

MEP Nils Ušakovs in Armenia: Reforms linked to EU accession will strengthen country



The EU and Armenia have never had such close relations as they do now, MEP Nils Ušakovs has said.

Ušakovs is the co-chair of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee.

Speaking at the 4th Meeting of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee, he welcomed the Armenian parliament's adoption of the EU integration [bill](#).

"The truth is that the EU and Armenia have never had such close relations. Our relations are based on strong foundations, joint commitments, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights. We believe in the right of peoples and states to choose

their future," he said.

Ušakovs said that the European Parliament has already unambiguously expressed support for stronger ties with Armenia and that now everything depends on Yerevan in terms of what kind of relationship it strives for.

"Obviously any bid for joining the EU will be considered based on requirements, priority and standards," he said, cautioning against unrealistic expectations.

MEP Ušakovs said "It is clear that Armenia will not join the EU neither in this year end nor the next. That process takes time and substantive efforts. However, any reform that Armenia would do on the

path of joining the EU would make Armenia stronger, and as a result the country will be in a position where it wants to see itself," he said.

If any politician vows that Armenia can join the EU in just a few years then it can be considered an exaggerated expectation, he stressed. "That process takes years, like it was in the cases of Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Czechia. My country, Latvia, joined the EU after years of efforts, and the same goes for Armenia. The realistic timeframes could be five, seven or ten years," he said.

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Armenia deeply values partnership with Germany: Pashinyan congratulates Merz on election win

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has congratulated Friedrich Merz and his CDU/CSU alliance on election win.

“Armenia deeply values its partnership with Germany, including within the framework of the European Union and looks forward to further strengthening our multifaceted cooperation, founded on our shared commitment to democracy,” PM Pashinyan said.

Friedrich Merz’s CDU/CSU conservative alliance has won the general election with 28.6% of the vote, according to preliminary results announced by



Germany’s federal electoral body, Deutsche awelle reports.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) secured 20.8% of the vote, which is the party’s strongest result to date at the federal level.

Outgoing chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats’ (SPD) share of the vote dropped to 16.4%, putting them at third place.

The SPD’s junior coalition partner, the environmentalist Greens, won 11.6%.

The pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) netted only 4.3%, meaning that it will not enter the Bundestag as it did not pass the 5% threshold for representation in parliament. The same goes for the left-wing populist Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), which got 4.97%.

The socialist Left Party achieved 8%.

Armenian, Iranian FMs discuss bilateral ties, regional developments

Armenian and Iranian Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan and Seyed Abbas Araghchi have discussed issues on the agenda of bilateral relations.

The top diplomats of the two countries met today on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva.

The parties emphasized the willingness of the two countries to take practical steps towards the continuous development of cooperation. The work carried out in various sectors and upcoming programs



were discussed.

The meeting also touched upon the opportunities for cooperation in various

formats.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Seyed Abbas Araghchi exchanged views on regional developments. They touched upon efforts aimed at ensuring stability and lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

Reference was made to the unblocking of regional economic and transport communications based on unconditional respect for the fundamental principles of international law.

Deputy FM receives special envoy for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process

Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Paruyr Hovhannisyan on February 25 received Chris Allan, Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and Special Envoy for the Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process, the foreign ministry said

in a statement.

During the meeting, Deputy Minister Hovhannisyan presented the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Armenia’s vision for ensuring stability and lasting peace in the South Caucasus.

The discussion also covered the “Cross-roads of Peace” project, reaffirming Armenia’s commitment to unblocking transportation routes.

The sides addressed issues on the Armenia-EU bilateral agenda.

Simonyan, Matvienko discuss issues on agenda of Armenia-Russia relations

President of the Armenian National Assembly Alen Simonyan had a telephone conversation with Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly.

The interlocutors discussed issues on the agenda of Armenian-Russian relations, cooperation within the framework of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly Council and other platforms.

The organizational issues of Valentina Matvienko’s planned official visit to Armenia were also touched upon.

Lawmaker hopes Armenia-EU visa liberalization will become reality in few years

A senior Armenian lawmaker expressed hope on February 25 that the Armenia-EU visa liberalization will become reality in a few years.

MP Arman Yeghoyan, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on EU Integration Affairs, made the comments in his remarks at the 4th Meeting of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee in Yerevan. Yeghoyan is the co-chair of the committee.

He said the Armenia-EU ties have developed significantly over the past 6 years since he assumed the post of co-chair of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee.

“At that time, I didn’t feel that the European Parliament was interested in the issues of our region in all detail,” Yeghoyan said, adding that the changes took place



in the past few years.

Regional security has had an important place in the agenda of the European Parliament and the EU’s executive bodies especially in the past two-three years, the MP said.

“Now Armenia is discussing with the EU the new agenda of partnership, which takes our relationship beyond the existing legal-contractual framework,” he said.

Yeghoyan pointed out the Armenian parliament’s adoption of the EU integration [bill](#).

Speaking about the visa liberalization dialogue, he said, “This was a decision that we had been waiting for a very long time, and we worked painstakingly for many years not only with EU institutions but also with EU member states individually,” Yeghoyan said.

He thanked all 27 members of the EU, assuring that Armenia will take relevant steps because it has political will.

“And I hope that within a few years the visa liberalization will become reality. Armenia will do everything on its part for it to happen.”

The lawmaker also lauded the aid provided through the European Peace Facility.

No mention of EU Mission in draft peace treaty, Armenia’s top security official says



There is no mention of an EU Observation Mission in the draft Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty, Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan told reporters on

February 28.

He noted that is a general formulation about the presence of third forces, which may also refer to the European Union, but there is no mention of a specific EU observer mission.

According to Grigoryan, 15 of the 17 points of the peace treaty have been agreed upon as a result of years of work, but the last two points are yet to be agreed on.

“Armenia will continue to work in

order to be able to finalize these two articles as well. We are currently holding discussions, and will send our response when we are ready,” the Secretary noted.

According to Grigoryan, the uncoordinated issues concern the presence of third-party forces on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and the end of the so-called diplomatic war.

“The approaches here are different, and no solution has been found so far,” he emphasized.

page 1 of the EU, but rather changes that are important for any society, the MEP said. “Strengthening of the rule of law, increasing the level of welfare and systemic reforms are of vital importance for Armenia regardless of which alliance the country will chose to cooperate with in the future,” he said.

MEP Ušakovs also spoke on the European Parliament’s supports for Armenia’s agenda of peace during the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee

saying that it is difficult to understand and comment on Azerbaijan’s reaction to Armenia’s agenda of peace.

He highlighted the development of security cooperation between the EU and Armenia: “The European Union’s civilian mission [EUMA] has helped stabilize the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Of course, Baku and Moscow are targeting this mission and making accusations. But a question arises, what kind of a threat can an unarmed, civilian mission

pose? They are trying to view this as an obstacle for the peace treaty,” MEP Ušakovs said.

Ušakovs said that while Azerbaijan is refusing to cooperate and is seeking to end EUMA, Armenia has presented a proposal on mutual arms control mechanisms. “And this is an example that Armenia is committed to the agenda of peace. And we support this. But it is very difficult to understand and comment on Azerbaijan’s reaction to all of this,” he said.

MEP Loiseau calls on Armenian political forces to unite for peace

Member of the European Parliament Nathalie Loiseau from France has called on all political forces in Armenia to unite for peace.

Speaking at the 4th EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee meeting in Yerevan, the MEP warned that division among political forces is beneficial for adversaries.

She said that Europe knows that Armenia is in a region full of challenges and the only way to overcome this is through unity.

The MEP welcomed Armenia's efforts



aimed at establishing peace in the region.

"We know that Armenia has two neighbors with whom its relations aren't good. The only way is to be united. The more

divided we are the more we make our adversaries happy. I call on Armenia's political forces to unite for peace," Loiseau said, adding that Armenia's efforts for peace require EU support.

She commended the defense cooperation between France and Armenia.

Loiseau emphasized that Armenia is known to the world as a peace-loving country. "In this regard allow me to commend and praise the current government of Armenia," she added.

International humanitarian law defeated in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian Parliament Speaker tells EU lawmakers



International humanitarian law was defeated in Nagorno-Karabakh, Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Alen Simonyan said at the opening of 4th Meeting of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee in Yerevan.

The Speaker expressed gratitude to all Members of the European Parliament who have followed the processes taking place in the region over the years, the challenges facing Armenia, and have condemned the destructive war unleashed by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, the forced displacement of more than 100,000 Armenians,

the occupation of the sovereign territory of Armenia, the gross violations of human rights, the fact of captives being held in Azerbaijan, and the vandalism committed against Armenian cultural and religious heritage.

"We have opened a new page in our history. Armenia has chosen the path of democratic development, as it stands at the origins of the value system of European civilization and steadfastly continues to reinforce democracy and the policy of protecting and strengthening its country with its own forces. We realize that this is a very difficult and dangerous path," Simonyan said.

"Being at the crossroads of civilizations, we attach great importance to normal relations with neighboring states and strive to establish relations in the region with open borders and based on partnership. The Armenian Government has come up with the Crossroads of Peace project,

which refers to making transportation and communication routes of our region more efficient, based on the principles of sovereignty, equality of states, territorial integrity and reciprocity," Armenia's top legislator stated.

"We are trying to pursue a balanced policy with the countries and power centers of the region, the basis of which is the diversification of security, economy, energy and other spheres. We are also expanding the cooperation with the European Union member states in most various areas," he added.

Alen Simonyan reminded that on February 12, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted in the first reading the law On the Launch of the Accession Process of the Republic of Armenia to the European Union, which, he said, is "a real manifestation of the determination of our citizens who aspire to become part of the European community."

Iranian Foreign Minister reaffirms readiness to support Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, has reaffirmed Tehran's readiness to support peace efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"We strive for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan and are ready to support this process," Araghchi said at a press conference following his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

He added that he discussed various aspects of bilateral relations, as well as regional and global issues, with his Russian counterpart.

Mock trials against Armenians taking place in Baku, FM Mirzoyan tells UN Human Rights Council

Statements coming from Azerbaijan continue to question the territorial integrity of Armenia despite the recognition of each other's territorial integrity based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said in an address to the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

He reminded that according to the Declaration, the boundaries of the Soviet Socialist Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan had become the international borders between the two independent republics.

"Moreover, as we speak, mock trials against 23 Armenian individuals, who are arbitrarily detained, are taking place in Azerbaijan with disregard for human



rights standards for due process," Minister Mirzoyan said.

The Foreign Minister emphasized that Armenia remains faithful to the agenda of establishment of peace and stability in the region, and has made several constructive proposals to the Azerbaijani

side, including within the context of peace agreement, opening of transport infrastructure, mutual arms control and verification mechanism, etc., having in necessity to establish a strategic deal that will resolve all major issues.

"We remain convinced that constructive response and further engagement and demonstration of political will of both parties will largely contribute to opening a new era of peace in our region," FM Mirzoyan stated.

He reconfirmed the willingness of the Armenian side to turn the page of enmity and establish institutionalized peace.

"We are not only ready for this, but will not divert from this path," he stated.

EUMA reduces likelihood of escalation, says Armenian official

The EU monitoring mission (EUMA) has reduced the likelihood of escalation, Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyanyan has said.

"We want to set security in the region to establish Armenia's path towards Europe and the EU," Hovhannisyanyan said at the 4th Meeting of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee in Yerevan. "The progress we've had in our relationship with the EU in the past years shows our commitment to expand our agenda with the EU and have cooperation on various levels."

Hovhannisyanyan said Armenia continues efforts to implement the Comprehensive

and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

He said the new partnership agenda, currently under negotiation, will deepen bilateral relations.

Hovhannisyanyan said Armenia is grateful for the EU's extension of the monitoring mission in Armenia. "It brings stability in the border regions with Azerbaijan and reduces the likelihood of escalation," he said.

Citing the recently adopted EU integration bill, Hovhannisyanyan said that the people of Armenia want stronger ties with the European family.

He said the EU continues to be a top partner for Armenia in the reforms



agenda.

EUMA was launched in 2023 at the request of Armenia. The civilian mission observes and reports on the security situation along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan. In January 2025 the EU extended the mandate of the EUMA for a further two years.

Azerbaijan's statements seek to obstruct constitutional reforms in Armenia, warns lawmaker

A senior Armenian lawmaker on February 25 described the Azeri government's demands on Armenia changing its constitution to sign a peace treaty as an attempt to obstruct the constitutional reforms in Armenia.

Arman Yeghoyan, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on EU Integration Affairs, was asked to comment on Azeri Deputy FM Elnur Mammadov's recent statement that Baku is waiting for Armenia to "abandon territorial claims

against Azerbaijan" through constitutional changes.

"I view that statement as an obstruction for constitutional reforms in the Republic of Armenia. Knowing very well what kind of reaction that statement will get in Armenia, the Azerbaijani representatives seek to not allow constitutional reforms to be implemented in Armenia. I assess it that way," Yeghoyan said at a press conference after the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee

meeting.

He emphasized that 15 of the 17 articles in the draft peace treaty have been agreed upon between the two countries, while neither of the outstanding articles pertains to the constitution.

The accusations that the Armenian constitution contains territorial claims against Azerbaijan has been denied numerous times by Armenian officials.

Armenian banks' capital grew by 24-25% in key indicators in 2024

The banking system of Armenia operated profitably in 2024, Chairman of the Union of Banks of Armenia Daniel Azatyan stated at a press conference on February 25 while presenting statistical data.

According to Azatyan, the total assets of Armenia's 18 banks (two of which, Ardshinbank and Ardshininvest, temporarily operate as a single entity) amounted to 11 trillion drams at the end of 2024. Moreover, loans and deposits were nearly equal in volume - about 6.4 trillion drams each.

In 2024, the capital of banks operating in Armenia grew by approximately 24-25 percent in key indicators. The total capital of banks increased by about 20 percent, or 300 billion drams, during 2024, reaching 1.8 trillion drams.

It was also noted that the banks' loan portfolio expanded by approximately 1.2 trillion drams during the reporting period, reaching 6.4 trillion drams. Joint liabilities grew by 1.5 trillion drams, while deposits increased by 780 billion drams, totaling 6.4 trillion drams.

Of the 6.4 trillion drams in loans provided in 2024, 22.8 percent were



consumer loans, while 22.4 percent (1.4 trillion drams) were mortgage loans. Overall, around 45 percent of the banks' loan portfolio consisted of consumer and mortgage loans issued to individuals. Meanwhile, 44 percent of loans were allocated to legal entities and agricultural and other loans comprised 5 percent. The remaining

6 percent were loans provided between financial institutions.

According to the Chairman of the Union of Banks of Armenia, the growth of consumer loans is driven by rising incomes. As for the increase in mortgage loans, he linked it to the restrictions on the income tax refund system in Yerevan.

MEP calls on Turkiye to stop linking Armenia border opening with Azerbaijan normalization

MEP Nils Ušakovs on February 25 urged Turkiye to separate the opening of the border with Armenia from the Yerevan-Baku normalization process.

Speaking at the 4th Meeting of EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee, Ušakovs, the co-chair of the committee, said, "We call on Ankara to separate border issues from the Armenia-Azerbaijan relations agenda."

In 2022, Armenia and Turkiye reached an agreement on opening their land border for citizens of third countries and diplomatic passport holders. The agreement is yet to be implemented, but Turkiye has numerous times afterwards that it will open its border with Armenia only after the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan are normalized.



Ušakovs emphasized that the EU is interested in the Armenian government's Crossroads of Peace initiative, describing the implementation of the project as highly important for the entire region.

He highlighted that Armenia must be able to freely choose a European future, which implies also economic diversification, which is yet another reason to focus on opening of connection routes.

Emarat and SIL Capital sign strategic MOU to expand energy solutions in Armenia

Dubai, UAE & Yerevan, Armenia — February 12, 2025 Emirates Petroleum Company P.J.S.C. (Emarat), a pioneer in the UAE's oil and gas industry, and SIL Capital L.L.C., a leading Armenian company with a diversified portfolio, including petroleum wholesale and retail, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to explore strategic opportunities in the energy sector across Armenia.

The MOU establishes a collaborative framework between Emarat and SIL Capital, aimed at exploring opportunities for the distribution of Emarat-branded automotive and industrial lubricants in Armenia. Both parties will work together to define a comprehensive structure for cooperation, ensuring that all aspects of the partnership align with their shared commitment to quality and innovation. Beyond lubricants, the agreement also opens opportunities for international growth, with a strong emphasis on maintaining operational excellence, adhering to industry best practices, and delivering exceptional value to customers in Armenia and beyond.



H.E. Ali Khalifa Al Shamsi, CEO of Emarat, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership, stating: "We are excited to explore opportunities with SIL Capital, a company that shares our vision for quality and innovation. Together, we aim to deliver value-driven solutions to Armenian consumers and businesses."

Elizabeth Movsisyan, CEO of SIL Capital, added: "We are pleased to embark on a new collaboration with Emarat Petroleum. We believe this memorandum will create exciting opportunities and open new prospects for both companies, fostering growth and strengthening our partnership."

This partnership not only strengthens

trade ties between the UAE and Armenia but also reinforces both companies' commitment to sustainable energy practices and market development.

About Emarat:

Emirates General Petroleum Corporation (Emarat) is one of the UAE's leading energy providers, established in 1980 to meet the nation's growing energy demands. Emarat operates an extensive network of service stations across the UAE, offering

high-quality fuel, convenience retail, and automotive services, alongside a comprehensive range of commercial fuel, natural gas, and lubricant products.

About SIL Capital

SIL Capital L.L.C. is a major player in Armenia's economy, overseeing the strategic management of over 12 companies across diverse industries. Founded in 2012 by the Sukiasyan family, SIL Capital was established to provide businesses with the strategic support needed to thrive in an evolving market. Over the years, the company has expanded its footprint into financial services, aviation, gold production, oil refining, and fuel sales.

Over \$5 million to be invested to complete construction of Yerevan's Casacade complex

A consortium of four companies, represented by "GTB Development" LLC, will implement the "Cascade Cultural Hub" project, the Yerevan City Hall informs.

AMD 20 billion 46 million (over \$5 million) will be invested to complete the construction of the Cascade complex based on the project presented by renowned French architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

A concert hall for about 1,000 people, a new museum of contemporary art, studios, entertainment and recreation areas will be



created. All newly-constructed buildings, which will be equipped with the necessary

technical means and infrastructure, will be transferred to the city of Yerevan as community property.

The investing company will also be allowed to build a multifunctional complex on the right of the Cascade, the design of which will be drawn up and architectural solutions will be provided by Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

The project is planned to be completed in five years.

‘Freedom for Ruben Vardanyan and others’: protests in Armenia



Protests in support of Ruben Vardanyan

One of the most pressing topics in [Armenia](#) remains the ongoing trial of Armenian prisoners in Baku, widely dismissed in the country as a “farce.” The biggest public outcry followed the release of courtroom photos of former unrecognised [NKR](#) State Minister Ruben Vardanyan, showing clear signs of torture.

The opposition accuses Armenian authorities of failing to act to secure the return of prisoners, while government officials call these accusations offensive. Their response: “Not a day goes by without steps being taken in this direction.”

This morning, Armenia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official statement:

“We are deeply concerned by reports, including videos and photographs from the ‘trials’ of 23 Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and detainees, as well as information from their lawyers—especially regarding Ruben Vardanyan, who has declared a hunger strike—about the use of [prohibited substances], torture, and their deteriorating health conditions.”

Throughout the day, civil society groups held multiple protests, including outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the government building.

Protesters demanded that authorities take public steps to secure the prisoners’ release and denounce the staged trial as political and illegal. Two more demonstrations have already been announced—one outside the UN office in Armenia and another at the International Committee of

the Red Cross (ICRC) headquarters.

Around 30 Armenian NGOs have sent an appeal to the President of the ICRC, urging the organization to act as an independent mediator between the prisoners and Azerbaijani authorities to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and their immediate release.

Meanwhile, former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian has urged Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to suspend negotiations with Azerbaijan until “all Armenian prisoners return home.” According to Oskanian, such a move would be legitimate and well understood by the international community

Vardanyan protests against “judicial farce”

Ruben Vardanyan began his hunger strike 11 days ago. During a phone call with his family, he stated that this was his way of protesting against lawlessness and pressure on him, as well as what he called a “judicial farce.”

On 25 February, during a court hearing, Vardanyan’s condition deteriorated. A break was announced, but the session soon resumed. According to Azerbaijani sources, Vardanyan refused to testify or answer questions. He had previously [reported](#) being denied the right to a proper defense, restricted from contacting international lawyers, and that his Azerbaijani-appointed lawyer was under pressure.

The charges against Vardanyan span 422 volumes, accusing him of over 40 serious crimes, including planning and waging war against Azerbaijan, mercenary activities, and allegedly organizing “Nemesis 2”—a terrorist operation targeting Azerbaijani diplomats abroad.

The original “Operation Nemesis” was a Dashnaktsutyun party initiative aimed at assassinating leaders of the Ottoman Empire involved in the Armenian Genocide, as well as figures of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic who, according to the organizers, were responsible for the massacre of Armenians in Baku in 1918.

The operation was named after Nemesis, the Greek goddess of retribution.

Meanwhile, businessman and philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan, who lived in Russia until recently, had no military role in Nagorno-Karabakh and did not participate in combat.

Other former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh are also facing charges of genocide, terrorism, and forced displacement of civilians. Among them are former presidents Arkadi Ghukasyan, Bako Sahakyan, and Arayik Harutyunyan; parliamentary speaker Davit Ishkhanyan; Defense Army commander Levon Mnatsakanyan; his deputy Davit Manukyan; and foreign minister Davit Babayan. All cases are being heard behind closed doors in a military court in Baku, with Vardanyan’s case being handled separately.

Lawyer demands trial suspension until hunger strike ends

Ruben Vardanyan’s international lawyer, Jared Genser, issued a [statement](#) two days ago, claiming that Vardanyan was forced to continue attending court hearings despite a motion to postpone the trial.

“Ruben’s blood pressure was significantly above normal, he appeared emaciated, and was on the verge of losing consciousness multiple times. Forcing him to participate in this trial while his health and safety are in serious danger constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment at the very least,” Genser stated.

He urged the Azerbaijani government to allow a doctor from their international team to examine Vardanyan, demanded immediate medical assistance, and called for the trial to be postponed until the hunger strike ends. Additionally, Genser insisted that independent judicial experts oversee the proceedings to ensure Vardanyan’s rights are not further violated.

Official Yerevan condemns ‘staged trials’ in Baku

Armenia’s Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that it

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page 8 ➡ continues to draw international attention to the issue of Armenian prisoners of war, hostages, and other detainees held in Azerbaijan. According to the ministry, Baku is conducting “staged judicial processes accompanied by the most serious procedural violations and blatant signs of torture.”

The ministry believes that “Azerbaijani authorities are using this judicial spectacle as a tool of political pressure on Armenia and manipulation of public sentiment, given the sensitivity of the issue for every family and society as a whole.”

The statement also claims that the Armenian government has received reports of prohibited psychotropic substances being used on Armenian prisoners and detainees—an allegation previously voiced by Prime Minister [Nikol Pashinyan](#).

The Foreign Ministry emphasized that Armenian prisoners and detainees are being held unlawfully in Azerbaijan, calling it a “gross violation of international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights.” It listed treaties that Baku has signed but allegedly fails to uphold.

Armenian diplomats also pointed to the “ongoing propaganda of ethnic hatred against Armenians in Azerbaijani media,” arguing that Armenia cannot “remain indifferent or uninvolved.” The government pledged to continue raising the issue of prisoner repatriation in various forums, seeking concrete decisions and progress.

A few days ago, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan addressed the issue at the UN, stating: “Right now, fake trials are being conducted in Azerbaijan against 23 Armenians who have been arbitrarily deprived of their freedom, with no regard for the human rights standards necessary for due process.”

In response, Azerbaijan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Elnur Mammadov asserted that “bringing individuals suspected of war crimes to justice is not only Azerbaijan’s right but also its obligation under



international law.”

“Preventing possible tragic consequences”

Several dozen Armenian NGOs have sent an open letter to Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), urging immediate intervention in the cases of Armenians detained in Azerbaijan and hunger-striking Ruben Vardanyan. Civil society representatives argue that the detainees are being “illegally prosecuted for political reasons” and that Armenians held in Baku are subjected to unfair treatment and ethnic persecution.

Regarding Vardanyan’s hunger strike, they warn that “his health could deteriorate, leading to irreversible consequences.”

The signatories call on the ICRC to:

Immediately visit Ruben Vardanyan and conduct an independent medical assessment;

Ensure impartial monitoring of his health and guarantee he receives necessary medical care;

Investigate the injuries on his face, for which “the Azerbaijani side bears particular responsibility”;

Establish the reasons for Vardanyan’s hunger strike and take effective measures to end it;

Provide an impartial report on the

conditions and treatment of all Armenian prisoners;

Conduct regular visits to all Armenian detainees in Azerbaijani prisons to ensure they are treated fairly.

They stress that another Red Cross visit “must not come too late”:

“The International Committee of the Red Cross has a unique mandate to protect prisoners. Your intervention in this situation is not only justified but necessary. We hope the ICRC will take immediate steps to prevent potential tragic consequences.”

International organizations concerned about Armenian prisoners

“We are particularly alarmed by the inhumane treatment of Ruben Vardanyan. His hunger strike is a desperate plea to the international community to intervene against Azerbaijan’s blatant violations of the law and fundamental human rights,” reads a statement from Transparency International.

The Democracy Development Foundation has also expressed concern over Vardanyan’s deteriorating health.

Both organizations have joined the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in calling for urgent action to ensure that “Azerbaijan upholds its international obligations and ends politically motivated persecution.”

Use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes a priority policy for Armenia, Foreign Minister says



The Republic of Armenia remains firmly committed to fulfilling its obligations under the treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which is at the heart of international security architecture, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said in an address at the High-Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament.

“At the same time the safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is and will be a priority policy for Armenia. Driven by the successful uphold of high standards of safety and security in the operation of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant and with an ultimate goal of smooth transition to a new capacity by 2036, Armenia opted for a transparent and open policy for safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy and will continue to pursue this policy further, strengthening and undertaking necessary measures to enhance and maintain nuclear safety and security. Armenia has already started initial procedures for selection and later construction of the new Power Plant. At the moment, we are carefully examining the characteristics of Small Modular Reactors,” the Foreign Minister said.

“The Republic of Armenia has always stood firm in its belief that an effectively functioning Conventional Arms Control regime is indispensable for ensuring military and political stability at international, regional, and subregional levels. We have consistently advocated for the full implementation of arms control agreements,

coupled with unwavering adherence to the guiding principles of the Arms Control regime, as an essential prerequisite for sustainable peace and security. In this vein, we also consider the possibility of joining the Arms Trade Treaty,” he added.

“Armenia has demonstrated its steadfast commitment to the legally binding Conventional Arms Control regime in Europe. We have adhered to its provisions, as well as honored our obligations. Yet, despite our dedication, the reality has proven to be different from what was expected initially. Due to the lack of effective control and enforcement, the regime has unwittingly allowed those with malicious intentions to cover up their wrongdoings. The results are well-known – the arms control regime failed to prevent the recurrence of the use of force, undermining the very foundations of stability it was meant to safeguard,” the Foreign Minister stated.

Nevertheless, he said, Armenia remains committed to this idea and continues to advocate for an effective and comprehensive arms control regime. “In pursuit of enhanced transparency and confidence-building in the South Caucasus, Armenia has submitted a written proposal to Azerbaijan on the establishment of mechanisms for reciprocal arms control and joint investigation of border incidents. This initiative aims to foster mutual trust, reduce the threat perceptions, and contribute to regional stability. While awaiting

for a response to this constructive proposal, we remain hopeful that dialogue and cooperation will prevail over hostility and distrust,” he said.

“Acknowledging the growing trend among States to develop and advance military artificial intelligence capabilities, including the integration of AI to support autonomous functions and systems, the Republic of Armenia emphasizes that the application of AI in the military domain should be properly regulated in compliance with the existing international legal instruments, without prejudice to the possibility of *lex ferenda*, thereby mitigating the risk of exploitation by irresponsible actors to violate international law,” the Armenian Foreign Minister stated.

“The Republic of Armenia affirms that international law, particularly international humanitarian law and international human rights law, is fully applicable to all weapon systems, including those incorporating artificial intelligence and autonomous technologies. The military use of artificial intelligence should be ethical, responsible and contribute to the enhancement of international security. Such use must remain consistent with all applicable international legal frameworks,” he noted.

“Furthermore, within the framework of promoting the responsible use of military AI, the Republic of Armenia places significant importance on ensuring the responsible and ethical transfer of military AI technologies. This entails that states at the forefront of developing advanced military AI technologies, including autonomous weapon systems, should refrain from authorizing such transfers if there is a credible knowledge that the recipient state has a recorded history of violating international law and international human rights law,” Ararat Mirzoyan said.

In closing, he underscored that ensuring peace and international security is a collective endeavor that serves the common interests of all and demands sustained commitment and genuine determination. “Armenia remains steadfast in its commitment to pursuing negotiated multilateral solutions, promoting dialogue, and strengthening international cooperation to advance peace and security,” Minister Mirzoyan concluded.

Armenian Ambassador to Greece, Greek MP discuss South Caucasus developments

Armenian Ambassador to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan met with Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on National Defense and Foreign Relations of the Greek Parliament.

During the meeting, Ambassador Mkrtchyan discussed Armenia-Greece and Armenia-European Union relations and presented the latest developments in this direction, the Armenian Embassy in Greece said in a statement.

“The Ambassador presented the latest developments in the South Caucasus region, in particular, the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey negotiation processes. It was noted that the recognition of each other’s territorial integrity should be the foundation of a peace treaty, based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration. Ambassador Mkrtchyan expressed concern over the rigged trials against Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held in Baku.

Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis welcomed Armenia’s intention to normalize relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, noting, in particular, that the opening of the



Armenian-Turkish border would contribute to the formation of a more constructive atmosphere in the region. She noted that the application of international law is experiencing a crisis, but Greece’s position is clear that the resolution of conflicts should take place in accordance with the norms of international law.

Both sides touched upon the importance of high-level contacts between Armenia and Greece and highlighted the activeness of cooperation between the two parliaments. For this purpose, Ambassador Mkrtchyan invited Mrs. Bakoyannis to visit Armenia, which was positively received.

Spanish legislator calls on EU to support Armenia’s ‘bold’ integration move

Spanish Member of Parliament Jon Iñarritu has called on the EU to support Armenia’s latest integration move which he described as a ‘bold step’.

Earlier in February, the Armenian parliament adopted the [bill on EU accession](#) at first reading.

“I think Armenia’s place has always been in Europe, be it cultural or historical ties,” Iñarritu told Armenpress. “The EU must support Armenia to restore its worthy place in the European family.”

He emphasized the growing role of the civil society in terms of the EU bill having been initiated through a petition by civic organizations.

“The EU must support this bold step

and ensure that Armenia doesn’t withstand the challenges alone because it is one of the few democracies in the region,” the Spanish legislator said.

“If the legislation advances then Armenia must take necessary steps to comply with EU standards and values,” he added, emphasizing that the path towards joining the EU requires significant reforms.

Iñarritu also spoke about Armenia’s ties with Russia and the latter’s possible reaction to the adoption of the bill.

“It’s important to remember that most probably Russia will start a major campaign to block the close ties between Armenia and the EU, like in the past, when Armenia was being pressured to join the

Eurasian Economic Union, leaving the country with few options,” he said.

The EU bill was initiated by several civic organizations through a petition which garnered enough votes to be considered as a bill. It calls on the Armenian authorities to launch the process of EU accession.

The bill was previously endorsed by the Cabinet.



Armenia to provide additional evidence to international courts on sham trials of Armenians in Azerbaijan



Armenia continues its efforts in international courts to protect the rights of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held in Azerbaijan, the Office of the Representative on International Legal Matters said in a statement issued Friday.

According to the statement, from 2021 to 2024, the Office of the Representative on International Legal Matters, regarding the criminal proceedings against all Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held in Azerbaijan, including Ruben Vardanyan, filed interstate complaints on behalf of the Republic of Armenia with both the European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice. These complaints aimed to protect their rights, including the right to life, freedom from torture and

other cruel and degrading treatment, fair trial, liberty, personal immunity, and several other fundamental rights.

“In January 2025, information and photographs regarding the above-mentioned persons were received through the European Court of Human Rights and were transferred to their relatives. In response, on February 27, 2025, the Republic of Armenia submitted its observations on the positions and information presented by the Azerbaijani side, demanding that Azerbaijan be required to provide more detailed information.

At the same time, the Court’s attention was drawn to violations in the trial of Ruben Vardanyan and the deterioration of his health condition, and additional information was requested,” reads the statement, reaffirming that the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights issued on September 27, November 3, December 11, and December 23, 2020; February 17, 2021; November 21, 2023; and November 6, 2024, which were adopted within the framework of the procedure for the application of interim measures and concern, among other matters, the protection of

the rights of captive persons, including those currently held in Azerbaijan, remain in force.

The decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of December 7, 2021, remains in force. In this decision, the Court, applying interim measures against Azerbaijan, determined, among other things, that Azerbaijan is obliged to protect all persons captured and held in Azerbaijan during and after the 2020 war from violence and bodily harm, as well as to ensure their safety and equality before the law.

At the same time, by its decision of October 12, 2022, the Court noted Azerbaijan’s commitment to ensuring the fulfillment of the above-mentioned obligations put forward by the decision of December 7, 2021, with respect to any person of Armenian origin detained in Azerbaijan.

The Office of the Representative on International Legal Matters is closely monitoring the ongoing trials in Azerbaijan. The Office informs that additional necessary evidence and claims will be submitted to the European Court and the International Court of Justice in accordance with established procedures,” the statement reads.

“Armenia” faction calls on OSCE PA to monitor trials of Armenians illegally detained in Baku

The opposition “Hayastan” Faction of the Armenian Parliament has sent letters to the President of the OSCE PA, the rapporteurs on human rights and South Caucasus issues, demanding immediate steps to organize a fact-finding mission to monitor the trials of Armenian prisoners of war held in Baku and the military-political leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh, faction leader Seyran Ohanyan said in a statement on social media.

“Armenia” faction deputies are using all channels and possible leverage daily to restore the clearly violated rights of the military-political leaders of Artsakh and Armenian prisoners of war held in Baku prisons and to secure their return to Armenia.

Letters have been sent to the President



of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Pia Kauma, OSCE PA Human Rights Rapporteur Carina Odebrink, and OSCE PA Vice-President Luis Graça, demanding immediate steps be taken to organize a fact-finding mission to monitor the trials of Armenian prisoners of war detained in Baku and the military-political leadership

of Artsakh,” Ohanyan said.

“Immediate and meaningful action is required to establish effective monitoring mechanisms, direct reporting, and enforcement of accountability. Not holding Azerbaijan responsible encourages authoritarian regimes around the globe. Action can no longer be deferred.

I do hope that the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE will launch prompt discussion of all steps required to ensure stronger and more direct monitoring of human rights violations in Azerbaijan, particularly the illegal detainment of Nagorno-Karabakh’s state and military officials and the latter’s release in an expedited manner,” reads the letter.

UNICEF and Japan to scale up mental health and psychosocial support services for refugee children in Armenia

UNICEF, the Government of Japan, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) announced a new partnership of over US\$3 million to provide mental health and psychosocial wellbeing services for ethnic Armenian refugee children and adolescents and their peers from host communities across Armenia. This contribution enables UNICEF to scale up support, engaging 5600 service providers working with children in different sectors and reaching around 300,000 children and adolescents, as well as up to 150,000 parents with mental health services through various forms and channels.

The programme is designed to address mental health and psychosocial wellbeing services across education, health and social services, improving cross-sectoral coordination and referral. To ensure that national systems have the capacity to support children's wellbeing, UNICEF will partner with municipalities, as well as national government, including Ministries of Health; Education, Science, Culture and Sports; Labor and Social Affairs, and Territorial Administration and Infrastructure.

At the community level, UNICEF will support service providers, such as health providers, psychologists, social workers, with training, counselling and referral mechanisms to strengthen their technical expertise to apply a broad range of tools and resources for mental health support. UNICEF will also work with the national government to develop policies, regulatory frameworks and oversight mechanisms to guide the work of service providers and institutions.

"Many countries lack the human and financial resources for mental health, and people in need of support are not



receiving adequate services. At the same time, conflicts and disasters continue to occur around the world, increasing the need for support in this area," noted Mr WAKUI Junji, Resident Representative of JICA Georgia office. "Japan is a country that frequently experiences disasters, such as earthquakes, and since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, we have accumulated extensive knowledge on mental health care for disaster victims. Making use of this knowledge, JICA has also provided MHPSS support to victims of many disasters."

"Our goal is to provide compassionate, individualized care to each child affected by the conflict. We aim to help these children recover from the traumas of past conflicts and rediscover hope. With UNICEF's profound expertise in child welfare, we strive to empower them to envision—and believe in—a brighter future. This builds upon our previous successful partnership with UNICEF during the 2021 emergency grant aid that addressed urgent humanitarian needs in Armenia," said H.E. AOKI Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Armenia.

"To ensure every child can realize their right to good mental health and well-being, we need to work across sectors with an integrated approach at the community level.

Delivery modalities and tools need to be tailored to the needs of boys and girls and adjusted to consider the needs of different age-groups of children from early childhood to adolescence," explained Ms Christine Weigand, UNICEF Representative in Armenia. "Through this programme, we also come together to promote positive attitudes among the population to encourage demand for mental health and psychosocial services where needed."

In the healthcare sector, UNICEF will work with partners to develop standard training and counseling packages for healthcare providers on psychoeducation, as well as early identification and management of mental health issues. Periodic counselling sessions will be organized for ethnic Armenian refugee children, their peers from host communities and their parents. UNICEF will train frontline services providers, such as psychologists and social workers in psychological first aid, as well as work with paraprofessionals for greater outreach throughout communities with limited number of frontline professionals.

UNICEF will partner with Republic Pedagogical Psychological Center to pilot school based mental health services in ten schools, preparing a model for scaling up across the country. UNICEF will also work with youth workers and young peer support volunteers to build their capacity to support adolescents and young people, while also preventing burnout. Finally, UNICEF will also produce online and broadcast edutainment materials on mental health, promoting social-emotional skills, self-care and resilience.

Garant Logistics completes first cargo transportation on new China-Armenia land route

Garant Logistics provides comprehensive logistics outsourcing services across European, Asian, CIS, and EAEU countries, offering a single-window service through Supply Chain Management.

The company offers three types of cargo transportation between China and Armenia: sea, air, and land.

Sea transport is the most efficient option for shipping large and bulky cargo over long distances. Garant Logistics partners with leading shipping lines to ensure reliable, safe, and timely delivery of cargo from cities and ports across China and other Asian countries to Armenia, as well as in the opposite direction.

While carrying out sea transportation, the company also focuses on newly developing ports.

In 2024, Garant Logistics launched extensive efforts to assess the potential of Iran's Chabahar port.

"This port, as the only non-sanctioned ocean port in Iran, has great potential and could become a key hub for trade between Armenia, China, and India," noted Aram Nikoghosyan, founder of Garant International Group.

"With the development of the necessary infrastructure, Chabahar port will be of great interest to Armenian businesses and logistics companies, becoming a vital platform for expanding trade relations with the global market," he added.

In 2024, as part of the Armenian delegation's visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, our company signed a memorandum in the Chabahar Free Economic Zone, which will open up broader opportunities for cooperation and enhance trade relations with Asian countries.

Garant Logistics offers air transportation for swift deliveries. Cooperating with leading airlines, the company provides express delivery services, including the transport of valuable and perishable goods.

Our specialists design optimal routes and ensure prompt customs clearance, reducing delivery times while preserving the quality of the goods," he noted.

In the field of land transportation, Garant Logistics has achieved significant



milestones. As a result of extensive efforts in 2024, the company now offers fast cargo transportation from any city in China to Armenia, primarily utilizing the Khorgos and Kashgar checkpoints at China's land exits.

"This was a real challenge for us, as previously we lacked the experience of carrying out cargo transportation along this route. Considering the importance and advantage of this checkpoint and especially the overload at the Khorgos land checkpoint, our team compiled a list of problems and developed a roadmap to address them. Now I report that at this moment we have implemented the first shipment from Shanghai, China to Yerevan with unprecedented, fastest cargo transportation times."

From providing a truck to any location in China, to formalizing export procedures and delivering goods at transit checkpoints, all the way to the final destination specified by the customer, the entire shipment process is managed by our team. We have members not only in Armenia, but also in China and other transit countries. Numerous factors influence delivery times, and due to this fact, cargo from Shanghai to Armenia can arrive in 20 to 30 days," said Nikoghosyan.

Land routes from China to Armenia via Central Asia and Iran enable the delivery of goods in the shortest possible time. Compared to traditional sea transportation, this method reduces delivery time by 30-40%. These land routes offer greater independence and flexibility, reducing possible frequent delays at seaports, disruptions in air transportation, and other external factors. Such transportation also helps optimize logistics costs, which is particularly important for small and

medium-sized businesses in Armenia.

"The development of land routes stimulates exports and imports, creates jobs, and attracts investment. It is also worth noting that Garant Logistics is actively involved in initiatives related to the development of the North-South international corridor, which enhances Armenia's transit potential.

Armenia has significant potential and, if properly organized, could become a key logistics hub for transporting goods between Asia and Europe," he concluded.

Garant International Group includes Garant Logistics, Tower International Consultants, and Garant Shipping. Garant Logistics has been operating in over 100 countries worldwide for more than a decade, offering 4PL outsourcing services. These services range from developing logistics strategies and optimizing costs to managing the entire business process chain, including road, sea, rail, air, and multimodal freight transportation, warehouse logistics, and customs brokerage services. These services are available in Armenia, Georgia, Europe, the EAEU, Asia, and other countries.

As a logistics outsourcing company, Garant Logistics organizes the entire logistics chain for businesses. It is not only responsible for implementing transport logistics services but also for designing and planning supply chains, as well as managing logistics business processes within the company.

Garant Logistics also offers its full range of services outside of Armenia.

Garant International Group is already operational in Georgia, and Garant Sepditi, a transport company, operates in Europe. The potential and capabilities of the company's team enable it to provide coverage for 80% or more of global cargo transportation services.

Tower International Consultants, a member of the Garant International Group, serves large and prestigious Armenian and international companies. It specializes in providing accounting and tax outsourcing services (including payroll and Employer of Record), legal consulting (corporate law), and business consulting services to both Armenian and international clients.

ITF Armenia 2025: Yerevan to host ‘unprecedented’ tourism expo



The ITF Armenia 2025 International Tourism Fair and Business Forum will take place April 4-6 in Yerevan.

The event is organized by the Tourism Committee and the Armenian Tourism Federation.

Tourism Committee President Lusine

Gevorgyan said Tuesday that the event will be ‘unprecedented’.

“Tour operators, hotels and airlines will all gather in one place,” Gevorgyan said at a press conference. The event will be held at the K. Demirchyan Sports and Concert Complex.

She said that IT companies will also participate and present digital solutions for the sector.

Representatives of government agencies and private companies from around the world will attend the event.

“This is also a good opportunity for our local companies to find new partners,” Gevorgyan said, adding that the committee will work with the foreign ministry to attract as many foreign partners as possible.

Armenian Tourism Federation President Mekhak Apresyan highlighted the importance of the expo in terms of promoting international cooperation and developing domestic tourism.

In terms of attracting tourists, the Armenian tourism officials are working in targeted directions, particularly Arab countries. There is great interest from the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and other countries in the region. The targeted countries in Asia include China and Japan.

Ukrainians, Iraqis top asylum seekers in Armenia



665 persons requested asylum in Armenia in 2024, 151 were citizens of

Ukraine, according to official data released by the Statistical Committee.

The asylum seekers included 148 Iraqi citizens, 91 Iranian citizens, 79 Egyptian citizens, 56 Russian citizens, 19 Syrian citizens, 5 Turkish citizens and 7 Georgian citizens. Citizens of Belarus, Moldova, Germany, the US and several other countries were also among the asylum seekers.

185 asylum requests were denied.

203 persons were granted refugee status in 2024, 109 of them Ukrainians.

Other refugee status recipients included 35 Iraqi citizens, 12 Iranian citizens, 10 Syrian citizens, 6 Russian citizens, 1 Turkish citizen and others.

17 persons’ refugee status was revoked.

Freedom in the World 2025: Armenia rated as ‘partly free’ country

Armenia has been rated as “partly free” in the [Freedom in the World 2025](#) report published by the Freedom House.

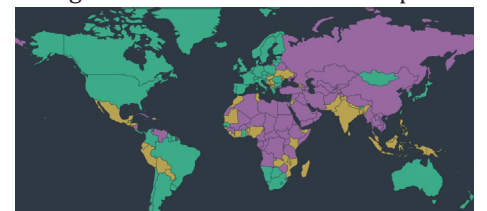
Armenia’s neighbor Georgia is also ranked as “partly free,” while Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran are all labeled as “not free.”

According to the reports, Global freedom declined for the 19th consecutive year in 2024. Sixty countries experienced

deterioration in their political rights and civil liberties, and only 34 secured improvements. El Salvador, Haiti, Kuwait, and Tunisia were the countries with the largest score declines for the year, while Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Syria recorded the largest gains.

The Freedom House notes that global freedom faces serious challenges in 2025, including security threats from multiple

armed conflicts, deepening repression in both entrenched and emerging autocracies, and democratically elected leaders who seek to advance their goals by overriding institutional checks on their power.





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