another former Armenian president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, on January 25. A spokeswoman for Ter-Petrosian said the meeting focused on the current situation in the Karabakh conflict zone.

Polish politician Tomasz Lech Buczek sends brochure on Azerbaijani war crimes against Armenians to Biden

Polish lawyer and politician Tomasz Lech Buczek has penned a letter to US President Joe Biden, urging him to take steps to free Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

Buczek also attached a publication on Azerbaijani war crimes against Armenians. He had earlier [sent a copy to Azerbaijani President](#) Ilham Aliyev.

The letter reads:

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to you, first of all, as an ordinary person, a Polish citizen by chance born on July 4, on a day so special for the history of the United States.

I am fighting for the truth to prevail. Artsakh, who fought for Independence, this small piece of Armenian sacred land.

On February 3, I received a very personal letter from Mrs Armine of Stepanakert, an Armenian mother.

During the Nagorno-Karabakh war, she lost her son and husband, and the youngest son, 19, was taken prisoner by Azerbaijan.



In this letter, she stated that this letter was a Great Hope for Her, because as a simple woman she did not know who to turn to for help.

Then I remembered the letter. The Bixby letter a brief, consoling message sent by President Abraham Lincoln in November 1864 to Lydia Parker Bixby, a widow living in Boston, Massachusetts, who was thought to have lost five sons in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

Executive Mansion, Washington, Nov. 21, 1864.

Dear Madam, I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have

died gloriously on the field of battle.

I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save.

I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

*Yours, very sincerely and respectfully,
Abraham Lincoln*

I replied to Ms Armine quoting this letter and added one sentence – only one that I would do everything to free the Armenian prisoners of war held in Azerbaijan.

In the twenty-first century, the world cannot accept the violation of fundamental human rights. The world must take steps to free the Armenian prisoners of war held in Azerbaijan.

Presence of terrorists in the region a serious threat to both Armenia and Iran – Deputy FM

The presence of terrorists in the region is a serious threat to both Armenia and Iran, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Gagik Ghalechyan said in an interview with Armenpress.

“This has been repeatedly voiced by high-ranking officials of the two countries. Unfortunately, Turkey and Azerbaijan do not discriminate between means to advance their aggressive policy and are consistently taking steps to turn our region into a hotbed of terrorism. It is natural that the situation in the region poses challenges to the security of the two countries, and those should be kept in the focus of attention,” the Deputy FM said.

He said unblocking of transport route in the region and namely the possible establishment of rail communication between Armenia and Iran would positively impact the development of trade and economic relations.

“The Iranian side has expressed readiness to carry out the necessary work, which will allow establishing a railway connection from the Iran’s border to Yerevan. At the same time, road transport links with



Iran through the territory of Syunik region and the development of relevant infrastructure continue to be of strategic importance for Armenia and Iran,” Ghalechyan said.

As for Azerbaijan and Turkey’s proposal to create a six-party platform of cooperation in the region, the Deputy FM said, “the Armenian authorities have always been in favor of stability, peace and cooperation in the region, and to this day they are consistent in their steps in that direction.” However, he stressed, for its effective operation, it is first necessary to “create an atmosphere of trust, which is clearly lacking among the countries of the region.”

“In the “author” countries of this proposal, Azerbaijan and Turkey, the level of anti-Armenianism is setting new “records

Dozens of Armenian prisoners of war are still in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan has occupied the territories of Artsakh, and the destruction of Armenian historical and cultural values continues in Turkey. After all, no diplomatic relations have been established with the two countries,” Gagik Ghalechyan stressed.

He emphasized that “Armenia does not consider that the results of Azerbaijan’s aggression against Artsakh can be a basis for local peace.”

“As Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian noted during the meeting with his Iranian counterpart, only lasting peace meeting everyone’s interests in the region where there are no “winners and losers” can create real guarantees for promoting stability and security in the region,” the Deputy FM said.

“As for the further development of the region in the conditions of new realities, Armenia’s vision is unchanged, it is aimed at deepening and expanding relations with friendly countries and resolving the existing conflicts,” he added.

Minsk Group has full support in working for lasting peace – OSCE Chair

Nagorno Karabakh was high on the agenda of the meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Swiss Foreign Minister Ann Linde.

“Last year’s outbreak of hostilities in and around Nagorno Karabakh with its heavy death toll and human suffering made clear the risks when conflicts remain unsolved,” Ann Linde said at a joint press conference with Lavrov.



In this case, she said, the OSCE will have to play a bigger role in order to secure sustainable peace.

“International humanitarian law will guide all our efforts,” she added.

“The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and my Personal Representative have our full support in working for lasting peace,” the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office said.

She said conflict resolution is a strong priority of the OSCE.

The EU supports Armenia-Georgia and Armenia-Iran energy and economic links

The European Union has provided EUR 10.2m in investment grant and technical assistance for the electricity grid interconnection with Georgia to be implemented by the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) under the Caucasus Transmission Network project.

The link allows continuous energy trade between the two countries, and in particular allows Armenia to better access regional and European markets. The link will improve



security of electricity supply in both participating countries.

“The EU Neighborhood Investment Fa-

cility (NIF) grant will not only ensure the overall financing, but have a positive economic impact on the project finally resulting in limiting the potentially required end user tariff increases for the Armenian consumers thereby contributing to energy affordability especially for the poorer part of the population. In addition the EU NIF funds will be used to adapt energy sector regulation approximating EU standards,” said the EU Ambassador, Andrea Wiktorin.

UN releases \$2 million for lifesaving humanitarian assistance to war-affected people in Armenia



The United Nations has released \$2 million for the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance to people who have sought refuge in Armenia as a result of the recent conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. These funds will immediately support the Armenia Inter-Agency Response Plan launched last week, which outlines resource needs for the UN and humanitarian partners to meet the critical needs of those displaced and host communities.

Six weeks of fighting last year in the Nagorno-Karabakh area ended with a trilateral ceasefire statement on 9 November, after more than 90,000 people, mostly women and children, had been displaced to Armenia.

“The United Nations began supporting people forced to flee their homes at the onset of the conflict and will continue

as long as people remain vulnerable” said the UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia, Shombi Sharp. The UN is committed to supporting and ensuring the protection, especially of the women, men, girls and boys from in and around Nagorno-Karabakh who are in Armenia and who have been impacted by the recent conflict.

Funding from the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) will help provide prioritized assistance for persons in refugee-like situations and host communities. Delivered through UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, this will include protection support to ensure that all vulnerable groups, especially children, have access to schools, psychosocial support and primary health services, as well as shelter and non-food items assistance to endure the winter. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities will be prioritized for life-saving assistance as the funding is disbursed.

The Response Plan scales up support already provided since the beginning of the conflict. From October until December 2020, the UN agencies and partners distrib-

uted over 33,330 non-food items, including bedding items, towels, hygiene supplies, and household items, in addition to providing 1,000 foldable beds, psycho-social support services to women and children and covering the utility costs for 64 collective shelter facilities. Some 11,500 school-age children, who are currently enrolled in primary and secondary education in Armenia, were also assisted. Further, hundreds of metric tons of food assistance has been provided to approximately 18,000 people each month, along with a number of other actions.

The Armenia Inter-Agency Response Plan was launched last week, under the joint leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator and UNHCR, the United Nations Country Team, together with NGO partners. The Response Plan involves 36 humanitarian partners and 188 projects with total financial requirements amounting to \$ 62.6 million across six key sectors: **protection, including child protection; education; shelter and non-food items; food security and nutrition; health, and early-recovery.**

Armenian Deputy PM, Iranian Ambassador discuss “Persian Gulf-Black Sea” transport corridor issues

Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Avinyan received on February 5 Ambassador of Iran to Armenia Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri and discussed issues related to trade and economic cooperation, as well as “Persian Gulf-Black Sea” international transport corridor.

As the office of Tigran Avinyan informs, greeting the guest, Avinyan noted that Armenian-Iranian relations are unique for their centuries-old friendship, based on mutual trust and respect. The sides shared the opinion that the Armenian-Iranian partnership has great potential, which should be brought to



life step by step.

Assessing peace, stability and sustainable development as a common interest for Armenia and Iran, Tigran Avinyan referred to the regional situation resulted by

the Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh. The Deputy PM particularly focused on the issue of the exchange of detainees, which is a priority for Armenia.

The sides also discussed trade and economic cooperation issues. Ambassador Zohouri highlighted the necessity of joint efforts for the best use of the existing economic cooperation potential.

The sides also referred to the cooperation in the sphere of cooperation.

Issues related to “Persian Gulf-Black Sea” international transport corridor were also discussed at the meeting.

Russia, China, Switzerland Armenia’s main foreign trade partners for 2020



Armenia recorded highest trade turnover in 2020 with Russia, China and Switzerland, ARMENPRESS was informed

from the Statistics Committee of Armenia.

Armenia’s foreign trade turnover in 2020 amounted to over 7,1 billion USD, declining by 13.2% against 2019.

Russia ranked 1st among Armenia’s foreign trade partners, with a trade turnover over 2 billion and 155 million USD, which is a decline of 3.5% against 2019.

Armenia’s 2nd foreign trade partner was China, with a trade turnover over 964 million USD, which is an

increase of 2% against 2019.

Switzerland comes next, which recorded 485million USD trade turnover with Armenia – a decline of 5.1%.

Armenia’s trade turnover with the EU amounted over 1 billion and 276 million USD, declining by 22.9% against 2019.

Armenia’s trade turnover with the USA in 2020 amounted to 152 million USD, declining by 54,5% against 2019.

Trade turnover with Iran amounted to over 400 million USD, declining by 2.2%, while with Georgia – 129.7 million USD, a decline of 12.9% against 2019.

Armenian nationals can travel to Georgia only by air

Armenian nationals can enter Georgia only by air, after passing the full course of COVID-19 vaccination (two doses), the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs clarifies.

The comments come after media outlets circulated information claiming that the entry of foreigners to Georgia is free



in case of a negative COVID-19 test result.

“According to the new regulations set by the Georgian government, Armenia is not included in the list of countries whose citizens can enter Georgia in case of a negative COVID-19 test result,” the Foreign Ministry said.

MEPs urge to resume negotiations on Karabakh conflict settlement

Chair of the Delegation for relations with the South Caucasus, MEP Marina Kaljurand, the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Armenia, MEP Andrey Kovatchev, and the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Azerbaijan, MEP Željana Zovko, on the need to resume negotiations on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The statement reads:

Last year's war between Armenia and Azerbaijan was a terrible human tragedy,

We applaud the fact that the situation has stabilized after the agreement of 9 November 2020 and that – apart from deplorable but isolated incidents – the ceasefire has been respected, but a lot more is necessary to achieve much-needed reconciliation.

Negotiations on a lasting settlement of the



Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and on the region's future legal status remain as indispensable as ever. We call on both parties to reaffirm clearly and publicly their willingness to re-engage in the process led by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and founded on the group's Basic Principles that they themselves agreed to, reflecting the Helsinki Final Act principles of non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples. At a time of a fresh momentum brought about

by the new US administration, we firmly reiterate the European Parliament's – and, indeed, the European Union's – continued support to this process and these principles.

The complete implementation of the ceasefire agreement is a necessary first step and it is regrettable that the exchange of prisoners of war has not been carried out fully yet. We welcome last week's release of several of the Armenian servicemen captured after the end of hostilities and appeal to Azerbaijan to release the rest, so that trust can be rebuilt.

We also urge the parties to ensure fully unhindered access of international organizations for the purposes of humanitarian assistance and the protection of cultural heritage. These issues underline even more the need for renewed multilateral efforts to support finding a lasting solution to the conflict

Foreign Ministry calls on all countries and organizations to be correct in their statements on Azerbaijan-Artsakh conflict

Artsakh's Foreign Ministry has called on all countries and organizations to be extremely careful and correct in their statements on the Azerbaijan-Artsakh conflict.

"Recently, we have witnessed an information campaign by Azerbaijan, which, in an effort to demonstrate alleged international support for the Turkish-Azerbaijani armed aggression against Artsakh, disseminates messages about congratulations by representatives of some international organizations and political circles of a number of countries on the "liberation" of the so-called "occupied" territories by Azerbaijan," the Foreign Ministry said.

"Leaving aside the question of the credibility of these statements, we nevertheless consider it necessary to note once again



that the armed aggression unleashed in September 2020 by Azerbaijan with the support of Turkey and with the participation of international terrorists against the Republic of Artsakh has led to numerous sufferings: thousands of innocent citizens of Armenian nationality were killed and injured, hundreds are missing, are now in captivity, have become hostages, have been subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treat-

ment, and the Armenian cultural heritage is being destroyed," the statement reads.

The Ministry calls on all countries and organizations to be extremely careful and correct in their statements on the Azerbaijan-Artsakh conflict, to avoid statements that may negatively affect the international efforts for the comprehensive settlement of the conflict, maintenance of peace and stability in the region, as well as hurt the feelings of thousands of people.

"Diplomatic etiquette cannot and should not serve as a basis for statements that can be considered in the context of legitimizing and consolidating the occupation of the territories of the Republic of Artsakh and justifying internationally wrongful acts," the Ministry concluded.

Syrian mercenaries should leave Karabakh conflict zone, CSTO chief says

Mercenaries from Syria must leave Nagorno-Karabakh, their activities near the CSTO countries pose risks to the collective security of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas said at an online briefing, [RIA Novosti](#) reports.

"We had information about the presence and actions of militants from Syria in the



Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone," Zas said.

"We proceed from the premise that any Syrian mercenaries, militants must leave this territory, stop their activities, because the creation of detachments, groups of militants, illegal armed formations directly near the borders of the CSTO member countries are certain risks for our collective security," he pointed out.

Rep. Sherman demands answers from U.S. Ambassador to Baku for congratulatory statements on Azerbaijani aggression



Senior House Foreign Affairs Committee Member Brad Sherman (D-CA) demanded answers from U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Lee Litzenberger following reports that the U.S. envoy congratulated the Aliyev regime for “restoring its territorial integrity” and pledging U.S. funds to rebuild on occupied Artsakh lands, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

Rep. Sherman’s concerns followed news accounts in Azerbaijani press describing Ambassador Litzenberger’s January 27th meeting with Azerbaijan’s Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov.

In a strongly worded letter to Ambassador Litzenberger, Rep. Sherman asked the U.S. envoy to explain:

— Is it the policy of the United States to commend Baku on its successes as a result of the recent war, which was initiated by Azeri aggression?

— Is it the policy of the United States to encourage investments in Azerbaijan meant to marginalize Artsakh?

Rep. Sherman noted that Amb. Litzenberger’s reported remarks, which have not been refuted by the U.S. Embassy in Baku, run counter to statements by Secretary of State Antony Blinken made during his con-

firmation process. In response to inquiries by Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Ed Markey (D-MA), Secretary Blinken noted: “In light of the recent outbreak of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Biden-Harris administration will review our security assistance to Azerbaijan. If the circumstances warrant, the Biden-Harris administration will be prepared to suspend waivers of requirements under section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and the Secretary of Defense to determine the appropriate level of assistance to meet the security needs of Armenia and the region.”

Commenting to Asbarez News last week regarding Amb. Litzenberger’s reported remarks, ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian stated, “We are troubled by unconfirmed reports that our Ambassador in Baku is celebrating Azerbaijani aggression and – even worse – enlisting Americans in the commercial exploitation of indigenous Armenian lands. In light of published accounts characterizing his comments in this regard, Amb. Litzenberger should set the record straight – explaining whether he is in fact pushing U.S. investments in areas of Artsakh seized by Azerbaijan,” added Hamparian.

The full text of Rep. Sherman’s letter

to Amb. Litzenberger is provided below.

Dear Ambassador Litzenberger,

As you are aware, Azerbaijani and Turkish forces initiated an unprovoked attack against Armenia on September 27, 2020, leading to six weeks of devastating fighting that killed an estimated 5,000 people and forced more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians to flee from the Karabakh region. As a result of the intense fighting, a Russia-backed ceasefire was agreed to, which has resulted in an untenable situation for Artsakh’s long-term security and stability.

According to a press statement issued by Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Economy on January 27th, in a meeting with Azerbaijan’s Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov, you congratulated Azerbaijan for “restoring its territorial integrity” and expressed the United States’ readiness to take part in rebuilding lands that recently came under Baku’s control as a result of the war.

The United States is an active member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group process. U.S. engagement in the OSCE process is necessary to find a permanent settlement to the Artsakh conflict that protects the security of Artsakh and helps to ensure another war does not break out. I appreciate the statement Secretary Blinken gave during his confirmation hearing to this end.

Ambassador Litzenberger, your remarks to Azerbaijan’s Economy Minister are extremely concerning, and are all together out of step with Secretary Blinken’s statements to date. Thus, I would appreciate responses to the following questions:

— Is it the policy of the United States to commend Baku on its successes as a result of the recent war, which was initiated by Azeri aggression?

— Is it the policy of the United States to encourage investments in Azerbaijan meant to marginalize Artsakh?

Biden, Erdogan Top Advisors Discuss Karabakh



The Karabakh conflict reportedly was discussed on February 2 during a phone conversation between President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Ibrahim Kalin, the chief advisor to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

According to Turkish state-run media, the Karabakh conflict was among topics, including Syria, Libya and Afghanistan that were discussed by the two top leaders. No specific details on the subject of Karabakh were publicized. The White House did not include a mention of Karabakh in its read-out of the call.

On Monday, in a strongly-worded op-ed published in the San Francisco Chronicle, representatives Jackie Speier and Adam Schiff [urged](#) President Biden to end America's "silence on Azerbaijan's and Turkey's regional aggression" and halt U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan.

"We must also reassess our relationship with Turkey, which has always been complex, but has become increasingly untenable as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has amassed autocratic powers while undermining U.S. interests. In addition to encouraging, arming, and supplying Syrian mercenaries to wage war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey's actions in Syria have set back U.S. interests and endangered our forces," Speier and Schiff stressed in the op-ed.

"Sullivan underscored the Biden Administration's desire to build constructive U.S.-Turkey ties, expanding areas of cooperation and managing disagreements effectively," said a White House statement.

tively," said a White House statement.

U.S.-Turkey relations have been in a downward spiral in recent years with tensions escalating when Ankara opted to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia, in defiance of NATO agreements.

The White House said that Sullivan "conveyed the administration's intention to strengthen transatlantic security through NATO, expressing concern that Turkey's acquisition of the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system undermines alliance cohesion and effectiveness."

At the end of last year, Congress overwhelmingly approved sanctions against Turkey when voting on the 2021 Defense Appropriation bill—a move vetoed by President Donald Trump forcing Congress to overwrite the veto.

Turkey's ongoing feud with Greece in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Cyprus issue were also touched on by Sullivan and Kalin.

New Start: US and Russia extend nuclear treaty

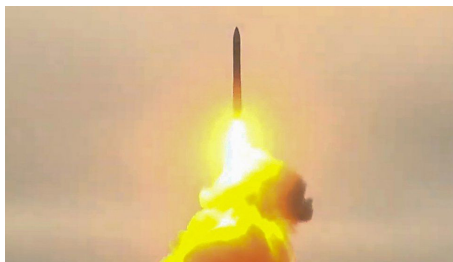
The US has extended the New Start nuclear arms control treaty with Russia for five years, the BBC reports.

Announcing the move, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said it made the world safer.

President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin reportedly discussed it by phone a week ago, and Mr Putin signed it into law on January 29.

The treaty had been set to lapse on 5 February, as the Trump administration had refused to approve the extension.

It had sought tougher verification procedures and some inclusion of tactical



weapons, as well as an expansion of the deal to cover China.

New Start is the last remaining nuclear arms deal between Russia and the US, and its demise would have ended all limits on deployments of strategic nuclear warheads

and delivery systems.

"The 5-year extension of New START makes the United States and the world safer," Mr Blinken tweeted.

"This welcome step is the start of our efforts to pursue effective arms control that lowers the risks of war and helps prevent arms races," he said.

A Russian foreign ministry statement said the agreement entered into force on Wednesday after diplomatic notes were exchanged with the US Embassy in Moscow, adding that the treaty remained in effect "exactly as it had been signed, without any amendments or additions."

Alexei Navalny sentenced to 3.5 years in prison

A Moscow court has jailed Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny for three-and-a-half years for violating the conditions of a suspended sentence.

Navalny's suspended sentence in the Yves Rocher embezzlement case has been converted to 3 years and 6 months behind bars, TASS reports from the courtroom.

Navalny has been accused of breaking the terms of a 2014 suspended sentence for embezzlement that required him to report regularly to Russian police.

Navalny will serve his time in medi-



um-security prison. According to preliminary reports, the opposition figure will be behind bars for two and a half years, taking

into account one year he was placed under house arrest during the preliminary investigation in the Yves Rocher case.

The court ruling notes that the Navalny defense team's position that he did not conceal his whereabouts from the Federal Penitentiary Service agencies and was getting treatment in Germany is dismissed because he had repeatedly violated his probation terms even before the hospitalization.

Thousands of supporters have rallied across Russia in support of Mr Navalny.

South Australia Recognizes Artsakh, Condemns Azerbaijan and Turkey

ADELAIDE, Australia—South Australia became the second state in Australia to recognize the rights to self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh, condemning Azerbaijan and Turkey for their invasion of the country's indigenous Armenians in a motion passed with a vote in the House of Assembly, reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia.

The motion follows one passed by the New South Wales Parliament's Legislative Assembly in October 2020, and similarly "calls on the Federal Government to also recognize the Republic of Artsakh as the only permanent solution to the conflict to avoid further attempts of such military aggression".

Member of Parliament Tom Koustantonis moved the historic motion, which also called out "the actions of President Erdogan of Turkey and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan in their pursuit of a policy of Pan-Turkish nationalism, which has previously led



to genocide and which now threatens the Armenian population of Artsakh with ethnic cleansing".

The House of Assembly considered a proposal to "adjourn the debate", however this was defeated by the casting vote of the Speaker. The debate resumed and resulted in a vote – without dissent – in favor of the motion.



ANC-AU Executive Director Haig Kayserian thanked the Armenian Cultural Association of South Australia for its grassroots advocacy.

"We were proud to support members of Adelaide's dedicated Armenian community for their tireless efforts on the ground, which have ensured South Australia's parliament has joined a growing number of legislatures around the world supporting the legitimate rights to self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh," said Kayserian.

"Mr. Emil Davityan and the President of the Armenian Cultural Association of South Australia are a credit to the greater Armenian-Australian community and were a pleasure to work with to achieving this wonderful outcome for our heroic brothers and sisters of the Armenian Republic of Artsakh," he added.

"We thank Mr. Tom Koustantonis and Ms. Jayne Stinson for championing this motion and extend our gratitude to all parliamentarians who supported its passage in the name of human rights," said Emil Davityan.

"South Australia's Armenian community wanted to play its part in supporting the people of Artsakh, bringing attention to the critical humanitarian issues in the re-

gion and contributing to an enduring and peaceful settlement to the conflict. The community thanks all who supported it in its endeavors."

The Motion in full reads as follows:

That this House:

(1) Notes the actions and belligerence of Azerbaijan towards the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh in commencing military action

on 27 September 2020.

(2) Notes the serious concerns that have been raised from Armenian-Australians regarding the existential threat to the indigenous Armenian population of the Republic of Artsakh by this military action, and in any attempts by Azerbaijan to prevent the peaceful resettlement of the indigenous Armenian population following agreement to a provisional ceasefire on 9 November 2020.

(3) Notes the serious concerns raised by Armenian-Australians and independent international organizations regarding the risk of Azerbaijan destroying sites of global cultural and historical significance.

(4) Condemns the actions of President Erdogan of Turkey and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan in their pursuit of a policy of Pan-Turkish nationalism, which has previously led to genocide and which now threatens the Armenian population of Artsakh with ethnic cleansing.

(5) Calls on the Federal Government to condemn these attacks and advocate its support for the safety and security of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh.

(6) Recognize the right to self-determination of all peoples including those of the Republic of Artsakh and calls on the Federal Government to also recognize the Republic of Artsakh as the only permanent solution to the conflict to avoid further attempts of such military aggression.

Armenia, Sweden mull perspectives of cooperation in high-tech

High-Tech Industry Minister Hakob Arshakyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sweden Mr. Svensson Patrik and Izabella Eriksson, Deputy Head of Mission, Counsellor in charge of Development Cooperation.

Minister Arshakyan welcomed Ambassador Svensson and wished him success during the diplomatic mission. He mentioned that the Armenian side highly appreciates the humanitarian aid received from Kingdom of Sweden after the war.

The Minister emphasized the importance of the agreement on the development of cooperation between Sweden and Armenia, signed in 2019 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and the Director-General of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Carin Jämtin.

“The signing of the agreement is a new chapter in Armenian-Swedish relations and within its framework we need to develop our relations in many spheres” said Arshakyan.

Speaking about the main fields of activities of the Ministry, Hakob Arshakyan mentioned that Armenia’s high-tech industry had impressive growth even in 2020,



which was a hard year for the economy. This shows that Armenian high-tech industry not only has good growth potential, but also demonstrates tangible results. This is evidenced by the presence of branches of world high-tech companies operating in Armenia, such as “Ericsson” and other companies.

The Minister suggested the Ambassador to draw the attention of Swedish companies to the idea of opening branches in Armenia, as well as the possibility of establishing a Tumo Center for Creative Technologies in Stockholm, and localization of other successful technological educational programs there. Ambassador Svensson, who was appointed in September, positively assessed the growth in the high-tech sector, noting that it also demonstrates the level of certain

environment and favorable conditions.

The Ambassador stressed that the Swedish high-tech industry had undergone considerable development and they are happy to share their experience not only in terms of creating an enabling environment for company development, but also in terms of education, science and their connections to business.

Hakob Arshakyan told the Ambassador that the Armenian side is particularly interested in cooperation within educational and scientific programs in different formats: on the level of universities, scientific institutions and policy development.

In turn, the Ambassador replied that there are grants for Armenian students at Swedish universities of technology, and grants may be increased in the future.

The Ambassador also expressed interest in Armenia’s digital agenda. Armenia’s five-year digitalization strategy has already been developed and submitted to the government for approval, now it is in the final stages of discussion.

The directions and possibilities of cooperation and development in the sphere of incubators and start-ups was discussed.

Pope declares February 27 as St. Gregory of Narek Day

By the decree of Pope Francis, February 27 will be celebrated in the Roman calendar as the day of remembrance of St. Gregory of Narek (Grigor Narekatsi), Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Church, the Armenian Embassy to the Holy See reports.

It will be included in the calendars of Catholic churches all over the world, the books of the liturgy and the texts of



the liturgy will be updated.

On February 23, 2015 the Pope awarded the title of “Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Church” to the medieval Armenian clergyman, theologian, poet St. Gregory of Narek

Pope Francis thus confirmed the decision of the Congregation for the Saints of the Holy See, according to which Gregory of Narek deserved the highest ecclesiastical award.

Moderna's Noubar Afeyan awarded Lebanon's Order of Merit

Noubar Afeyan, co-founder and chairman of Moderna, has been honored with Lebanon's National Order of Merit.

On behalf of the President of the Republic of Lebanon, H.E. General Michel Aoun, the Ambassador of Lebanon to the United States of America, H.E. Gabriel Issa decorated Moderna's Executives and Scientists of Lebanese descent with the National Order of Merit, for their achievement and work in developing the COVID-19 vaccine.

The National Order of Merit was presented by to:

Dr. Noubar Afeyan-Co-founder and Chairman of MODERNA

Mr. Marcello Damiani- Chief Digital & Operational

Mr. Said Francis- Senior VP for Business Development & Corporate Strategy

Mr. Charbel Haber- Senior VP for Regulatory Affairs

Dr. François Nader- Board Member

Ms. Monique Yoakin Turk- Director, Program & Alliance Management.

Mr. Joe Sarkis- Associate Director



Ms. Joyce Kfoury Sousa-Quality Control Manager

Noubar Afeyan was born in Beirut to Armenian parents in 1962, did his undergraduate work at McGill University in Montreal, and completed his Ph.D. in biochemical engineering at MIT in 1987.

Addressing the ceremony, Afeyan expressed deep gratitude to Lebanon for hosting his ancestors after the Armenian Genocide.

"When I was born, I thought all Armenian people lived in Lebanon. There were so many of us. There were 78 churches, there were 60 schools. That doesn't exist in many countries," he added.

Afeyan is one of America's leading bio-tech and life sciences entrepreneurs. He has set up more than 30 companies in the past 28 years from his base in Boston. Collectively, they are worth \$10bn and each employ anything from a dozen staff to 400. He has done it by pioneering a new way of starting a business, based on the idea of survival, constant adaptation and overcoming obstacles, however big they appear – just as his forbears

did in historical Armenia.

A passionate advocate of the contributions of immigrants to economic and scientific progress, Noubar Afeyan received the Golden Door Award in 2017 from the International Institute of New England, in honor of his outstanding contributions to American society as a U.S citizen of foreign birth.

He was also awarded a Great Immigrant honor from the Carnegie Corporation in 2016, received a Technology Pioneer award from the World Economic Forum in 2012, and was presented with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2008.

Armenia actively negotiates purchase of Russian Sputnik V vaccine – Minister

Armenia is ready to buy a new batch of Russian Sputnik V vaccine, Armenian Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan said at a meeting with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kopirkin and the Adviser of the Russian Embassy Pavel Kurochkin.

During the meeting the parties discussed the directions of cooperation achieved within the framework of the sitting of the Armenian-Russian intergovernmental commission between the Ministries of Health of the two countries.

Anahit Avanesyan attached importance to the regular Russian support to Armenia – including vaccines, laboratory-diagnostic equipment, and mobile diagnostic-thera-

peutic clinics.

The Armenian-Russian health conferences, which are held annually in Moscow and Yerevan, play an important role in the development of bilateral relations, she said.

Minister Avanesyan thanked Russia for its invaluable assistance in the fight against the new coronavirus (COVID-19), emphasizing that it has actively cooperated with its Russian counterparts over the past year.

"Close cooperation with the Russian side, regular information and exchange of experience are very important for us, and today our specialists are actively negotiating the purchase of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine," the Minister said.

In this context, she noted that the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia has signed a cooperation agreement within the framework of the COVAX FACILITY initiative, but Armenia is ready to acquire additional batches of Russian Sputnik V vaccine within the framework of this initiative.



Presence of Azerbaijani military on roads in Armenia's Syunik province lacks legal basis – Ombudsman

The presence of Azerbaijani armed forces (flags and signs) on the roads connecting the communities of the Syunik region of the Republic of Armenia contradicts the foundations of the international human rights system, violates the rule of law and, consequently, lacks any legal basis, Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan says.

The Ombudsman lists the reasons why the Azerbaijani servicemen were deployed in those places:

1) Ethnic cleansing and genocidal policies against Armenians were carried out in Artsakh by terrorist methods;

2) Civilians and soldiers have been tortured and inhumanly treated (beheadings, desecration of corpses, etc.);

3) Jihadists and ISIS terrorists were used against Artsakh. They committed war crimes and atrocities against Armenians;

4) The civilian settlements of Artsakh were subjected to deliberate mass destruction, including with banned cluster weapons;

5) From the first day of the war, it was accompanied by the state policy of encouraging anti-Armenian hatred and incitement of hostility towards Armenians on the basis of ethnicity;



6) During the war, more than 100,000 civilians were displaced from their permanent residences, and about 40,000 people were left homeless;

7) The highest authorities of Azerbaijan and Turkey speak openly about Armenia and the entire Armenian people in the language of threat of genocide (for example, during the military event in Baku on December 10, 2020).

8) The highest bodies of the Azerbaijani government, public figures insult Armenians in order to humiliate the dignity of the whole Armenian people and publicly encourage it.

9) The process of determining Armenia's borders takes place under the threat of war and the use of force.

10) Due to the threats of war, the bor-

ders are determined by mechanical methods and at impermissible speed, without professional work, with gross violations of international rules;

11) The rights and legal interests of the border residents of Armenia are ignored;

12) The process is accompanied by gross violations of property, economic activities and other socio-economic rights of the border residents of Armenia (people deprived of their property and left homeless);

13) The rights of life, dignity, physical and mental inviolability and other vital rights of the border residents of Syunik and Gegharkunik marzes and, in general, of the entire population of Armenia have been seriously endangered;

14) There is no predictability for residents of border areas or actions are uncertain, at least there is no schedule.

Therefore, the Ombudsman says, the determination of borders with the described approaches will not promote the peaceful coexistence of peoples in the region. On the contrary, it will create fertile ground for incessant hatred and enmity towards Armenians in Azerbaijan, continuous gross human rights violations and other dangerous manifestations.

Russian Prime Minister thanks EDB's Tigran Sargsyan for COVID-19 travel app project

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin expressed gratitude to the Deputy Chairman of the Eurasian Development Bank's (EDB) Management Board Tigran Sargsyan for the creation of the "Travel Without COVID-19" application that is used in restarting travel following the pandemic-related shutdown.

"I'd like to thank our colleagues, Nikolai Podguzov, Tigran Sargsyan, for such a quick and active work," Mishustin



said at the Almaty Digital Forum 2021 in Kazakhstan, addressing EDB Management Board Chairman Podguzov and his deputy

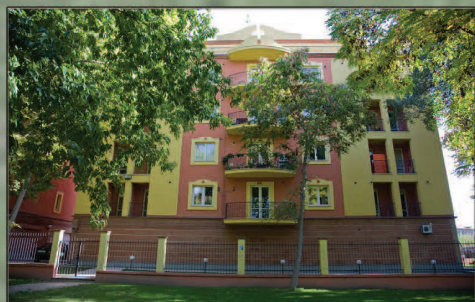
Tigran Sargsyan.

Mishustin noted that Russia, Armenia and Belarus have already joined the program and expressed hope that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will also do so soon.

The Travel without COVID-19 program features a mobile app which shows the traveler's COVID-19 test result in the form of a QR code, which is used when crossing border.

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