

Latvia recognizes the Armenian Genocide



Latvia has officially recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide. The Seima (Parliament) voted 58 to 11 with 7 abstentions to adopt a relevant declaration, Armenia's outgoing Ambassador to Latvia Tigran Mkrtchyan informs.

Back on April 24, 2020, two forces in the Latvian parliament, members of the ruling coalition, the New Conservatives and the Yes to Development Parties, made statements condemning the Armenian Genocide. On the initiative of these forces, as well as most of the representatives of the Agreement party, the process of recognizing the Armenian Genocide began in February 2021, as a result of which a resolution-statement was submitted on April 23.

Emphasizing that Latvia condemns all crimes against humanity, the declaration notes that the country sees it as a duty to recognize and remember these crimes in order to prevent their recurrence.

Recognizing that a large number of Armenians were deported to other parts of the empire as a result of the actions of the Ottoman authorities, which resulted in many casualties caused by starvation, atrocities and massacres, the lawmakers condemn the crimes, massacres and forced deportations committed by the Ottoman authorities against the Armenian people.

The declaration respects the memory of all the victims of the Armenian Genocide, pays tribute to all the survivors, affirms that open discussions on historical issues are inextricably linked to the development of a healthy, mature democracy.

The Seima calls on the international community "to assess these historic events, to look to the future we want to build, without violence, intolerance, a future where human rights are respected, where everyone can be free, safe and secure."

Armenia welcomes the adoption of the Declaration recognizing the Armenian Genocide by the Latvian Parliament, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"This is a step towards the universal recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide," the Ministry said.

It noted that the declaration is important not only for the sake of historical justice and truth, but also for the prevention of such crimes in the future. "The universal recognition of the Armenian Genocide is one of the most important guarantees for the security of the Armenian people in the region."

"We share the position of the Latvian Parliament that the recognition of such crimes is called to build a future where human rights are respected, u every individual can be free, safe and secure," the Foreign Ministry stated.such crimes in the future. "The universal recognition of the Armenian Genocide is one of the most important guarantees for the security of the Armenian people in the region."

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Determination of Artsakh's status should underlie a comprehensive settlement, Armenia's top diplomat says



The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is far from being resolved, Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian said at

a joint press conference with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

"Exceptionally through peaceful negotiations will it be possible to reach a comprehensive political solution, which will respect everyone's rights and will bring peace and stability to the South Caucasus," Ara Aivazian said.

He stressed that at the core of such settlement should be the determination of the status of Artsakh within the borders where the people of Artsakh self-determined.

"The principles of settlement have been worked out by the co-chairmanship of the OSCE Minsk Group, and we are interested in the farther strengthening of that format," he added.

"The Armenian side shares the joint position of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries that special attention should be paid to achieving a final, comprehensive and sustainable settlement on the basis of the principles and elements well-known to the parties," acting Minister Aivazian stated.

The Armenian side has returned all Azerbaijani POWs – MFA

Armenia has fulfilled its obligations under Article 8 of the November 9, 2020 trilateral statement and returned all Azerbaijani prisoners of war, including the two persons convicted for the murder of a minor in 2014, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan says.

"The growing pressure on Azerbaijan from various countries and international organizations shows that a consensus is being formed in the international community on the immediate repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and hostages in accordance with the requirements of



international humanitarian law," she said.

The comments come after the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs issued a statement on May 5, urging the sides to fully and expeditiously complete the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and

remains, and to respect their obligations to ensure the humane treatment of detainees.

In response to the accusations from the Azerbaijani of the refusal to provide information about the missing during the first Artsakh War and on minefields, the Spokesperson said: "In the light of growing international pressure Azerbaijan is trying to bring forward a fake agenda, seeking an excuse for its own failure to meet its commitments."

"Armenia is always ready to cooperate with international partners in solving humanitarian problems," Naghdalyan stated.

Minsk Group Co-Chairs call for release of all prisoners

The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stephane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) released the following statement on May 6:

The Co-Chairs welcome Azerbaijan's release of Armenian detainees Robert Vardanyan, Samvel Shukhyan, and Seryan Tamrazyan and call on both parties to fully and expeditiously complete the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, and to respect their obligations to

ensure the humane treatment of detainees.

Recalling their 13 April statement, the Co-Chairs urge the sides to exchange all data necessary to conduct effective demining of conflict regions and to lift restrictions on access to Nagorno-Karabakh, including for representatives of international humanitarian organizations. The Co-Chairs encourage the sides to take concrete steps to create an atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to long-lasting peace by addressing the remaining areas of concern outlined

in the 13 April statement of the Co-Chairs. This includes resuming high-level political dialogue under the auspices of the Co-Chairs at the earliest opportunity.



Russian FM confident the issue of POWs will be solved in the near future

The relations between our countries are allied, and are built on the principle of strategic partnership, Armenia's acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

"At difficult times, the Russian Federation reached out to us to help solve the problems that had arisen as a result of the pandemic and the aggression against Karabakh. Thanks to the efforts of the Russian Federation, it became possible to stop the hostilities and achieve a significant mitigation of tension in our region. The presence of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno Karabakh today is a strong guarantee of security in Nagorno-Karabakh," Pashinyan said.

He emphasized Russian President Vladimir Putin's role in achieving peace in the region.

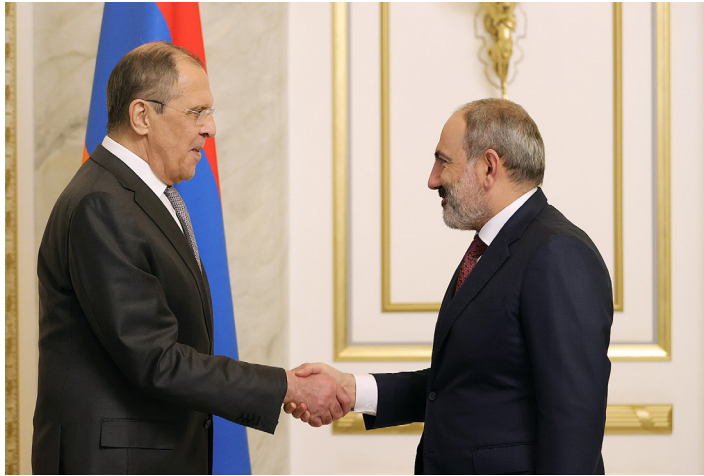
In this regard, he reiterated Armenia's commitment to continue to take all measures to implement the agreements reached through the trilateral statements of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021.

"We are also ready to make every effort to ensure a constructive dialogue between the parties in trilateral format," the acting PM said, emphasizing, however, that Azerbaijan's actions do not contribute to the progress of the trilateral dialogue at all.

"The actions of Baku, which manipulates the issue of the return of prisoners of war, carries out anti-Armenian Bacchanalia, lays territorial claims on Armenia, and have now begun to destroy the cultural and religious heritage of the Armenian people, are aimed at aggravating the situation in the region and frustrating the agreements reached," Nikol Pashinyan stated.

In this context, he hailed the actions of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, whose latest statement is, in fact, a response to Azerbaijan's destructive position.

"The position of the Co-Chairs



expressed in the April 13 statement is in line with our position on the main issues today. In this regard, I would like to emphasize our position that the peace process needs to be restored in order to reach a final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based on the principles proposed by the Co-Chairs," Pashinyan stated.

Sergey Lavrov noted, in turn, that Russia is committed to ensuring the security of its ally – the Republic of Armenia

"We highly appreciate the agreements reached on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Thank you for emphasizing the role of Russia, personally President Putin, in the efforts that led to the cessation of hostilities and the coordination of a stable framework for further action by all parties," Lavrov said.

"We most actively support the activities of the trilateral working group at the level of the Deputy Prime Ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which deals with the most important issues at this stage – the unblocking of economic and transport infrastructure, which will allow to end the blockade of Armenia not only at the political level, but will also ensure mutually beneficial cooperation of all countries in the region for the benefit of the common good," he said.

Undoubtedly, he said Russia will continue the peacekeeping mission in Nagorno Karabakh and assured that the

peacekeepers will do their best to resolve the remaining issues related to the determination of a clear line of contact and the provision of mutually beneficial agreements on its crossing. "And, without a doubt, delimitation and demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan will be possible when all these steps are implemented," he said.

"Together with the other OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, we continue to work to resolve all humanitarian issues, including

completing the return of detainees. We understand the psychological significance of this step, we are sure that we will be able to solve this problem in the near future. It will create a positive, constructive atmosphere for us to move forward on all further issues of the final settlement. We will do our best to support the solution of these issues in all possible ways, in line with the implementation of the trilateral statements of November 9 January 11," Lavrov stated.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the agenda of the Armenian-Russian allied relations, touched upon the situation around Nagorno Karabakh, particularly the settlement of humanitarian issues.

Nikol Pashinyan drew Sergey Lavrov's attention to Azerbaijan's ongoing anti-Armenian rhetoric, referring to the opening of the so-called "trophy park" in Baku, which features anti-Armenian, degrading demonstrations.

The Russian Foreign Minister attached importance to the joint efforts to build a constructive atmosphere and dialogue in the region. Sergey Lavrov also assessed the talks with his Armenian counterpart as effective, shared his impressions from his visit to the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial today, noting that Russia is always by the side of the friendly Armenian people.

The parties exchanged views on the regional situation and security challenges.

Ter-Petrosian defends election offers to other Ex-Presidents

Levon Ter-Petrosian defended on May 7 his public calls for Armenia's two other former presidents to form an electoral alliance with him and jointly try to oust Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's "criminal and nation-destroying regime."

Ter-Petrosian revealed on May 5 that he floated the idea at a March 25 meeting with Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan. He said Kocharyan rejected it out of hand while Sargsyan "did not express any opinion." He said he is "publicly repeating my proposal" because he believes Pashinyan's reelection would spell further trouble for Armenia.

Both ex-presidents swiftly turned down the proposal, saying that they are planning to enter other alliances ahead of the snap parliamentary elections expected in June.

"Whatever they say, an alliance of the three former presidents of the republic would still be the only way to ward off the danger of a reproduction of Pashinyan's criminal and nation-destroying regime and avoid new disasters," Ter-Petrosian said in his latest article posted on Ilur.am.

Ter-Petrosian also revealed on May 1 he held a separate meeting with Sargsyan and proposed that their political parties



set up an alliance without Kocharyan's participation. He claimed that he put forward a draft joint declaration saying, among other things, that Kocharyan is driven "not so much by the country's interests as revanchist motives."

"My second proposal did not succeed either because it was rejected by Sargsyan," wrote the 76-year-old ex-president who had served as Armenia's first president from 1991-1998.

He said he has disclosed details of his contacts with Sarkisian and Kocharyan in hopes of generating "public pressure" on them.

Sargsyan's office confirmed the rebuff in a statement issued later on Friday. It said he told Ter-Petrosian that "the bilateral alliance cannot be effective."

The office insisted at the same time that at their May 1 meeting Ter-Petrosian did not show Sargsyan the draft declaration publicized by him.

Ter-Petrosian's readiness to team up with the two other ex-presidents is remarkable given the long history of mutual antagonism between them. For many years he was highly critical of his successors' policies and track records.

The three men met in October for the first time in decades to discuss ways of stopping the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ter-Petrosian and Kocharyan offered to jointly travel to Moscow for urgent talks with Russian leaders.

Pashinyan reportedly refused to authorize them to negotiate on behalf of his administration. He later questioned the sincerity and seriousness of the ex-presidents' initiative, prompting angry reactions from them.

Like other opposition figures, all three ex-presidents blame Pashinyan for Armenia's defeat in the six-week war. Ter-Petrosian said in March that Pashinyan must step down and "at least temporarily" leave the country to end its post-war political crisis. The prime minister reacted scathingly to that statement.



Armenia's second President Robert Kocharyan will lead the alliance of the Reviving Armenia party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutyun.

"Taking into account the dire situation

Robert Kocharyan to lead the alliance of Reviving Armenia Party and ARF Dashnaktsutyun

in Armenia and Artsakh, due to the need to unite with ideological and like-minded political forces, the Reviving Armenia Party has decided to run in the snap parliamentary elections in alliance with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutyun, which will be led by

the second President of the Republic of Armenia Robert Kocharyan," the Reviving Armenia Party.

The snap parliamentary elections are expected on June 20. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stepped down late last month to trigger early elections.

Armenian parliament adopts bill on amendments to the Electoral Code at 1st reading

The National Assembly of Armenia adopted at the 1st reading the bill on amendments to the Electoral Code and the package of bills attached to it. ARMENPRESS reports the bills were adopted unanimously – 82 MPs voted in favor and 1 abstained.

The legislative package envisages enshrining the conduct of pre-election

debates on the Public TV by the force of law, expanding the list of expenses made by the foundations, significantly reducing the possibility of increasing the number of MPs.

It also envisages reduction of the threshold for passing to the parliament for parties from 5% to 4%, while increasing

that for blocs of parties – 8% for blocs comprised of up to 3 parties and 10% for blocs comprised of over 4 parties.

The Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR have expressed a positive opinion of the bill on amendments to the Electoral Code and the package of bills attached to it.

France concerned over opening of “trophy park” in Baku, which is against reconciliation desire

France is concerned over the opening of the “trophy park” by Azerbaijan in Baku, where Armenian military equipment taken as trophy and wax mannequins depicting Armenian soldiers are exhibited, a diplomatic source of ARMENPRESS at the Foreign Ministry of France said.



“As a Minsk Group Co-chair country, France is committed to the establishment of sustainable peace and prosperity in the region. France is concerned over the public exhibition during the opening of the park on dedicated to the military victory in the last war of Nagorno Karabakh. This deadly conflict has caused much grief and disaster in many families both in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and that opening ceremony goes against the reconciliation desire which in numerous occasions has been supported also by the Azerbaijani authorities”, the diplomatic source said.

France will continue working together with the other Co-chairs for reaching the goals defined by the April 13 statement of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs. “This is the demand of the President and Minister of the Republic”, the source at the French Foreign Ministry said.

The April 13 statement runs as follows,

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

The Co-Chairs note with satisfaction the consolidation of the ceasefire, and are

closely monitoring the implementation of the agreement reached by the parties on 9 November 2020. The Co-Chairs welcome the significant achievements with regard to the return of the remains of the deceased, and the ongoing progress with regard to the resettlement of those displaced by the conflict, provision of humanitarian assistance and adequate living conditions, as well as constructive discussions aimed at unblocking transportation and communication lines throughout the region.

The Co-Chairs remind the sides that additional efforts are required to resolve remaining areas of concern and to create an atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to long-lasting peace. These include issues related to, inter alia: the return of all POWs and other detainees in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, the exchange of all data necessary to conduct effective demining of conflict regions; the lifting of restrictions on access to Nagorno-Karabakh, including for representatives of international humanitarian organizations; the preservation and protection of religious and cultural heritage; and the fostering of direct contacts and co-operation between

communities affected by the conflict as well as other people-to-people confidence building measures.

Having in mind the terms of their OSCE mandate and the aspirations of all the people of the region for a stable, peaceful, and prosperous future, the Co-Chairs stress that special attention should be paid to the achievement

of a final comprehensive and sustainable settlement on the basis of the elements and principles well-known to the sides.

In this respect, the Co-Chairs call on the parties to resume high-level political dialogue under the auspices of the Co-Chairs at the earliest opportunity. They reiterate their proposal to organize direct bilateral consultations under their auspices, in order for the sides to review and agree jointly upon a structured agenda, reflecting their priorities, without preconditions.

The Co-Chairs also express their strong support for the continuing activities and possible expansion of the mission of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office (PRCiO) and call on the sides to provide full access and support to its efforts. The Co-Chairs underscore their readiness to resume working visits to the region, including Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas, to carry out their assessment and mediation roles. In this regard, the Co-Chairs remind the sides of the requirement to provide unimpeded access and maximum flexibility of movement with regard to the Co-Chairs’ travel itineraries, in accordance with their mandate and previous practice”.

Russian, Chinese, UAE companies interested in Armenian renewable energy market



The Armenian Government has outlined an action plan until 2040 under its strategy for developing the energy sector.

The program highlights the construction of high-capacity solar power stations.

“Armenia has big potential in this sector, and it is envisaged that in the next years we will have up to 1000MW photovoltaic stations,” Karen Asatryan, the Director of the Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency Fund of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures said at a news conference. He said the total output of these stations will be up to 15% of the entire electric-

energy production.

“It’s planned that concrete work will be done in the direction of wind energy as well. It’s planned that by 2040 we’ll have up to 500MW wind power plants of systemic significance. These stations will be based on the public-private partnership.”

The next important component of the strategy is the liberalization of the energy market, as a result of which Armenia will have a new level energy system. Anyone producing electric-energy will be enabled to sell it directly to consumers.

Asatryan says another direction is energy saving. “We can have up to 40% energy saving,” he said. “Each saved kilowatt costs cheaper than producing it. We are making efforts so that energy saving becomes a part of our everyday lives. Active work in this direction is done in public buildings, and soon apartment buildings will also be involved.”

Speaking about the ongoing

construction of Masrik-1, a 55MW solar power plant in Gegharkunik province, he said it will be completed in 2024. “The investor is a Spanish company,” he said.

“Now, works are underway in the direction of developing a construction project of 120MW solar power plants. We hope to have new tenders next year. Now, tender processes are underway regarding other solar power plants, like the construction of the Ayg-1 and Ayg-2, each 200MW capacity. The winners will be known in the next months. Those interested include Russian, Chinese and UAE companies.”

Asatryan noted that over the time the legislative framework has been improved and it allows regular citizens or companies to install solar power systems for their own use. 4600 stand-alone power systems were installed as a result. In one year, a 59% growth in solar power production was recorded, he said. Asatryan says they expect up to 600,000,000-dollar investments in the solar power sector by 2030, and up to 500,000,000-dollar investments in the wind power sector.

Government eases quarantine restrictions: vaccinated citizens will not have to take PCR tests

The government amended one of its previous decisions in a bid to increase the effectiveness of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). According to acting Minister of Healthcare Anahit Avanesyan, citizens with a certificate of vaccination – “green passport” - will no longer need to take a PCR test upon arrival in Armenia.

“In fact, both the PCR test certificate and the “green passport” will act in parallel as a precondition for crossing the border. It should be borne in mind that this is a



requirement for citizens who want to enter Armenia, while other countries may change their policies over time. You need to be careful, and before leaving the country

you need to see what requirements the host country is putting forward,”- the Acting Minister said.

Anahit Avanesyan reported another amendment, which lifts the requirement for PCR testing for one-year-old children. “Following surveys, we decided not to involve children under the age of 1 year. In case family members have tested negative, there is sufficient chance that a child under the age of one year may also test negative,” she said.

Artsakh's Water Security Threatened, Says Foreign Minister

The headwater of the Vorotan River, a major source of water for Artsakh, is in Karvachar, which was surrendered to Azerbaijan

Artsakh Foreign Minister David Babayan on May 7 sent letters to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk, warning them of a threat to water security in Artsakh.

The letters emphasize that the military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, put the water security of the Artsakh in serious jeopardy.

"After the signing of the Trilateral statement on secession of hostilities on November 9, 2020, the Karvachar (Kelbajar) area – which is the principal water source of Artsakh was ceded to



Azerbaijan. Currently approximately 98 percent of the water used in the Republic of Artsakh originates in Karvachar. The Arpa River and Vorotan River—which provide water to Lake Sevan, where 80 percent of Armenia's water resources are concentrated, and without which Lake Sevan would face an ecological catastrophe—originate in Karvachar, too," explained Babayan.

"Hence today, more than at any other time in the history of Republic of Artsakh, it is of paramount importance to ensure the water right and security of the Republic. The ever-existing threat of ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, along with the long-lasting state policy of Armenophobia and massive hate campaign against the ethnic Armenians, which is coordinated and supported by Azerbaijani authorities, necessitates substantial security measures," emphasized Babayan.

The letters also call on the OSCE to establish an international monitoring mechanism in the area, from where the key rivers noted originate. "Otherwise, the Artsakh people's basic right to water—and, as such, their very existence—will be endangered, yet again."

Over 20,000 conflict-affected families in Armenia to receive World Bank support

A Grant Agreement for the "Support to Conflict Affected Families" project was signed today by Sylvie Bossoutrot, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia, and Atom Janjughazyan, Acting Minister of Finance of Armenia. Funds for the project are provided by the multi-donor State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF), through a one-year grant of \$3.72 million.

The Government of Armenia has developed a broader social protection response package with support from development partners and non-governmental organizations. This project will be implemented by Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia, through its subordinated agency — the Unified Social Service – and aims to improve the resilience of conflict affected people and reduce the financial burden of host families, with a particular focus on women and vulnerable members of the population.

"We are pleased to sign this timely Agreement supported by the State and Peacebuilding Fund Grant," says **Sylvie Bossoutrot, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia**. "This project is of extreme importance and the assistance granted to displaced individuals and their host families will help to improve

the resilience of families affected by the conflict."

The proposed project will contribute to select social protection and employment support programs, which are part of a larger support package targeting displaced people and their host families, from the Government of Armenia.

Specifically, the project aims to:

- Reach around 11,530 displaced persons with a monthly cash benefit equal to the minimum wage (68,000 AMD) per adult/child for up to four months in Armenia.
- Provide cash assistance/income support to 3,975 families in Armenia hosting displaced people to help meet basic consumption needs.
- Temporarily subsidize an employment program for 936 displaced people who are looking to gain work experience in Armenia and facilitate their labor market participation and economic inclusion.
- Support 115 displaced individuals through the public works program (cash-for-work).

"The project is designed to especially benefit women affected by the conflict," says **Maddalena**

Honorati, World Bank Task Team Leader. "According to the rapid multi-sector needs assessment conducted last December, women represent 70 percent of the adult displaced population. The cash transfers will help them meet their basic needs on a day-to-day basis. More importantly, the project will improve the resilience of the displaced families and promote the social cohesion in their host communities."

The State and Peacebuilding Fund is a global fund administered by the World Bank to finance critical development operations and analysis in situations of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV). The SPF is kindly supported by Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, The United Kingdom, as well as the World Bank.



Government wants to take over 3 Public Universities

YEREVAN (RFE/RL)—The Armenian government is continuing its efforts to gain direct control of three of the country's leading state universities two weeks after President Armen Sarkissian blocked a relevant bill pushed by it through the parliament.

The bill passed by the National Assembly in late March would empower the government to appoint most members of the boards of trustees that elect university rectors and make other key decisions.

Yerevan State University (YSU) and the National Academy of Sciences strongly opposed these changes, saying that they would violate a clause in the Armenian constitution which entitles state-funded colleges to a high degree of autonomy.

Sarkissian likewise suggested that they are “contentious in terms of constitutionality” when he announced on April 22 his decision not to sign the bill into law. He also asked the Constitutional Court to rule on its conformity with the constitution.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government pressed ahead with the same changes through an executive order issued earlier this week.

The order stipulates that YSU, the Armenian State Pedagogical University and Gyumri State University will have

new governing boards consisting of 20 members. Thirteen of them are to be appointed by the government and the Ministry of Education, while the seven others will be chosen by their faculties and students.



All four parties have been equally represented in the boards until now.

A senior Ministry of Education official defended on Friday the changes sought by the government, saying that they are needed to address a “management vacuum” within the universities. She claimed that their current boards have failed to properly perform their duties.

The official argued that the current YSU board is paralyzed and even unable to formally accept the resignation of the university's acting rector.

Critics countered that the government itself engineered the paralysis by recalling its appointees from the board earlier this year.

Vahe Hovannisyan, an YSU professor, deplored the “abrupt” decision made by the government after Sarkissian's appeal to the Constitutional Court. He warned that the three universities will be thrust into deeper turmoil if the court declares the controversial bill unconstitutional. Hovannisyan also said: “Taking the universities under control or changing their boards of trustees does not serve any development purpose.”

Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, also condemned the government's executive order, pledging to challenge its legality in the Constitutional Court.

“I believe that this initiative by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports is disrespectful towards the president of the republic and the Constitutional Court,” he said on Thursday, adding that the problems cited by ministry officials are “artificial.”

“I have grounds to presume that the government caused a problem and is now trying to solve it at the expense of university autonomy,” said Tatoyan. “I believe this is unacceptable.” Pashinyan and his associates, among them young scholars, pledged to give universities more freedom from the government right after they swept to power three years ago.

U.S. welcomes release of more Armenian POWs

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on May 5 praised Azerbaijan for repatriating on Tuesday three Armenian prisoners of war and expressed hope that others will be freed as well.

“The U.S. welcomes Azerbaijan's release of three Armenian detainees,” tweeted Blinken. “We call on both parties to fully and expeditiously complete the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, and to respect their obligations to ensure the humane treatment of detainees.”

The U.S., Russian and French diplomats co-heading the OSCE Minsk



Group also called for “the return of all POWs and other detainees” in a joint statement issued on April 13.

No Azerbaijani POWs or civilians are known to be held in Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh at present.

Yerevan says that more than 100 Armenians remain in Azerbaijani

captivity. It insists on their immediate and unconditional release, citing the terms of a Russian-mediated agreement that halted the Armenian-Azerbaijani war on November 10.

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

The European Union last week called on Azerbaijan to free all remaining Armenian prisoners “as soon as possible” and “regardless of the circumstances of their arrest.”

How Can the Armenian Patriarch Be as Pro-Turkish as Erdogan?

By Harut Sassounian

The Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, Sahak Mashalian, once again issued a pro-Turkish statement, this time on the eve of the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, trying to please his Turkish masters and undermine President Joe Biden's April 24 acknowledgment.

We all understand that the Armenian community and the Patriarch in Turkey are hostages in the hands of the Turkish government. As such, they are under pressure to make pro-Turkish statements. However, there are red lines that no Armenian should cross, regardless of the circumstances or reasons. Our ancestors sacrificed their lives during the genocide, not succumbing to Turkish pressures and physical threats. The Patriarch, who is supposed to be a man of God, is obligated to tell the truth even if his life is in danger.

As I have suggested before, if the Patriarch does not want to get in trouble with the Turkish authorities, he should simply keep his mouth shut. He should not volunteer to issue statements on non-religious issues and not desecrate the memories of 1.5 million perished Armenians. We should not jump to the conclusion that every time the Patriarch issues a pro-Turkish statement, he is necessarily doing it under duress. Furthermore, the Patriarch should ask himself if the Armenian community has received any benefits in return for his multiple pro-Turkish statements.

Certainly, the Turkish government has repeatedly exploited the Patriarch's words to disseminate pro-Turkish propaganda worldwide. For example, on April 23, 2021, when it became known that President Biden would issue his much anticipated acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide, the Anadolu Agency (AA), the official Turkish government's news service, reported Patriarch Mashalian's condemnation of President Biden's upcoming statement. The AA headlined its 'news' with the Patriarch's words: "Using 1915 incidents for politics saddens Armenians."

How could President Biden's acknowledgment of the genocide, welcomed by Armenians worldwide, "sadden Armenians?" On the contrary it saddened the denialist Turks and thrilled



Armenians. Patriarch Mashalian should just stick to religious subjects and not pronounce judgements on other matters. Regardless of whether he is pressured by the Turkish government to make political statements or does it voluntarily, the Patriarch should refrain from taking such positions, saying that as a clergyman he only deals with religious subjects.

Here are excerpts from the pro-Turkish statement made by Patriarch Mashalian on April 23, 2021, to the Anadolu Agency which was publicized widely in the Turkish media:

"It saddens us to see that the suffering of our people and the suffering of our ancestors are instrumentalized by some countries for everyday political purposes. The tension caused by the usage of the issue in parliamentary agendas for decades has not served the rapprochement of the two nations. On the contrary, it provokes hostile feelings and delays peace. We, just like our predecessors and late Patriarchs, will continue to wish for peace, friendship and well-being between Turks and Armenians. We will encourage the rebuilding of relations based on neighborhood and common grounds speedily. We prefer to be one of those who hopefully expect the revival of neighborly relations, which are unique to these lands and exist in the traditions of the two communities, between Turkey and Armenia's authorities. Dear Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his time as both Prime Minister and President, has been the only top state official in the history of the Turkish Republic to give messages on this occasion. These messages show a spirit, sharing our pain and a certain respect for the children of our nation that lost their lives in exile. In our opinion, it would be appropriate to take these as positive steps towards rapprochement in the future. If

only the joint history commission they [Turkey] proposed could have been established, then at least 15 years of progress would have been made. If only the [Armenia-Turkey] protocols could have been implemented, borders could have been opened. Then the resolution of the Karabakh [issue] could have resulted differently. We still do not think it is late. The project to build a six-country basin, proposed by our Dear President for Caucasasia, can bring the peace of the century to the communities in the region."

Leaving no doubt as to the pro-Turkish position of the Patriarch, Turkey's Communications Director Fahrettin Altun endorsed his statement: "Sahak Mashalian, the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey, aptly noted that past sufferings must not be exploited for short-term political gains. [The Patriarch said]: 'We will continue to live together, peacefully and as brothers and sisters, in this land.'"

Turkey's presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin also expressed support for Mashalian's remarks: "Abusing history for a narrow political agenda helps neither the past nor the present."

Interestingly, President Erdogan sent a letter to the Armenian Patriarch on April 24, denying the Armenian Genocide and agreeing with the Patriarch's words. It is not surprising that the Turkish government supported Archbishop Mashalian's candidacy for the Patriarchal elections over other less subservient candidates.

The Patriarch must realize that by making propaganda statements on behalf of Turkey, he is losing the respect of Armenians both inside and outside Turkey. His anti-Armenian words are viewed as those of a sold-out Turkish agent. The Armenian Church and Armenians in Turkey should pressure the Patriarch to resign since he has lost the support of the Armenian community and can no longer function as their religious leader.

The only countries around the world that criticized President Biden's April 24 statement were: Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This place the Armenian Patriarch in the shameful company of the enemies of the Armenian nation!

Armenian minister sends letter to UNESCO Director General over Azerbaijani actions in Shushi's Ghazanchetsots Church



Acting minister of education, science, culture and sport of Armenia Vahram Dumanyan has sent a letter to the UNESCO Director General, expressing his concerns over the actions being carried out by Azerbaijan in Shushi's Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, the ministry told Noyan Tapan.

In the letter Mr. Dumanyan stated that during the large-scale military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh in autumn 2020, Azerbaijan, among other war crimes, has deliberately targeted the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, as a result of which one of the two domes of the Church has been destroyed. Moreover, the photos and videos spread on the internet prove that the Church has been vandalized after the end of the hostilities, and the second dome has also been damaged by the Azerbaijani forces.

Recently, Azerbaijan, under the pretext of "renovation works", has removed the dome of the Cathedral, trying to change the historical and architectural look of the monument and distort its Armenian

identity.

In his letter the Armenian caretaker minister noted that there are many grounds to believe that Azerbaijan is deliberately blocking the entry of UNESCO experts to the Armenian cultural heritage sites aimed at hiding its war crimes. Moreover, Azerbaijan is actively conducting a policy of falsifying the historical facts, calling the Armenian cultural heritage sites in Artsakh as "Caucasian Albanian".

Highly valuing the key role of UNESCO in the preservation of cultural heritage, Vahram Dumanyan called on the UNESCO Director General to condemn the attempts of eliminating and appropriating the Armenia cultural heritage sites.

Turkey offers the Latvian Parliament to retract from "wrong step" of recognizing the Armenian Genocide

The Turkish Foreign Ministry has called on the Latvian Parliament to retract from the "wrong step" of recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

In a statement the Turkish Foreign Ministry called the "recognition of the 1915 events as genocide" a "null attempt to rewrite history with political motives."

"We reject and strongly condemn this unfortunate and unlawful decision. Parliaments are not venues for history writing and judgment," the Foreign Ministry stated.

The comments come after the Latvian Seima (Parliament) voted on May 6



to adopt a declaration recognizing and condemning the Armenian genocide.

"Instead of serving the agenda of some circles that try to create enmity from history, we invite the Latvian Parliament to take back this wrong step and to support the efforts to establish a practice of peaceful coexistence in the

region, especially between the Turkish and Armenian peoples," the Ministry stated.

The declaration adopted by the Latvian parliament respects the memory of all the victims of the Armenian Genocide, pays tribute to all the survivors, affirms that open discussions on historical issues are inextricably linked to the development of a healthy, mature democracy.

The Seima calls on the international community "to assess these historic events, to look to the future we want to build, without violence, intolerance, a future where human rights are respected, where everyone can be free, safe and secure."

Armenia, Russia sign MoU on biological safety

Armenia's acting Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Russian Federation on biological safety.

"The realization of the Memorandum is expected to make a considerable

contribution to the development of cooperation in this sensitive and urgent field and reinforce our common biosafety space," Lavrov said at a joint press conference with Ara Aivazian.

He said they will continue to promote the issue within the framework of multilateral structures, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization

(CSTO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).



There is more documentary evidence on the Armenian Genocide than the Holocaust-an academic article in Spanish El Pais-



Guillermo Altares, a well-known journalist and former head of the international section of the Spanish daily *El País*, published an article in the same newspaper entitled “Genocide Denied for Political Reasons”, noting that there is more documentary evidence on the Armenian Genocide than the Holocaust.

“Armenpress” presents the unofficial translation of the article:

“Only 30 countries called 1915 genocide, the murders of the Armenians, despite the fact that historians do not hesitate to use this term. When the Armenian Genocide took place, the term genocide had not yet appeared. But it was this crime against humanity that ushered in the era of mass extermination in the early 20th century, prompting Polish lawyer Rafael Lemkin to look for a new term to describe an atrocity previously unnamed -the killing of ethnic or religious groups just for the sake of it and because that they are existed.

This is not the only paradox related to 1915-1918. Up to 1.5 million pre-planned extermination and deportation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Independent historians are more than convinced that it is about the genocide, but it was recognized only by 30 countries, the last of which was the United States last week. Spain has not done that yet! Turkey even considers the use of this term under Article 301 by Turkish Criminal Code a crime and generalizes these killings in the context of World War I. “The Armenian Genocide is an established fact in academia”, explains Taner Akcham, a well-known Turkish historian, genocide scholar and professor at Clark University in the United States. Taner Akcham, considered by *The New York Times* to be the Armenian Genocide Sherlock Holmes, devoted his entire career to seeking and publishing evidence (that the killings of Armenians were not unplanned or sudden massacres, but state policies pursued by the Young Turks who came to power in

1908). They remained until 1918, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I. In the history of the Ottoman Empire, violence against Armenians and against Christians in general- 200,000 Armenians were killed during 1894-1896- was regular, but until then no one had set a goal of total annihilation. “Even the US administration, the Congress or the staff have no doubt that what happened to the Armenians can be described as genocide”, said Akcham. It was planned and I can easily state that there is more documentary evidence on the Armenian Genocide than on the Holocaust. We have many certified telegrams that clearly show the genocidal intention of the Ottoman authorities” says Akcham.

In books like “A Shameful Act” the Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility or *Killing Orders-Talat Pasha’s Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide*”, Akcham reveals the coded telegrams of Young Turks Interior Minister Talat Pasha (who has been killed in 1921 by an Armenian soldier), which leave no doubt about his intentions. For years the Turkish government claimed that they were fake, but after his intelligence work, Akcham proved that they were real. According to one of them in 1915 and in September at the beginning of the massacre Talaat Pasha ordered the following: “The government has decided to exterminate all Armenians living in Turkey, not sparing women, children or the sick. As tragic as these methods of destruction may seem, we must end their existence without listening to our consciousness”, Although the originals were destroyed, Akcham found the photos of the telegrams in New York in 2015.

There are obvious facts that before the Holocaust, during which 6 million people were killed, the Nazis took note of what happened in Turkey for their plan to exterminate European Jews. “On 1939, August 22, Hitler addressed his generals about the impending war with Poland” said Benjamin Carter Hett, an American historian and author of “*The Death of Democracy*”, a book about Hitler’s rise to power. According to one of them, Hitler said: “After that, who remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?” The other two interpretations do not contain these words. But the fact that this transcript was circulated by *The New York Times*

in 1945 shows that a connection has been established between the massacres of Armenians and Jews since the 1940s. “Undoubtedly it had a great impact on Lemkin” says in his autobiography Jose Ricardo de Prada, one of Spain’s leading experts on international justice. Samantha Power, who served as Ambassador to the United Nations under President Barack Obama in 2002 was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the book “*Problem from Hell. America and the Age of Genocide*”. There he recounts how Lemkin, a student in Lviv, argued with a professor who justified the massacres of Armenians, arguing that in the end every government had the right to do to its citizens what it wanted, including to kill them. Like “a farmer who can kill his own chickens”. It was because of that debate the idea emerged that there should be laws above states that would punish these crimes. “During the Armenian Genocide, there was no one like Hitler” said Taner Akcham, when he asked about comparing the two crimes against humanity and added: “The genocide was a decision of a political party, implemented by a political party-Union and Progress. This is one of the main differences between the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. The other is that the Young Turks did not have the racist ideology that the Nazis had. Of course, they were nationalists, but they made the decision to commit genocide because they thought that the existence of Armenians was a threat to the empire, they thought that killing of Armenians could neutralize that threat”.

The genocide was accompanied by mass deportations to the Syrian deserts, and with the most brutal massacres. Ethnic cleansing was universal. Neither the Holocaust nor the Armenian Genocide achieved their ultimate goal, which is to wipe out Jews and Armenians from the face of the earth. But, yes, they managed to destroy the millennial cultures of the Jews in Eastern Europe, the Armenians of Anatolia. Both Auschwitz and Der Zor, a Syrian desert camp where tens of thousands of Armenians starved to death, abandoned Jewish cemeteries, forgotten Polish synagogues, or the ruins of the medieval Armenian capital of Ani, perpetrated by the new Turkish authorities, are reminiscent of 20th century horror”.

Congressman Chris Smith calls for \$50,000,000 in direct U.S. humanitarian aid to Artsakh

Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) – the most senior member on the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee – has called on House appropriators to allocate at least \$50 million for food security, housing, medical aid, infrastructure, and other pressing needs in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) – citing the vast death and destruction caused by Azerbaijan’s Turkey-backed attack last year, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

In a letter addressed to the leaders of the House Appropriations subcommittee that writes the foreign aid bill, Rep. Smith noted that, “In September 2020, Azeri forces, supported by Turkey, embarked on a devastating war of conquest in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region that caused thousands of casualties, rendered thousands more homeless, and destroyed



vital infrastructure,” underscoring the need for “not less than \$50 million shall be made available for humanitarian assistance in Artsakh to support food security, housing, medical assistance, and vital infrastructure.”

Congressman Smith also forcefully condemned “credible reports that the Republic of Turkey funded mercenaries recruited from the Syrian National Army to fight with the Azeri army that invaded

Artsakh,” calling on his Congressional colleagues to appropriate “not less than \$500,000 shall be made available to the Secretary of State for a report that the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate Congressional Committees, on the role of Turkey in the recent attack on Artsakh.”

In his letter, Rep. Smith called for the strengthening of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support, a statutory restriction on U.S. aid to Azerbaijan, and for suspending all “U.S. military aid, including under Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program, to Azerbaijan until its government ceases its attacks against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and agrees to an equitable resolution of the conflict.”

Acting PM hands over Arkady Ter -Tadevosyan’s Order of Motherland to his son



Through the mediation of acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Major General Artush Hovhannes Tadevosyan (Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan, Commandos) was posthumously awarded the Order of the Motherland of the Republic of Armenia for outstanding services in the establishment

and development of the Armed Forces, defense and security of the Republic of Armenia.

Nikol Pashinyan handed it over to Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan’s son Hayk Ter-Tadevosyan.

“Dear Mr. Ter-Tadosyan, I consider

today’s occasion very important; I am sorry that I am handing over this highest title not to Commandos personally, but to you. It’s very unfortunate that we are delivering this worthy award in a slightly different environment than we would like to. Nevertheless, I think this is a very strong and worthy tribute of respect and appreciation not only to Arkady Ter-Tadevosyan, but also to all our compatriots dedicated to the Artsakh liberation war and the defense of the Homeland in general,” the acting PM said.

“My word of appreciation, our tribute is to all the martyrs who died for the Motherland, all the soldiers, freedom fighters, volunteers who defended the Homeland, to all our citizens and compatriots who worked for the Motherland,” said Nikol Pashinyan.

On behalf of his family, Hayk Ter-Tadevosyan expressed gratitude for the high award. “This high title, which was awarded to my father, will be one of the symbols of our future victories. It is a great symbol for our youth,” he said.

Maestro Harutyun Arzumanyan: Stick that in his Hands can Make Miracles

By Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent



...I have been knowing Harutyun Arzumanyan, leading way conductor of the Al. Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theater, Chief Conductor of the Hakob Paronyan Theater of Musical Comedy, Professor of the Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas for several years in row already, and I believe I could say we are the true friends by now. What is his distinction for me??

He is a brilliant art man, an intellectual – PhD in the Armenian philology (who graduated his studies in the Yerevan State Conservatory after the Great Komitas and in the same months defended his doctoral theses at the Yerevan State University), an honest, devoted friend and a man of the strongest principles...



But the biggest surprise I've got knew recently that he was a native brother to my beloved friend and colleague **Artak Arzumanyan**, a frontline reporter who fell in his NATIVE Artsakh land (while your

author was there) during the First Karabakh War (1992-94)...

And then all his above mentioned qualities have become ABSOLUTELY understandable to me...

Very recently the Public Radio of Armenia in its regular "Hatvogh Ether" program dedicated Maestro Arzumanyan and entitled it *"Stick that in his Hands can Make Miracles"*.

As the program preface says on Maestro Arzumanyan, "all his talent, knowledge and experience he donates completely to the development of the Armenian music art and musical education, greatly contributing to the popularization of the Armenian performing art."



Harutyun Arzumanyan was born in the family of the literary critic, D.Sc. of the Armenian Philology, Professor Academician **Sevak Arzumanyan**, but love for music was stronger than for literature. And the conducting becomes the dream of an artist..."

In his interview Dr Arzumanyan shared insights on that during his childhood classical music was heard permanently, and nobody made him to listen the pearls of the classics – Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Vivaldi, others...

Harutyun tells in detail on the Opera House activities under Covid19 pandemia



– online broadcasting of previous year's recordings, then on new stagings, – again online, and, after all, long awaited "normal" stagings – in the Hall with spectators the first of which was in the last December and called...naturally, "Return".

Asked by a reporter on the Opera House' new programs, leading conductor of the Theater said that they had a lot of them, but they can be realized in case of proper financial support.

In reply of reporter's another question, on Maestro **Constantine G. Orbelian**, the General and Artistic Director of the Theater, Harutyun S. Arzumanyan emphasized his role in the Opera and Ballet House rebirth, including his personal financial contribution in premieres of new stagings as well as world tours.



Europe Day 2021 celebration activities in Armenia will be launched on 10 May

The European Union Delegation to Armenia has announced the launching of the Europe Day 2021 activities in Armenia on 10th May.

The activities will be held under the EU-Armenia 'Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement' theme and will include thematic discussions, cultural events and regional events in Gyumri and Debed. The activities will take place in online-offline formats, ensuring compliance with COVID-19 protocols at all times.

The Europe Day celebrations will commence with thematic online discussions on Road Safety, Regional



Development and Environment, they will continue with regional events concentrated on youth and innovation, as well as

tourism and will also include a holographic projection, placement of a photobooth in major cities and musical inputs. The celebrations will culminate with an online concert on 19th May, which will be livestreamed via EU Delegation social media.

The Embassies of EU Member States accredited to Armenia will also join the celebrations.

The European Union Delegation to Armenia would like to inform the media representatives that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the attendance to offline events is limited this year.

COVID-19: Mobile site in downtown Yerevan provides easy access to everyone willing to get vaccinated



The mobile vaccination site deployed to Yerevan's busiest pedestrian Northern Avenue in downtown intended to increase access and make it easier for people who

want to get the shot against COVID-19 is showing positive results. The health workers at the site told ARMENPRESS that the activeness is so high that at some hours of the day there are people waiting in line. Both locals and foreigners are using the site to get vaccinated.

A tourist from Iran who introduced himself as Mahmud Dashtban told ARMENPRESS in Northern Avenue that he's in Armenia to visit his student son and to spend his vacation here. He said he decided to get vaccinated when he found out about the mobile site. "Having this mobile vaccination site is a very good

idea. Being in Armenia I decided to take this opportunity, why not? I want to get vaccinated and be protected," he said.

Another person getting the shot was 61-year-old Armen Grigoryan from Yerevan. "I liked this idea. At first, I was thinking to go to the clinic but why not come here if there is an easier option," he said.

Another mobile vaccination site has been deployed to the Dalma Garden Mall shopping center.

Armenia uses the Sputnik V, AstraZeneca and CoronaVac vaccines.

Kim Kardashian, Cher, Serj Tankian call to expand educational opportunities for students in Armenia and Artsakh

Hope For Armenia, Teach For Armenia. With these words, Kim Kardashian, Cher, Serj Tankian, Eric Esrailian and a number of other prominent Armenians are making a call to join Teach For Armenia in expanding educational opportunities for students in Armenia and Artsakh.

On Thursday, **May 6th**, Teach For Armenia will be hosting the **#HopeForArmenia** virtual event that



celebrates Teach For Armenia's work creating access to educational opportunities

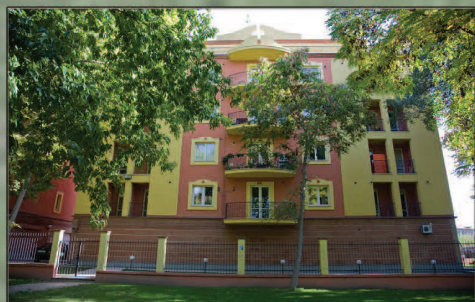
for students in Armenia and Artsakh.

The event will feature celebrity guests, supporters, Board members, Alumni-Ambassadors, Teacher-Leaders, and students in reflecting on the accomplishments and unveiling exciting new plans for the future.

The event will be open to the public and broadcasted on Teach For Armenia's **Facebook page** and **PanArmenian TV** at 8:00 p.m. EDT/5:00 p.m. PDT.

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