

Joe Biden recognizes the Armenian Genocide



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The American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today, US President Joe Biden said in a statement on the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

"Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Beginning on April 24, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination. We honor the victims of the Meds Yeghern so that the horrors of what happened are never lost to history. And we remember so that we remain ever-vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate in all its forms," Mr. Biden said.

"Of those who survived, most were forced to find new homes and new lives around the world, including in the United States. With strength and resilience, the Armenian people

survived and rebuilt their community. Over the decades Armenian immigrants have enriched the United States in countless ways, but they have never forgotten the tragic history that brought so many of their ancestors to our shores. We honor their story. We see that pain. We affirm the history. We do this not to cast blame but to ensure that what happened is never repeated," he added.

"Today, as we mourn what was lost, let us also turn our eyes to the future—toward the world that we wish to build for our children. A world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world. And let us pursue healing and reconciliation for all the people of the world," President Biden said.

"The American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today," he concluded.

Armenian genocide showed the world the cost of division, exclusion, and hatred - Justin Trudeau

p. 2

U.S. Ambassador emphasizes U.S.-Armenia partnerships during trip to Syunik Region

p. 4

Armenia's economy set to start recovering in 2021 - IMF

p. 7

Armenian PM steps down to trigger snap parliamentary elections

p. 5

US recognition of Armenian Genocide a much-needed message to international community: PM Pashinyan sends letter to Joe Biden



On the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent a letter to President Joe Biden of the United States of America, expressing gratitude for the official recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. The letter says:

"Excellency,

The people of Armenia and Armenians all over the world perceived with great enthusiasm and welcomed your message, in which you officially recognized and condemned the genocide of Armenians

perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire in 1915-23. I highly appreciate your principled position, which is a powerful step on the way to acknowledging the truth, historical justice, and an invaluable of support for the descendants of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

By making special mention of the resolutions on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide passed by the two houses of the U.S. Congress in 2019, I wish to state that your message brought to completion the process of recognizing the Armenian Genocide in the United States.

The acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide is important not only as a tribute paid to the 1.5 million innocent victims, but also in terms of preventing the recurrence of similar crimes against mankind.

The recognition of the Genocide is a matter of truth, historical justice and

security to the Republic of Armenia, especially in the light of the events that took place in our region last year.

I fully share your view, namely that "If we fail to fully acknowledge, commemorate genocide and teach our children about it, the words "Never again" become meaningless."

Honorable Mr. Biden,

The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the United States is a much-needed message to the international community, which comes to reaffirm the primacy of human rights and values in international relations. From this perspective, it sets an encouraging and inspiring example for all those who want to build a just and tolerant international society.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

Armenian genocide showed the world the cost of division, exclusion, and hatred - Justin Trudeau

The Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, issued a statement on Armenian Genocide Memorial Day, also known as Medz Yeghern. Canadian PM, Justin Trudeau particularly said in his statement,

"Today on Armenian Genocide Memorial Day, we join Armenian communities in Canada and around the world to remember those who lost their lives and who suffered from the senseless acts wrought upon the Armenian people. We also honor their descendants and all those who continue to live with the pain, trauma, and loss from this tragedy.

"The Armenian genocide showed the



world the unconscionable cost of division, exclusion, and hatred. Canada vigorously opposes and condemns hate, intolerance, and xenophobia. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental rights and dignity of all human beings, and commit to continue working with our partners

to make sure atrocities like these never happen again.

"We continue to be inspired by the strength and spirit of the Armenian people in the face of unimaginable hardship, and look forward with hope to a more peaceful, just tomorrow.

"On this somber anniversary, I invite all Canadians to pause to remember the victims and those who survived the horrors of the Armenian genocide. We will continue to honor them by fighting hate, protecting the most vulnerable, and working to make our world a better one."

Artsakh Defense Army reports ceasefire violations by Azerbaijani side

Artsakh's defense Army reports ceasefire violations by the Azerbaijani side in different directions.

The enemy has been violating the ceasefire in the recent days using firearms of different caliber.

While the Azerbaijani forces would usually shoot in the air in the past, they are now frequently firing at the Defense Army's combat positions and peaceful settlements, the Army said. "Convinced that the above-mentioned violations are aimed at creating panic

among the people of Artsakh, as well as undermining the implementation of the Russian peacekeeping mission, we call on the Azerbaijani side to refrain from such provocative actions and to adhere to the agreements reached," the Defense Army said in a statement.

France's Macron shares message in Armenian to commemorate Genocide anniversary

French President Emmanuel Macron shared a message in Armenian to commemorate the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The President also paid tribute to the memory of victims at the Komitas Monument in Paris.

The full text of Macron's message is below:

On the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, all my thoughts are with Armenia, which has suffered the hardships of history.

In my mind, I am with the Armenian people, those who escaped the genocide, and the refugees once hosted by France, and their descendants who contributed to our country. We shall never forget.

As I had pledged, in 2019 April 24 was officially recognized as Armenian Geno-



cide Remembrance Day in France. Everywhere in France, despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic, that day included in our national calendar will be commemorated. This April 24, more than any other day, our two peoples are united around the same remembrance.

It's our duty to prevent forgetfulness, denial, lies by accepting the truth, paying

homage to the dead, respecting the memory of the living. Committed to being with you throughout history, we are committed to the future now as well, when your country went through a deadly conflict that befell the region where too much blood was shed. It is necessary to create a new page of peace, prosperity and reconciliation. The struggle for justice and truth, which France fought together with you and will continue, will not stop as this is not only the struggle of the Armenians. This is the basis of the fraternity principle of the French Republic.

On this day of sadness, but also of hope, when together we remember the terrible sufferings of the martyred people, France and Armenia are united by friendship and brotherhood.

Top French Officials Attend Genocide Commemorations in Yerevan

The speaker of France's upper house of parliament and a senior French government official visited Yerevan to attend Saturday's official ceremonies to mark the 106th anniversary of the Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey.

The Senate speaker, Gerard Larcher, and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, a secretary of state at the French Foreign Ministry, joined Armenian officials in laying wreaths at a memorial to 1.5 million Armenians massacred by the Ottoman Turks during the First World War.

"Today French and Armenian hearts in unison remember the Armenian Genocide," Lemoyne tweeted afterwards.

In a letter to his Armenian counterpart Armen Sarkissian publicized on Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron said Lemoyne will "represent" him at the genocide commemorations.

"The fight for justice and truth that France is leading and will continue to lead by your side will not stop because it does not concern Armenians alone," wrote Macron. "It is at the heart of the brotherhood of the French Republic."

The French Foreign Ministry said, for its part, that Lemoyne's participation in the



Armenia - Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, a secretary of state at the French Foreign Ministry, lays a wreath at the Armenian genocide memorial in Yerevan, April 24, 2021.

ceremonies is of "particular importance" because 2021 marks the 20th anniversary of France's official recognition of the Armenian genocide. It also underscores Paris's "resolute commitment" to Armenia's development and security, read a ministry statement.

"France has played and continues to play a key role in international recognition of the Armenian genocide," Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told Lemoyne at a meeting held late on Friday.

Pashinyan also praised Macron for supporting Armenia at a "difficult moment."

Larcher arrived in Yerevan on April 23 at the head of a delegation of about a dozen French senators.

The Senate speaker put their visit in a "painful context" of last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh and its aftermath. He portrayed the trip as a follow-up to the Senate's November resolution calling on the French government to recognize Karabakh as an independent republic.

"Never before has a resolution been passed with such a strong majority," Larcher wrote on his Twitter page.

Macron's government ruled out Karabakh's recognition, saying that it would be counterproductive for both France and international efforts to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.



France is home to a sizable and influential Armenian community mostly consisting of descendants of survivors of the 1915 genocide.

U.S. Ambassador emphasizes U.S.-Armenia partnerships during trip to Syunik Region

This week, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, Lynne M. Tracy, traveled through the Syunik region to learn first-hand from local officials and U.S. Embassy program partners how the region has been affected by the twin crises of the pandemic and conflict this past year. She also met with the recipients of several U.S. government grant projects to discuss how the Embassy can continue to maintain these partnerships to support the region's recovery and development.

From Sunday, April 18-Thursday, April 22, Ambassador Tracy traveled to Sisian, Meghri, Kapan, and Goris, meeting with the Governor of Syunik, Melikset Poghosyan; the Mayor of Meghri, Mkhitar Zakaryan; the Mayor of Goris, Arush Arushanyan; and the Mayor of Sisian, Artur Sargsyan. She discussed how the U.S. government is providing humanitarian assistance to those displaced by the conflict and shared ways in which we continue to support the region's development.

In Sisian, she also visited the Sisian

Adult Education Center Foundation to meet with the beneficiaries of a U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission Small Grant project in the Hatsavan community. The project helped community members learn fund-raising skills so they could raise money to build a playground for the children of Hatsavan.

In Meghri, the Ambassador met with partners at a USAID-supported Farm Service Center, which is helping more than half of Meghri's farmers by giving them access to high quality supplies and services. She also visited USAID partner Haykush Hovsepyan and her family at their dry fruit production facility. USAID support is helping the family produce and sell dry fruit, ensuring increased cash flow into the community. Also, while in Meghri, the Ambassador met with the Border Control Post Commander and visited the St. Hovhannes Church, a recipient of a \$500,000 Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation grant which restored its historic frescoes.



In Kapan, the Ambassador was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with a group of alumni of U.S. government exchange programs to learn about their experiences in the United States and about how they have been doing back home in Armenia during this difficult year.

Finally in Goris, Ambassador Tracy met with families displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and the community social worker and USAID project partners that have been assisting them and others affected by the conflict. During her visit Ambassador Tracy reaffirmed that the United States will continue to provide assistance to improve the lives of Armenians.

Armenia condemns Aliyev's threats



Armenia -- Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan visits an Armenian military base in Syunik, April 21, 2021.

Official Yerevan has strongly condemned Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's latest threats to forcibly open a land "corridor" that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia's southeastern Syunik province.

In televised remarks aired on April 20, Aliyev again referred to Syunik as a "historical Azerbaijani land" and said Baku "will accomplish the task of creating the Zangezur corridor whether Armenia wants it or not."

"If Armenia wants, we can solve that easily. If it does not, we will solve that by

force," he said.

"I already said during and before the war [in Nagorno-Karabakh] that they must willingly get out of our lands; or else, we will throw them out. This is what happened. The same will happen to the Zangezur corridor."

The Armenian Foreign Ministry was quick to condemn Aliyev's remarks as a fresh threat to Armenia's territorial integrity.

"Such statements seriously undermine regional peace and stability. They reveal the false nature of Azerbaijan's recent statements on peace and reconciliation," the ministry spokeswoman, Anna Naghdalyan, said in a late-night statement.

"We are in constant touch with our strategic ally [Russia] as well as with all our partners interested in peace in the South Caucasus. Armenia will undertake all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity," added Naghdalyan.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also deplored Aliyev's remarks when he visited

Syunik on April 21.

"With such provocative statements, Azerbaijan's leadership wants to ... walk away from our understandings, heightening tensions in the region to continue blockading Armenia," Pashinyan said at a meeting held in the provincial capital Kapan.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry insisted earlier in the day that Aliyev did not threaten Armenia's territorial integrity or lay claim to any Armenian territory. In Pashinyan's words, the ministry's denial contradicted what the Azerbaijani leader said.

The Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the Karabakh war on November 10 commits Yerevan to opening rail and road links between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan. Armenia should be able, for its part, to use Azerbaijani territory as a transit route for cargo shipments to and from Russia and Iran.

"If Azerbaijan talks about a 'Zangezur corridor,' then by the same token Armenia can talk about a 'Nakhichevan corridor' or a 'north Azerbaijan corridor,'" Pashinyan said in this regard.

Armenian PM steps down to trigger snap parliamentary elections



Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan said in an address he will step down to trigger snap parliamentary elections. He will still carry out the responsibilities of the head of government.

"The parliamentary elections are pos-

sible only in the event the Prime Minister resigns and the National Assembly fails to elect Prime Minister twice. After this the Parliament is considered dissolved by virtue of law, and early parliamentary elections take place," Pashinyan explained.

To hold the June 20 elections in full compliance with the law, Nikol Pashinyan will nominate his candidacy for the Prime Minister twice, other factions and MPs represented in the National Assembly will not nominate candidates. The parliamentary majority will not elect Pashinyan as Prime Minister, and the National Assembly will be considered dissolved.

Nikol Pashinyan said his Civil Contract

Party will run in the elections, and he will be the candidate for Prime Minister.

"We will humbly obey the decision of the people, and will wholly carry out our commitment before the people. If people decide I should leave the Prime Minister's post, I will obey that decision. If people decide I should continue performing my duties as Prime Minister, I will fulfil that decision," Pashinyan stated.

He paid tribute to those who fell in the 44-day war and their families. He expressed support for the families of the missing and wished endurance to those in captivity and their relatives.

Dashnaksutyun confirms pre-election talks with Kocharyan

(RFE/RL) - A leader of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) acknowledged on April 20 that the opposition party is discussing with former President Robert Kocharyan the possibility of forming an electoral alliance.

Dashnaksutyun announced its decision to participate in snap parliamentary elections expected in June after a party congress held over the weekend. It said the congress authorized the party's governing body in Armenia to decide whether to do so separately or in an alliance with other opposition forces.

"As regards the format of our participation, when the elections are [officially] announced we will discuss that and announce our final decision," the head of the body, Ishkhan Saghatelian, told reporters. "Political consultations are going on right now."

Saghatelian said that the consultations are being held with various political groups and figures, including Kocharyan.

Armenian media outlets have reported

in recent weeks that Dashnaksutyun is likely to join forces with Kocharyan. The ex-president stated earlier this month that he will lead an alliance comprising at least two opposition parties.

Kocharyan, who is highly critical of the current Armenian government, governed the country from 1998-2008. Dashnaksutyun was allied to him during his rule.

The party, which has branches in major Armenian communities around the world, is not represented in the current parliament, having garnered only about 4 percent of the vote in the last elections held in December 2018.

Saghatelian insisted that Dashnaksutyun will do much better if it participates in the upcoming elections on its own. "But our goal in these elections is not to win parliament seats. Our supreme goal is to get rid of this government of evil," he said.

Dashnaksutyun is a key member of the Homeland Salvation Movement, a coalition of more than a dozen opposition

groups that have held street protests in recent months in a bid to topple Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan over his handling of last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan has refused to step down and pledged to hold the snap elections instead.

Although the Homeland Salvation Movement has insisted that such polls be held by an interim government, only one of its members, former President Serzh Sargsian's Republican Party of Armenia (HKh), has called for an election boycott so far. Other parties affiliated with the alliance, notably Gagik Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia Party, made clear their intention to join the parliamentary race already in March.

Saghatelian admitted that these differences have weakened the opposition movement. But he did not rule out more anti-government protests in the weeks ahead.

Turkey says rejects Joe Biden's April 24th remarks

Rejecting US President Joe Biden's remarks on Armenian claims about the events of 1915, Turkey's Foreign Ministry on April 24 said that the statement lacks any scholarly or legal basis and is not supported by the evidence.

"We reject and denounce in the strongest terms the statement of the President of the US regarding the events

of 1915," the Ministry, stated, noting that it was made "under the pressure of radical Armenian circles and anti-Turkey groups"

The ministry added that none of the conditions required for the use of the term "genocide" – strictly defined in international law – are met by the "events of 1915."

The ministry said the statement by

Biden, who is neither legally nor morally authorized to judge historical events, has no value.

President Joseph Biden officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, rejecting the longest-lasting foreign gag-rule in American history and dealing a major setback to Turkey's century-long obstruction of justice for this crime.

Armenia plans to export solar panels, liquor to Canada



Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan held a meeting with Canadian Ambassador to Armenia Alison LeClaire.

Kerobyan and LeClaire both attached importance to the Armenian-Canadian cooperation and outlined potential directions for cooperation.

They pointed out the following directions: trade and investments, industry, high technologies, education and tourism. Kerobyan expressed certainty that the Armenian-Canadian economic relations have

big potential to bolster and develop.

The possibilities of exporting Armenian production, namely solar panels and alcoholic drinks, into Canada were discussed.

"The minister attached importance to the opportunities of establishing business ties with leading Canadian companies engaged in the production of cannabis and emphasized that Armenia has an attractive environment for business activities, given the country's climate conditions and high-quality workforce. In addition, Canadian investors can use the opportunities of the industrial zones which are currently being built in Armenia, to facilitate the process of moving their industrial branches to Armenia, as well as entering the EEU market without obstacles," the ministry of economy said in a news release.

Highlighting education for economic development, Kerobyan and the ambassa-

dor attached importance to implementing joint educational and specialized development programs.

The discussion also addressed exchange of experience programs in rendering financial services and agriculture.

Kerobyan expressed readiness to support Canadian financial institutions, banks, namely venture funds, to get established in Armenia, noting that Armenia has one of the most transparent and trusted financial systems in the region, thanks to which several leading international banks are operating in Armenia for already many years.

Issues of organizing business meetings with participation of private sector representatives of the two countries were discussed. On this occasion the minister proposed to hold an Armenian-Canadian business forum in the second half of 2021.

Foreign debt is manageable, says finance minister

The 2020 government budget revenues totaled 1 trillion 560 billion 655 million 340,8 thousand drams, while the spending stood at 1 trillion 894 million 647,093,3 thousand drams, with a deficit of 333 billion 991 million 752,6 thousand, finance minister Atom Janjughazyany said at the Cabinet meeting.

He noted that during the 2,9% global economic growth in 2019 Armenia succeeded in recording 7,6% growth, which allowed the government to revise the budget spending resources. In particular, the allocations in the Education, Science, Culture and Sports grew 11%, healthcare al-



locations grew 22% and capital spending grew 30%, he said.

"At yearend the government debt/GDP ratio was lower than 50%, which allowed to maintain the fiscal policy logic during crisis by way of attracting new debt in

2020. As a result, we had a bigger deficit than planned. Initially we had an expected deficit of 2,3% of the budget, but factually we had a nearly 5,5% of GDP deficit.

This was the price we paid to mitigate the impact of the economic decline. The debt level with 2020 results totaled 63,5% of the GDP. In these conditions we must reduce this indicator to 60% in 5 years. This is the threshold which is considered in the world as manageable in terms of risk," Janjughazyany said, adding that the crisis situation in Armenia in 2020 is comparable in terms of figures to that of other developing countries.

Armenia ranked 63rd in 2021 World Press Freedom Index

Armenia ranks 63rd position (down from 61st last year in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders on April 20.

Georgia has retained the 60th place, Russia is 150th, Turkey and Azerbaijan are ranked 153th and 167th respectively. Armenia's southern neighbor Iran is 174th on the list.

Norway, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands are ranked as the countries with the highest degree of freedom for journalists.

The 2021 World Press Freedom Index shows that journalism, the main vaccine against disinformation, is completely or

partly blocked in 73% of the 180 countries ranked by the organization.

According to the report, media diversity has blossomed but the government that emerged from Armenia's Velvet Revolution in the spring 2018 has failed to reduce the media's polarization.

"The editorial policies of the main TV channels coincide with the interests of their owners. Transparent media ownership and journalistic independence are still far from being achieved," Reporters Without Borders said.

"There is concern about the volume of judicial proceedings against journalists and about excesses in the fight against

fake news. The involvement of the security services in combatting disinformation and attempts to legislate without prior discussion with civil society and journalists are alarming. But investigative journalism is flourishing online and is well placed to play a major role in a national offensive against corruption," the report reads.



Armenia's economy set to start recovering in 2021 – IMF

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Nathan Porter, held virtual staff-level discussions with the Armenian authorities during April 6–21, 2021 to discuss recent economic developments, the outlook, and the policy priorities ahead. At the end of the visit, Mr. Porter issued the following statement:

"The Armenian economy has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and military hostilities. GDP dropped by 7.6 percent in 2020 reflecting the decline in services and trade. Annual inflation accelerated to 5.8 percent in March 2021 amid recent global food inflation and dram depreciation. The fiscal deficit widened to around 5½ percent of GDP in 2020, reflecting the impact of government support to vulnerable firms and households and higher health spending, with government debt ending 2020 at about 63½ percent of GDP. The current account deficit narrowed to 3.1 percent of GDP in 2020 and gross reserves, albeit somewhat reduced, remain adequate.

"The recovery is likely to be protracted. While there is uncertainty about the pace of the recovery, our conservative outlook expects growth of around 1 percent in 2021 and 3½ percent in 2022. Inflation is projected to peak in the first half of 2021 before declining to around 4 percent by year-end as the temporary impact of imported food inflation and the pass-through from recent depreciation dissipate. The current account deficit would widen to around 5 percent of GDP in 2021 as activity and imports gradually recover. Reserves are expected to remain adequate, supported by the Eurobond issuance earlier this year. Near-term upside risks come from a faster than expected vaccination roll-out, while additional waves of infection or heightened global financial volatility or trade tensions would delay the recovery and add to external pressures.



"The immediate policy priorities are to protect vulnerable households (including displaced Nagorno-Karabakh residents), accelerate planned capital expenditure, and fast-track large-scale vaccinations to support economic recovery. These items should be prioritized within the existing 2021 spending envelope. The 2021 budget deficit—5¼ percent of GDP—appropriately balances the need to maintain policy support with the authorities' debt sustainability objective. Without significant new macroeconomic shocks, any other initiatives involving current expenditure should be accommodated within the approved budget envelope through reprioritization.

"Looking forward, it is important that Armenia maintains a strong medium-term fiscal framework—underpinned by measures to broaden the tax base, such as turnover and environmental tax reforms and income tax declarations, and current expenditure restraint—consistent with the authorities' debt sustainability objective of bringing debt-to-GDP below 60 percent by end-2026. These measures are critical to ensure adequate space for future priority social and development spending. Progress on strengthening the fiscal framework should continue, including the extension of the coverage of fiscal risk monitoring, the creation of a pipeline of construction-ready public investment projects, and the implementation of the State Revenue Committee's tax compliance strategy.

"Strengthening the public investment management framework is a priority

to ensure that quality infrastructure underpins near- and medium-term growth. While priority projects in the pipeline should advance without delay, safeguards are needed to ensure that public investment decisions are adequately assessed. In particular, procurement, project management, implementation, and oversight for all projects (including PPPs) should be effective, transparent, and evenhanded across projects and suppliers.

"The monetary stance remains appropriate. The Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) preemptively raised the policy rate by 100 bps in December 2020 and a further 25bps in February 2021 anticipating the rise in inflation from a sharp increase in global food prices and dram depreciation. The CBA should continue to carefully monitor the inflation outlook and stand ready to adjust its monetary stance as necessary, allowing the exchange rate to be a shock absorber. Although there are no signs of financial sector strain, the full impact of the pandemic is still unfolding, highlighting the need for ongoing supervisory vigilance in case action is necessary. Despite the rise in NPLs to 7.3 percent in January, banks remained well capitalized and liquid.

"Structural reforms to further strengthen governance, improve the business environment and access to financing, and increase economic inclusion need to be accelerated to achieve faster, inclusive, and private-led growth in Armenia.

"The mission would like to commend the Armenian authorities for their commitment to the IMF-supported program which has been on track through the third review. Since then, all end-December quantitative performance criteria have been met and actions for structural benchmarks have advanced."

PACE Monitoring Committee calls on Azerbaijan to release Armenian POWs

The Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has called on Azerbaijan to release the Armenian prisoners of war.

"The military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the developments since the trilateral statement of 9-10 November 2020 are of great importance to the Council of Europe and have been closely followed by the Monitoring Committee. In co-ordination with other relevant committees, it has heard from representatives of both countries as well as independent experts, and the co-rapporteurs for Armenia and Azerbaijan have regularly made joint statements on the developments taking place," the Monitoring Committee said in a statement.

The Committee is convinced that the national parliament of both countries can and should play an important role in the urgently needed confidence building measures, the reconciliation process and the resumption of concrete peace negotiations between the parties. It therefore welcomes the progress made with the implementation



of the trilateral statement but expresses its concern about reports that not all persons detained in the context of this conflict have been exchanged. In addition, the Committee considers that both parties should reinforce their cooperation and communication aimed at demining the concerned areas, with a view to ensuring safety of civilians.

The Committee reiterates that the clear intention of article 8 of the trilateral statement was the exchange of all detained persons, without distinction as to the status that these people assigned by one of the parties. Underscoring the concerns expressed by the European Court of Human Rights with respect to 188 Armenians allegedly captured by Azerbaijan the Committee calls upon Azerbaijan to ensure that

all Armenian detainees are released without delay into the care of the Armenian authorities.

In the views of the Committee, the establishment of an independent international mission responsible for investigating the conflict and allegations of human rights and humanitarian law violations during the recent hostilities is essential to create an environment that is conducive to reconciliation and the establishment of genuine peace. Cultural heritage is important to all parties to the conflict and the urgent establishment of the necessary mechanisms to ensure its protection and renovation is a priority. The Committee has therefore charged its Sub-Committee on Conflicts between Council of Europe Member States to explore more in detail concrete mechanisms for these two issues.

Finally, the Committee calls both parties to constructively engage with the relevant international institutions, in particular the OSCE Minsk Group with a view to fully implementing the trilateral statement, and start the peace negotiations.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi commends President Biden for recognizing the Armenian Genocide



Speaker of the House of Representatives has commended President Joe Biden for taking the historic step and joining Congress with its formal recognition on Armenian Genocide Day.

Speaker Pelosi's full message is below:

As the Speaker of the House, it is an honor to bring the greetings of the United States Congress to the Armenian people on this solemn day of remembrance. 106

years ago today, the world witnessed the beginning of one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century: the systematic murder of more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children by the Ottoman Empire.

But tragically, too often, the truth of this crime has been denied, and its monstrosity, minimized.

That is why, in 2019, the Congress passed legislation declaring that the barbarism committed against the Armenian people was a genocide.

And that is why, today, our hearts are full of joy that President Biden has taken the historic step to joining Congress with its formal recognition on Armenian Genocide Day.

Thank you to so many in the Arme-

nian American community, including Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, Chairman Adam Schiff, Chairman Frank Pallone and Congresswoman Jackie Speier, who made this day possible. And we are enormously grateful to President Biden for his leadership.

Each of us has the moral obligation to remember the truth and recognize this brutality for what it was – for if we ignore history, then we are destined to witness the horrors of the past be repeated.

Today and always, we honor the memories of the victims and survivors. We pledge to stand strong against violence and bigotry wherever we see it. And we commit to building a future of hope, peace and freedom for all.

Government to earmark AMD 7.5 billion in financial assistance for Artsakh citizens



The Council of Europe's body of constitutional legal experts, the Venice Commission, and the OSCE/ODIHR have published an urgent joint opinion on April 22 on amendments to the Electoral Code and related legislation of Armenia. Having examined the conformity of the procedure of their development, as well as the conformity of the amendments with international standards, the opinion concludes that the package is to be broadly welcomed, as it addresses the majority of previous recommendations, but improving these amendments is still recommended.

The opinion was requested by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia on 4 March 2021 and is based inter alia on a series of video conferences with representatives of state and non-state actors. On 1 April 2021, the National Assembly adopted a first set of amendments to the Electoral Code concerning the abolition of the territorial candidate lists with 82 votes in favor and no abstentions or votes against. The signing of the amendments into law is pending.

The proposal abolishes the territorial candidate lists, establishing a proportional electoral system only based on a nationwide constituency, thus reducing regional inequalities in the value of the ballot, the opinion reads. The Venice Commission and the ODIHR note with satisfaction that the reform went through broad consultations among different political forces, civil society and expert community and

took place within an adequate timeframe, assuring the widest possible support to the amendments.

The Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR have taken note that these amendments are supposed to be applied to the forthcoming early parliamentary elections tentatively scheduled for 20 June 2021, in less than three months. Any legislative change taking place so close before an election should be in principle avoided as it leads to uncertainty. Additionally, the public and all stakeholders have to adapt to new rules in a tight time frame. The abolishment of the territorial candidate lists does not alter the electoral system proper, but it does appear to formally change the way votes are turned into mandates in terms of geographical representation. However, the simplification of the proportional electoral system appears to enjoy a broad support by most of the political forces and the civil society. In addition, in purely technical terms, the new system does not seem to have a major impact either on the capacity of the electoral administration to organize such elections, or on the understanding of the procedures by the voters.

The previous recommendations by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR that the amendments have addressed are in particular those related to enabling the formation of governing coalitions, reducing the electoral deposit for political parties, increased transparency of campaigns on the media, offering clarifications on the use of administrative resources, strengthening the quota mechanism for promoting the participation of women as candidates and additional provisions facilitating the participation of people with disabilities.

However, the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR make the following

key recommendations aimed at improving these amendments:

1. Reconsidering the provisions relating to electoral thresholds, which do not appear coherent: some have been lowered, while others raised without a clear justification.
2. Clarifying the notion of “false information” so that it does not interfere with legitimate aims, for example investigative media, and stifle the political debate.
3. Extending legal standing to allow for voters to submit complaints against election results.
4. Clarifying the meaning of “gross violation” as a ground for early termination of powers of a member of a constituency and precinct electoral commission.
5. Providing for longer time frames to submit an application for recount.

For the purpose of the forthcoming early parliamentary elections, the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission also recommend that specific measures for holding elections during emergency situations, including pandemic periods, be stipulated in law or in infra-legal texts well in advance.

Other recommendations include strictly applying personal data protection standards in publishing declarations, clarifying the status of the first-round election results in relation to the second round, further reducing the amount of the electoral deposit, clarifying provisions on the sanctions related to the campaign funding.

This opinion was prepared under the Quick response Mechanism, financed by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe in their Partnership for Good Governance, phase II.

Greek President commemorates the Armenian Genocide



President Katerina Sakellaropoulou laid a wreath on Saturday at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens to commemorate the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Greek City Times reports.

"One hundred and six years have passed since the beginning of the systematic extermination of one and a half million Armenians during the last years of the

Ottoman Empire. It is a tragedy that indelibly sealed the first decades of the 20th century, a genocide that crushed a thriving Christian nucleus in the southern Caucasus and almost wiped out an ancient people," the President said.

"Today, we unite with the Armenian communities in Greece and around the world to honour the memory of the victims, but also the strength, dignity and confidence with which the Armenians resisted the alienation and subjugation, she



added.

"And we reaffirm with them our commitment to a world free of discrimination and persecution, where everyone can feel safe," President Sakellaropoulou said.

Genocide is genocide, plain and simple: Sen. Menendez reacts to reports President Biden could recognize the Armenian Genocide

Chairman if the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) has issued the following statement in reaction to reports that President Joe Biden will officially recognize the Ottoman Empire's genocide against the Armenian people:

I'm honored and incredibly moved to be able to commemorate this year's anniversary of the Armenian Genocide by applauding the President's reported decision to end over a century of official erasure of one of the darkest events in human history. Today we keep faith with all those who stand up to injustice anywhere and everywhere in the world. We honor those who lost their lives in this genocide, remember how they died and rejoice in knowing we've changed the way history will remember their deaths. After three decades of leading this fight in Congress, I am proud the U.S. government is poised to finally be able to say it without any euphemism: genocide is genocide. Plain and simple.

As we prepare to observe the 106th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire's systematic drive to eliminate the Armenian people, I am deeply grateful for and inspired by the Armenian American



community's persistence in ensuring the Armenian genocide is recognized as an irrefutable fact of history – accepted by the United States and the rest of the world. I want to personally thank President Biden for honestly facing history and heeding our calls to recognize the genocide's factual reality; something that should have never been denied, diminished, or mischaracterized by any U.S. administration. Having the full U.S. government affirm the facts of the Armenian Genocide will send a strong signal that the truth and human rights, not ignorance and denial, shape our foreign policy.

I join the Armenian community in New Jersey, across the United States, and around the world in honoring the 1.5 million innocent men, women, and children who were killed, starved and

forcefully deported from their homeland by the Ottoman Empire 106 years ago. Only by acknowledging and understanding history's darkest hours can we truly learn from them and use them to build a peaceful future."

Menendez has long been a passionate champion for the Armenian-American community in the United States, leading the push for a formal Senate Resolution to recognize the Armenian Genocide in every session of Congress since 2006, as well as co-authoring in years past during his time in the House of Representatives. In November 2019, Senator Menendez took to the Senate Floor every week to try to adopt the Resolution. After being blocked every time by a Senate Republican, the Senator vowed to keep returning every week until Armenian Genocide denialism was defeated. On December 12, 2019, the Senate unanimously passed Menendez's Senate Resolution affirming the historical facts of the Armenian Genocide.

Last month, Chairman Menendez led 37 of his Senate colleagues in requesting the Biden administration join the U.S. Congress in officially recognizing the Ottoman Empire's genocide against the Armenian people.

USA must help Artsakh's innocent civilians to live on their own land – Congressman Pallone



Frank Pallone, the Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, thinks that today, 106 years after the Armenian Genocide, similar actions in various parts of the world still continue, he told ARMENPRESS.

He highlighted the adoption of the resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide by both houses of the US Congress.

“We cannot forget the slaughter of mil-

lions of Armenians, as well as Assyrians, Greeks and other religious minorities by Ottoman Turks, which is considered the 1st genocide of the 20th century. But today concerns about genocide continue, not only in terms of Armenians, but in general.

The war in Artsakh last November during which numerous atrocities were committed by Azerbaijanis and Turks reminded us of the past”, Pallone said, emphasizing that Armenians were treated inhumanely, and civilian settlements were bombed.

The Congressman reminded that the Turkish-Azerbaijani leadership even brought mercenaries from other countries to participate in the war. He stressed that Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan

do not even hide their dreams in their statements about eliminating Armenians from the region of Artsakh.

‘I think the USA has to play a more crucial role, putting an end to these aggressions and expansionist desires of the Turks and help the innocent citizens of Artsakh to live on their land.

Under the previous administration the USA basically “washed its hands” of the region and I think that was the reason why the Turks and Azerbaijanis felt they can attack Artsakh”, Pallone announced.

He reminded that they have sent a letter to U.S. President Joe Biden with over 100 congressmen signing under it, urging him to use all the possible diplomatic levers to impose sanctions against Turkey and Azerbaijan.

No reconciliation without recognition: German MP urges Turkey to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide

Member of German Bundestag Albert Weiler urges Turkey to face the past and acknowledge it.

“Today is the day of remembrance of the first systematically planned genocide of the 20th century – 106 years ago around 1.5 million Armenians and other Christian minorities were brutally murdered and expelled in their homeland, in what was then the Ottoman Empire. To this day, Turkey has not made a clear commitment to this



dark chapter of its history, our common history,” the lawmaker said in a Facebook post.

“As the Bundestag, we have already recognized this genocide. I urge the Turkish government to take a critical look at the past and to acknowledge it. There is no reconciliation without recognition,” he emphasized.

“My thoughts today are with the many descendants of genocide victims around the world. May God bless you!” said the MP, as he shared a 2015 photo from Tsitsernakaberd Memorial.

MEP Manfred Weber calls on Turkey to face history and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide



Member of the European Parliament Manfred Weber (EPP Group) has called on

Turkey to face history and fully recognize the reality of the Genocide.

“Today we commemorate the Armenian Genocide and pay tribute to the victims of this tragedy. In 1915, 1.5 million of Armenians lost their lives in the massacres perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire,” he said in a video message.

“For millions of Armenians these

wounds are still wide open. The denial of the genocide by today’s Turkish authorities makes it impossible to come to terms with the past,” Manfred Weber said.

“My country, Germany, knows how hard it can be to face your history and your responsibility. But this is the only way towards reconciliation and to lasting peace between countries,” the MEP said.

Cyprus Parliament observes minute of silence to mark Armenian Genocide anniversary

Armenian Representative at the Parliament of Cyprus Vartkes Mahdessian, addressed the last plenary session of Parliament following a one-minute silence, in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

In his speech marking the 106th anniversary, the Representative referred to the beginning of the first genocide of the 20th century, a tragedy that shook the civilized world and at the same time has been engraved in the collective memory of Armenians all over the world.

With dismay, he noted that in the 15



years of serving as the Armenian Representative, Turkey has not only remained a firm denier of its bloody past, but it intimidates those who dare to acknowledge its existence.

“Turkey’s latest heinous act is the coalition with Azerbaijan against Armenia and

Nagorno-Karabakh during the war in the autumn of 2020. In addition to the human losses for Armenia, 7,000 dead, 10,000 wounded and 100,000 refugees, the Turks and Azeris are presently provoking by renaming toponyms, desecrating churches and decimating monuments in the occupied areas,” Mr. Mahdessian said.

In conclusion, the Representative extended his sincere gratitude to Cyprus, which was the first country in Europe to recognize the Armenian Genocide in 1975, while in 2015 it criminalized its denial.

Newsom declares Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day in California

Governor Gavin Newsom today issued a proclamation declaring April 24, 2021 as “A Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide” in the State of California, Asbarez reports.

Below is the text of the Newsom’s proclamation.

On this day in 1915, the Ottoman Empire began its systematic genocide of Armenian people, a minority group that had long been treated as second-class citizens. The Armenian Genocide began with the forced deportation and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders and ended eight years later with the deaths of 1.5 million men,

women and children.

It was the first genocide of the 20th Century. As we remember the victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, we also honor the strength and resilience of the Armenian people. Forced to build new lives in all corners of the globe, Armenians bravely forged ahead in the face of unimaginable tragedy. Thousands made their homes in California, and we are greater for their contributions.

Today and every day, let us recommit ourselves to making certain that we never forget the Armenian Genocide, and that we always speak out against hatred and atrocities anywhere they occur. NOW



THEREFORE I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim April 24, 2021, as a “Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.”

New exhibition at AGMI tracks the families of Armenian Genocide survivors



A temporary exhibition titled “Tracking the Families of Armenian Genocide Survivors” opened at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute on April 21.

In his opening remarks, AGMI Director Harutyun Marutyan stressed the impor-

tance of regularly revealing the stories of Armenian Genocide survivors, as well as the coverage of individual stories in addition to various studies.

The organizer of the exhibition, Seda Parsamyan, thanked the descendants of the survivors for sharing their family stories.

The exhibition is bilingual in Armenian and English. The stories of more than thirty families who survived the Armenian Genocide are presented through seventeen main titles and accompanying original exclusive materials (photographs,

family relics, documents, handwritten memoirs, etc.). The exhibition includes excerpts from video recordings of Armenian Genocide survivors.

The event was attended by the descendants of survivors from the United States, Cyprus, Argentina, France and Armenia, who personally presented their family stories.

A book dedicated to the history of the Tekeyan family was presented during the opening ceremony.

At the end of the event, letters of thanks were handed to the survivors’ heirs.

The exhibition will run until September 10. Admission is free.

Bells of Remembrance: An Amazing Concert in the Memory of the 1915 Armenian Genocide Innocent Victims

...and the Fallen Heroes of the Last War...

By Gourgen James Khazakian,
Chief Correspondent



On 22nd April at the Natl Opera House of Armenia held a very heartbreaking concert that we have not seen for a long years, Bells of Rememberance, dedicated to the

memory of the 1915 Armenian Genocide innocent victims, and, according to the Musical Director and Conductor **Harutyun Arzumanyan**, to the memory of the heroes who fell during 44 days bloody war started by Azeris/Turkey on 27 September 2020.

In the Concert Theatre's soloists as well as Symphony Orchestra and Choir participated.

According to Maestro Arzumanyan, normally they were staging "Requiem" by Verdi or Mozart every year, but this year they decided to diverse the program dedicated to the memory of Genocide st.victims.

For instance, the first part of the concert fully encompassed a wonderful piece –"Stabat Mater" of G.Pergolesi (sung by **Kristine Sahakyan**, mezzo soprano, RA Honored Artist) and **Artsvik Demurchyan** (soprano).

Second part included pieces performed rarely, such as "Vocalise" of **Constantine Petrosyan** (**Magda Mkrtchyan**, soprano, RA Honored Artist) that was received by soloist ladies very warmly...

And indeed "Vocalise" by the Great **Arno Babajanyan** was peformed as well (**Mary Movsisyan**, soprano).

Your author would



not like to seem a blatant one, but in Petrosyan's "Vocalise" he felt clear tunes of the Armenian popular music, it was very beautiful music...

Irina Zakyan (soprano, RA Honored Artist), an experienced singer of high culture wondered audience with A. Stradella's "Preta, Signore" with her amazing voice...

A beautiful "Panis Angelicus" by C.Franck was performed by **Lilit Soghomonyan** (soprano) and the



Theatre's Choir (Head Choirmaster **Hrach Boryan**) that was followed by "Pavane" by G.Fore performed by the Theatre's Choir.

G.Rossini's "Agnus Dei" from "Petite Messe Solennele" was performed by **Sofia Tumanyan** (mezzo-soprano) and Choir.

Logical end of this amazing concert was Verdi's "Libera Me" performed by RA Honored Artist, Professor **Marineh Deinyan** and the Choir. (Notably, Deinyan's voice takes more than two octaves...)

It is no need to say that the Concert was interrupted several times by non-stop "Bravo" and rounds of applause becoming ovation...

Your author asked General and Artistic Director of the Theatre,



Honored Artist of Russian Federation Maestro **Constantine Orbelyan** to say a couple of words on the Concert:

"I am so appreciative of the incredible effort that the extraordinary artists of the Al. Spendiaryan Yerevan Natl Academic Opera and Ballet Theater showed on the 22nd of April."

"This is always a very difficult time for us to program the music that will create the desired mood. Our conductor Haroutyun Arzumanyan always has been very thoughtful in putting together excellent programs. This particular program which was dedicated to the memory of the 106th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was particularly moving. All of the excellent singers - Marineh Deinyan, Artsvik Demuchyan, Kristine Sahakyan, Mary Movsesyan, Irina Zakyani, Lilit Sogom-

onyan, Magda Mkrtchyan, and Sophya Tumanyan performed with a special emotional message which rang though every note of the glorious music that they performed to a very appreciative audience. I must also commend our



wonderful Choir Conductor Hrach Boryan.

"Once again we were given the message of life and beauty with the universal language of music and were given another chance to hear our star singers perform with such great artistic mastery."



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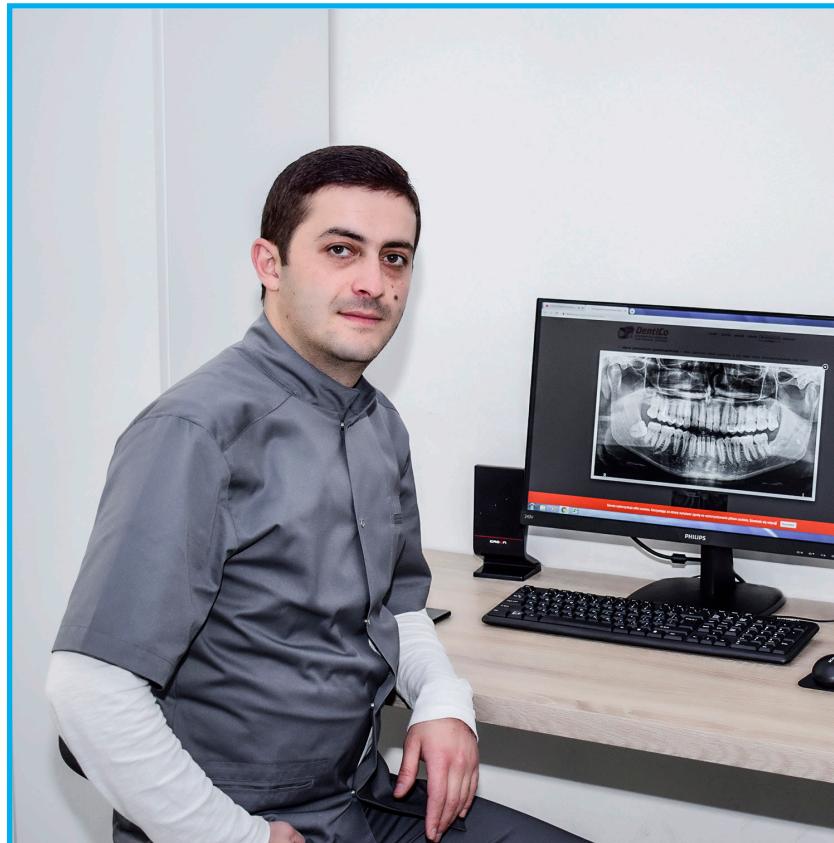
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Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Ա.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604

Գրանցման վկասվածի համար՝

03Ա898368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.

Registration certificate and the date:

273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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Noyan Tapan

The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեությունը իրականացնող՝
ՆՏ Հոլդինգ ՍՊԸ

Տարբայ՝ 2.25 մամու, տպաքանակ՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993