

Victory Day, Liberation of Shushi celebrated in Artsakh



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Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Mrs. Anna Hakobyan participated in festive events in Stepanakert dedicated to the 75th anniversary of Victory in World War Second, the Liberation of Shushi and the formation of the Artsakh Defense Army.

High-ranking officials of the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh visited the Stepanakert Memorial, where they laid wreaths and flowers at the monument to the freedom fighters killed in the Great Patriotic War and the liberation of Shushi.

The Prime Minister then visited the fraternal cemetery of the freedom fighters killed in the Artsakh war and laid flowers at their graves, paying tribute to the memory of the freedom fighters.

Afterwards, high-ranking officials of the two Armenian republics laid flowers at the Tank Monument in Shushi and the monument to Commander Vazgen Sargsyan, honoring his memory.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan together with President Bako Sahakyan and President-elect Arayik Harutyunyan also visited the boiler house of the newly built district of Stepanakert, which works with a pellet system. The Prime Minister got acquainted with the work of the boiler house and the heating opportunities of the district with pellets.

Armenian PM, Lithuanian President discuss boosting bilateral economic cooperation

p. 2

Armenian Parliament ratifies CoE Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation

p. 4

Noubar Afeyan's Moderna gets OK to move onto second phase of testing the coronavirus vaccine

p.7

Former Armenian PMs urge Kocharyan's re-lease

p. 5

Armenian PM, Lithuanian President discuss boosting bilateral economic cooperation

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan had a video talk with President of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda, the PM's Office told Noyan Tapan.

The officials exchanged views on the actions taken in both countries, as well as in the world to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In this context they both appreciated the support provided by the EU to the Eastern Partnership states and in particular to Armenia.

Pashinyan introduced the Lithuanian Pres-



ident on the process and priority directions of the Armenian government's reforms. President Gitanas Nausėda highly valued the determination of the Armenian author-

ities to implement reforms. He expressed his support to the reforms policy, as well as readiness to provide expert assistance.

Both sides highlighted boosting the bilateral economic cooperation agenda in such situation. In particular, they emphasized the importance of resuming the direct flights. The Armenian PM and the Lithuanian President also touched upon the Armenia-EU relations agenda.

The officials also exchanged invitations on paying official visits.

PM Pashinyan holds telephone conversation with Pope Francis

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan held a telephone conversation with Pope Francis on May 8, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister.

The PM thanked for the efforts of the Holy Roman Church and personally Pope Francis aimed at mitigating the social-economic problems resulted by coronavirus and helping the vulnerable people and presented the measures of the Armenian Government aimed at fighting the pandemic.

The sides emphasized the importance of encouraging peace and stop of militariza-



tion. In this context PM Pashinyan highlighted the call for universal ceasefire by Pope Francis last month and presented Ar-

menia's commitment for a peaceful settlement to NK conflict, and also expressed gratitude to His Holiness for standing with the Armenian people and promoting the historical justice.

His Holiness congratulated PM Pashinyan on the 2nd anniversary of assuming the PM's Office. He expressed great satisfaction over the fraternal and unwavering relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Pope Francis reaffirmed his position on the Armenian Genocide issue.

Putin sends congratulatory message to Armenia on 75th anniversary of victory in Great Patriotic War

On April 29, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan had a telephone conversation with Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio on the initiative of the Armenian side.

On behalf of the Armenian people and the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Armenian Foreign Minister expressed support to the friendly people of Italy in effectively addressing the challenges caused by the pandemic and overcoming it as soon as possible.

Minister Mnatsakanyan briefed his Italian counterpart on the steps taken by the



Government of the Republic of Armenia to prevent the new type of coronavirus, to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the latter.

In the context of the fight against the virus and the elimination of its consequences, the Foreign Ministers exchanged views on new

initiatives for international cooperation.

Touching upon the issues on bilateral agenda, Minister Mnatsakanyan emphasized that Armenia attaches special importance to the development of relations based on the common Armenian-Italian civilizational values.

In this context, the Foreign Ministers hailed the high level of the existing political dialogue between Armenia and Italy.

During the telephone conversation, reference was made to a wide range of international and regional security issues.

Pashinyan condemns parliament brawl between opposition and ruling bloc lawmakers



Nikol Pashinyan says he finds the brawl in parliament to be a result of provocation by opposition Bright Armenia (LHK) party, but at the same time he condemned his political force, the My Step faction, for giving in to the provocation.

“I would like to unequivocally emphasize my attitude, by saying that I condemn any occurrence of violence with all its manifestations. I would like to emphasize – violence with all its manifestations, because violence can be not only physical, but also moral, violence can be psychological. And I must very directly emphasize that for already two years the revolutionary team, including this parliamentary majority and this government are consistently and continuously being subjected to moral and psychological violence,” Pashinyan said.

The PM said the goal of these provocations is to subvert and weaken the political majority and subvert the trust between the people and the political majority.

He reminded that on May 7 Bright Armenia leader Edmon Marukyan had invited him to a meeting, and he had accepted it. “And I had directly said that we all have reasons to suspect that you and your activity, all these psychological and moral violence, were eventually an integral part of a plan of launching physical violence”, he said.

Pashinyan said he has re-watched the video from the incident several times and described it as “a disgusting provocation”, but at the same time he condemned it and condemned that his team has given in to it.

“I condemn us, I condemn myself. And today’s happening I find to be our and my own biggest loss that we had after the revolution. But let this not make anyone hopeful. I have lost, lost many times and I have seen the lie’s sneer, but my will is stronger than stone, my spirit doesn’t know surrender,” he said, quoting his own poem.

He said he believes the opposition’s behavior is linked with the law on the Stolen Asset Recovery, and numerous criminal cases.

“Violence has no place in our reality, and this incident must never again be repeated,” he said.

Any solution should be acceptable to the peoples of Armenia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan, Pashinyan reiterates

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has reiterated that any solution to the Karabakh conflict is impossible, unless it is acceptable to the peoples of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.

“No leader in Armenia has ever presented his stance in more detail than me. No leader has presented his stance on the issue as frequently as I have. No leader has been more public and transparent on the issue,” the Prime Minister said, as he presented the execution of the Government’s Action Plan to lawmakers at the National Assembly.

“We have a clear stance irrespective of all other existing positions on the issue. Sure, there are stances differing from ours, as well, and the whole negotiation process is about whether we manage to bring this po-



sition closer and form a common stance,” the Prime Minister said.

He reiterated that any solution unacceptable to the people of Armenia and the people of Artsakh (including Members of Parliament) is impossible.

“I go further by saying that any solution should be acceptable to the peoples of Ar-

menia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan,” Pashinyan said.

He said when such solution is formed, it will be brought for discussion at the Security Councils, the National Assemblies and the Governments of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh.

“We’ll bring this solution for discussion after the Foreign Minister and I see that there is an option that can be considered. Unless we come forth with such a solution,

the rest are just stances,” the Prime Minister stated.

The Prime Minister says he would not add or remove anything from his stance on the issue (not even a single comma) expressed since he came to office in 2018

Armenian Parliament ratifies CoE Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation

The Armenian Parliament on May 11 ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse with 79 votes in favor and 12 against.

Armenia had signed the convention in 2010.

The convention is a comprehensive international tool aimed at preventing sexual exploitation and abuse of children, protection of victims, implementing duly investigation, awareness and cooperation.

The Convention also establishes programmes to support victims, encourages people to report suspected sexual exploitation and abuse, and sets up telephone and internet helplines for children. It also ensures that certain types of conduct are classified as criminal offences, such as engaging in sexual activities with a child below the legal age and child prostitution and pornography. The Convention also criminalizes the solicitation of children for sexual purposes (“grooming”) and “sex tourism”.

With the aim of combating child sex tourism, the Convention establishes that individuals can be prosecuted for some offences even when the act is committed abroad. The new legal tool also ensures that



child victims are protected during judicial proceedings, for example with regard to their identity and privacy.

Deputy Minister of Justice Kristine Grigoryan, who presented to lawmakers the convention, also briefed the legislators on the statistics in Armenia for the past three years.

She said that in 2017 investigative bodies investigated 265 criminal cases concerning crimes committed against children, of which 101 were of sexual nature. In 2018 the number of investigations was 317, 76 being of sexual nature. In 2019, only in Q1 there were 209 criminal cases with 51 being of sexual nature, she said.

Opposition lawmaker Gevorg Petrosyan from the Prosperous Armenia (BHK) party said the convention includes clauses which in his words give hope that an attempt is

made in Armenia to exercise human rights protection more comprehensively, however he said he believes the convention also includes clauses which “jeopardize the disciplinary interests of children”. According to him, some representatives of the Armenian Church have contacted him and expressed their disapproval of the convention.

Petrosyan was particularly concerned with the fact that the convention foresees educating children about the threats of sexual abuse and self-defense measures as early as from 1st to 4th grades. “Don’t they have anything else to teach children of this age?” he said. He proposed to solve the matter by more severe accountability in the criminal code.

Parliament Majority Leader (My Step bloc) Lilit Makunts reminded that all factions had voted in favor during a committee hearing earlier.

Addressing Petrosyan, she said: “I am sorry that some individuals are able to impact your stance. However, this convention is in the interest of children, it is a convention against pedophilia, which will prevent pedophilia in Armenia,” she said.

Vice Speaker Vahe Enfiadjyan from the opposition BHK also spoke in favor of additional hearings on the matter.

Former Security Chief summoned for questioning

An Armenian law-enforcement agency on May 7 summoned former National Security Service (NSS) Director Artur Vanetsyan for questioning over scandalous allegations made by Mikael Minasyan, former President Serzh Sargsyan’s fugitive son-in-law.

Minasyan said late last week that that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had offered to guarantee his and his father’s immunity from prosecution if he pledges to pay cash and stop challenging the Armenian government. In a video mes-



sage posted on Facebook, he said Vanetsyan personally communicated Pashinyan’s offer to him during a February 2019 meeting held in Rome.

Pashinyan has still not commented on

Minasyan’s claims. Vanetsyan, who resigned as NSS chief in September 2019 after falling out with Pashinyan, has also declined a comment.

Armenian prosecutors were quick to instruct the Special Investigative Service (SIS) to look into the allegations. The SIS should decide by next week whether to launch a formal investigation.

A lawyer representing Vanetsyan, Lusine Sahakyan, was the first to announce that her client was summoned to

[page 10](#)

Former Armenian PMs urge Kocharyan's release

(RFE/RL- Yerevan) - Three former Armenian prime ministers petitioned a Yerevan court to release former President Robert Kocharyan from custody when his trial resumed after a two-month pause on May 8.

The trial of Kocharyan and three other former officials prosecuted on coup charges denied by them was suspended in March after the presiding judge, Anna Danibekyan, unexpectedly took sick leave. Danibekyan officially returned to work on April 17 but did not rush to restart court hearings.

Former Prime Ministers Vazgen Manukyan, Khosrov Harutiunyan and Karen Karapetyan attended the latest hearing to guarantee in writing that Kocharyan will demonstrate "proper behavior" and not go into hiding or obstruct justice if set free. A former Karabakh prime minister, Anushavan Danielyan, also signed such a statement and handed it to Danibekyan.

Manukyan had served as Armenia's first post-Communist prime minister from 1990-1991. He was succeeded by Harutyunyan in 1992. For his part, Karapetyan held the post from 2016-2018, during former



President Serzh Sarkisian's rule. None of the three men agreed to talk to reporters after leaving the courtroom.

Meanwhile, Kocharyan's lawyers submitted two separate petitions demanding his release on health grounds or on bail. They said late last month that he risks being infected with coronavirus in a Yerevan prison.

The ex-president, who ruled Armenia from 2008-2018, was hospitalized a few days later. Nevertheless, he attended the latest court session.

Kocharyan likewise claimed to be at risk of contracting the virus when he spoke in the courtroom. "Now I'm alone in my

prison cell ... but there is obviously contact with [prison] personnel," he told the judge. "It's impossible to avoid it. Given the prison conditions it's impossible to maintain a safe physical distance."

The trial prosecutors continued to oppose Kocharyan's release. One of them, Petros Petrosian, said that the ex-president could flee prosecution or obstruct justice.

Danibekyan said she will rule on the petitions on May 13. The judge had repeatedly refused to free Kocharyan pending the outcome of the trial since taking over the high-profile case last August.

The three other defendants -- Kocharyan's former chief of staff Armen Gevorgyan and retired army Generals Seyran Ohanian and Yuri Khachaturov -- have not been held in detention. The charges leveled against them and Kocharyan mostly stem from the 2008 post-election unrest in Yerevan.

The 65-year-old ex-president also stands accused of bribe-taking. He rejects all accusations as politically motivated.

Armenia could start producing medical ventilators in 4-6 months

Armenia could start producing medical ventilators in 4-6 months, Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan told lawmakers during a Q&A session at the National Assembly on May 6.

The Minister said a number of applications have been received in response to the Ministry's call for proposals.

"We have received a number of proposals from Armenian engineers and scholars from different parts of the world, as well as individuals, organizations and research institutes in Armenia," Arshakyan said.

Some of them include concrete commer-



cial proposals, the Minister said, adding that the government has provided a grant

amounting to 90 mln AMD for this purpose.

"The funds have been provided to the Engineering Association, which will process the whole information and fund the companies interested in launching production of ventilators.," Hakob Arshakyan said.

According to preliminary assessments, he said, the designing will take 4-6 months, after which they will start the production.

Armenia will have the capacity to produce 40-50 ventilators a month, the Minister said, adding that not only will the companies manage to satisfy the internal demand, but will also have a chance to target external markets.

Yerevan wants Russia's Gazprom to change pricing policy

Gazprom should stop trying to make Russian natural gas more expensive for consumers in Armenia, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on May 6, pointing to the coronavirus-related collapse in global energy prices.

Armenia's Gazprom-owned gas distribution network asked public utility regulators a month ago to allow it to raise by an average of 11 percent the prices of gas supplied by it to Armenian households and corporate consumers. The Gazprom Armenia network argued that they have remained unchanged despite a 10 percent rise in Gazprom's wholesale price for Armenia which took effect in January 2019.

The move followed the Armenian government's calls for Gazprom to cut the wholesale tariff. The government hopes that such a reduction would widen Gazprom Armenia's profit margins and at least keep inter-

nal Armenian prices unchanged.

Speaking during the government's question-and-answer session in the parliament, Pashinyan said he understands Gazprom's desire to help its Armenian subsidiary make "decent profits" and use them for vital repairs and maintenance of the gas distribution network.

"But we believe that the company of our strategic partner country should display a different approach given this global crisis and the collapse of the energy market, and we will try to talk to our partners," he said, answering a question from a pro-government parliamentarian.

Pashinyan discussed the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin in an April 6 phone call.

Two weeks later, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed complaints that European Union member states are

now paying less for Russian gas than Armenia and Belarus because of the collapse in international oil prices. He argued that unlike EU consumers, the two ex-Soviet states allied to Russia buy Russian gas at fixed prices that had been set well below international market-based levels.

Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan countered that Russian gas has never been as cheap for Armenia as was claimed by Lavrov. He said that Yerevan asked Gazprom for a deeper discount primarily because the Russians want to raise the gas price.

Grigoryan also dismissed Lavrov's criticism of ongoing criminal investigations into major Russian companies operating in Armenia and the state-owned Russia Railways network in particular.

Cypriot-Armenians fund construction of solar station in Vayots Dzor



Construction of a solar station has started in Vayots Dzor's Saravan community. The \$9 million investment will be completed within the next year, Diaspora High Commissioner's Office reports.

The project is funded by Cypriot-Armenian businessmen David and Alexander Petrosyan and Ashot Mkrtychyan. Inspired by the changes in Armenia, they decided to make the investment after meeting with High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan in Cy-

prus ten months ago.

Ashot Mkrtychyan says they have turned their attention to the homeland, and investments in other areas are also possible.

MP Vardges Mahdesyan, representative of the Armenian community in the Cypriot House of Representatives, expressed his confidence that the

Republic of Cyprus' experience in the field of solar energy will greatly contribute to the success of the investment. According to the MP, this initiative will promote the development of Armenia-Cyprus relations, as well as the strengthening of homeland-Diaspora ties and

Armenia's economic progress.

David Petrosyan, a Cypriot-Armenian businessman and co-investor, praised the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner and the role of Zareh Sinanyan in the decision-making process. According to the businessman, this initiative is especially valuable in terms of ensuring Armenia's energy security.



Armenia hopes to complete energy project with Iran in 2020

The Armenian government hopes that the ongoing construction of a third power transmission line connecting Armenia to neighboring Iran will be completed by the end of this year, Minister for Local Government and Infrastructures Suren Papikyan said on May 7.

Work on the high-voltage line, which is mainly carried out in southeastern Armenia by an Iranian company, was supposed to finish in September 2019. However, the launch of the \$120 million facility was delayed due to a host of factors, reportedly including the U.S. sanctions against Iran.

“The construction is due to be completed this year,” Papikyan told the Armenian parliament, according to the Armenpress news agency.

“Unfortunately, because of the coronavirus the beginning of this year was not that promising [for the project,]” he said. “We hope to be able to conclude the construc-



tion within the planned time frames.”

The high-voltage line will stretch almost 280 kilometers from Yerevan to Armenia’s border with Iran. It will allow the two neighboring states to triple mutual power supplies. Armenia has for years exported electricity to Iran in payment for up to 500 million cubic meters of Iranian natural gas imported by it annually.

Papikyan said in December that the new facility will also put Armenia in a better position to serve as a transit route for electricity supplies to the Islamic Republic from Georgia and even Russia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly made clear that his government

will seek to deepen Armenian-Iranian political and economic ties despite the U.S. sanctions.

“Our countries have very good relations,” he said on Thursday. “They are developing dynamically.”

Speaking in the parliament, Pashinyan pointed to his April 28 phone conversation with Iranian President

Hassan Rouhani.

According to an official Armenian readout of the phone call, Rouhani and Pashinyan discussed ways of minimizing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on bilateral commercial ties. “Both sides stressed the importance of taking further steps in that direction,” said the statement.

The Armenian government decided on February 24 to close the Iranian border for travel and cancel regular flights between the two states. The border, which serves as one of landlocked Armenia’s two conduits to the outside world, has remained largely open for cargo shipments.

Noubar Afeyan’s Moderna gets OK to move onto second phase of testing the coronavirus vaccine

Moderna Therapeutics co-founded by Noubar Afeyan, one of the first biotech companies to begin human trials of an experimental vaccine for the coronavirus is now ready to move onto the next phase of testing.

On May 7, Moderna announced that the Food and Drug Administration had cleared its application to proceed to a clinical trial involving about 600 people.

“The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) completed its review of the



Company’s Investigational New Drug (IND) application for its novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19) vaccine candidate (mRNA-1273) allowing it to pro-

ceed to the Phase 2 study,” Moderna said.

The company said a 600 participant Phase 2 study is expected to begin shortly. The Company is finalizing the protocol for the Phase 3 study, which is expected to begin in the early summer of 2020.

More than a dozen companies, including known vaccine producers like Johnson & Johnson, or Sanofi, are involved in a global race to develop a vaccine

Armenians have fully paid off their debt for all the wars in the 20th century – PM

The Armenian nation played a significant role in bringing about that victory and, as a result, in liberating Europe from the scourge of fascism, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a congratulatory message on

the 75th Anniversary of Victory in World War II, Shushi Liberation Day and the day of foundation of the Artsakh Defense Army.

“This very day 75 years ago, our people joined other peoples of the former Soviet Union to celebrate the victory over fascism, one of the greatest evils in human history. The victory was achieved through enormous human suffering, sacrifice, unprecedented courage and perseverance,” the Prime Minister said,

He said the Armenian nation played a significant role in bringing about that victory and, as a result, in liberating Europe from the scourge of fascism. More than half a million Armenians were involved in the war as part of the Soviet army. Thousands of Armenians fought in the squads of resistance movements in European countries.

“The Armenian people sacrificed about 300,000 lives on the altar of victory. For a nation that had survived the Genocide just a quarter of a century ago, it was an incredibly large number comparable to the



human losses suffered by the great powers.

While no hostilities had taken place on our soil, the population of Soviet Armenia fell by more than 13 percent at the end of the war,” Pashinyan added.

Today, as we bow to the memory of our martyrs, we are proud of our ancestors’ heroism, he said.

“During the war, 107 Armenians were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest award given for exceptional heroism. The significant contribution made to mankind’s victory by the Armenians living in Armenia and the Diaspora and especially the valuable material contribution of the Armenian Apostolic Church deserves special praise,” the Prime Minister noted.

“We have fully paid off our debt for all the wars in the 20th century. And now we are well aware of the cost of peace more than anyone else. Our identity is best expressed through creative work we do in peacetime. At the same time, knowing the price of peace, we are ready to defend it at all costs

and to stand up again for our freedom and dignity, where necessary,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

“Whether a coincidence, or perhaps a deed of Providence, on this very day we are celebrating the liberation of Shushi and the establishment of the Artsakh Defense Army, exceptional events that crowned Arme-

nia’s modern history,” he added.

“The liberation of Shushi ushered in the liberation of Artsakh. Followed up with a brilliant victory, it became the pledge for our people’s security and peace. We are firmly determined to ensure the security of the people of the Artsakh Republic: their right to self-determination is not subject to bargaining. Both are absolute values for us,” Pashinyan stated.

He called to commemorate and pay tribute to our heroes who died for the liberation of Shushi and Artsakh, who stood just as strong as their ancestors did about half a century ago in World War II.

He called to commemorate “those brave guys who fell in the Four-Day April War – our modern-day heroes who sacrificed their lives to prove our people’s unbreakable will for freedom.”

“Glory to all our heroes who fought for the freedom of the Armenian people! Long live Armenia and Artsakh!” the Prime Minister concluded.

World Bank supports innovative social assistance project in Armenia

The World Bank Country Manager for Armenia Sylvie Bossoutrot and President of the Armenian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Mira Antonyan signed a Grant Agreement for “Promoting Social Inclusion and Self-Reliant Livelihood Activities in Armenia” project on May 6. Funds for the project are generously provided by **Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF)** through a three-year grant of \$2.7 million.

The project has been designed by the World Bank in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia and will be implemented by the Association of Social Workers— a non-governmental, not-for-profit national professional representative body of social workers in Armenia.

“We are pleased to sign this Agreement with a civil society organization, as a recipient and implementing agency for this Project supported by a Japanese Grant,” says **Sylvie Bossoutrot, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia**. *“This project will aim to better integrate vulnerable people and help them become active participants of society by improving their employment opportunities.”*

“On behalf of Japanese Government, I would like to highlight the extreme importance of this project”, says **Yun Yamada, Ambassador of Japan to Armenia**. *“I am deeply convinced that this project contributes to the enhancement of the life of vulnerable people, especially in the regions of Armenia, through the capacity building of social workers and vocational training for targeted people.”*

The project is expected to help increase access to social assistance benefits and



services and provide self-employment support to about 11,000 vulnerable members of society in urban and rural communities in Ararat, Armavir, Kotayk, Lori and Shirak regions of Armenia. Beneficiary selection criteria will favor Family Benefit Program (FBP) recipient households with a disabled member(s), children up to 5 years old, and a working age adult with high motivation.

“The project objectives are strongly aligned with current reform agenda of the Government, especially from the perspectives of encouragement of employment and entrepreneurial initiatives of vulnerable groups as the most reliable way to overcome poverty,” says **Zaruhi Batoyan, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia**. *“The Ministry will continue its support to the project implementation to promote beneficiaries’ self-reliant livelihood mechanisms.”*

Specifically, this project will support:

- Developing a social case management system to assess beneficiaries’ needs and refer them to various types of services including, provision of medical assistance, emergency support, access to educational institutions for children, professional and life skills training, psychotherapeutic and social rehabilitation services, as well as legal advice. This innovation will leverage

the individualized case management approach to reach out to the most vulnerable and marginalized population, reaching around 6,000 family program recipients.

- Enhancing self-employability of around 300 beneficiaries through business training and provision of grants, which could help them graduate out of the Family Benefit Program.

The main types of businesses supported will cover areas such as agriculture, production/processing (of food/non-food goods), accommodation and food service, arts and culture, entertainment, and trade. Additionally, this component will support placing FBP beneficiaries in the existing self-employment programs, as well as providing them with capacity building, knowledge sharing, and advice on self-employment opportunities. Overall, this component will support around 5,000 vulnerable members of society.

The proposed activities will strengthen the role of community-based and territorial social workers for improving access of families to available social assistance benefits and services. Under the project 200 social workers will receive methodological support and capacity building to implement effective social case management in target areas.

The JSDF was established by the Government of Japan and the World Bank as a mechanism to provide direct assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable groups in eligible World Bank countries. The aim is to enhance their capacities, strengthen their empowerment and participation in society and economic life.

European Court obliges Armenia to pay 26,000 euros to family of soldier killed in 2001

The European Court of Human Rights on May 7 delivered a news judgment on the case of [Anahit Mkrtchyan v. Armenia](#). The case concerned the death of the applicant's 22-year old son during his military service back in 2001.

The European Court has found violation of the Article 2 (right to life) of the European Convention of Human Rights and awarded to the applicant just satisfaction of 24,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 2,000 for costs and expenses.

The applicant, Anahit Mkrtchyan, is an Armenian national who was born in 1952 and lives in Baghramyán, a village in Armenia.

The case concerned her complaint about the national authorities' investigation into the death of her 22-year-old son, Arayik Avetisyan, during his military service.

Just over a year after he was drafted into the army, on 30 October 2001, Ms Mkrtchyan's son died from a gunshot wound in the head in the office of his battalion's commanding officer.

From the outset the official explanation for the incident was that another conscript had accidentally shot her son. Ms Mkrt-



chyan, on the other hand, immediately suspected his commanding officer who she alleged had been abusing her son and extorting money from him.

Immediately after the incident, an investigator carried out an on-site examination and seized a gun.

The following day a criminal case was opened, an autopsy was ordered and several key witnesses, other conscripts, were questioned.

One week later one of the conscripts was charged with murder. He was eventually indicted for negligent homicide resulting from breaching the rules on handling firearms. During these proceedings the domestic courts remitted the case to the prosecution three times, pointing out shortcomings in the investigation, in particular, a failure to address contradictions in wit-

ness statements and the forensic data.

Both before and during his trial the accused conscript admitted to unintentionally killing the applicant's son, but when he was questioned again in March 2011 following another remittal of the case, he denied all his previous statements, maintaining that he had had to incriminate himself out of fear for his and his family's security.

The investigation is still ongoing today, with the criminal proceedings having been stayed for the second time in March 2019 on the grounds that it had not been possible to identify the person against whom charges should be brought. The investigation has neither established the origin of the non-ballistic injuries on the victim's body, which according to experts had not been caused by his falling after the gunshot, nor the gun from which the shot was fired.

Relying in particular on Article 2 (right to life) of the European Convention on Human Rights, Ms Mkrtchyan alleged that the national authorities' investigation into the death of her son, lasting so far more than 18 years, had not been effective.

page 4 ➔

...Former Security Chief summoned for questioning

the SIS earlier in the day.

"A legal process is underway and we will refrain from further comments regarding it," Sahakian wrote on Facebook. She gave no other details.

Three Armenian media outlets reported afterwards that Vanetsyan has already visited the investigators but refused to give any testimony. The SIS declined to comment.

Vanetsyan claimed late last year that he met with Minasyan at the prime minister's initiative when he ran Armenia's most pow-

erful security service. But he gave no details of the alleged conversation.

Minasyan, who now lives abroad, made the allegations one week after it emerged that he was charged with illegal enrichment, false asset disclosure and money laundering earlier this year. He rejected the accusations as politically motivated.

Pashinyan has repeatedly accused Minasyan of illegally making a huge fortune during Sargsyan's rule.

A newspaper controlled by the prime minister alleged in January that Minasyan and

Vanetsyan have joined forces in a bid to topple him.

Also, a spokeswoman for Pashinyan claimed last week that "according to the government's information" Vanetsyan abused his NSS position to buy Minasyan's minority stake in Armenia's largest mining company. Vanetsyan strongly denied that.

The former security chief officially announced his entry into politics in February, saying that he is setting up an opposition party for that purpose.

Armenia improves democracy score in Nations in Transit 2020 report



Armenia has improved the democracy score from 2.93 to 3.00 in the Nations in Transit 2020 report published by the Freedom House.

Armenia has thus earned the largest two-year improvement ever recorded in Nations in Transit.

Azerbaijan has scored 1.14 (up from 1.07 last year), Georgia’s score has dropped from 3.29 to 3.25, Russia’s score has declined from 1.43 to 1.39.

“Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will now face the difficult challenge of managing expectations, maintaining trust, and restructuring corrupt systems without contravening democratic norms,” the report stresses.

The report notes that the new government has pursued significant, democratic reforms since crushing the old ruling party in the parliamentary elections.

The Freedom House recommends that Armenia invest heavily in programs that support the rule of law and strengthen independent institutions, including comprehensive judicial and police reforms.

“A national consensus in favor of political change, the rule of law, and the elimination

of systemic corruption formed the basis of

Country	Score	Change	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Armenia	2.93 TO 3.00	33%		▲					▲
Azerbaijan	1.07 TO 1.14	2%		▲	▲				
Belarus	1.39	7%							
Georgia	3.29 TO 3.25	38%						▼	
Kazakhstan	1.29 TO 1.32	5%			▲				
Kyrgyzstan	2.00 TO 1.96	16%							▼
Moldova	3.04 TO 3.11	35%	▲						▲
Russia	1.43 TO 1.39	7%			▼				
Tajikistan	1.21 TO 1.18	3%						▼	
Turkmenistan	1.04 TO 1.00	0%						▼	
Ukraine	3.36 TO 3.39	40%	▲						
Uzbekistan	1.11 TO 1.14	2%							▲

Armenia’s 2018 Velvet Revolution. This public demand provides a historic opportunity for democracy’s advocates inside and outside the country,” the report reads.

It notes that both the United States and the EU have stepped up support, but their programs should also focus on maintaining social cohesion and addressing political polarization. Overcoming these challenges could be the key to success for any other reforms.

Nations in Transit 2020 evaluates the state of democracy in the region stretching from Central Europe to Central Asia.

The 22nd edition of this annual study covers events from January 1 through Decem-

ber 31, 2019.

In consultation with country report authors, a panel of expert advisers, and a group of regional expert reviewers, Freedom House provides numerical ratings for each country on seven indicators: National Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Civil Society, Independent Media, Local Democratic Governance, Judicial Framework and Independence, Corruption.

The Democracy Score is a straight average of the seven indicators and is also expressed as a percentage, where 0 represents the lowest and 100 the highest

level of democracy.

Countries with a score of 2.01 to 3.00 are classified as Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes. Countries receiving this score attempt to mask authoritarianism or rely on informal power structures with limited respect for the institutions and practices of democracy.

Countries with a score of 3.01–4.00 are classified as Transitional or Hybrid Regimes. Countries receiving this score are typically electoral democracies where democratic institutions are fragile, and substantial challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties exist.

Memorandum of the Artsakh Foreign Ministry disseminated in the UN

A Memorandum of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), addressed to the Secretary General of the organization on March 27, 2020 in connection with the Azerbaijan's ongoing attempts to falsify the events that occurred during the liberation of Khojalu from the Azerbaijani armed units in February 1992, was disseminated in the United Nations as an official document.

The document argues that the actions of the Artsakh Republic self-defense forces, aimed at neutralizing the shelling and firing positions of the Azerbaijani armed forces located in Khojalu, as well as at lifting the blockade of the Stepanakert airport, were determined by absolute military necessity and in line with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law.

On the contrary, the Azerbaijani side committed gross violations of a number



of norms of international humanitarian law during the above-mentioned events. In particular, the authorities of Azerbaijan decided not to evacuate the civilian population in order to maintain their military-strategic position. Using the civilians as human shields by the Azerbaijani armed forces to provide shelter for themselves is not only a gross violation of international humanitarian law, but also, according to Article 8 (2) (b) (xxiii) of the Rome Statute of the

International Criminal Court, amounts to a war crime.

The tragic outcome of the following circumstances – the deliberate violation of international humanitarian law by the Azerbaijani side, the struggle for power in Azerbaijan and the resulting lack of unity of command among the Azerbaijani armed forces – led to human losses, despite all the protective measures taken by the Artsakh self-defense forces, including, in particular, early warning of the operation and provision of humanitarian corridors.

Azerbaijan continues to carry out a policy of falsifications and misinformation, spreading false allegations about the events that occurred during the liberation of Khojalu from the Azerbaijani armed units with the aim of escalating anti-Armenian hysteria and cultivating hatred towards Armenians in the Azerbaijani society.

UK Foreign Office privately admitted the 1915 massacre of Armenians was genocide – Geoffrey Robertson



The UK Foreign Office has privately admitted that the 1915 massacre of Armenians was genocide, but they cannot say so, Geoffrey Robertson, a distinguished human rights barrister, academic, author, and broadcaster said in an interview with the Harvard Political Review.

In his book “An Inconvenient Genocide” Robertson suggests that proving that this

was an act of genocide is “inconvenient” for the world. Because, he says, “in this case, Turkey is “neuralgic” — the word that the British Foreign Office used to describe it in some secret memoranda I obtained under our Freedom of Information Act.”

“The Foreign Office privately admitted that it was genocide, but they could not say so because Turkey would take diplomatic and economic reprisals. Turkey is a NATO member of great strategic importance, and for that reason, the U.S. government cannot

admit the truth either,” the barrister told the Harvard Political Review.

“President Obama always said that he would call it a genocide, but he quailed when he became president and called it “Medz Yeghern” — an Armenian phrase which means a great catastrophe. Donald Trump, for all his bravado, dare not speak the truth either by calling it “genocide.” Turkey is too strategically important, and its neuralgia must not be stoked by honest description of its history,” Robertson said.

In 2015 Geoffrey Robertson and Amal Clooney represented the Armenian Government at the European Court of Human Rights in *Perincek vs. Switzerland* case.

Robertson suggests that proving that this

Canada clarifies position on Artsakh

OTTAWA, Canada—In a letter addressed to the Armenian National Committee of Canada on May 4, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, François-Philippe Champagne clarified Canada’s position on Artsakh.

Contrary to the diplomatically irresponsible and one-sided tweet published by the Canadian Embassy in Ankara, following the General Election held in the Republic of Artsakh on March 31, Minister Champagne clearly stated that Canada fully supports the OSCE Minsk Group Process, the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the principle of self-determination – among others – as outlined in the Helsinki Final Act.

“While I regret any concern that this tweet may have caused the Armenian National Committee of Canada and the Canadian-Armenian community, I would like to reassure you that there has not been any change to our long-standing position on Nagorno-Karabakh,” said the minister in his letter.

“We are satisfied to see that the Minister has restored the balance vis-à-vis Canada’s position on this issue of paramount impor-



tance to Armenian-Canadians, effectively overriding the lopsided and foreign-influenced tweet published by the embassy in Ankara,” said Hrag Tarakdjian and Shahen Mirakian, co-presidents of the ANCC.

“The position of Canada remains based on our strong and consistent support for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group’s work toward a negotiated solution, and our position does not prejudice the outcome of this process. Canada agrees with the Minsk Group that there can be no military solution to the conflict and that any resolution must take into account the Helsinki Final Act. We want peaceful societies, and we will support the solution, when achieved,” concluded the minister in his letter addressed to the ANCC.

“There is still a lot more that needs to be done on this issue and the ANCC will continue to stand at the forefront and work with our government to ensure that the fundamental human rights of the people of Artsakh are protected and upheld” concluded Tarakdjian and Mirakian.

On April 3, the ANCC forwarded a letter to Minister Champagne, raising serious concerns regarding the tweet, asking for its retraction and for the Minister to recall the ambassador for his irresponsibility and inability to uphold Canada’s balanced foreign policy. The ANCC is the largest and the most influential Armenian-Canadian grassroots human rights organization. Working in coordination with a network of offices, chapters, and supporters throughout Canada and affiliated organizations around the world, the ANCC actively advances the concerns of the Armenian-Canadian community on a broad range of issues and works to eliminate abuses of human rights throughout Canada and the world.

Trump nominates Patrick Hovakimian for National Intelligence General Counsel post

US President Donald J. Trump has announced his intent to nominate Patrick Hovakimian, of California, to be General Counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the White House informs.

Mr. Hovakimian is currently the Associate Deputy Attorney General and Chief of Staff to Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey A. Rosen at the Department of Justice. He also served as the Department’s Director of Counter-Transnational Organized Crime and as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of California. As a



Federal prosecutor, Mr. Hovakimian prosecuted public corruption and white-collar crime, including multinational bribery and fraud conspiracies.

In addition, Mr. Hovakimian is a Com-

missioner of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States, having been nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate in 2018.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Hovakimian practiced law with Latham & Watkins, LLP, and was a law clerk for the Honorable J.L. Edmondson of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. He holds a B.A. from Occidental College, an M.Phil. from the University of Oxford, where he studied as a Marshall Scholar, and a J.D. from Stanford Law School, where he studied as a Truman Scholar and was an editor of the Stanford Law Review.

Missak Manouchian: The French Armenian who fought fascism



“...In a few hours I will no longer be in this world. We are going to be executed today at 3:00. I don’t believe it, but I nevertheless know that I will never see you again...”

excerpt from the last letter of Missak Manouchian to his wife.

The national hero of France Missak Manouchian was born in 1906 in the city of

Adiyaman of the Ottoman Empire.

From the first days of the war, he joined the fight against fascism, organizing an underground organization together with a group of associates.

The Manouchian group is credited with the assassination attempt of

Paris Commandant von Schaumburg and the liquidation of SS General Julius Ritter, who was responsible for sending 600 thousand civilians to penal labor in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Together with his wife, Mélinée Manouchian, he was involved in the French Re-

sistance against the fascist invaders, then became the leader of the FTP-MOI group (French Main-d’œuvre immigrée).

On February 21, 1944, after three months of interrogation and torture, at the age of 37, Manouchian, along with 21 members of his group, was executed by firing squad at the Fort Mont-Valérien fortress near Paris.

In order to discredit the Resistance, the Nazis published thorough Paris red posters listing the victims of the partisans and labeling them as “Army of Criminals.” Those posters read: “Manouchian: an Armenian leader of the gang, 56 attacks, 150 dead, 600 wounded.”

But to their surprise, “Affiche Rouge” or the “Red Poster” caused a wave of anger among the French people, and partisans were honored as heroes.

Leopard caught on cameras in Armenia’s Tavush for first time in 50 years

A leopard has been caught on cameras on the territory of Yenokavan village in Tavush province, WWF Armenia reports.

On November 19, 2019, it was reported that a leopard had attacked one of the residents of Yenokavan. A laboratory examination of the animal’s hair taken as a sample from the clothes of the villager denied he had been attacked by a leopard. The test was conducted in Germany and was expected to show 99% accuracy. Neither was any leopard found as a result of field research.

Trusting the citizen, Arman Gabrielyan, who still insisted he had been attacked by a leopard, WWF Armenia specialists went on with the field research. As a result, the geography of camera was expanded. Arman



Gabrielyan, the residents of Yenokavan, as well as the “Future Resort” company provided great support to the research.

The leopard thus returns to Tavush region after a 50-year break. The animal was last

seen in the area in 1970s.

Tavush thus becomes the fourth region in Armenia where the leopard lives.

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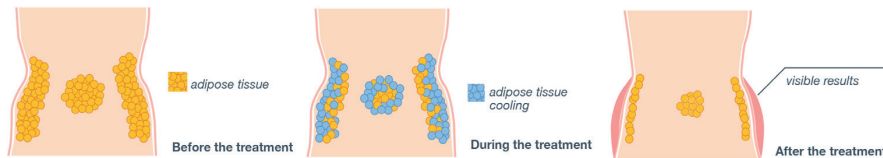
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