

## U.S. urges Armenia, Azerbaijan to de-escalate border dispute



U.S. -- U.S. State Department Spokesman Ned Price speaks during a press briefing at the State Department in Washington, February 8, 2021

The United States has called on Armenia and Azerbaijan to pull back their troops from contested portions of their border, saying that a continuing military standoff there must be resolved “urgently and peacefully.”

The U.S. State Department also called for the immediate release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, including the six soldiers who were captured by Azerbaijani forces on the border early on Thursday.

“The United States considers any movements along the non-demarcated areas of the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan to be provocative and unnecessary,” the department spokesman, Ned Price, said a statement released on Thursday evening.

“We reject the use of force to demarcate the border and call on both sides to return to their previous positions and to cease military fortification of the non-demarcated border and the emplacement of landmines,” he said.

Price said that Armenian and Azerbaijani troops should retreat

to the positions which they held as of May 11. He welcomed Armenia’s “statements of intent to this effect.”

“These actions will de-escalate tensions and create space for a peaceful negotiation process to demarcate the border on an urgent basis. The United States is prepared to assist these efforts,” added the official.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan proposed earlier on May 27 that both sides withdraw their troops from the disputed border areas and let Russia and/or the United States and France, the two other countries co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group, deploy observers there. He said that should be followed by a process of “ascertaining border points” supervised by the international community.

Pashinyan told members of his Civil Contract party on Friday that one of the co-chair countries has already “tentatively reacted” to his proposal. “I hope that the two other co-chair countries will also react,” he said without naming any of them.

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## Iran stands for peaceful settlement of all issues in the region – Zarif



Iran stands for peaceful settlement of all issues in the region, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in Yerevan after his meeting with Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian.

Mr. Zarif added that the countries' territorial integrity and the rights of peoples should be respected.

"Any escalation that leads to human losses is a matter of concern and we want this issue to be solved peacefully as soon as possible," Zarif said, commenting on the border standoff after Azerbaijan's intrusion into Armenia's sovereign territory.

Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian said, in turn, that Armenia is in favor of resolving the latest tension through political and diplomatic means.

"We very much appreciate that in these alarming days and circumstances, our

age-old friend and neighbor, the Iranian Foreign Minister and my very good colleague Zarif, paid a regional visit and arrived in Armenia today, which testifies to Iran's unselfish intention to work for stability and security in the region," he said.

He emphasized that Iran is a very important neighbor and partner that plays a key role in the stability and security architecture of the region. Ara Aivazian emphasized Armenia's willingness to make every effort to deepen the interstate cooperation with Iran.

## Captured Armenian servicemen must be returned immediately and unconditionally – MFA

Azerbaijani military units, which have infiltrated the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia since May 12, continue to carry out provocative actions in a number of directions, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

"As a result of one of them, in the early morning of May 27 in the border part of Gegharkunik region of the Republic of Armenia six servicemen of the RA Armed Forces were surrounded and captured, when carrying out engineering works in the protection area of the N military unit of



the RA Armed Forces," the Ministry said.

The Ministry notes that these provocative actions by the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan are aimed at further aggravating the situation,

which could seriously jeopardize regional peace and stability.

"We strongly condemn the use of force by Azerbaijan against the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia, emphasizing that the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan is responsible for all the actions and consequences of the Azerbaijani armed forces" the statement reads.

The captured Armenian servicemen must be returned immediately and unconditionally, the Foreign Ministry stated.

## Russian, Armenian Defense chiefs 'agree' on border crisis

Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan and his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu agreed on how to deal with Armenia's ongoing border dispute with Azerbaijan when they met in Moscow on May 28, according to the Armenian Defense Ministry.

A statement on the talks released by the ministry said Harutyunyan briefed Shoigu on "details of Azerbaijani army units' intrusion into Armenia's territory" and measures taken by the Armenian military in response.

"The sides looked into possible ways of resolving the situation and reached agreement on necessary steps," it added without elaborating.

The Russian Defense Ministry did not report such understandings in its statement on the meeting, which was also attended by other senior Russian and Armenian

military officials. It only publicized Shoigu's opening remarks at the meeting.

The Russian defense minister said the two sides will discuss "all acute problems that have arisen lately" in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone but did not comment on them. He also praised Russia's close military ties with Armenia and said the two nations are "reinforcing our military cooperation."

Shoigu also spoke of a "successful implementation" of Russian-Armenia defense treaties and stressed the importance of Russian military presence in Armenia. Harutyunyan likewise said that Russian-Armenian military cooperation is "developing very successfully."

The two ministers twice spoke by phone earlier this month shortly after Azerbaijani troops reportedly advanced several kilometers and crossed some

sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, triggering an Armenian military buildup in those areas.

Armenia formally asked the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to help it restore its territorial integrity. It also requested separate military aid from Russia.

So far Moscow has not publicly sided with Yerevan in the dispute, offering instead to act as a mediator in a delimitation and demarcation of the border.



## Pashinyan criticizes Russian-led military bloc



(RFE/RL) - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan criticized the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on May 26 for not publicly siding with Armenia in its ongoing border dispute with Azerbaijan.

Armenia appealed to the CSTO after Azerbaijani troops reportedly advanced into some of its border areas two weeks ago. Yerevan asked the military alliance to invoke Article 2 of its founding treaty which requires the CSTO to discuss a collective response to grave security

threats facing member states.

The foreign ministers of Armenia, Russia, and four other ex-Soviet republics making up the bloc discussed the border dispute when they met in Tajikistan later in May. They expressed

concern over the continuing tensions but did not issue joint statements in support of Armenia.

“The speed of CSTO actions does not satisfy us,” Pashinyan said during his government’s question-and-answer session in the Armenian parliament. “But we will continue to ... work with our partners and present further clarifications of the situation.”

Pashinyan complained that CSTO member states have not formulated “explicit positions” on what Yerevan

regards as Azerbaijani intrusion into Armenian territory.

“Such a position is expressed at the working level but not publicly, and we want clarity on this issue,” he said.

A CSTO spokesman, Vladimir Zaynetdinov, told the RIA Novosti news agency later in the day that the bloc’s Moscow-based secretariat “took note” of Pashinyan’s remarks.

Zaynetdinov also cited a statement on the border crisis made by the CSTO’s deputy secretary general, Valery Semerikov, earlier this week.

Semerikov called for urgent “political and diplomatic” measures to end the crisis. He also stressed the need for a demarcation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Pashinyan noted that Yerevan could turn to the UN Security Council “if it turns out that the instruments of the CSTO or the treaty on the joint Russian-Armenian military contingent are not enough to resolve this problem.”

## CSTO has taken note of Armenian acting PM’s appeal

The Collectives Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has taken note of Armenian acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s appeal, CSTO press secretary Vladimir Zainetdinov told reporters on May 26, [TASS](#) reports.

He said the work on holding consultations in accordance with the instructions of the chairman of the CSTO Collective Security Council Emomali Rahmon continues.

Zainetdinov reminded that during the meeting of the coordination meeting of the chairmen of the defense and security committees on Tuesday CSTO Deputy Secretary General Valery

Semerikov said that the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border requires urgent measures, primarily of a political and diplomatic nature, as well as implementation of demarcation and delimitation on this section of the state border.

On May 26, Pashinyan said at the National Assembly that the Armenian side does not exclude the possibility of applying to the UN Security Council because of the situation on the border with Azerbaijan, if the CSTO mechanisms fail to help solve the problem. In addition, he said that Armenia is not satisfied with the “speed of action” of the CSTO on the problem of the

border with Azerbaijan, and added that the organization was yet to publicly express a clear position on this matter.

On May 14, Pashinyan appealed to the current chairman of the CSTO Collective Security Council, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, with a request to instruct to immediately activate the mechanism of emergency consultations in order to coordinate the positions of the CSTO member states and take measures to eliminate the emerging “threat to security and territorial integrity” in Syunik. Rahmon instructed to hold appropriate consultations.

## Armenia’s acting Foreign Minister resigns

Armenia’s acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian has submitted his resignation on May 27, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan informs. Aivazian gave no reasons for his resignation.

Ayvazian appeared to have tendered his resignation immediately after taking part in an emergency meeting of Armenia’s Security Council which discussed mounting tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.



## Minsk Group Co-Chairs call for release of all POWs, stress that use or threat of force to resolve border disputes is unacceptable



The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stephane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) released the following statement on May 28:

The Co-Chairs held consultations

with International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Peter Maurer and UN High Commissioner of Refugees Filipino Grandi in Geneva 27 and 28 May. The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office (PRCiO) Andrzej Kasprzyk also participated in the meetings. The Co-Chairs take note of the reported detention of six Armenian soldiers on May 27 and call for the release of all prisoners of war and other detainees on an all for all basis. The Co-Chairs underscore the obligation to treat detainees in accordance with international humanitarian law. The Co-Chairs strongly urge the sides to lift all restrictions on humanitarian access to Nagorno-Karabakh immediately, and call on the sides to implement in full the commitments they undertook under the

November 9 ceasefire declaration.

The Co-Chairs also note with concern several recent reports of incidents on the non-demarcated Armenia-Azerbaijan border. The use or threat of force to resolve border disputes is not acceptable. We call on both sides to take immediate steps, including the relocation of troops, to de-escalate the situation and to begin negotiations to delimitate and demarcate the border peacefully. The Co-Chairs stand ready to assist in facilitating this process.

Having in mind the terms of their OSCE mandate and the aspirations of all the people of the region for a stable, peaceful, and prosperous future, the Co-Chairs again call on the sides to reengage under their auspices at the earliest opportunity.

## China supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Armenia

On May 26, political consultations were held between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and the People's Republic of China. From the Armenian side, the consultations were chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister Avet Adonts, and on the Chinese side by Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Le Yucheng.

During the consultations, the parties discussed a wide range of issues on the international, regional and bilateral agenda. The Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister presented in detail the situation established as a result of intrusion of Azerbaijani armed forces into the sovereign territory of Armenia.

Avet Adonts noted that Azerbaijan fails to fulfil its obligations under the trilateral



statement of November 9, 2020, continuing to hold Armenian prisoners of war and civilians hostage. Azerbaijan obstructs the entry of international humanitarian organizations into Nagorno Karabakh, destroys the Armenian historical, cultural and religious heritage.

It was noted that a lasting settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be achieved through negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Deputy Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Le Yucheng noted that China supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia, emphasizing that the full implementation of the provisions of the November 9 trilateral statement is the guarantee of regional security and stability.

The parties hailed the successful cooperation in the joint fight against coronavirus. Avet Adonts thanked the Chinese side for providing Armenia with 100,000 doses of CoronaVac vaccine.

A number of issues related to bilateral cooperation in the economic, scientific-educational, cultural and humanitarian spheres were also touched upon.

## Spanish parliamentary panel urges release of Armenian POWs, withdrawal of Azerbaijani troops

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Spanish Congress has accepted a motion urging the government to demand that the Azerbaijani authorities implement the November 9 statement, the Armenian Embassy in Spain informs.

The MPs also call for humane treatment

of prisoners of war, immediate release of all Armenian civilians and military servicemen held in Azerbaijan.

The motion urges to provide information on all persons detained in Azerbaijan and withdraw troops from Armenia's Syunik region.



## EU says developments on Armenian-Azerbaijani border worrying, calls for release of POWs



Recent developments on the Armenia/Azerbaijan border are both dangerous and worrying, Peter Stano, lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

said in a statement, adding that immediate de-escalation is needed.

“The European Union urges both sides to refrain from any further military deployment and actions. All forces should pull back to positions held before 12 May and both sides should engage in negotiations on border delimitation and demarcation. We continue to call on Azerbaijan to release all prisoners of war and detainees without delay. We

welcome all efforts aimed at decreasing tensions, including proposals for a possible international observation mission,” the Spokesperson said.

“The EU is ready to provide expertise and help on border delimitation and demarcation, as well as to support much needed confidence building measures, in order to move towards sustainable peace and prosperity for the South Caucasus,” he concluded.

## Belgian Parliament calls for immediate release of all Armenian POWs

The Belgian Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution calling on Azerbaijan to immediately release all remaining Armenian prisoners, including civilians, in accordance with Article 8 of the November 9, 2020 statement on ceasefire and conventions, the Armenian National Committee of Belgium informs.

The Parliament strongly condemned the numerous allegations of torture of prisoners.

The Parliament called on the federal government to take appropriate measures to support the immediate, unconditional release and safe return of all remaining Armenian captives by Azerbaijan.



According to the European Court of Human Rights, 188 prisoners of war are still in Azerbaijan. The ceasefire agreement signed on November 9 provided for the immediate and full exchange of prisoners. However, Azerbaijan not only failed to

release the captives, but also arrested other Armenian soldiers and civilians in the days following the end of the fighting. Armenia, in turn, released all prisoners of war as soon as the fighting ended.

In addition, on Thursday, May 27, Azerbaijani forces captured six more Armenian servicemen on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. This follows the recent incursions into the Armenian territory at several points of the border.

The Armenian Committee of Belgium calls on the government to back the request of the parliament and to intervene to ensure the immediate release of all Armenian prisoners.

## A group of EU Ministers to visit Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan – Borrell

A group of EU Ministers will visit Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Josep Borrell has said.

“A group of [European Union] Ministers will visit the three South Caucasus countries on my behalf to show our readiness to further engage in the region,” Borrell said at the informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers in Lisbon, Portugal.

The Foreign Affairs Ministers of the

European Union (EU) gathered for an in-person meeting in Lisbon on 27 May, with the usual chairmanship of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell.

As a rule, this informal meeting, known as Gymnich, is organized by the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. The main items on the agenda for this meeting will be EU-Africa relations, the unresolved conflicts in the Eastern Neighborhood and

the Indo-Pacific region. There will also be an exchange of views with the Jordanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ayman Al Safadi, who has been invited to take part in the working lunch.



## Armenian-Iranian business forum held in Tehran



An Armenian-Iranian business forum was held in Tehran with the support of the Armenian Embassy. The conference was organized in the Chamber of Commerce of Iran within the framework of the working visit of Armenia's State Revenue Committee Chairman (SRC) Edward

Hovhannisyanyan to the Islamic Republic.

Prior to the conference, a private conversation took place between SRC Chairman Edward Hovhannisyanyan and Chairman of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce Gholam-Hossein Shafe'i. The parties attached importance to the cooperation between the businessmen of the two countries and highlighted the huge potential for development.

During the conference, the businessmen discussed the new changes in the spheres of tax, customs legislation and administration of Armenia. The SRC representatives briefed the Iranian colleagues on the reforms implemented in recent years,

which have had a significant impact on the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries.

Edward Hovhannisyanyan expressed readiness to organize regular consultations with representatives of the business sector in order to discuss the existing problems and search for ways to solve them.



## Armenian, Iranian ministers sign memorandum of understanding in Yerevan

Armenia's acting Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan received Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammed Eslami and his delegation who arrived in Armenia on a working visit.

The meeting was also attended by Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri.

Welcoming the guests, Mr. Kerobyan said Armenia and Iran have formed firm partnering relations in the field of economy, noting that the Armenian side is interested in expanding the mutually beneficial cooperation and commercial relations with Iran, as well as taking practical steps to implement the agreements reached.

In his turn the Iranian minister thanked for the meeting and reaffirmed the



readiness of the Iranian side to implement initiatives contributing to deepening the economic ties and expressed confidence that the great cooperation potential existing between Armenia and Iran can be used for the implementation of the joint programs of the Armenian and Iranian companies.

A wide range of issues of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting.

The sides also discussed the launch of new direct flights between Armenia and Iran, which, they said, will boost tourism.

Vahan Kerobyan noted that there is a readiness in both sides to register practical results and hoped that the agreements which were reached at the meeting will contribute to the rise of the bilateral trade and transit cargo transportation. For this purpose, the two ministries signed a memorandum of understanding according to which a joint working group will be formed to examine the procedures obstructing the trade-economic relations and present proposals over them.

The document has been signed by acting minister Vahan Kerobyan and Iranian minister Mohammed Eslami.

## Cenbank governor forecasts drop in consumer loans, growth in mortgage

Central Bank governor Martin Galstyan forecasts drop in consumer loans and growth in mortgage loans during 2021.

Speaking in parliament in response to lawmaker Mikayel Melkumyan's question, he said the cenbank has discussed with all banks their strategic plans for the current year. The banking system will try to be



conservative in 2021, namely in terms of consumer loans.

"Last year, we had an 8% drop in the population's income. Therefore, they decided to introduce more strict conditions for loans, and they could also make some revision of the interest rate, which will impact the demand for consumer loans."

## Biden Administration proposes \$24,005,000 post-war aid package for Armenia

The Biden Administration proposes \$24,005,000 post-war aid package for Armenia. The President's budget makes no mention of Artsakh Republic, reports the Armenian National Committee of America.

A broad, bipartisan coalition of U.S. Senators and Representatives has repeatedly called upon the Administration to provide at least \$100,000,000 in U.S. aid to Armenia and Artsakh.

"President Biden's business-as-usual budget for Armenia – proposed amid a humanitarian crisis across Artsakh and Armenia created by Azerbaijan's



aggression – falls far short of the desperate needs faced by tens of thousands of Armenians displaced by Baku's ethnic-cleansing" said Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the ANCA.

"Our government has found the funds

to ship \$120,000,000 in U.S. military aid to oil-rich Azerbaijan, yet is proposing just a fraction of this amount for the Artsakh families destroyed and displaced by the Azerbaijani army. The Congress needs to set this right – zeroing out all U.S. arms and aid to Baku and sending a robust U.S. assistance package to Artsakh and Armenia," he said.

A separate line item in the budget calls for \$6,050,000 in International Narcotics and Law Enforcement spending in Armenia.

## Armenia's economy shows activeness as 2.6% growth registered in Jan.-April for the first time since COVID-19 spread



Armenia's economic activity index increased 2.6% in January-April 2021

compared to January-April 2020, according to the data released by the Statistical Committee.

Industrial production volume increased 0.9%. Construction volume increased 20.3% compared to January-April 2020. The growth in trade turnover comprised 4.8%, whereas the services volume (without trade) registered a 2.9% decline.

Consumer price index increased 5.4%, the industrial production price index – 8.1%. Electricity production volume

increased 3.1%.

7.2% increase in external trade turnover volumes has been registered in January-April 2021: moreover, the export great by 16.7% (comprising 818.7 million USD) and the import by 2.2% (comprising 1351.6 million USD).

In April 2021, compared to April 2020, the economic activity increased 23.2%, the construction volume – 87.7%, external trade turnover – 47.5%.

## Discussion on border points possible only after Azerbaijani troops leave Armenian territory



The clarification of the Armenian and Azerbaijani border points can be discussed only after the Azerbaijani military leave the territory of the Republic of Armenia, acting Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan

told *Armenpress*.

The comments come after Azerbaijan's Prime Minister said the Russian proposals on solving the border crisis with Armenia was acceptable to Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan supports the proposal of the Russian side to establish a trilateral commission on the delimitation and demarcation of the Azerbaijani-Armenian border," Ali Asadov said at the sitting of CIS Heads of Government in Minsk.

Mher Grigoryan said the Russian proposals on resolving the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border are acceptable for Armenia, and the Armenian

side presented its position in writing to its Russian partners on May 19.

"According to it, the clarification of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border points can be discussed only in case the Azerbaijani military units leave the territory of the Republic of Armenia. In this context, we also emphasized the return of our captured soldiers," Mher Grigoryan said.

He stressed that Armenia reaffirms the proposal to withdraw troops from the border on both sides, relocate them to permanent locations, and proceed to clarifying the border points.

## Armenia-Iran dialogue is of strategic importance: Nikol Pashinyan receives Iran's Foreign Minister



Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was in Armenia on a working visit.

Welcoming the Iranian Foreign Minister to Yerevan, Nikol Pashinyan said:

“Our good-neighborly relations with Iran are of strategic importance. The common border with Iran has ensured the security of our country in a number of ways ever since the first years of Armenia’s independence. It is my pleasure to note that there is a similar perception in Iran about our relationship.

Our economic ties have developed over several decades, especially in Syunik region; there has always been a great interest in implementing joint projects. We have set up a free economic zone in Meghri with a view to deepening economic exchanges with friendly Iran.

A number of adverse factors, including COVID-19, prevented this free economic zone from gaining enough momentum, but we are convinced that it can become a strong fulcrum for our two countries’ economic development. We are indeed interested in it, and we have already discussed the possibility of deepening our high-level political dialogue. We are similarly holding discussions in the security sphere: there are specific issues high on the bilateral agenda. Armenia-Iran dialogue is of strategic importance, and therefore, we must make efforts to succeed.

You may be aware that some tensions have recently emerged on the border with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani armed forces crossed into Armenia’s sovereign territory in several sections. Our position is unequivocal: all units of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces must leave our territory.

And we are making political-diplomatic efforts to this end, first of all, because our partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization have been urging us from the very first days to try to settle the matter through diplomatic-political means.

You are aware that according to the Collective Security Treaty, aggression against our country implies that other CSTO-member nations should get involved in hostilities. Of course, it is our wish that the issue be resolved through diplomatic and political means. Unfortunately, we had a victim yesterday. A serviceman of the Armenian Armed Forces was killed with a gunshot fired by representatives of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces. So, the situation is quite tense; this meeting is a good opportunity to learn Iran’s views on ways of addressing the crisis.”

Iran’s Foreign Minister stated, in turn: “Esteemed Prime Minister, let me thank you for providing this opportunity to my colleagues. And let me convey to you warm greetings on behalf of President Rouhani and Mr. Jahangiri. Armenia has always been our good friend; our relations are deeply rooted in centuries. Iran and Armenia are cooperating in several areas as vividly evidenced by the latest visit of the Iranian Minister of Urban Development and Roads, which proved quite successful. And I hope that after the end of this pandemic we will be able to further develop bilateral relations in the economic sphere.

The operations of the Meghri free economic zone, as well as the Iran-Nakhichevan-Armenia railway can be very effective for both countries. A good agreement has been reached. And I hope we will be able to step up the economic activity in Syunik region in the near future. This is the importance we give to bilateral relations.

I have had a very strategic dialogue with our Armenian partners; our representative, our negotiator will arrive in Armenia at the first opportunity as a follow-up to the ongoing dialogue. There are many important issues, both bilateral and regional, that need to be addressed.

We want peace in this region. And we have always highlighted the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the peaceful resolution of crises. The Islamic Republic of Iran prioritizes respect for international law.

In order to resolve the recent escalation, three visits were paid from our country to Armenia. I was the first to pay a visit, then our special envoy came to Armenia,



and now I am visiting Armenia again. I am sorry that you have been a victim of this new escalation. Yesterday I had a very detailed and meaningful conversation with the President of Azerbaijan. I hope that today’s meeting, like the one I had with my esteemed colleague, will help resolve the crisis. Thank you again.”

The interlocutors went on to discuss the steps aimed at resolving the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The Iranian Foreign Minister assured of his country’s keen interest in reinstating regional stability, preserving and ensuring Armenia’s territorial integrity.

Nikol Pashinyan and Mohammad Javad Zarif touched upon a number of issues related to the further development of cooperation between the two countries in the field of economy. Continued interaction in the frame of the gas / electricity swap program was discussed during the meeting. In particular, the parties considered it necessary to extend the term of the program, step up the volume of gas and electricity exchanged, implement joint infrastructure projects and expand relations in the fields of education and culture.

The Acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran exchanged views on the joint efforts aimed at addressing the current situation and achieving stability and lasting peace in the region.



## 23 parties, 4 blocs bid for participation in snap parliamentary elections



Pan-Armenian National Statehood Party  
 Prosperous Armenia Party  
 Armenian Homeland Party  
 National Agenda Party  
 Christian-Democratic Party  
 European Party of Armenia

Armenian Eagles United Armenia Party

According to the Electoral Code and the schedule established by the Central Electoral Commission, the registration of the electoral lists of the parties and blocs participating in the snap elections will be completed until May 31, 18:00.

Political forces will be vying for at least 101 seats in Armenia’s new parliament that will be elected on June 20 under the system of proportional representation.

Under Armenian law, the parties need to win at least 5 percent of the vote in order to be represented in the National Assembly. The vote threshold for blocs is set at 7 percent.

Twenty-three parties and four blocs of parties have bid for participation in the snap parliamentary elections on June 20. The political forces had until 6 pm today to submit the necessary documents to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). The CEC has five days to process the applications.

**Blocs of parties:**

- “Armenia” Alliance
- “Free Homeland” Alliance
- “I have the Honor” Alliance
- Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats

**Parties:**

- Civil Contract Party
- Fair Armenia Party
- Republic Party

- Citizen’s Decision Social Democratic Party
- Our Home is Armenia Party
- National-Democratic Pole Party
- United Homeland Party
- 5165 National Conservative Movement Party
- Bright Armenia Party
- Rise (Verelq) Party
- Freedom Party
- Liberal Party
- Armenian National Congress Party
- Sovereign Armenia Party
- Awakening National Christian Party
- Democratic Party of Armenia



## Armenia marks 103rd anniversary of First Republic

The 1918 Republic of Armenia barely lasted two years. It was, however, a historic political entity – the first expression of Armenian sovereignty since 1375.

Its efforts led to the establishment of a Soviet Armenian Republic, which, in turn, allowed for an independent Armenia upon the collapse of the USSR seventy years later.

In 1917 after the February Revolution Russian Provisional Government dissolved the Viceroyalty of Caucasus and established the Transcaucasian Special Committee. During that period of time steps were undertaken for the Armenian refugees to return back to Western Armenia. By the end of 1917 the number of refugees was about 390 thousand. In September 1917 the Armenian National Committee was formed in Tbilisi, where the representatives of the Armenian Revolutionary Party of Dashnaktsutun had priority.

In December the Yeznka Ceasefire was signed between the newly established Transcaucasian Committee and Ottoman Army. In its turn the Soviet Government announced a Decree on Turkish Armenia, recognizing the right of Armenians from Western Armenia to the Self Determination, including even the creation of an independent state. However, Turkish troops restarted military actions, disrupting the Reconciliation Regime. Despite heroic resistance, the Armenian irregular troops and volunteer detachments began retreating to the borders of Eastern Armenia.

According to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918), under the pressure of Germany the Soviet Russia agreed to return to the borders of the former Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878. As a result of that retrograde not only Western Armenia, but the regions of Kars, Ardahan and Batumi became parts of Ottoman Empire as well.

As a consequence of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk the peace negotiations that had been conducting with Ottoman Empire in Trapizon since March 1918 by the authorities of the Transcaucasian



Democratic Federative Republic (former Commissariat and then Sejm) were deadlocked and suspended. Invading Eastern Armenia, Turkish troops occupied the Province of Kars, cities of Kars and Alexandrapol (Gyumri) and moved towards Yerevan and Gharakilisa (nowadays Vanadzor). On their way Turks were demolishing Armenian towns and villages, slaughtering population. The situation was fatal: Eastern Armenia was under the threat of genocide then.

Day by day growing danger united Armenians and Armenian troops along with militias and led by General Moses Silikyan, Colonels Daniel Bek-Pirumov, Drastamat Kanayan and others made a decisive counterattack to the Turkish conquerors near Sardarapat, Gharakilisa and Bash-Aparan.

During those days of Heroic Battles of May 1918, the discrepancies within the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic composed of three main nationalities of the South Caucasus, were deepening.

On March 26, 1918 the Transcaucasian Sejm (Parliament) was dissolved leading to the dissolution of Transcaucasian Republic. In those conditions, on May 28, 1918 the Armenian National Council declared itself as the only and supreme authority of Armenian provinces. The Republic of Armenia was established. After the defeat of Ottoman Empire in the World War I and according to the Peace Treaty of Mudros (October 30, 1918), Turkish Troops hastily quited the Territory of Eastern Armenia.

The power of the First Republic was

applied to the following areas: major part of former Kars Region, the Province of Yerevan, western parts of Province of Yelizavetpol and southern parts of the Province of Tbilisi. Kharabakh was neither included in the territory of the Republic nor subjected to Musavat Azerbaijan, it was governed by the Congresses of the National Council of local Armenians.

In April, 1920 during a regular Congress the people of Nagorno-Karabakh made a decision on unification with the Republic of Armenia.

On August 10, 1920 the victorious states of the World War I, including Armenia, signed a peace agreement with defeated Turkey in the city of Sevres (France). It was Avetis Aharonyan, the head of the Armenian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Republic of Armenia. The section “Armenia” in the Treaty of Sevres included Articles 88-93.

By this treaty Sultan Turkish Government recognized Armenia as a free and independent state. Armenia and Turkey agreed to provide America with an opportunity to decide the demarcation line between the two states in Erzurum, Van and Bitlis provinces as well as to accept the offers concerning the access of Armenia to the Black Sea and the disarmament of all Ottoman territories, adjacent to above-mentioned boundary.

The nationalist government of Turkey, headed by Mustafa Kemal, who assumed the authority, did not accept the Treaty of Sevres. In 1920 the Soviet Government, seeking to direct the Kemalist movement in Turkey against the Entente, provided Turkey with palpable military and financial aid which was used against Greece in the West and against Armenia in the East. At the end of September, 1920 Turkish army started attacking. Conquering more and more lands, the Government of Ankara was aimed at depriving Armenians of an opportunity to recreate its own state. Turkish troops occupied the Region of Kars, Surmalu and Alexandrapol.

## Artashat-Meghri Road, investment programs, new flights: Iranian minister presents joint projects with Armenian side



The Islamic Republic of Iran is inclined to develop the relations with Armenia and raise them to a higher level: the issues on the agenda which are being discussed are the evidence of this, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammed Eslami, who was in Armenia on a working visit, told ARMENPRESS.

During his visit the Iranian minister met with Armenia's acting deputy prime minister Mher Grigoryan, acting minister of territorial administration and infrastructure Suren Papikyan, acting minister of economy Vahan Kerobyan. The meetings focused on a number of projects of joint interest relating to infrastructure development, launch of free economic zones, road construction and investment programs.

According to Mohammed Eslami, Iran always keeps the relations with the neighboring countries under its spotlight, and attaches special importance to Armenia as there are stable historical relations

between the two countries.

“In 2020 the trade turnover between Iran and Armenia was 400 million dollars. Of course, this was during the coronavirus pandemic when the level of the trade turnover between many countries has been lower. But we are already observing growth in the first months of 2021. The will of the two countries shows that the trade turnover must be reached 1 billion dollars. And this goal is realistic. Iran, which is currently Armenia's forth trade partner, will be in higher position if it continues so”, he said.

The Iranian minister presented several projects which can contribute to the development of commercial relations between the two countries. The first one, according to the minister, is Iran's participation in the construction sector, in particular in infrastructure development projects which can lead to the development of industry, creation of joint productions and attraction of investors in the joint programs.

Talking about the interest of the Iranian side to engage in construction of southern sections of the North-South highway, the minister noted: “There are two important projects in the construction sector which are in the agenda of the Armenian government. The one relates to the road construction sector – Artashat-Meghri, which should be implemented in several

stages.

The Sisian-Kajaran and Kajaran-Meghri section, a total of 92 kilometers, is also important and requires an urgent solution. Iranian companies are ready to participate in these projects. We must create a consortium from the advanced Iranian companies. These companies will participate in both project design, funding and implementation”.

According to Mohammed Eslami, one of the key issues for the development of the Armenian-Iranian relations is the Persian Gulf-Black Sea international transportation corridor project which should pass through Armenia. He added that the project has already been agreed upon with the Armenian side.

“We had constructive discussions during this visit according to which Armenian and Iranian trucks can enter to each other's country and mutually lower the road fees, in order to promote the cargo companies which, seek to carry out transit transportations”, he said.

As for the cooperation in the field of passenger transportation, the Iranian minister said they have reached an agreement with the Armenian side over the operation of Yerevan-Isfahan and Yerevan-Kish direct flights.

**Interview by Karen Khachatryan**

## Armenia applies to European Court regarding the six POWs captured on May 27

The Republic of Armenia has applied to the European Court of Human Rights to ensure respect of the fundamental human rights of six Armenian prisoners of war captured this morning, Representative of Armenia before the ECtHR informs.

The Office of the Representative of Armenia before the ECtHR has submitted request to the European Court of Human Rights to indicate interim measures under



Rule 39 of the Rules of Court against

Azerbaijan in the name of the individuals taken captive while carrying out engineering works in the border area of the Gegharkunik region early in the morning on 27 May 2021.

The submitted request aims to ensure respect of the captives' rights to life and prohibition of torture envisaged by the European Convention on Human Rights.

## Azerbaijan and Turkey on Opposite Sides of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Harut Sassounian

It is commonly stated that politics is similar to prostitution. There is no morality, just interests. However, there is also something called hypocrisy. While it is true that individuals or nations can get away with any kind of unscrupulous behavior for a while, but eventually it catches up with them and they become exposed.

There are plenty of examples of such dishonest behavior in the world, but let's focus on the current case of Azerbaijan and its hypocritical behavior.

Azerbaijan is an Islamic state and active member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, composed of 57 member states. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan's infatuation with Israel initially started by copying the behavior of its "elder brother" Turkey which had gone out of its way to curry favor with Israel and American Jewish organizations to be on the good side of the United States government and to counter the Armenian-American community's efforts in Congress to have the Armenian Genocide acknowledged.

Regrettably, the behavior of the Israeli government and that of Jewish American organizations were just as cynical and immoral intending to cuddle the Republic of Turkey which was pretending to be friendly and supportive at a time when Israel was surrounded by a sea of hostile Arab states.

Eventually, the leaders of Israel and Jewish-American organizations realized Turkey's fake friendship after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan repeatedly insulted Israel and Jews by making hateful anti-Semitic remarks. Finally, Turkish hypocrisy was exposed and the relations were cut off!

Turning to Azerbaijan, it copied the Turkish example of hypocrisy vis-à-vis Israel and Jewish-American organizations. In this case, however, Azerbaijan pursued an interest much larger than their mere lobbying support. The relationship soon turned to mutual exploitation based on lies

and deceit. Azerbaijan, flush with tons of petrodollars, bought billions of dollars of deadly drones and other advanced weapons from Israel in return for supplying the latter with oil. Never mind Israel's immoral and criminal action with descendants of Holocaust survivors supplying deadly weapons to kill survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

However, Israeli leaders ignored all obvious signs of hypocrisy, deceit and mutual exploitation, blinded by the Almighty dollar. As I reported in a previous column, an early sign of Azerbaijan's insincerity toward Israel was exposed on March 18, 2021, when Shahriar Hajiyev, third secretary at the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations in Geneva, gave a speech at the Human Rights Council, harshly condemning Israel's "massive, flagrant and systematic violations of human rights" of Palestinians. Except for a critical reaction by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in the United States, Israeli leaders ignored the Azeri attack, even after my column was reprinted by the Jerusalem Post on April 4, 2021.

A much more ominous development took place in May when Israel and Palestinians in Gaza engaged in mutual missile attacks, killing over 200 Palestinians and a dozen Israelis. The entire Arab and Islamic world condemned the Israeli attack on Gaza, except for Azerbaijan. Even when the Israeli police attacked Arab worshippers inside Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, one of the holiest Islamic mosques, Azerbaijan remained silent.

What will be the repercussions of Azerbaijan's abandonment of its fellow Muslims? Turkey and particularly President Erdogan certainly feel betrayed by its "junior brother" whom Turkey helped win the war against Armenia and captured large parts of Artsakh. While Erdogan was harshly critical of Israel and threatened military intervention, Azerbaijan remained quiet. This will not remain unnoticed either in Ankara or other Islamic capitals.

The next time President Aliyev of Azerbaijan submits another resolution to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to condemn Christian Armenia, OIC member states will remind Azerbaijan of its silence during the Israeli attack on Gaza. Ironically, just before the start of the recent Israeli-Palestinian attacks, Azerbaijan had proposed to mediate reconciliation between Israel and Turkey. Azerbaijan's silence during the Gaza attack also put an end to that prospect.

Azerbaijan's pro-Israeli stance will certainly create a friction with Turkey. The last time such ill will was expressed by Azerbaijan's leader against Turkey was when Armenia and Turkey signed a protocol in 2009 to open their mutual border which President Aliyev strongly opposed and stated that it would damage Azerbaijan-Turkey relations. During a meeting with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Bill Burns in Baku on February 25, 2010, "Aliyev made clear his distaste for the Erdogan government in Turkey, underscoring the 'naïveté' of their foreign policy and the failure of their initiatives, including the loss of support for Turkey among traditional international friends because of Ankara's hostility to Israel. He noted that in his view, there had never been any merit to the notion of a 'moderate Islamist' government in Turkey, and that Erdogan's insistence on promoting Hamas and Gaza (when other Arab countries were notably silent on these issues) had brought Turkey no benefits," WikiLeaks revealed.

In the long run, President Aliyev's lack of Islamic solidarity on Israel's bombing of Gaza could undermine his government's rule over 10 million Shia and Sunni Muslims in Azerbaijan, encouraged by Turkey which enjoys a tight grip over Aliyev after the Artsakh War. Aliyev's cuddling of Israel would also have a negative effect on Azerbaijan's relations with neighboring Iran and its large Azeri population.

## Global humanitarian community to commemorate the life of Aurora Co-Founder Vartan Gregorian



On June 5, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will host an Aurora Dialogues Online event titled “Vartan Gregorian. The Aurora Co-Founder,” set to bring together representatives of the global humanitarian community and commemorate the life of Aurora Co-Founder and member of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee Vartan Gregorian – an outstanding Armenian American humanitarian who was a man of great inner strength and a reservoir of compassion.

In 2015, together with Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan, Vartan Gregorian co-founded the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors. His passionate commitment to the power of our common humanity was truly inspiring, and his spirit of gratitude was one of his numerous personal qualities that warmed the heart of anyone who met him. Throughout his life, Vartan Gregorian made a massive difference, and his loss is mourned around the world.

The Aurora Dialogues Online event will focus on Vartan Gregorian’s extraordinary life as Aurora Humanitarian Initiative’s Co-Founder, humanitarian, educator and mentor. The tribute will be hosted by David Ignatius, Associate Editor and Columnist for the Washington Post, with speakers including Aurora Co-Founders, Aurora

Prize Selection Committee members and Aurora Prize Laureates:

- Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; Founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering;
- Deana Arsenian, Creative Council Member, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; Vice President, International Program and Program Director, Russia and Eurasia at Carnegie Corporation of New York;
- Marguerite Barankitse, 2016 Aurora Prize Laureate; Founder, Maison Shalom;
- Tom Catena, Chair, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; 2017 Aurora Prize Laureate; Medical Director of Mother of Mercy Hospital, Nuba Mountains;
- Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee; Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London;
- Mirza Dinnayi, 2019 Aurora Prize Laureate; Co-Founder and Director of Luftbrücke Irak (Air Bridge Iraq);
- Shirin Ebadi, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Nobel Laureate; Iranian lawyer and a human rights activist; Founder of Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran;
- Leymah Gbowee; Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Nobel Laureate; Founder and President of Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa
- Hina Jilani, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and

a human rights activist; Former UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders;

- Bernard Kouchner, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Former French Foreign Minister and former Minister of Health of France; Co-Founder, Médecins Sans Frontières;
- Samantha Power, USAID Administrator; Former US Ambassador to the United Nations; former Aurora Prize Selection Committee member;
- John Prendergast, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; human rights activist and Co-Founder of The Sentry;
- Mary Robinson, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Chair of The Elders; Former President of Ireland and Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Ruben Vardanyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative; Co-Founder of Noòdome;
- Ernesto Zedillo, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member; Director at Yale Center for the Study of Globalization; Former President of Mexico.

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is a foundation that seeks to address on-the-ground humanitarian challenges around the world with the focus on helping the most destitute. Its mission is rooted in the Armenian history as the Initiative was founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors and strives to transform this experience into a **global movement**.

## New type of Dutch tulip named after Armenia's Aragats Mountain

A new type of white Dutch tulip has been named after Aragats Mountain on the occasion of Armenia's Republic Day and on the eve of the 30th anniversary of Armenia's independence, the Armenian Embassy in the Netherlands informs.

The tulip has been developed and grown within seven years by Maveridge Floriculture Company. It symbolizes the snow peaks of Armenia's highest mountain.

The flower-naming ceremony took place at the Maveridge headquarters,



where Armenia's Ambassador Tigran Balayan, Head of Pineacher Helps Armenia Fund Henry Boss, and Owner of Maveridge Klaas Peter De Geus signed the statement on flower-naming.

Ambassador Tigran Balayan toured the company, got acquainted with the latter's activities and achievements. The possibilities of implementing new joint programs and establishing production in Armenia were discussed.

## Wearing masks in open-air areas will not be mandatory in Armenia from June 1



Wearing a mask in open-air areas will no longer be mandatory in Armenia from June 1, the Ministry of Health informs.

Vaccinated citizens, that have received two

doses of the vaccine, are registered in the "Armed E-Health" system and have a QR code will not be required to wear a mask indoors.

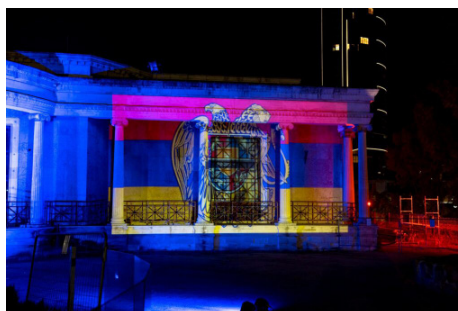
The vaccination is carried out with 3 vaccines: Sputnik-V, AstraZeneca and CoronoVac. AstraZeneca and CoronoVac are available to citizens over the age of 18 on a voluntary basis.

Sputnik-V is intended for chronic patients over 18 years old, medical workers aged 18-54, residents and employees of social care centers.

## Liberty Square in Nicosia lights up in "Armenian colors" on Republic Day

The Liberty Square in Nicosia, Cyprus, lit up in colors of the Armenian flag as Armenians worldwide celebrated the 103rd anniversary of establishment of the First Republic on May 28.

Images depicting the Armenian flag, the coat of arms, as well as excerpts from Armenian history were projected on the buildings on Nicosia's main square.



The initiative came from the Armenian National Committee of Cyprus.

The Eleftheria square (Liberty Square) is the main square in central Nicosia. The square is usually the focus of various profile activities in the capital. Examples include advertising promotions, political rallies and meetings.respect of nonpecuniary damage.

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