

The 15 captives are already in Armenia: Pashinyan presents details



In a deal brokered by the United States and Georgia, Azerbaijan set free 15 Armenian prisoners of war on June 12 after receiving more information from Armenia about minefields around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia’s acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said Georgian, American and EU partners played a role in ensuring the return of 15 Armenian prisoners from Azerbaijani captivity.

“Two days ago, I had a meeting with acting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Philip Reeker, who said he had been instructed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to ensure breakthrough in the return of Armenian captives,” Pashinyan said.

According to him, Reeker said they were willing to get involved, if the Armenian side was ready for such cooperation.

“I said we are ready. And today, as a result of these efforts, and the efforts of our Georgian colleagues, namely Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, our EU partners, 15 of our captured brothers are returning to Armenia,” the acting PM said.

They crossed the Red Bridge to Georgia and headed for Armenia through Bagratashen checkpoint. They will now pass medical examination.

Nikol Pashinyan confirmed media reports that the Armenian side has handed over maps of some minefields to the Azerbaijani side.

“I want to say that we have not exchanged maps for captives. We have responded to a step with a step,” Pashinyan stated.

A total of 88 Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians have been freed to date. More than 100 others are believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Yerevan regularly demands their immediate release.

Baku says that they are not covered by the truce agreement because they were captured after it took effect on November 10. Azerbaijani officials have branded the remaining Armenian detainees as “terrorists.”

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Blinken welcomes release of 15 Armenian detainees



The United States welcomes the release by Azerbaijan of 15 Armenian detainees and their return to their families in Armenia, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

ernment of Georgia for the essential role Georgia played in facilitating these steps, which bring the people of the region closer to the peaceful and prosperous future they

said in a statement.

“We also welcome Armenia’s decision to provide Azerbaijan with important information that will facilitate humanitarian demining and avoid future casualties. We are grateful to Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and the Gov-

deserve,” Blinken said.

“The United States is pleased to support these steps and hopes they will lay the groundwork for additional cooperation. We continue to call for the return of all detainees and stand ready to assist the countries of the region in their efforts to continue cooperation and resolve outstanding issues between them,” the Secretary of State said.

“We also continue to urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to reengage in substantive negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to negotiate a comprehensive political settlement to the conflict,” he concluded.

Armenia keen to strengthen friendly ties with UK: Nikol Pashinyan congratulates Boris Johnson on Queen’s Birthday

Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sent a congratulatory message to Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Boris Johnson on the occasion of Queen’s Birthday. The message reads: “Excellency,

I warmly congratulate you and the friendly people of the United Kingdom on the occasion of Queen’s Birthday.

Armenia is keen to develop and fur-



ther strengthen its friendly ties with the United Kingdom and expand cooperation in all areas of mutual interest.

I am hopeful that through joint efforts we will be able to reinvigorate the Armenian-British interaction to the benefit of our two countries and for the welfare of the two nations.

I wish Your Excellency robust health and fruitful activity, as well as progress and prosperity – to the friendly people of the United Kingdom,” the congratulatory message reads.

Confidence-building impossible when hundreds of families are waiting for their sons to return – Armenian President

President Armen Sarkissian says it is impossible to build confidence, when hundreds of Armenian families are waiting for their sons to return.

There are hundreds of prisoners of war still in Azerbaijan, while the Armenian side has handed over all POWs, the President said at a forum hosted by Horasis – an in-



dependent, international think tank, headquartered in Zurich

“You cannot build trust when hundreds of families in Armenia are waiting for their sons to return and under the conditions when Azerbaijani soldiers are crossing the border to the Armenian side thus inciting tensions,” he said.

Acting PM, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State highlight key role of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship



Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received on June 10 the US delegation led by acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Reeker.

Welcoming the representatives of the high-ranking US delegation, Nikol Pashinyan emphasized the importance of development of Armenian-American cooperation, noting that the visit is a good opportunity to discuss the agenda and prospects of bilateral relations.

The Acting Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for US President Joe Biden's message officially recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide and expressed hope that it would contribute to maintaining stability and security in the region. Nikol Pashinyan noted that

the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide is an important factor for regional security, as the security challenges of the Armenian people have not changed over the past 100 years. The 44-day war against Artsakh showed that the same actors involved in the organization and implementation of the Armenian Genocide were involved in this war.

The Acting Deputy Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia noted that he was visiting Armenia for the first time and was happy to be in Yerevan to discuss bilateral relations with Armenian colleagues. Philip Reeker conveyed to Nikol Pashinyan the greetings of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and reaffirmed the readiness to develop partnership with Armenia.

The American official praised the processes aimed at the development of democratic institutions in Armenia and said the 2018 parliamentary elections were exemplary. He reiterated the willingness of the American side to continue assisting Armenia in the implementation of democratic reforms.

The interlocutors referred to the situation in the region. Both sides noted the

importance of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs' role and the need to take steps to reduce tensions.

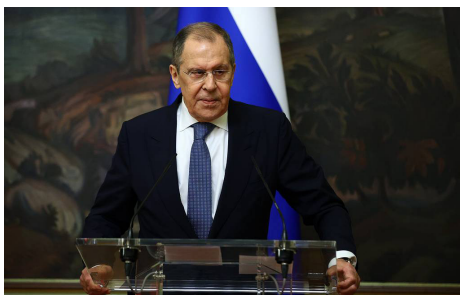
In the context of the Artsakh issue, Nikol Pashinyan stressed that the position of the Armenian side is that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict should be settled within the framework of the peace process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, based on the principles proposed by the Co-Chairs.

Nikol Pashinyan drew the interlocutor's attention to the need for the immediate return of prisoners, hostages and other detainees and the immediate withdrawal of Azerbaijani armed units from the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

The parties also discussed issues on the agenda of bilateral cooperation.



Status of Nagorno-Karabakh yet to be agreed – Lavrov



The issue of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh must still be agreed upon with the participation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs (Russia, USA, France), but now it is worth focusing on the return to peaceful life, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at the Primakov Readings forum.

"I understand that now many are talking about the fact that the status of Nagorno-

Karabakh remains unresolved. This has to be finally agreed with the participation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, who at this stage, probably, should not raise the status problem, but contribute to strengthen confidence-building measures, solve humanitarian issues, so that Armenians and Azerbaijanis begin to live together in security and economic prosperity. And then, I assure you, in a couple of years, all status-related issues will be solved much easier," the Russian Foreign Minister said.

He pointed out that statements from the capitals of the countries participating in the conflict and neighboring states are often driven by emotions. "We call on all those involved in this situation to help calm down and establish a normal life for

those on the ground," Lavrov stressed. He added that Russia is actively involved in the efforts through peacekeepers and the Emergencies Ministry.

The Minister also noted that the activities of the trilateral working group on unblocking regional communications are also committed to this task. "The effectiveness of the activities of the trilateral working group will be determined primarily by the extent to which this unblocking will directly help improve people's lives," Lavrov said. "In these trilateral discussions, both the interests of Turkey and the interests of Iran are unambiguously taken into account, otherwise all this unblocking will not have maximum effect."

Kocharyan promises security, economic recovery



Former President Robert Kocharyan pledged on June 11 to restore security and stability in Armenia, kick-start the domestic economy and deepen the country's ties with Russia if an opposition alliance led by him wins the June 20 elections.

Kocharyan and senior members of the Hayastan alliance toured central Kotayk province on the fifth day of official campaigning for the snap elections in which they will be one of the ruling Civil Contract party's main challengers.

"We are coming to restore security," Kocharyan said at a campaign rally held in the town of Abovyan. "We are coming

to strengthen our borders. We are coming to restore and deepen relations with allied states."

"We are coming to ensure an economic upswing. We are coming to fight against unemployment, emigration and poverty," he said, adding that a new Armenian government led by him would attract large-scale investments and help to create "tens of thousands of new jobs each year."

Kocharyan has repeatedly touted his economic track record on the campaign trail, arguing that the Armenian economy grew at double digit rates during much of his 1998-2008 rule. He has also said that he would use his personal relations with Russian leaders and President Vladimir Putin in particular to boost Armenia's national security seriously weakened by last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Kocharyan campaigned in the Kotayk towns of Yeghvard and Nor Hachn earlier on Friday, holding indoor meetings with local residents. Some of them were able to ask him questions.

One voter wondered if Kocharyan's possible return to power would restore impunity which was enjoyed by government-linked and wealthy individuals under Armenia's former rulers.

The 66-year-old ex-president acknowledged that various abuses committed by them were widespread and said he "will not allow such practices" if he succeeds in unseating Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

He also said: "Have you ever heard about by any act of impudence by a member of my family or my other relatives? If my loved ones don't do that, who else would do that?"

Kocharyan went on to stress in this regard that he is not responsible for the policies of his successor and erstwhile ally Serzh Sargsyan, who was toppled in the 2018 uprising.

"After 2008 I had no ties to the authorities," he said. "From 2009 through 2018 I didn't even have contacts [with the Sargsyan administration] because there were many things with which I disagreed."

Armenian Opposition Leader Favors Closer 'Integration' With Russia

(RFE/RL) - Artur Vanetsyan, a leader of a major opposition bloc running in the upcoming Armenian parliamentary elections, called on Wednesday for Armenia's "deeper integration" with Russia.

"Russia is our ally and Armenia cannot have a better ally," Vanetsyan told Vladimir Solovyov, an outspoken Russian TV host close to the Kremlin, in an interview live streamed on the latter's YouTube channel. "We must have the right, straightforward relationship with Russia."

"Russia is not an ordinary country, Russia is a superpower," he said. "I think that after coming to power we will need to consider having closer cooperation, deeper integration processes with the Russian Federation. Relations between Armenia and Russia must be upgraded to a level where nobody would be able to change it."

Vanetsyan is a former director of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) who tops the list of the Pativ Unem bloc's candidates in the early elections slated



for June. The bloc consists of his Fatherland party and former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). It is seen as one of Prime Nikol Pashinyan's main challengers.

Vanetsyan, Sargsyan and their associates accuse Pashinyan of seriously undermining Russian-Armenian relations during his three-year rule. The prime minister has also faced similar accusations from other opposition leaders, notably former President Robert Kocharyan.

Kocharyan, who leads another opposition alliance, has repeatedly made a case for much closer ties with Russia after Ar-

menia's defeat in last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan has also vowed to deepen Russian-Armenian ties. He stated in April that Russian military presence in Armenia is vital for the country's national security and should become even stronger soon.

Vanetsyan also effectively endorsed Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea strongly condemned by the West. He said it was backed by the vast majority of the Ukrainian region's population.

"I believe that everyone must respect the Crimean people's right to self-determination and I'm sure that Crimea is Russian," he declared.

Vanetsyan, 42, was appointed as head of Armenia's most powerful security agency immediately after the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" that toppled Sargsyan and brought Pashinyan to power. He quickly became an influential member of Pashinyan's entourage but eventually fell out with the prime minister and resigned in September 2019.

Resignations of top Armenian diplomats accepted



Three of Armenia's four deputy foreign ministers, who have tendered their resignations due to apparent disagreements with the government, were formally relieved of their duties on June 8.

All four diplomats decided to resign after Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazian stepped down on May 27 following an emergency session of the Armenian

government's Security Council which discussed mounting tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

At a May 31 farewell meeting the Armenian Foreign Ministry staff, Ayvazian hinted that he disagrees with government decisions which he believes could put the country's sovereignty and national security at risk.

One of Ayvazian's deputies, Gagik Ghalachyan, also handed in his resignation on May 27. The Foreign Ministry confirmed on Monday that the three other vice-ministers -- Artak Apitonyan, Avet Adonts and Armen Ghevondyan -- followed suit.

Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, who is currently filling in for Prime Min-

ister Nikol Pashinyan campaigning for the June 20 parliamentary elections, accepted the resignations of Adonts, Apitonyan and Ghalachyan on Tuesday.

It was not clear whether Avinyan refused to approve Ghevondyan's letter of resignation and whether the latter intends to continue performing his duties. The Foreign Ministry did not comment on that.

Neither Pashinyan nor key members of his administration have made any public statements on the unprecedented resignations. A government spokesperson said last week that the post of foreign minister will likely remain vacant at least until the elections.

Macron intends to discuss Nagorno Karabakh, Armenian-Azerbaijani relations with Erdogan

French President Emmanuel Macron intends to discuss with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria and Libya at a meeting to be held in Brussels on June 14 on the sidelines of the NATO summit.

"Immediately on the eve of the NATO summit, I will have a meeting with the President of Turkey. This is a good opportunity to exchange views on a number of issues," Macron said. "We have deep differences, we know about them, but I believe that it is necessary to conduct a dialogue," the French President told a



press conference on Thursday.

"I want to talk about the situation in Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh and relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan," he said. Macron also said that he "intends to discuss cooperation within

NATO and the rules of conduct in relations between allies."

"I also want to talk about the work that France is doing against radical Islamism and separatism," the French leader added.

"We need a demanding agenda, despite our differences," Macron said. "I have always been very clear about the observance of human rights, the protection of journalists and political opposition, representatives of the scientific community and artists," he continued. "We need a one-on-one discussion. We need to speak even when there are disagreements."

U.S. rejects use of force to demarcate the border, urges Armenia, Azerbaijan to return to substantive negotiations

The US is concerned by recent developments along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, including the detention of six Armenian soldiers by Azerbaijani forces and the recent tragic death of two journalists in a land-mine incident, Acting Assistant Secretary Philip Reeker told reporters in Azerbaijan, U.S. Embassy in Baku informs.

"Too many lives have been lost in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and we are concerned the situation at the border could escalate. We call on both sides to resolve these incidents urgently and peacefully," he said.

"The United States considers any



movements along the non-demarcated areas of the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan to be provocative and unnecessary. 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 emplacement of landmines," Philip Reeker noted.

"The United States urges the sides to return as soon as possible to substantive negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to achieve a long-term political settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The United States will continue to work with international humanitarian organizations, as well as our Allies and partners, to meet humanitarian needs in the region. But only through a peaceful settlement of the conflict can the people of the South Caucasus truly thrive and prosper," he stated.



Acting Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan received Ambassador of Iran to Armenia Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri, the ministry told Armenpress.

The meeting was also attended by deputy ministers Varos Simonyan and Narek Teryan.

Welcoming the guest, Vahan Kerobyan said the close cooperation with Iran has further intensified recently, adding that a number of agreements have been reached with the Iranian delegations during their visit in Armenia, aimed at expanding the partnership in different branches of the economy.

Armenia's acting economy minister receives Iranian Ambassador

Mr. Kerobyan highlighted putting the joint projects and initiatives on a practical base as soon as possible. In response the Ambassador informed that the Iranian side has already developed a roadmap and a timetable for the implementation of the joint programs outlining the program priorities.

The meeting participants discussed also the issues on the agenda relating to trade, industry, pharmaceuticals, tourism and other sectors, as well as the implementation of prospective programs, attraction of investments, effective organization of exports and imports between Armenia and Iran. Highlighting the cooperation in pharmaceuticals sector, Vahan Kerobyan informed that several Armenian pharmaceutical companies will soon visit Iran to discuss the cooperation opportunities and reach agreements.

The sides paid attention also to the development of inter-provincial cooperation. They noted that in case of effectively organizing the bilateral cooperation, the trade turnover volumes and tourism flows will increase considerably. In this respect the caretaker minister touched upon the necessity of operating Yerevan-Isfahan direct flights, adding that its launch will contribute to the development of relations between the two nations.

The Ambassador also informed that Iranian construction companies are interested in participating in the construction of Sisian-Kajaran section of the North-South highway.

The Armenian and Iranian sides agreed to take concrete actions to develop joint projects contributing to economic development and implement the already existing ones as soon as possible.

UAE-based Masdar Company set to launch first renewable energy project in Armenia

President Armen Sarkissian received representatives of the UAE-based Masdar Company Mohammed al-Shehhi and Managar at the Bids Department Vipul Goyal.

Masdar starts the first investment program in the field of renewable energy in Armenia, which will be launched in the near future within the framework of "AYG-1" solar photovoltaic program.

An agreement on the implementation of investment programs in Armenia by Masdar, one of the world leaders in the field of renewable energy, was reached during the official visit of the President of the Republic of Armenia Armen Sarkissian to the



United Arab Emirates.

A joint development agreement was signed in 2019 in Abu Dhabi between the State Interests Fund of Armenia and Mas-

dar Company on the implementation of projects with a total capacity of 400 MW in the field of renewable energy in Armenia.

During the meeting with the representatives of Masdar company, President Sarkissian hailed the fact that high-level agreements reached during the visits to the United Arab Emirates are being implemented.

"We expect investments and new cooperation programs in other spheres – technology, agriculture, logistics. Our countries have a great potential for cooperation," said President Sarkissian.

Acting high-tech minister visits Tumo Center for Creative Technologies

Acting Minister of High Technological Industry of Armenia Hayk Chobanyan visited the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies in Yerevan, the ministry told Armenpress.

Accompanied by Director of the Center Marie Lou Papazian, the caretaker minister toured the Center, its music studio, classrooms and cinema. He talked to the students, got acquainted with their study programs and listened to the works performed by Tumo's student music group,

as well as watched the animation videos created by the students of the Center.

The acting minister also visited the 42 Yerevan programming school operating in Tumo, which offers over 100 constantly upgrading projects in accordance with the latest demands of the field.

Thereafter, a discussion took place during which Tumo's development director Bekor Papazian presented the design of a new engineering and applied science complex which will be constructed next to

Tumo.

The Tumo Director informed that new centers will open in Koghb and Masis, and the next Tumo box will open in the town of Sevan. She said currently the number of students is 1900 and is expected to reach 60,000.

Highlighting the projects implemented by the Center, Hayk Chobanyan said the ministry is ready to provide assistance to Tumo's programs and initiatives.

Arsen V. Ghazayan: “Regardless of Political Processes, the Economy must be Stable and Ensure Normal Society Life”

*Prepared by Gourgen Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent*

Restoration of the post-war and post-pandemic economy, the current issues the business is faced the members of the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia (UMBA) and the RA Acting Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan discussed recently. The businessmen presented the challenges in various fields, their views on their overcoming, the vision of development. In particular, they referred to agriculture, winemaking, capital construction, jewelry, information technology, transport communications, tourism, and financial issues.

The implementation of investment supporting measures, the need to improve the legislative framework on tax and economic



“State-business regular dialogue is extremely important, especially for the restoration and promotion of our post-war economy. Regardless the political processes, the economy must be stable and ensure the society’s normal living,” said Arsen Ghazaryan, the UMBA

The participants of the meeting touched upon the “Strategy of



President.

RA Acting Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan presented the forthcoming and future steps taken by the Agency he has been leading and answered questions of the businessmen.

Author’s note

P.S. Just few weeks ago UMBA turned 25 years.

The Staff of the Noyan Tapan Holding wholeheartedly congratulates the Union and its President on the Jubilee and wish the fruitful work in the name of restoration and prosperity of our long suffered Motherland and the entire Armenian Nation.



activities, to ensure simplification and transparency of the state procurement process were discussed.

Transformation of Armenia until 2050” and the “Concept of the RA Economic Policy” developed by the Ministry.

In particular, it was noted that there is a need for their wide publicity as well as professional and expertise involvement in terms of implementation.

It was suggested to create a unified platform where the representatives of the RA Ministries of Economy and Finance, the Central Bank and the business community will be able to regularly held joint discussions on the steps and reforms related to the field.



‘We will try not to make a wrong decision’ –Armenian National Congress party chair on possible cooperation in parliament



The Armenian National Congress party, which is participating in the upcoming snap parliamentary elections, doesn't hurry to present what kind of cooperation it is going to have if elected with other political forces to be represented in the Parliament.

Party president Levon Ter-Petrosyan,

who is leading the ANC electoral list, stated during a press conference today that if they are elected to the Parliament, they will try not to make a wrong decision regarding the cooperation in the Parliament.

“You know that my proposal to Serzh Sargsyan [3rd President of Armenia] and Robert Kocharyan [2nd President of Armenia] has been rejected, and returning to it is no longer possible”, he said, adding that he supports “coalition of solidarity”. “Although this so called “coalition” is like a way of creating new problems for Armenia. The situation

could change every six months, and we will be among the countries which change their government once a year. If there is no other way out, of course, we must try. We will try not to make a wrong decision”, he said.

The electoral campaign for the snap parliamentary elections launched in Armenia on June 7.

The campaign will last until June 18.

The snap parliamentary elections will take place on June 20, but the electronic voting will kick off on June 11 until June 13.

26 political forces – 22 parties and 4 blocs, have been registered for participation in the elections, but on June 8 one of the parties has announced that they will not take part in the elections.

Czech MPs call for unconditional and immediate release of Armenian POWs

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament has adopted a resolution calling for unconditional and immediate release of Armenian prisoners of war, the Armenian Embassy in the Czech Republic informs.

The resolution reads:

Whereas on 19 March 2021 Human Rights Watch reported that Azerbaijani security and armed forces were abusing Armenian prisoners of war, and subjecting them to cruel

and degrading treatment and torture, either at the time of their capture, during their transfer or in custody in various prisons

I. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian military and civilian prisoners captured during and after the conflict, and calls on Azerbaijan to refrain from arbitrary detention in the future. Further urges the parties to the conflict to comply fully with the tripartite ceasefire of 9 November 2020, which provides for the exchange



of prisoners of war, hostages and other detainees, as well as the remains of persons killed in the armed conflict;

II. Deplores the violence that took place during the last war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh; Expresses its solidarity with the victims and their families; Deplores the breach of the ceasefire, which has led to further human suffering, loss of life and destruction; Condemns all attacks on the civilian population and recalls that states

have an obligation under international humanitarian law to protect the lives of civilians;

III. Considers it essential for the Government of Azerbaijan to provide exhaustive lists of all persons held in captivity in the context of the armed conflict and to provide information on their whereabouts and their health, including information on those who have died in captivity;

IV. Considers it necessary for the Government of Azerbaijan to cooperate fully with the European

Court of Human Rights on the issue of Armenian prisoners and to comply with the preliminary rulings of the court which ordered Azerbaijan to provide detailed information on the conditions of detention of prisoners, their state of health and measures taken for their return;

V. We ask the Government of the Czech Republic to act in the spirit of the above on the territory of the European Union, the United Nations and other international organizations.

Department of Commerce set to block Armenia's aluminum foil exports to the United States



cial manner that protects domestic U.S. interests while avoiding devastating impacts on Armenia's economy.

Armenal is a major taxpayer that contributes meaningfully to Armenia's budget, directly employs over 700 skilled workers in the Arabkir

The Department of Commerce is set to undertake a punitive trade action against Armenal, Armenia's sole producer and exporter of aluminum foil, a counter-productive proposal strongly opposed by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The ANCA supports a balanced "suspension agreement" that would put in place a managed bilateral trade regime to resolve outstanding issues in a mutually benefi-

region, and indirectly supports the livelihoods of thousands of families across Armenia. Armenal's aluminum foil exports have, in recent years, accounted for as much as three-quarters of Armenia's total exports to the United States, but represent only a small fraction of total U.S. imports, and an even smaller share of the total U.S. market.

"Now, more than ever, the Biden Administration needs to be pro-actively

supporting Armenia's sovereignty and Artsakh's security – amicably resolving trade issues and energetically boosting U.S.-Armenia economic ties – certainly not targeting Armenian workers with punitive trade actions," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "A 'suspension agreement' will be a win-win, providing all stakeholders with the time and space to address this matter in a cooperative manner."

The punitive trade action, currently being considered by the Commerce Department, comes amid Armenia's ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the economic and refugee crisis caused by Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing of Artsakh last fall, and Baku's ongoing aggression against Armenia.

The Department of Commerce's preliminary determination regarding Armenal is **available in the U.S. Federal Register**.

UNDP to provide \$75 mln to Armenia in 2021-2025

The Executive Board of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS adopted the UNDP Country Programme Document for Armenia for 2021-2025 during its Annual Session in New York. The estimated cost of the programme is over 75mln. US dollars.

Before the adoption of the programme document, the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN Mher Margaryan in his remarks commended the long-standing cooperation with the UNDP since the early days of the independence of Armenia, as well as the support of the UN System to the socio-



economic programs aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

The Programme document is deriving from the priorities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), in particular, in

the areas of sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development, environmental resilience and democratic governance.

The document prioritizes the needs of people displaced and affected by the recent aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh. It defines targeted measures aimed at income-generation and employment initiatives, including rehabilitation and integration into social and economic life for war veterans, disabled persons and vulnerable groups.

Australian Government position on Armenian Genocide is under review, FM Marise Payne confirms

During questioning by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Legislation Committee, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne confirmed the Australian Government's position on the Armenian Genocide "is a matter that we have under review," reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU).

In April 2021, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who called for Federal Australian recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a backbench MP in 2011, released his 106th Anniversary commemoration statement that failed to correctly characterize the crimes of 1915 despite acknowledging Australia's first major international humanitarian relief effort to aid the "dispossession, deportations and deaths" suffered during the events.

Following this statement, United States President Joe Biden made history by recognizing the 1915 massacres of 1.5 million Armenians as Genocide – this came after the country's Congress recognized the Armenian Genocide in both parliamentary chambers.

On 3rd June 2021, Shadow Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong – who is the Senate Leader of the Opposition, asked "about the government's reaction to President Biden's statement on Armenian Remembrance Day, including that 'the American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today'."

Minister Payne responded: "The Prime Minister provided a statement at the time



of the Armenian commemoration, which is on 24 April. That statement very clearly recorded the position of Australian prisoners of war as witness to the dispossession, deportation and death of Armenians."

"It is a matter that we have under review," she added. "As you say, there have been statements of position issued by the United States and others on this matter."

When pressed, Minister Payne continued: "We are obviously viewing the actions of other countries on this matter and drawing those into our consideration as well ... The Prime Minister's statement was a step ahead of statements he had made previously."

Minister Payne went on to express sympathy for sustained advocacy efforts, which include amplified representations by Armenian-Australians, Assyrian-Australians, Greek-Australians and many friends in parliament calling for Federal recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides.

"There are a number of keen advocates on these issues, as you know, right across this parliament and much further afield ... we are deeply sympathetic to the views that have been raised over many years."

The Armenian National Committee of Australia expressed gratitude to Senator Penny Wong for raising these questions, and to Minister Marise Payne for confirming the Government's policy was under review in light of local advocacy and international trends towards truth and justice on this issue.

"Through the Joint Justice Initiative, the Armenian-Australian, Assyrian-Australian and Greek-Australian communities have made clear the policy priority of our three communities is Federal Government recognition of the genocides faced by our ancestors, and we are encouraged that our collective voices are resulting in dialogue at the highest levels of Australian politics, when the country's alternative Foreign Minister is questioning our current Foreign Minister on this position," said ANC-AU Executive Director, Haig Kayserian.

"We are further appreciative that the outcome of this dialogue has confirmed, on public record, that the Government's position of not correctly recognizing the Armenian Genocide is under review and that Foreign Minister Payne considers Prime Minister Morrison's characterization of 'dispossession, deportations and deaths' as a step ahead."

"We thank Senators Payne and Wong, and look forward to working with all those across Australia's political spectrum until we achieve just recognition for the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Genocides," Kayserian added.

Constantine Orbelian appointed music director and principal conductor of New York City Opera

New York City Opera has announced the appointment of internationally acclaimed conductor and pianist Constantine Orbelian as the company's Music Director and Principal Conductor. Maestro Orbelian will conduct his first NYCO production this summer when the company performs a newly created version of *Rigoletto* on Sunday, August 29 at the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice in Kingston, New York, followed by an encore performance of the Verdi favorite on Friday, September 3 as part of Bryant Park's annual

Picnic Performance series.

"We are indeed very fortunate to welcome the world-renowned maestro, Constantine Orbelian to the New York City Opera Family," commented General Director Michael Capasso. "Maestro Orbelian brings decades of international experience conducting opera's greatest stars both in performance and on award-winning recordings and will offer the company and its audiences many world-class performances in the future. I have no doubt his skill and experience will be central to restoring City

Opera to its place in the American and international Opera scenes."

"I am thrilled to accept the position of Music Director and Principal Conductor of the venerable New York City Opera," said Maestro Orbelian. "It is a great opportunity to help bring this historic, culturally significant musical institution back to life after a challenging time of Covid closures. We will give opera lovers the thrill of hearing extraordinary singers from across America and beyond. Staying true to the NYCO

➡ page 13

Members of Congress demand answers from Biden Administration on Armenian POWs, waiver of restrictions on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez (D-NJ) told Secretary of State Antony Blinken that the Biden Administration's waiver of Section 907 restrictions on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan gave the "green light" to the Aliyev regime to "act with impunity," reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The statement came during a June 8th Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing with Secretary of State Blinken on President Biden's Fiscal Year 2022 foreign aid priorities. Secretary Blinken was also confronted with similar concerns regarding continued U.S. aid to Azerbaijan, the ongoing illegal captivity of Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) by the Aliyev regime, and U.S. ties with Turkey's autocratic Erdogan regime during hearings before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations this week.

"We join with our congressional allies in demanding an immediate stop to any and all US military aid to Azerbaijan," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "Not a single US taxpayer dollar should be shipped over to the oil-rich, racist, and violent Aliyev regime. Period. End of sentence," concluded Hamparian.

During Senate Foreign Relations Committee questioning, Chairman Menendez explained, "I was disappointed that the Administration green-lighted the [Section] 907 waiver renewals despite Azerbaijan's attack on Nagorno Karabakh. Now, after the 907 waivers, interfering



with the actual territorial sovereignty of Armenia in the border issue, not releasing the actual prisoners of the conflict in violation of international law – I mean, I think that they [Azerbaijan] can act with impunity and I think when we waived it [Section 907], we gave them that green-light."

Secretary Blinken stammered through a clearly strained response, stating "We have to continue to take a look at this. I have been working actively on this particularly, getting the return of the prisoners, getting engaged in an actual process discussion negotiation over an actual resolution and working on those things, and it was my hope that we would get a little bit of traction. But I think we have to continue to look at this and re-look at this in the future," continued Secretary Blinken.

During the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, senior committee member Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), told Secretary Blinken, "the Administration has issued a Section 907 waiver to allow the sale of weapons to Azerbaijan and I hope that you would reconsider that in light of Azerbaijan's violations of territorial integrity not of Nagorno Karabakh, although that is important, but of Armenia,

itself, in unprovoked aggression."

During the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations hearing, Chairwoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) noted that she would be submitting a question regarding Nagorno Karabakh and the waiver of Section 907 restrictions on aid to Azerbaijan and requested a written response from Secretary Blinken.

On Turkey, Senator Menendez argued, "There are more journalists and lawyers arrested in Turkey today and in jails. Turkey is constantly violating, in my perspective, international law when it threatens Cyprus and its exclusive economic zone, when it declares an economic zone going to Libya that is not recognized at all but interferes with Greece's economic zone, when it engages in aggression against Armenia through Azerbaijan, when it's playing a nefarious role in Libya. So, what are we doing to counter Turkey under Erdogan? And, I say Turkey under Erdogan because it's not about the Turkish people, but it's certainly about its leader."

Secretary Blinken noted that, "We certainly share those concerns and have engaged Turkey directly on them." When Secretary Blinken argued that the U.S. must keep Turkey "anchored to the West and aligned on some other critical issues," Senator Menendez shot back: "I understand we want Turkey anchored to the West but you can't be anchored to the West and drifting in every other direction further away on all the core principles we believe in as a NATO ally and also all the other ones."

Trial of Armenian captives in Baku a gross violation of international law – Ombudsman

The trials of the Armenian captives continue in Azerbaijan with gross violations of international law, Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan said in a statement.

Today, on June 8 and 9, regular court hearings were held in Baku on criminal cases against prisoners Ludvik Mkrtchyan, Al-yosha Khosrovyan and Vigen Euljekyan.

Azerbaijani publications show that the Armenian prisoners are accused of allegedly torturing, forming illegal armed groups and other acts.

The Armenian Human Rights Defender states that all the mentioned persons were captured within the framework of the Artsakh conflict; the conflict is not over. All servicemen and civilians of the Armenian side detained in Azerbaijan are captives.

"Therefore, any kind of persecution or trial against any of them is a gross violation of international law, and their detention is a prohibited punishment. These



rules are directly derive from requirements of international humanitarian law," the Ombudsman said.

The gross violations of international law are enshrined in the ad hoc report of the RA Human Rights Defender.

"The policy of anti-Armenianism and hostility of the Azerbaijani authorities, in turn, comes to confirm the illegality of criminal proceedings and makes it senseless to talk about guaranteeing any human right. In these conditions, the right to life of prisoners is obviously endangered, vital rights are violated," Arman Tatoyan said.

He stressed that the Azerbaijani author-

ities do not publish the real number of prisoners.

"Human Rights Defender's investigations, complaints from the parents of prisoners and missing persons, clearly show that the trials are causing additional mental suffering to their families, and are causing tension in Armenian society. Therefore, these trials contradict the foundations of international law, grossly violate the rights of prisoners and the missing, their families, and openly politicize humanitarian issues," the Human Rights Defense stated.

The Human Rights Defender draws the attention of the international community to the mentioned facts. All the captives of the Armenian side illegally detained in Azerbaijan must be released immediately and returned to their homeland without any preconditions.

How a secret army of Azerbaijani interns infiltrated Germany's democracy – VICE

For years, interns from Azerbaijan have networked in the Bundestag, maintaining strange contacts with the regime of Ilham Aliyev and German politicians, Robert Hofmann, Boris Kartheuser and Felix Dachsels write in an article published by VICE.

"In the Bundestag, the German parliament, interns with ties to the regime of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev have been working in the center of power for years. They are employed by MPs, some of whom themselves maintain connections with the country in the South Caucasus," the article reads.

The system that underpins these connections is large and complex, with many



players: a renowned Berlin university that receives hundreds of thousands of euros from Azerbaijan; members of almost all parties in the German parliament; and the embassies of two countries, the authors say.

They all help to ensure that interns with close ties to the Aliyev regime were em-

ployed in the heart of German democracy.

"This network of Azerbaijani interns is spread across several parliamentary groups. It helps Aliyev, who likes to appear in public dressed in camouflage and appointed his wife as his deputy by decree a few years ago, consolidate his influence abroad to the disadvantage of the opposition in Baku," the article continues.

The authors say "interns in the Bundestag are given a pass that gives them access to most places: to the offices of members of parliament, committees, and meeting rooms."

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

Serj Tankian's paintings to go on display at Tufenkian Gallery in Glendale

Tufenkian Fine Arts will present "Serj Tankian: The Incandescent Pause," an exhibition featuring selected works by the artist Serj Tankian. The exhibition will run from Friday, July 2 and will be on view through Friday, July 16. This will be the artist's first show with the gallery.

A poet, songwriter, visual artist, activist, composer, and lead singer for System of a Down, Serj Tankian has always created music as an outlet to express his thoughts and feelings with a level of passion and consciousness that few in today's world of music can rival. An Armenian born in Lebanon and re-rooted in Los Angeles, Tankian was introduced to the melding of cultures, philosophies, and ideals from a young age.

In recent years, Tankian has split his time between holding a microphone and a paintbrush, having feverishly created over sixty pieces of art since the beginning of 2013. His journey into the world of fine art began with his "Disarming Time Musical Paintings" which were exhibited at Project Gallery in Los Angeles. The artworks

in "The Incandescent Pause" present the viewer with a unique audible and visual experience, as each piece is accompanied by a musical score which remains as integral to Tankian's artistic expression as the paint on the canvas. The forms in Tankian's artworks thoroughly explore the space and convey complex relationships, much like the intricacies present in the artist's musical compositions.

As Tankian explains it: "The title of the exhibition serves as a visual reference to the involuntary social isolation experienced by our species recently. Nature has sent us to our rooms as we've failed in our vision as caretakers of the Earth. Time for a new way of co-existing, one that elevates the quality of all lives while lowering our lifestyle footprint. We can no longer afford to measure our value in economic growth. We must measure our value in the growth of our culture and happiness".

Influenced by the Russian Expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky's theories on color and synesthesia, Tankian explores the themes of movement, tone, dissonance,



harmony, and chromatics to create his incredibly dynamic and expressive works. Synesthesia describes the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body. The relation between both our visual and auditory senses inform our interpretation of the artworks. The embedded musical score that accompanies each piece in the exhibition are accessed via [Arloopa](#), a mobile application that utilizes optical recognition technology to allow users to listen to each painting by way of audio headsets.

Tufenkian Fine Arts, a gallery located in Glendale, California, is dedicated to the advancement of modern and contemporary artists. We present and connect audiences to events and exhibitions fostering excellence in contemporary fine art.

page 10 ➡ tradition, we will provide contemporary composers a great platform in which to premiere their works. We look forward to welcoming you, our opera-loving public, to our performances at Bryant Park and the Phoenix International Festival of the Voice this summer and to announcing our next season of events and performances."

New York City Opera will return to the Bryant Park Picnic Performance series this summer with four concerts beginning this month on Friday, June 18 with its annual "Pride in the Park" concert and culminating on Friday, September 3 with a fully staged, costumed and Orbelian-conducted production of *Rigoletto*, a newly created 90-minute version with narration written and performed by actor and playwright Bill Van Horn. This winter, New York City Opera will produce, with National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Michael Korie's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, opening in January at the Edward J. Safra Hall at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in downtown Manhattan, guest-conducted by Maestro James Lowe. Other upcoming 2022 productions include the New York premiere

of Anthony Davis and Richard Wesley's Pulitzer Prize-winning Opera *the Central Park Five*.

Constantine Orbelian

Four-time Grammy-nominated conductor Constantine Orbelian has been called "the singer's dream collaborator" by Opera News, which hailed him for conducting vocal repertoire "with the sensitivity of a lieder pianist." He has toured and recorded with some of the world's greatest singers, such as American stars Renée Fleming, Sondra Radvanovsky and Lawrence Brownlee, and with the great Dmitri Hvorostovsky and other renowned Russian singers in European, North American, Russian and Asian music centers. Maestro Orbelian's accomplishments include being Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia of Russia, founder of the annual Palaces of St. Petersburg International Music Festival, Chief Conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra in Lithuania, and Artistic Director of the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan, Armenia.

Among his concert and televised appearances are collaborations with Hvorostovsky, Renée Fleming, Anna Netrebko, Elīna Garanča and Van Cliburn, including

the legendary pianist's farewell performance. Born in San Francisco to Russian and Armenian émigré parents, Maestro Orbelian made his performing debut as a piano prodigy with the San Francisco Symphony at the age of 11. After graduating from Juilliard in New York, he embarked on a career as a piano virtuoso that included appearances with major symphony orchestras throughout the U.S., U.K., Europe and Russia. The first American to become music director of an ensemble in Russia, he was awarded the coveted title "Honored Artist of Russia" in 2004 in recognition of his efforts championing Russian-American cultural exchange. In 2012 the Russian Consulate in San Francisco awarded the maestro the Russian Order of Friendship Medal, joining such luminaries as Cliburn and Riccardo Muti in being so honored. In 2001 Maestro Orbelian was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, given to immigrants, or children of immigrants, who have made outstanding contributions to the United States. Maestro Orbelian has recorded over 60 CDs for the DELOS Label and has additional DVDs and CDs which have been released on Decca, Deutsche Gramophone, Chandos, Philips and Warner labels.

Armenian cultural sites and attractions to get nominated for World Travel Awards

In early June an Agreement on cooperation was signed between the Tourism and Urbanism (TUF) Charitable Foundation and the World Media & Events to develop the tourism industry and tourism infrastructures as well as to facilitate the professional growth of industry specialists.

With this agreement, TUF Foundation, which implements programs for the socio-economic development in Armenia through tourism and urbanism initiatives, as well as projects aimed at shaping a decentralized tourism chains in Armenia, will partner with the World Media & Events organizing the World Travel Awards. The latter was founded in 1993 to acknowledge, reward and celebrate excellence across all key sectors of the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

As part of the cooperation, TUF Foundation organized a visit of Graham Cooke, the Founder and the Director of the World Travel Awards, to Armenia. In the course of the three-day tour Mr. Cooke visited the most spectacular and attractive touristic sites in Armenia – Garni, Geghard,

Dilijan, Tatev, as well as the Genocide Museum and the Matenadaran in Yerevan. He also participated in the Yerevan Wine Days event.

“This cooperation is an opportunity for Armenia to climb to a new level of international tourism, become more visible, and have the Armenian cultural sites and attractions nominated for the World Travel Awards. Besides, we agreed on organizing an international wine and culinary festival in Armenia in 2022 with



an expressed commitment to start the work on the project,” Yelena Abovyan, the Director of the Tourism and Urbanism (TUF) Charitable Foundation, said.

The cooperation aims at developing the incoming tourism in Armenia,

improve Armenia’s position as a tourist destination in the world tourism market, strengthen the unity of professional communities in tourism and related industries, improve the image of tourism and hospitality specializations and jobs, develop the professional capacities of those engaged in the industry, support state agencies in developing public policies and implementing tourism development strategy in Armenia, as well as in elaborating and developing applicable laws and regulations in the sphere.

About the Tourism and Urbanism (TUF) Charitable Foundation

In July 2020 the Tourism and Urbanism (TUF) Charitable Foundation undertook the projects by the IDEa Foundation targeted at the tourism and urbanism development (in Dilijan, Tatev, Artsakh, and Yerevan). The Foundation develops innovative projects in tourism and urbanism, promotes sustainable regional development and positions Armenia on the world map as a competitive tourism destination.

Paul Eluard Francophone Center set to open in Stepanakert

The Paul Eluard Francophone Center in Stepanakert will be opened soon, the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund informs.

The center will unite all francophones, and serve as an educational, commercial, and innovative platform to promote the

development of the city.

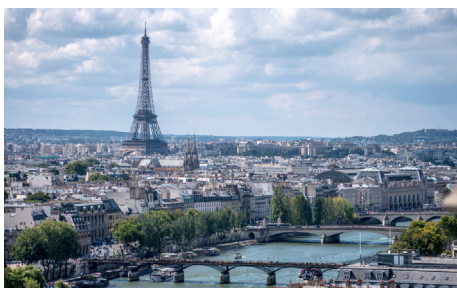
The project is unique as it is the first official foreign government investment in Artsakh being implemented thanks to the co-financing of the Fund’s French affiliate and the Government of Artsakh.



France resumes international travel: Armenia in orange zone

From 9 June onwards, tourist traffic between France and foreign countries will be reopened under procedures which vary depending on the health situation in the other country and the vaccination status of travelers, the Embassy of France in Armenia informs.

Armenia is classified in the orange zone (active circulation of the virus in controlled proportions, without dissemination of worrying variants).



The issuance of a visa does not guarantee the possibility of immediate

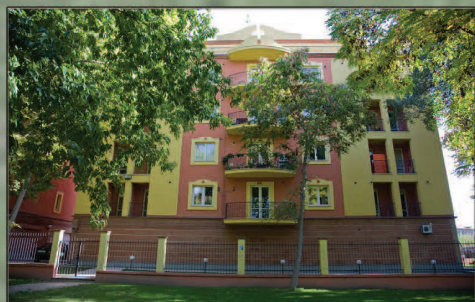
entry into the territory, the Embassy says.

To enter France, it is necessary to have been vaccinated by a vaccine recognized by the European Medicines Agency (Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson) and present a certificate of a PCR (less than 72 hours old) or antigen test less than 48 hours old.

Non-vaccinated persons must have compelling reasons to travel to France.

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