

Los Angeles City Council reaffirms support for Artsakh, suspends L.A.-Shushi Friendship City agreement



The Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted to reaffirm the city’s support for the people of Artsakh and temporarily suspend the LA-Shushi Friendship City agreement, “for as long as it is illegally controlled by Azerbaijan.”

The resolution was introduced by Councilmember Paul Krekorian and seconded by Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell, before the City Council voted to unanimously adopted a resolution reaffirming the support of the City of Los Angeles towards the people of the Republic of Artsakh.

“The historic struggle of the people of Artsakh, including the 1991-94 war, is similar to the struggle of all peoples who created a democratic state/nation, that adhere to the values of liberty and self-determination through free and fair elections, including the United States of America,” said the resolution.

The resolution referenced the City Council’s 2013 recognition

of Artsakh as an independence and sovereign state, as well as a December 2020 decision to support “the struggle of the Republic of Artsakh and its people for self-determination, and called upon the United States federal government to do likewise.”

In addressing last fall’s Artsakh War, the L.A. City Council resolution stressed that “throughout the brutal invasion, Azerbaijan terrorized civilians by targeting them with munitions that are widely banned and condemned by the international community, including cluster bombs and white phosphorus.” The resolution further states that “major combat operations ended on November 9, 2020, although Azerbaijan’s forces have continued to engage in violence, aggression and cruelty even after that date.”

“Therefore, be it resolved that by the adoption of this resolution the City of Los Angeles honors and mourns the thousands of lives lost in this attack, and declares November 9, 2020 a day of remembrance and commem-

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Armenian FM briefs Austrian counterpart on humanitarian situation in Artsakh following Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression

Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian had a telephone conversation with Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg.

The sides praised the positive dynamics in bilateral relations and reaffirmed mutual readiness to make practical efforts to intensify the political dialogue, to expand and enrich the agenda of cooperation.

The Armenian and Austrian Foreign Ministers also exchanged views on issues related to the Armenia-EU partnership and the schedule of upcoming EaP events. Minister Aivazian emphasized that the effective implementation of the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement will create new opportunities for deepening cooperation with both the EU and EU member states and outlining new directions.



In the context of regional security and stability, Minister Aivazian briefed his Austrian counterpart on the humanitarian situation in Artsakh following the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression, Azerbaijan's failure to fulfill its obligations under the November 9 statement, in particular the repatriation of prisoners of war and other detainees. In terms of improving the humanitarian situation in Artsakh, the need for the involvement of international part-

ners was stressed.

Ministers Aivazian and Schallenberg attached importance to taking steps to preserve historical and cultural heritage and places of worship in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone.

Referring to the security challenges in the OSCE region, including in the context of conflicts, both sides expressed concern over the involvement and transfer of armed terrorists and mercenaries. Cooperation within regional and international organizations was emphasized in this regard.

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Austria addressed the issues of the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship format.

Putin holds phone talks with Armenian, Azerbaijani leaders



Russian President Vladimir Putin held telephone conversations with Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani president

Ilham Aliyev, ARMENPRESS reports the official website of the Kremlin informs.

The practical aspects of the implementation of agreements on Nagorno Karabakh provided by November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021 trilateral statements were discussed. It was recorded with satisfaction that the ceasefire regime is strictly respected and the regional situation remains stable and calm.

The statement issues by the Kremlin

says that Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev highly assessed the productive activities of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in the contact line and along Lachin corridor. Issues related to unblocking economic and transport infrastructures in South Caucasus were also touched upon. In this context, the sides expressed satisfaction over the activities of the working group co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of the three countries.

Meeting initiated by President Sarkissian called off



Taking into account that the My Step and the Bright Armenia parliamentary factions have accepted the President's invitation for a meeting, the Prosperous Armenia faction and the Homeland Salvation Movement proposed their agenda for the meeting

and presented conditions, at this moment the format of the meeting around one table becomes infeasible, the President's Office said in a statement.

President Armen Sarkissian will continue his efforts; he is ready to have separate meetings both with those invited, as well as with the MPs not included in the factions of the National Assembly, with the representatives of different extra-parliamentary political forces.

These meetings will give an opportunity to hear everyone's views once again,

to further clarify the positions, and to formulate a working agenda based on results.

The President of the Republic reaffirms his conviction that the only way to resolve differences is through negotiations and dialogue, and that everything must be done to keep the country from being shaken.

On Wednesday President Armen Sarkissian invited the Prime Minister, the leaders of the parliamentary factions, the leaders of the Homeland Salvation Movement for a meeting at the presidential residence on March 13.

Armenian PM, President discuss possible snap elections



(RFE/RL) - Armenian President Armen Sarkissian on March 13 met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as part of discussions initiated by him to defuse the current political crisis in the country.

According to the president's press office, during their meeting Sarkissian and Pashinyan discussed "the situation in the country, ways of resolving it and overcoming the internal political crisis."

"In this context, they discussed holding early parliamentary elections as a solution," the report disseminated by the president's press office said.

The Pashinyan government has been under pressure to resign after Armenia suffered a defeat in a six-week war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh last fall.

Opposition parties and groups demanding Pashinyan's resignation renewed their street protests in late February.

Earlier this week President Sarkissian offered to host talks between Pashinyan and opposition leaders aimed at ending the political crisis in Armenia.

The leaders of the pro-government My Step parliamentary faction and one of the two opposition factions, Bright Armenia, accepted the invitation to the talks set for March 13 and their meetings with President Sarkissian were held later today.

In a statement disseminated late on Friday, the president's office said that the two other sides invited to the talks – the parliamentary opposition Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) and the Homeland Salvation Movement, an alliance of about

a dozen political parties and groups, including the BHK, demanding Prime Minister Pashinyan's resignation in the street – had proposed their own agendas and set conditions for the meeting, which made the format of talks in which all invited parties would meet at one table "unfeasible."

As Pashinyan visited the presidential compound in a heavily guarded motorcade, supporters of the Homeland Salvation Movement staged more protests in the adjacent boulevard that they have been blocking since late February.

The opposition movement continues to insist that Pashinyan must step down and a provisional government led by its leader Vazgen Manukyan should be formed before snap parliamentary elections can be held in a year.

Ishkhan Saghatelian, one of the leaders of the movement, said that in order to be able to discuss their possible participation in snap elections, first Pashinyan must step down and then the parliament must be dissolved.

"The prime minister's resignation and dissolution of parliament should take place before snap elections can be held. If these two processes are completed and we will have snap elections ahead, we will express our position on whether we take part in these elections, and if we do, then in what format. But [Pashinyan's] resignation should come first," he said, talking to media.

Talking to several media on Friday, the leader of the BHK, Gagik Tsarukyan, announced his upcoming meeting with Prime Minister Pashinyan. He said that Pashinyan must resign and snap parliamentary elections must be held in the country as early as possible to end the current political crisis.

Unlike it was before, Tsarukyan did not

page 1 ➡ oration of the victims of Azerbaijan's aggression against the Republic of Artsakh," the city council affirmed.

The city council also voted to "temporarily suspend its 'Friendship City' relationship with Shushi for as long as it is illegally controlled by Azerbaijan, and will renew that status when Shushi is again free of Azeri conquest and oppression and restored to democratic governance as part of the Republic of Artsakh."

"Having been abandoned by the international community, and facing an existential threat to Artsakh and the very real potential for another genocide of the Armenian people, Armenia signed a cease-fire statement brokered by Russia that allows Azerbaijan to control much of Artsakh, specifically including the city of Shushi," said the resolution, which also recalled the city council's April 24, 2012 decision to adopt Shushi as a "Friendship City."

"The City Council of Los Angeles extends its warm greetings, support and best wishes for safety and security to Shushi's Mayor Artsvik Sargsyan and the entire democratically elected leadership of Shushi, and the City Council further looks forward to the day that Shushi is once again liberated from Azeri occupation," said the LA City Council.

appear to insist on electing a new prime minister in parliament and forming any provisional government before holding preterm elections at some point in the future.

Earlier, Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the other opposition Bright Armenia faction in parliament, said his faction was ready not to field any candidate if Pashinyan resigned to clear the way for snap elections.

Pashinyan enjoys a comfortable majority in the Armenian parliament and practically does not need any assurance on the part of the opposition to resign and ensure that the parliament twice fails to elect a new prime minister for snap elections to be appointed. He and his political team, however, have sought such assurances from the two opposition factions to exclude any risks of political upheavals in the country.

Moscow declines to comment on Aliyev's 'Zangezur is Azeri' comment



The Russian foreign ministry on March 12 declined to comment on Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's revisionist and threatening declaration that Armenia's Zangezur is a "historic Azerbaijani territory."

Aliyev made the statement on March 5 during a speech at an economic summit, saying that a so-called corridor linking mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhchavan would run through Zangezur.

A reporter for Armenia's Public Television channel on Friday asked Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova whether Moscow considered Aliyev's statement about Zangezur a gross violation of international law and an infringement of Armenia's sovereignty, and whether it was a violation of the tripartite statement signed on November 9 on the unblocking of regional transport communications and routes, reported the Arka news agency.

Zakharova sidestepped the question and instead praised the "generally constructive approach demonstrated by both Baku and Yerevan within the framework of the trilateral working group chaired by the vice-pres-

miers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan,"

Zakharova stressed that the main task of the working group has been to find ways for unblocking all economic and transport links in the region.

"We hope that the same focus on positive and mutually acceptable points of contact will prevail both in official comments and in Armenian and Azerbaijani mass media," added Zakharova.

With such a provocative statement, calling Zangezur an 'historic Azerbaijani territory' and making reference to an imaginary corridor, the President of Azerbaijan deliberately undermines the implementation of the November 9 and January 11 trilateral statements," said Armenia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan last week. She stressed that "Article 9 of the November 9 trilateral statement does not mention the establishment of a corridor."

German lawmaker gives up mandate amid accusations of lobbying for Azerbaijan

A German lawmaker for Angela Merkel's ruling CDU party on Thursday became the third conservative parliamentarian to step down this week amid allegations of corruption, days before crucial regional elections, AFP reports.

Mark Hauptmann, a CDU lawmaker from the eastern German state of Thuringia, gave up his mandate but denied accusations that he had received payments from foreign governments such as Azerbaijan to lobby for them.

Earlier this week, Spiegel magazine reported that a regional newspaper which Hauptmann edits published adverts for events in Azerbaijan such as the 2015 European Games and the 2018 Baku Shopping Festival.

"I have never received money and I have never been influenced in my political actions," he told Die Welt newspaper.



Yet he has refused to publish a record of his additional incomes, telling Die Welt he was unable to divulge confidential business information.

Merkel's conservatives on Wednesday ordered MPs to declare all financial gains related to the pandemic, as it sought to put an end to corruption allegations dogging their ranks over mask procurement.

The move to clean house came with the CDU and its CSU Bavarian sister party already embroiled in a corruption scandal

after two of their lawmakers were accused of profiting directly or indirectly from mask contracts.

CSU lawmaker Georg Nuesslein was last month placed under investigation for corruption following accusations that he accepted around 600,000 euros (\$715,000) to lobby for a mask supplier.

A similar controversy embroiled CDU lawmaker Nikolas Loebel, whose company pocketed 250,000 euros in commissions for acting as an intermediary in mask contracts.

Loebel gave up his mandate this week, while Nuesslein has left the CDU/CSU, parliamentary group.

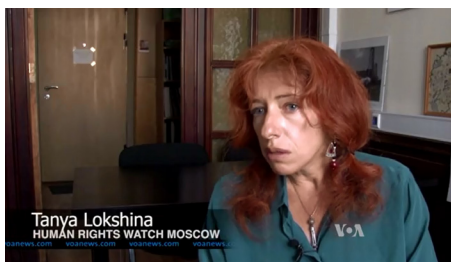
The scandal has led to a drop in the CDU's popularity ratings just days ahead of two key regional elections in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate.

HRW documents more evidence of torture and inhumane treatment of Armenian civilians by Azerbaijani forces

During last autumn's six-week war between in Nagorno-Karabakh, as Azerbaijani forces took control of areas in and around the region, they rounded up local civilians. Most younger civilians had fled the hostilities. Those remaining, with few exceptions, were older people who did not want to abandon their homes.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has documented several cases in which Azerbaijani forces used violence to detain civilians and subjected them to torture and inhuman and degrading conditions of detention. Two detainees died in Azerbaijani captivity; one of them, based on the evidence, was most likely the victim of an extrajudicial execution. Azerbaijani forces detained these civilians even though there was no evidence that they posed any security threat – they had no weapons and did not participate in the hostilities.

More than three months after the truce, Azerbaijan has returned a total of 69 Armenian Prisoners of War (POWs) and civilians. An Armenian foreign ministry



representative told HRW that they believe more than a dozen civilians are still in Azerbaijani custody. Their families are increasingly distraught, especially in light of the abundance of graphic videos of abuse of prisoners circulating on social media, and the horrendous accounts of some of those who have been repatriated.

HRW reminds that under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which sets out protections for civilians in an international armed conflict, civilians are “protected persons.” The convention requires that anyone “taking no active part in the hostilities, [...] shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction

founded on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.”

Also, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, Azerbaijan is bound by prohibitions on arbitrary detention as well as on torture and other degrading or inhuman treatment.

“The willful killing and ill-treatment of protected persons that we document constitute war crimes under international humanitarian law. Azerbaijani authorities should, without further delay, investigate the credible allegations regarding the unlawful detention of these civilians, their inhuman and degrading treatment, and the possible extrajudicial execution of a detainee, with a view to holding all perpetrators to account. They should also promptly free and repatriate any and all civilians who remain in their custody,” says Tanya Lokshina, Associate Director, Europe and Central Asia Division.

For the full article click [here](#).

Aliyev makes provocative statements about internationally recognized territories of Armenia – Tatevik Hayrapetyan



Aliyev makes provocative and inadmissible statements about the internationally recognized territories of the Republic of Armenia, Tatevik Hayrapetyan, member of the “My Step” parliamentary faction, said at March 12 sitting of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced

Persons.

Humanitarian aspect of the Nagorno Karabakh war were on the agenda of the meeting.

“The reality is that Azerbaijan, a member state of the Council of Europe, launched an aggression against the civilian population of Artsakh with the obvious support of another member state, Turkey. Although a trilateral statement on ceasefire was signed on November 9, 2020, Azerbaijan continues to fail to fulfill its obligations,” Hayrapetyan said.

She noted that many Armenian prisoners of war are still being held in Azerbaijan, which is unacceptable. At the same time,

she said, humanitarian issues are difficult to overcome unless there is a political solution.

“Yes, Azerbaijan has taken the path of aggression, which is not a political solution,” the MP stated.

She drew attention to the fact that Azerbaijan continues to use hate speech and threatening language.

“President Aliyev of Azerbaijan makes provocative and inadmissible statements about the internationally recognized territories of the Republic of Armenia. This is inadmissible. It must receive an adequate response from the international community,” said Tatevik Hayrapetyan.

Artsakh's security services will look into allegations about HALO Trust

The National Security Service of Artsakh will look into allegations the British HALO Trust charity organization provided the minefield maps to Turkish forces before or during the Karabakh war.

The Prosecutor's Office has sent the relevant materials to the NSS.

A number of media outlets quoted Artsakh President's envoy-at-large Boris Avagyan as saying that the British non-gov-

ernmental organization HALO Trust provided the Turkish special services with a map of the mined areas in Artsakh, which enabled them to successfully overcome the defensive mined areas of the Artsakh Defense Army during the 44-day war.

HALO Trust issued a statement, denying the claims.

“The HALO Trust is aware of a claim that it handed minefield maps to Turkish

forces before or during the 2020 conflict over Karabakh. There is absolutely no truth to this claim. For over 20 years HALO has worked in Karabakh to make the local people safe. The HALO Trust is only able to operate in conflict zones around the world because it is a totally non-political and neutral organization. The claim is totally false,” HALO Trust said in a statement.

Armenia, UAE keen to deepen political dialogue, economic cooperation

On a working visit to the United Arab Emirates, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian met with UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Minister Aivazian reaffirmed Armenia's intention to further deepen relations with the United Arab Emirates as a link for multifaceted cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the Arab countries of the Gulf.

Ministers Aivazian and Al Nahyan touched upon a wide range of issues on the bilateral agenda. The parties attached importance to maintaining the dynamics of the political dialogue was maintained, including through consultations.

The spheres of information technolo-



gies, agriculture, food security, renewable energy, tourism was singled out as promising directions of trade and economic cooperation. In this regard, the continuation of the work of the Armenian-Emirati Intergovernmental Joint Commission was emphasized.

The Foreign Ministers emphasized the bridging role of UAE's Armenian commu-

nity in strengthening and deepening the Armenian-Emirati relations based on mutual trust. In this context, Minister Aivazian hailed the caring attitude of the UAE authorities towards the Armenian community, which is a proof of the UAE's commitment to tolerance and cultural diversity.

Issues of regional security and stability were also on the agenda of the meeting. In this context, the Armenian Foreign Minister stressed that the Middle East plays an important role in Armenia's comprehensive security environment, and recent events have shown how interconnected the security of the Middle East and the South Caucasus is. The Ministers agreed that there is no military solution to the conflict, that any form of extremism is a threat to regional peace and stability.

Founder of Armenian DASARAN educational platform named 2021 Young Global Leader by World Economic Forum



World Economic Forum has honored global recognition to the CEO and Founder of DASARAN Educational Platform, Mr. Suren Aloyan's for his unique professional and societal contributions. The Forum has honored Suren Aloyan as a Young Global Leader 2021.

Suren Aloyan is the first ever Armenian national to be honored this title by the WEF. As a World Economic Forum Young Leader Suren Aloyan will represent Armenia in the diverse community of world-renowned young leaders.

YGL forum is an accelerator for a dynamic community of exceptional people with the vision, courage, and influence to drive positive change in the world. The growing membership of more than 1,400 members and alumni of 120 nationalities includes civic and business innovators, entrepreneurs, technology pioneers, educators, activists, artists, journalists, and more.

Aligned with the World Economic Forum's mission, YGL seeks to drive pub-

lic-private co-operation in the global public interest. The Forum is united by the belief that today's pressing problems present an opportunity to build a better future across sectors and boundaries.

The World Economic Forum is an International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

With an average budget of 300 million Swiss francs, the World Economic Forum is partnered with such large organizations as Google, Nestle, Barclays, Credit Suisse, Deloitte, Deutsche Bank, ABB.

Armenia to hold large-scale military exercises

Joint tactical and tactical-professional military exercises will be held in all operational directions of the RA Armed Forces from March 16 to 20, the Ministry of Defense informs.

The drills will involve different types of troops and special units.

The exercises aim at:

- checking the combat readiness of the troops, management capacities of the operative units and the ability to act quickly in

a specific situation,

- checking the cooperation between staff and supporting forces and means,
- conducting fire management trainings for subdivisions by simulating operative-tactical episodes, involving both combat and non-combat shooting.

About 7,500 servicemen, about 200 rocket and artillery systems, more than 150 anti-tank means, about 100 armored vehicles, more than 90 anti-aircraft means will

be involved in the exercises. Aviation will also be involved to support the tactical operations of the troops.



EUR 14.6 million LEAD Programme to promote sustainable socio-economic development in three regions of Armenia



Ambassador Andrea Wiktoria, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia, Vahan Kerobyan, the Minister of Economy of Armenia and Vache Terteryan, the Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia launched the EU-funded Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD) Programme. The action's implementing partners are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

Through an interactive presentation the project partners introduced the goals of the LEAD Programme, namely, to promote inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development resulting in improved quality of life in the communities in the three Northern regions of Armenia. The action's outcomes are closely aligned with the priorities of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

"We are announcing the launch of the LEAD programme just as the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership

Agreement (CEPA) entered into force on 1 March of this year. Regional development with a special emphasis on the development of disadvantaged areas and territorial cooperation is among the priorities of CEPA. CEPA's entry into force is happening at challenging times for Armenia. The European Union, is committed to continue its support to Armenia to overcome the challenges and to bringing positive change in the lives of people through actions aimed at resilience building and socio-economic recovery" emphasized Ambassador Wiktoria, Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia.

The 14.6 million Euro four-year LEAD programme is comprised of three projects. The LEAD4Shirak project co-financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation and implemented by ADA and the LEAD4Lori and Tavush regions project implemented by UNDP and FAO focus on adaptation and implementation of the EU LEADER methodology. This tried and tested approach identifies and supports community-driven local/rural development initiatives carried out through partnerships between local authorities, private sector and civil society.

"An important focus of our policy is to support development of rural areas of Ar-

menia creating new opportunities for employment. We expect to see tangible change as a result of the implementation of the Programme and we are ready to contribute to that change on our side" mentioned Vahan Kerobyan, Minister of Economy of Armenia.

Thirdly, the EU for Increasing Migrants' Potential to Act for Development of Armenia (EU4IMPACT) Project implemented by ICMPD focuses on empowerment of Armenian labour migrants, returnees and their family members through mobilizing remittances and investing in local development and job creation across Armenia.

"It is symbolic that the Local Empowerment of Actors for Development Programme funded by the European Union and implemented in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Armenia is launched in as the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement enters into force. I am convinced that our joint efforts to implement this Programme will raise to a new level the process of applying European values in Armenia. I hope that successful implementation of this Programme in the three northern regions of Armenia will create good basis for adaptation of the LEAD philosophy in all regions of Armenia through our joint efforts", mentioned Vache Terteryan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia.

Expected results of the projects include the creation of more than 250 jobs; support to 160 rural businesses and funding of 150 migrant businesses; training of at least 500 beneficiaries on business management and operations. Overall, around 9000 people from the regions of Armenia will benefit from the Programme's activities.

Over 150 representatives of national, regional and local authorities, civil society organizations, international organizations and implementing partner organizations took part in the event through a combined offline and on-line format.

Impunity inspires and entails new crimes, Armenian FM tells Al Arabiya

Impunity inspires and entails new crimes, and these words are fully describing the attitude and stance of Turkey towards its neighbors, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian said in an interview with Al Arabiya.

The full text of the interview is provided below:

Question: Now from Abu Dhabi via ZOOM we connect with His Excellency Ara Aivazian, Foreign Minister of Armenia. Welcome to the program. First, what are the reasons for President Sargsyan to decline the signing of the decree.

Ara Aivazian: Well, thank you, indeed, it is a pleasure to be with you. Of course, you know that we have a very complicated situation in the aftermath of the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh. The situation also had its repercussions on the internal situation in Armenia. Of course, we are now confronting internal difficulties, but I would like to emphasize the fact that Armenia is a democracy, may not a perfect one. And the recent years we witnessed significant achievements in this regard. This is the path of development that we have chosen and we are not going to backtrack from this path. As for the internal processes within Armenia, this is going on strictly upon the provisions of the Constitution. And it's my conviction that the current difficulties can be overcome through dialogue, consolidation and unification of our society both in Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) to safeguard and protect our state and national interests.

Question: Mr. Aivazian, you said the



situation around Nagorno-Karabakh was the cause of the political crisis in Armenia and the attempted coup.

Ara Aivazian: Of course, the results of the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan had its negative impact on internal stability in Armenia but I strongly disagree with the qualification of the attempted coup d'état in Armenia.

Question: This is not an attempted coup, so what is it Minister?

Ara Aivazian: This was a kind of political positioning of some members of General Staff. They just made a political statement, which is not an attempted coup itself. This was also the assessment of different countries and international organizations. There are no elements of a coup d'état in Armenia. And Armenia continues to be a democracy and the current situation, as I said, will be dealt according to democratic standards in our society.

Question: Minister, Armenia said, that without Turkey's support to Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan would not have achieved military victory against Armenia. What is your assessment of Turkey's involvement in the crisis?

Ara Aivazian: Well, it's not a secret that Turkey played and continues to play an extremely destabilizing role in our re-

gion. That role was vividly exposed during recent 44-day aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan. That country not only merely supported Azerbaijan, but was strictly involved in all military actions and phases of this aggression started from planning to ground operations. I'd like to recall that Turkey together with Azerbaijan on the threshold of the war conducted a large-scale military drill with the involvement of Turkish air force. That country resorted to the non-usual toolkit: export of foreign terrorist fighters to our region for its power projection.

The involvement of Turkish-affiliated foreign terrorist fighters in the war is a well-known fact that was confirmed by international media, world leaders, and many international bodies, such as the UN Working Group on Mercenaries. And it is also verified by captured terrorists who revealed the chain from recruitment to their transfer to the region.

Hundred and six years have passed since the Armenian Genocide, yet Turkey continues to spearhead new atrocities against Armenia now in our region.

Yet the South Caucasus is not the only target of Turkey. World has continuously witnessed the destabilizing role of Turkey in the Middle East, in the Eastern Mediterranean and now in the South Caucasus. Impunity inspires and entails new crimes, and these words are fully describing the attitude and stance of Turkey towards its neighbours.

Question: Minister, you spoke about Turkey's role in the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. And you said

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Freedom House: Armenian authorities must protect democratic institutions and civil society

In response to the Armenian government's legislative proposal to deprive the Human Rights Defender's Office (HRDO) of its financial safeguards and a dramatic increase in harassment of civil society organizations (CSOs) by opponents of democratic reform in Armenia, Freedom House issued the following statement:

"The Armenian authorities must ensure the unobstructed functioning of democratic and human rights institutions in the country, including civil society," said Marc Behrendt, director for Europe & Eurasia at Freedom House. "In addition to a disinformation campaign to smear civil society



as a whole launched by opponents of democratic reform, the government is attempting to cut the funding independence of the HRDO. These troubling developments will

only exacerbate Armenia's political crisis."

In light of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and the current political crisis, it is more important than ever to preserve the ability of the HRDO and CSOs to raise awareness of the human rights violations committed during the conflict and call out restrictions on fundamental freedoms in the country. The Armenian authorities should support the HRDO and CSOs by maintaining active dialogue with them, upholding the rule of law, and holding the perpetrators of violence and hate speech to account.

Armenian Maral Najarian released from Azerbaijani captivity

A Lebanese-Armenian woman was set free on March 10 four months after being detained by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The 49-year-old woman, Maral Najarian, was flown from Baku to Beirut via Istanbul immediately after her release demanded by the Armenian and Lebanese governments.

Like hundreds of other Lebanese nationals of Armenian descent, Najarian and her sister Ani migrated to Armenia following last August's devastating explosion at Beirut's port. They decided to relocate to Artsakh just days before the September 27 outbreak of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Najarian did travel to Artsakh together with a Lebanese-Armenian friend, Viken Euljekian, on November 10 hours after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the six-hour war. They were detained in the



Artsakh town of Shushi and taken to Baku.

Najarian says they did not know that Shushi was captured by the Azerbaijani army earlier in November.

Euljekian, who lived in Shushi and worked as a taxi driver before the war, is still held in an Azerbaijani prison, facing terrorism charges condemned by the Armenian government and human rights groups.

Najarian risked similar accusations, with Azerbaijani media still portraying her as an enemy combatant.

"We are very grateful to everyone: Ar-

menia, Lebanon and Russia," said her sister remaining in Yerevan.

Najarian also said that she was held in solitary confinement in three different Azerbaijani prisons and never saw any other Armenian prisoners.

Several other Armenians were also captured by Azerbaijan troops when they travelled to Artsakh from Armenia on November 10.

A senior Artsakh official said in late December that at least 40 Artsakh Armenian civilians remain unaccounted for after the war. He expressed hope that most of them are still alive.

Azerbaijan is also believed to be holding more than 100 Armenian prisoners of war in what the Armenian side considers a gross violation of the ceasefire agreement brokered by Moscow.

Valentina Matvienko acted as mediator in the release of Maral Najarian

Speaker of Parliament Ararat Mirzoyan thanked Chairwoman of the Federation Council of Russia Valentina Matvienko for mediating the release of a Lebanese-Armenian woman from Azerbaijani captivity.

All women lawmakers of the Armenian parliament had written a letter to Matvienko asking for her help in achieving the release of Maral Najarian.

"I am planning to nominate Mrs. Mat-



viyenko to the National Assembly Council for the National Assembly Medal of Honor," Mirzoyan said in a statement, expressing gratitude to the Chairwoman of the Federation Council.

"I am hopeful that joint efforts with our partners will allow us to return all prisoners of war and captives as soon as possible," Mirzoyan added.

European Court notifies CoE Committee of Ministers about Armenian POWs

On March 9, the European Court of Human Rights, based on the numerous applications of the Armenian representative to the ECHR, as well as the fact that the Azerbaijani government repeatedly violated the deadlines set by the European Court and failed to provide complete information, made a decision to notify the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the issue of violations of the rights of Armenian civilians and prisoners of war held by Azerbaijan.

The decisions of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the application of an interim measure against Azerbaijan regarding prisoners of war are still in force. With the interim measures, the European Court ordered Azerbaijan to provide information on the conditions of detention of the detainees, their state of health, as well as the measures taken to return them.

As for the claims of interim measures against Armenia, the European Court noted that taking into account the nature of the in-

formation provided by the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Court decided not to apply interim measures, therefore it did not find it necessary to notify the Committee of Ministers.



page 8 ➡ Turkey provided fighters in the conflict. Is this role of Turkey still going on?

Ara Aivazian: Well, both Azerbaijan and Turkey are now claiming that conflict is solved. And by saying this they tried to validate the use of force as an effective means, legitimate means to solve the conflicts. I would like to stress that this is a very dangerous precedent for conflict resolutions in international relations. Now we are hearing confusing messages from official Ankara. And I would like to say that based on the common past with Turkey, it's high time not to be guided by the messages but real actions. And I believe that the international community should play a conducive role that Turkey changes its aggressive attitude towards Armenia.

Regarding foreign terrorist fighters and

mercenaries, which were exported, transferred to our region, I think this is an issue of regional and international security and that issue should be solved by an unequivocal stance of the international community. The terrorist fighters and mercenaries should be pulled out from our region.

Question: Minister, does Armenia consider that the international community is working hard to find a solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis?

Ara Aivazian: First and foremost, Armenia does not consider that the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan creates the basis for the solution of the conflict, nor an opportunity for regional cooperation. Armenia stands ready for the resumption of the peace process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, and they are Russia, US and France. We have to ad-

dress the core pending issues, which are not addressed in the statement of November 9, signed by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. I would like to remind that the essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial dispute; it is about the survival of autochthonous population of Artsakh of the Armenian origin, which lived there for thousands of years; it is about their rightful self-determination, their right to master their own destiny. So, we have to address the right of those people to self-determination, which entails also the issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. It should be very clear for Azerbaijan and Turkey that the current status quo, which occurred after the aggression and the illegal use of force can neither be stable, nor acceptable for ensuring a lasting peace, security and stability in the region.

Opening embassy in Yerevan to boost cooperation, says Ambassador of Netherlands to Armenia



Armenia has big opportunities in the high-tech and tourism sectors, and the government of the Netherlands is already working with the Armenian government in several directions, such as cadastre reforms and agriculture, the Ambassador of Netherlands to Armenia Nico Schermers told ARMENPRESS, presenting their plans and upcoming activities.

The ambassador attached importance to the establishment of the Dutch embassy in Yerevan, which in his words will make cooperation more effective. He said that now

the technical issues are being solved and soon the embassy will be opened.

"We have several political programs with the government of Armenia, first of all it is the support to rule of law and democracy in Armenia. The rule of law is important not only in terms of security, but also attracting foreign direct investments, and overall, in terms of economic development. Our next priority is supporting human rights. If people have equal opportunities for development and integration, and so on, then the country's economy will also be on

a high level," the Dutch ambassador said.

Schermers also highlighted cooperation in agriculture, stressing that it is a very important sector for Netherlands.

"I think that there are numerous cooperation areas and we can support Armenia, and Armenia has a lot to offer to us," he said.

Ambassador Schermers spoke highly about their work with the Armenian government. "There is always room for improvement, and this is the reason why we are opening an embassy in Armenia, so that we make our cooperation better and more effective. In addition, for me it is truly a pleasure to be in Armenia, to work with Armenians and to get to know the culture. I've met many Armenians and I received the warmth of Armenian hospitality. This is a very hospitable country and I hope that I will be here for many years," he said.

Since the beginning of his diplomatic mission in Armenia in August 2020, the Ambassador of the Netherlands says he has already managed to visit numerous cultural sites and sightseeing locations. He pointed out the temple of Garni, the Geghard monastery and the Symphony of Stones, a portion of the Garni Gorge.

"The Armenian mountains are unique, I spend a lot of time in Tsakhkadzor, which is one of my favorite places," he added.

Interview by Karen Khachatryan

Armenian Ambassador briefs US students on Armenian Genocide, Artsakh War



On March 11, H.E. Varuzhan Nersesyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the USA, provided an online lecture for the students of Dickenson Law faculty of the Penn University in the framework of the course

“Crimes against Humanity.”

Ambassador Nersesyan briefed the students about the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turkey in 1915 and highlighted the importance of the international recognition as a means of prevention for future genocides.

In this context the Ambassador mentioned the denial policy by Turkey and recalled some of the documents dated back to the beginning of the 20th century indicating the Genocide committed against Armenians.

The Ambassador once again expressed his gratitude to the countries

which recognized the Armenian Genocide and emphasized the importance of the resolutions passed by the US Congress in 2019.

During the lecture the Ambassador presented the challenges and the humanitarian crisis after the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh. In this context he stressed the issue of Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians and inhuman treatment depicted in numerous footages uploaded in social media.

The lecture continued in Q&A format.

Pan Armenian Council launches petition, urging President Biden to recognize the Armenian Genocide

The Pan Armenian Council of Western United States and its member organizations have launched an [online petition](#) urging President Joseph R. Biden to honor his pledge to reaffirm U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide in his annual remembrance statement by properly acknowledging the mass murder of 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children by the Ottoman Turkish government as genocide.

The online petition, hosted on [change.org](#)—an activism portal—provides a simple form to take action. The petition aims to collect thousands of signatures by April 24, 2021.

The campaign calls on the White House to end this shameful chapter of U.S. complicity in Turkey’s denial of this unpunished crime against humanity and unequivocally affirm the official U.S. policy established in a near unanimous historic bipartisan expression by Congress in 2019 through the passage of H.Res.296 and S.Res.150. Individuals are strongly urged to add their names to the petition to ensure that their voices are heard.

The Pan Armenian Council of Western USA is a community wide coalition of 23



organizations. It serves as a meeting ground for influential leading organizations to foster mutual understanding, coordination of efforts and consensus-building, all in the name of collective community interests and the welfare of Armenia and Artsakh.

Pan Armenian Council of Western United States of America and its member organizations:

Armenian Assembly of America
Armenian Bar Association
Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg of North America
Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Western District
Armenian General Benevolent Union, Western District
Armenian Evangelical Union of North America
Armenian Missionary Association of America

Armenian National Committee of America, Western Region
Armenian Relief Society of Western USA
Armenian Revolutionary Federation of Western USA
Armenian Society of Los Angeles – Iranahay Miutyun
Armenian Youth Association of California – Irakahay Miutyun
Armenian Youth Federation of Western USA
Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of the Western USA
Homenetmen Western USA
Iraqi Armenian Family Association of Los Angeles
Kessab Educational Association
Organization of Istanbul Armenians
Service Employees International Union – Armenian Caucus
Southern California Armenian Democrats
Tekeyan Cultural Association
Unified Young Armenians
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America
Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America

Why Are Aliyev, Erdogan and Putin siding with Armenia's Prime Minister?



By Harut Sassounian

As the situation in Armenia is getting more chaotic on a daily basis, baseless accusations are becoming a common practice. It is no longer possible to distinguish fact from fiction.

Sadly, words like 'traitor' and 'bought by Turks or Azeris' are being used by Armenians to accuse fellow Armenians without a shred of evidence. We have all heard multiple times that the territories around Artsakh were given up by the former presidents long before the war and that Armenian traitors helped the enemy by disclosing our military secrets or urged soldiers to stop fighting during the war. These accusations have been repeated so often that a lot of Armenians believe them to be true. Never mind that no evidence has been presented, tarnishing the reputations of those they disagree with. If there were so many traitors during the war, how come not one such traitor has been arrested and convicted for treason? Normally, traitors during a war are immediately arrested, convicted and shot by a firing squad.

I do not believe that there are any traitors among us nor are there Armenians who sold their soul to the enemy for a handful of dollars. These are made up stories just because we disagree with each other. Regrettably, most Armenians do not know how to carry out a civilized conversation without insulting those they

disagree with.

In this analysis, I will avoid using such terms as traitor and sold out, and stick as much as possible to the facts, no matter how difficult they are to discern.

One issue that keeps coming up is the fact that the presidents of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia seem to prefer Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan over the opposition. This does not mean that Pashinyan is a traitor or is working for the interests of Armenia's enemies. I believe that Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia are siding with Pashinyan for two main reasons:

1. All three realize that Pashinyan, defeated in the Artsakh war and having signed a capitulation document, is in no position to go against the wishes of Azerbaijan and Turkey, and especially Russia. Whereas, as a former member of the opposition, Pashinyan was totally anti-Russian, he changed his tune and supported all Russian initiatives even before the war. After the war, he is completely beholden to Putin and does not dare to deviate one bit from the Russian President's directives. This became even more so after Pres. Putin repeatedly praised Pashinyan for signing the Nov. 10, 2020 trilateral agreement and abiding by its terms. Azerbaijan and Turkey are also satisfied that, after their defeat of Armenia, there is a leader like Pashinyan who is fully going along with the terms of the agreement.

2. Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia also realize that should Pashinyan's rule topple, his successor may not be as amenable to comply with the terms of the trilateral agreement. While a defeated country is in no position to contest these imposed terms, the fact that Pashinyan's opponents are expressing their opposition to that agreement means that Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia may have to deal with a new Armenian leader who will question the terms of the agreement that the three countries consider a fait accompli. So, Aliyev, Erdogan and Putin naturally prefer to deal with Pashinyan based on their own interests rather than

because Pashinyan is their 'agent.' At best, we can say that Pashinyan is reluctantly going along with these three leaders. At worst, he truly believes that the ceasefire agreement is in the best interest of Armenia, paving the way to the lifting of blockaded transportation routes, thus potentially boosting Armenia's economy.

We can be on different sides of the above analysis, but one thing is very clear. Pashinyan should not cross any red lines which are totally contrary to Armenia's national interests. It is one thing to be obligated to go along with your enemies after your defeat, but it is a whole different thing to enthusiastically comply with their wishes, mistakenly believing that the enemy's-imposed actions are in Armenia's own interest. Aliyev and Erdogan have repeatedly stated that they are willing to allow Armenia to use their transportation routes under certain conditions which were: 1. Return Artsakh territories to Azerbaijan (which has been mostly accomplished through the use of force), 2. Recognize the existing borders of the Republic of Turkey (no more territorial demands from Turkey), and 3. Discontinue the international pursuit of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. More recently, Aliyev added a new demand: signing a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan which means that Armenia will give up claiming Artsakh as an Armenian territory.

In my view, these Azeri and Turkish demands should be rejected by Armenia's current leaders. These are red lines that no Armenian government should cross, depriving future Armenian generations of their right to pursue the nation's just demands.

It remains to be seen if Armenia's next leaders will be able to find a way to minimize the losses from the war. But one thing is certain: Pashinyan must resign immediately allowing a new and more competent leadership trying to manage the catastrophic situation Armenia finds itself in.

Turkey pressed Canada to approve export of air-strike gear later used in Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict

Ottawa issued export permits for made-in-Canada target-acquisition gear to be shipped to Turkey last year, despite an arms embargo, after assurances from Turkish officials that the equipment would only be used to protect civilians under attack in Syria, newly unveiled documents show, *The Globe and Mail* reports.

Federal government documents released to the foreign affairs committee show that Turkey had pressed Ottawa to allow the shipment on the grounds that it was necessary to safeguard civilians in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

A May 6, 2020, memo by Marta Morgan, deputy minister of foreign affairs, recommends to then-foreign affairs minister François-Philippe Champagne that he permit the export of the Wescam gear to the Turks. In the memo, Ms. Morgan said this represents an "exceptional circumstances" case.

Turkey is an ally of Canada in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization military alliance, but in October, 2019, Ottawa halted the approval process for new export permits



to ship military goods to Turkey, citing Ankara's "military incursion into Syria." It followed Turkey's invasion of northeastern Syria in an assault on Kurdish forces.

And in April, 2020, the federal government released a public caution that prospective exporters should assume requests to ship Group 2 military goods would be rejected. Group 2 is a sprawling category that includes most goods that are considered weapons.

However, Global Affairs pressed Mr. Champagne to allow an exception on humanitarian grounds.

"Based on assurances provided to you by the Turkish foreign minister, [Canadian] officials have assessed that they are

intended for use to help protect civilians in Idlib," the foreign affairs deputy minister wrote.

Asked for comment, the Turkish embassy in Ottawa defended its conduct.

"We will not rush to comment on the documents that were released ... they will be analyzed in due course," the Turkish diplomatic mission said in a statement to *The Globe and Mail*.

The embassy said Canada should stop blocking exports to an ally. "We strongly believe that the restrictions on export permits of controlled goods and technology to NATO ally Turkey are unjustified and misguided. Turkey meticulously upholds human rights and NATO standards."

Drones played a major role in the recent Nagorno-Karabakh fighting and the parliamentary committee has been probing the means by which restricted Canadian imaging technology made by L3Harris Wescam turned up in drones being operated by Azerbaijan. The gear from Wescam, based in Burlington, Ont., had been authorized for export to Turkey only.

Youri Djorkaeff in Armenia to promote FIFA Foundation's programs



Youri Djorkaeff, the CEO of FIFA foundation is visited the FFA Technical Center/Football academy in Yerevan.

The perspectives of development of Armenian football were discussed during the meeting with Football Federation President Armen Melikbekyan.

Youri Djorkaeff also met with Joaquin Caparros and other members of Armenian national team coaching staff.

"This is my first visit to Armenia as head of the FIFA Foundation. At FIFA we have developed a program that helps under-

stand the demands of the football community and promote football among the youth and children around the world," Djorkaeff said.

"With my friend Armen Melikbekyan we are trying to implement the Football for School program in Armenia. During my stay we'll try to understand how the capacities of the FIFA Foundation can help the Armenian people," he added.

More than 150 Artsakh households receive humanitarian aid through Tufenkian-Izmirlian partnership



More than 150 families in three villages in Artsakh's Martuni region have received desperately needed humanitarian assistance packages, thanks to a recent partnership between the Tufenkian Foundation and the Yerevan-based Izmirlian Foundation.

The residents of Herher and its surrounding villages, Kherkhan and Tso-vategh, came under heavy bombardment during the 44-day war against Azerbaijan late last year. Over the past few months, thousands of families who had fled the region during the intense battles have returned to their homes, many of which have

sustained substantial damages.

Because of the war, many villagers also lost their harvests and were unable to adequately prepare their food reserves for the winter.

"The villagers are returning to their ancestral homes—these villages and towns are all they have known, and this is the region that made them the people they are. They are returning with the hope of rebuilding their lives and their homes, not only for themselves but for generations to come," said Tufenkian Foundation executive director Raffi Doudaklian.

The first distribution took place on Dec. 25, 2020. While many around the world were celebrating Christmas, the Tufenkian Foundation staff, accompanied by several dedicated volunteers from the United States, traveled to the villages to help with the effort.

The families in the three villages were given special food packages, which included flour, rice, buckwheat, pasta, oil,

and other staples. One of the volunteers, Dickran Khodanian of Los Angeles, Calif., said that the aid could not have come at a more crucial time for the villagers.

"The humanitarian aid distribution came at a time when there was not much help getting to the residents of these distant villages. I am happy that organizations like Tufenkian and Izmirlian continue to focus their efforts and energy in these places; I am glad that the needs of our compatriots there are not ignored," explained Khodanian. Subsequent distributions were carried out in the region on Jan. 23 and March 5.

"The purpose of our partnership with the Izmirlian Foundation is to help ensure that the residents of the affected villages can overcome the challenges of the harsh winter. This food assistance helped lessen the financial burden on villagers during these months, enabling them to take care of other necessary expenses," said Doudaklian.

Important archeological materials discovered during renovation of Armenian kindergarten in Jerusalem



Father Baret Yeretsian, head of the real estate office of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, informed that important archeological materials have been discovered during the renovation of the Armenian kin-

dergarten in Jerusalem, which need more detailed examination, ARMENPRESS reports regionmonitor.com informed.

One of the valuable findings is the large cross-stone (khachkar), which dates back to



the 12th century or earlier. It is a typical Armenian cross with the inscription "Lord Jesus, remember", below it an Armenian flowered cross is depicted, as well as grape motifs.

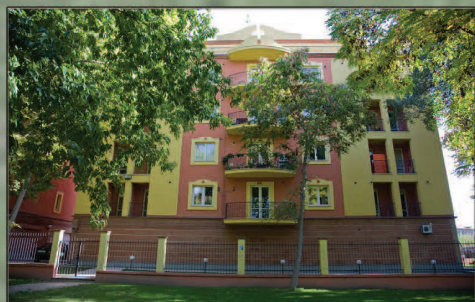
A mosaic was also discovered, judging by the style, probably from the Byzantine period. Copper coins from the Byzantine and (or) Mamluk period have also been found.

Those findings show the early Armenian presence and pilgrimage in Jerusalem.



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