

## Special representatives of Armenia, Turkey meet in Moscow, agree to continue talks



Following two hours of talks on January 14 in Moscow between Turkish and Armenian special envoys, Yerevan and Ankara have agreed to continue talks on normalization of relations between two countries “without precondition,” according to Armenia’s Foreign Ministry.

Ankara was represented in the talks by Serdar Kilic, a veteran diplomat who served as Turkey’s ambassador to the United States from 2014-2021. Kilic’s 31-year-old Armenian opposite number, Ruben Rubinyan, is a deputy speaker of the Armenian parliament.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, which hosted the first meeting between Turkey’s Serdar Kilic and Armenia’s Ruben Rubinyan was hailed as positive.

” The parties showed readiness to conduct a dialogue on a constructive, apolitical manner, with an open spirit and aimed

at practical results, moving in small steps, passing from simple to complex. An agreement has been reached to continue finding common ground for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries, for the benefit of regional stability and economic prosperity,” the Russian Foreign Ministry statement said.

Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko mediated the talks. According to Armenia’s Foreign Ministry he held a separate meeting Rubinyan ahead of the talks.

“During their first meeting, conducted in a positive and constructive atmosphere, the Special Representatives exchanged their preliminary views regarding the normalization process through dialogue between Armenia and Turkey. Parties agreed to continue negotiations without preconditions aiming at full normalization,” said Armenia’s Foreign Ministry, which added that a “date and venue of their second meeting will be

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## Fresh provocation a manifestation of Azerbaijan's continuous encroachments on Armenia's territorial integrity – MFA

The Armenian Foreign Ministry strongly condemns the gross violation of the ceasefire by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in the direction of the eastern frontier of the Republic of Armenia, using artillery and unmanned aerial vehicles, as a result of which Armenian servicemen Arthur Mkhitarian, Rudik Gharibyan and Vahan Babayan were killed.

“The provocation of the units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces is another manifestation of the continuous encroachments of Azerbaijan on the territorial integrity of Armenia, which began in May 12, 2021 with the intrusion into the sovereign territory and continued with regular armed



attacks,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

“The Republic of Armenia draws the attention of the international community to the fact that official Baku, continuing its encroachments on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Ar-

menia, violates the basic principles of international law, including the UN Charter, and undermines regional security,” the Ministry emphasized.

It reminded that “the Armenian side has repeatedly stated that one of the ways to avoid further aggravation of the situation may be the withdrawal of troops and the launch of an international monitoring mechanism along the border.”

The Foreign Ministry calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to refrain from provocative actions, to fulfill their commitment to establish stability in the region assumed after the meetings in Sochi and Brussels.

## Armenian FM briefs US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State on recent ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan

Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Karen Donfried.

The interlocutors congratulated each other on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and expressed satisfaction with the dynamics of the development of the Armenian-American dialogue, based on common values - democracy, rule of law and protection of human rights.

The sides stressed the need for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh

conflict under the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, and the need for a full resumption of work in this area. Humanitarian issues that need to be addressed urgently were discussed.

Minister Mirzoyan attached importance to the statement of the US Department of State Bureau on Europe and Eurasia on the release of prisoners of war, clarification of the fate of the missing, exchange of remains.

Ararat Mirzoyan informed about the recent violations of the ceasefire regime by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and highlighted the importance of taking steps to



defuse the situation.

The interlocutors touched upon the process of dialogue between Armenia and Turkey.

The situation in Kazakhstan was also discussed during the telephone conversation. Minister Mirzoyan presented the position of the Armenian side on the issue.

The parties touched upon other issues of regional and international security.



Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed by telephone with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan the progress of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan, the Kremlin said.

## Pashinyan, Putin discuss the CSTO peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan

“Taking into account Armenia's chairmanship in the Collective Security Treaty Organization, an exchange of views was held on the course of the CSTO peacekeeping operation in Kazakhstan. The effective coordinated actions of the peacekeeping contingent contributing to the normalization of the situation in the republic, were noted,” the press service said.

In addition, Putin and Pashinyan dis-

cussed the current situation around Nagorno-Karabakh and implementation of the agreements enshrined in the statements of the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan on November 9, 2020, January 11 and November 26, 2021.

The Russian President and the Armenian Prime Minister agreed to continue contacts at various levels, the Kremlin added.

page 1 decided in due time through diplomatic channels.”

An identical statement was issued by Turkey’s Foreign Ministry.

However, Turkish leaders from the country’s president on down have often preconditioned normalization of relations on Armenia’s recognition of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, which includes Artsakh as part of that country. More recently, Turkish officials have also hinted that Armenia must accept a land corridor connecting mainland Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan—a scheme being advanced by Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev, who

has been calling it the “Zangezur Corridor.”

Russia reiterated its support for the Armenia-Turkey normalization process with the country’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov telling reporters on Friday that Moscow hopes that the talks will be successful.

“Armenia and Turkey have appointed their special representatives. Russia helped to coming to that agreement, and we are very happy that today that first meeting is taking place in Moscow. Our role helped to establish a direct dialogue,” Lavrov said.

Ahead of the meeting, Armenia’s For-

eign Ministry spokesperson Vahan Hunanyan told Armenpress that Armenia anticipates that the talks will result in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Ankara.

“Armenia’s expectations from this dialogue are essentially the same they were since the 1990s. We expect that as a result of the process diplomatic relations will be established between Armenia and Turkey and the border between the two countries which was unilaterally closed by Turkey itself in the early 90s will be re-opened,” Hunanyan told Armenpress.

## Russia to present Armenia’s proposals on border delimitation commission to Azerbaijan – Lavrov



Russia will convey to Azerbaijan the proposals of Armenia regarding the commission for the delimitation of the border between the two countries with its subsequent demarcation, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a press conference on the results of the activities of Russian diplomacy in 2021.

“Just yesterday (January 13), I talked to my Armenian colleague who had new proposals, we are passing them on to Baku. We will look at how to have it (the commission) work as soon as possible,” he said.

“It is optimal to create this commission by including issues on its agenda that need to be addressed as a matter of priority,” Lavrov added.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said Baku and Yerevan are making their proposals regarding the creation of the commission, but disagreements on this issue remain.

“In order to create the commission, it

is necessary, first of all, to agree on the conditions. These conditions are being discussed now. There are differences there,” the minister continued.

Upon the conclusion of a trilateral meeting in Sochi, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev agreed to work towards the creation of a bilateral Commission on the delimitation of the state border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia with its subsequent demarcation with the consultative assistance of the Russian Federation at the request of the parties.”

## EU says the meeting of Armenian, Turkish envoys ‘an important step,’ stands ready to provide support

The EU welcomes the willingness of both Turkey and Armenia to work on the normalization of relations between the two countries and the appointment of Special Envoys for this purpose, Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Peter Stano said in a statement.

“The first meeting of the Special Envoys this Friday was an important step forward and the European Union encourages both Turkey and Armenia to make further efforts in this regard,” he said.

According to the Spokesperson, any



further concrete steps towards the normalization of relations would be good news for regional stability and prospects for reconciliation and economic development.

“The normalization of relations be-

tween Armenia and Turkey is of key importance for the EU in its engagement with both countries. Since 2014, the EU has provided more than EUR 4.5 million to projects aiming to prepare the ground for the normalization of relations in a number of areas such as economy, culture, education, and communication exchange. The EU stands ready to provide further support to possible additional steps towards normalization of relations,” Peter Stano concluded.

## Aliyev threatens to suppress the activity of the OSCE Minsk Group

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said Baku will suppress the attempts of the OSCE Minsk Group to deal with the Karabakh issue, *Interfax* reports.

Aliyev said he has an idea of "what the group should do and what it should not." "They should not deal with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, because it is resolved," he said in an interview with Azerbaijani TV channels.

The President added that, according to his information, there is no unity among the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. "My judgments prove this. Relations between these countries have become especially tense lately, and they have diverged views on the past conflict and the current situation. I do not think they can come to an agreement."

Aliyev stated that first of all, it is necessary to determine to what extent the co-chairmanship in the Minsk Group today corresponds to the realities of the time,

whether there is a need to change the co-chairs.

"Many do not even know what kind of group it is. The sequence should be like this. Firstly, it is necessary to clarify the viability of this group. Secondly, they should present an agenda of what they plan to do, and the agenda should be agreed between themselves. Then the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides should express their attitude to this. These first two points are not yet available. Therefore, in principle, it makes no sense to talk about this topic," Aliyev stated.

The Minsk Group co-chairing countries have stated on many occasions that they are united in the commitment to mediating a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In a joint statement dated December 7, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lav-

rov, and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian encouraged the sides to welcome the Co-Chairs to the region as soon as possible to allow them to assess the situation on the ground first-hand and to reach agreement on an agenda for future engagements.

They also reiterated their strong support for the continuing work of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair in Office (PRCiO) in the region and encourage the sides to cooperate fully with his efforts.

The Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group reaffirmed their commitment to working with the sides to find comprehensive solutions to all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with their mandate in order to promote a secure, stable, prosperous and peaceful future for the South Caucasus region.

## CCAF calls on French government to demand apology from Azeri authorities or else recall ambassador over Aliyev's threats

The Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF - Conseil de coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France) issued a statement on January 13 regarding Azeri president Ilham Aliyev's threats against Valérie Pécresse, the President of the Regional Council of France's Île-de-France and a candidate for the French presidency.

Aliyev had said that the Azeri government was unaware of Pécresse's visit to Nagorno Karabakh, and if they knew she was there the Azeri authorities wouldn't have allowed her to leave Nagorno Karabakh.

CCAF called on the French government to demand an explanation and apology



from the Azerbaijani government for making such terrorizing statements against a French presidential candidate. CCAF said the French government ought to recall its ambassador from Baku and expel the Azeri ambassador from Paris if the explanations and apology aren't issued by the Azeri authorities.

Talking to the news media, Pécresse herself stressed the seriousness of Aliyev's threats against a presidential candidate, and noted that a candidate must be free to go wherever they want.

Pécresse said she doesn't feel intimidated by the threats, but that she is shocked from the French government's silence. The French politician said she'd want Paris to officially respond to Aliyev's threats.

Pécresse visited Armenia and Artsakh December 21-23, 2021. The ex-foreign minister of France and former European Commissioner Michel Barnier and the head of the Republicans of the French Senate Bruno Retailleau accompanied her.

## OSCE concerned about renewed clashes between Armenian, Azerbaijani forces

The Polish OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office expresses deep concern about "renewed clashes along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and that this violence resulted in casualties."

"We call to refrain from the use of

force and to continue the meaningful political dialogue initiated recently. Poland as the OSCE Chair is committed to working with partners to renew and strengthen efforts aimed at establishing lasting peace and promoting sustainable development

in the region," the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau said in a statement.

"We support the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in this regard. We also reiterate our strong support for the continuing work of the Personal Representative of the Polish OSCE Chair-in-Office Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk," the statement reads.



The newly appointed Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe Arman Khachatryan presented his credentials to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejčinović Burić.

During the private conversation Arman Khachatryan noted that the Armenian government highly appreciates the support

## Armenia interested in deepening the agenda of cooperation with Council of Europe

provided by the Council of Europe in the field of democratic reforms, ensuring the rule of law and protection of human rights. The Permanent Representative reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to deepen the agenda of cooperation with the Council of Europe, attaching importance to the implementation of the 2019-2022 action plan between Armenia and the Council of Europe.

Referring to the humanitarian consequences of the 44-day war, Arman Khachatryan stressed the importance of repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war

and other detainees held in Azerbaijan, unimpeded access of international organizations to Artsakh, as well as the involvement of the competent bodies of the Council of Europe. The need for a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict through negotiations under the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs was stressed.

Congratulating the Permanent Representative on his appointment, Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić wished fruitful

## Armenia's UN envoy elected Vice-President of the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council has elected Ambassador Andranik Hovhannisyan, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, to serve as a vice-president for 2022.

Mr. Hovhannisyan was elected from the Eastern European group of States.

In this capacity, the Ambassador of Armenia together with his HRC Bureau colleagues shall deal with procedural and organizational matters, including presiding over the HRC meetings.

The United Nations Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body



consisting of 47 member States responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights. This is Armenia's first term in the HRC, for a three-year period of 2020-2022.

## Peacekeepers from Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan leave Kazakhstan



More than 2,000 troops from the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) reportedly began withdrawing from Kazakhstan on January 13 one week after being called in to help stabilize the Central Asian nation following deadly unrest sparked by a fuel price hike.

The "collective peacekeeping forces... are starting to prepare equipment and materiel for loading into the planes of the

military transport aviation of the Russian aerospace forces and returning to the points of permanent deployment," said a Russian Defense Ministry statement carried by Russian news agencies.

The CSTO -- an alliance comprised of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Tajikistan -- said in a statement on Wednesday that the pullout should take about 10 days to complete.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed the troop withdrawal with Kazakhstan's President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev in a phone call. Pashinyan's press office said Toqaev also briefed him on ongoing efforts to "normalize the situation in the country."

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced, meanwhile, that all Armenian, Belarusian and Tajik troops de-

ployed to Kazakhstan will be flown out of the country by Russian planes on Friday. The other CSTO forces will complete the pullout by January 19, Shoigu told Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The 100 Armenian soldiers joined the CSTO contingent late last week. Russian news agencies reported on Wednesday that they are guarding a bread factory and a water distribution facility in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and the epicenter of the unrest.

The commander of the Armenian army unit, Major Hayrapet Mkrtychyan, was quoted as saying that one of its main missions is to prevent "terrorists" from poisoning drinking water supplied to the city's residents.

## World Bank forecasts 4.8 percent economic growth in Armenia in 2022

The World Bank forecasts 4.8 percent economic growth in Armenia in 2022.

Following a strong rebound in 2021, the global economy is entering a pronounced slowdown amid fresh threats from COVID-19 variants and a rise in inflation, debt, and income inequality that could endanger the recovery in emerging and developing economies, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report.

Global growth is expected to decelerate markedly from 5.5 percent in 2021 to 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.2 percent in 2023 as pent-up demand dissipates and as fiscal and monetary support is unwound across the world.

Growth in Europe and Central Asia region is forecast to slow to 3 percent in 2022 – about half the pace in 2021 – as tighter macroeconomic policy and recur-

Europe and Central Asia Country Forecasts  
(Annual percent change unless indicated otherwise)

	2019	2020	2021e	2022f	2023f
GDP at market prices (average 2010-19 US\$)					
Albania	2.1	-4.0	7.2	3.8	3.7
Armenia	7.6	-7.4	6.1	4.8	5.4
Azerbaijan	2.5	-4.3	5.0	3.1	2.7
Belarus	1.4	-0.9	1.9	-2.8	2.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina <sup>a</sup>	2.8	-3.2	4.0	3.0	3.2
Bulgaria	3.7	-4.2	3.3	3.8	3.6
Croatia	3.5	-8.1	9.4	5.4	4.4
Georgia	5.0	-6.8	10.5	5.5	5.0
Hungary	4.6	-4.7	6.8	5.0	4.3
Kazakhstan	4.5	-2.5	3.5	3.7	4.8
Kosovo	4.8	-5.3	7.1	4.1	4.4
Kyrgyz Republic	4.6	-8.6	2.3	4.7	4.3
Moldova	3.7	-7.0	6.8	3.9	4.4
Montenegro	4.1	-15.3	10.8	5.6	4.8
North Macedonia	3.9	-6.1	4.0	3.7	3.4
Poland	4.7	-2.5	5.1	4.7	3.4
Romania	4.2	-3.7	6.3	4.3	3.8
Russian Federation	2.0	-3.0	4.3	2.4	1.8
Serbia	4.3	-0.9	6.0	4.5	4.0
Tajikistan	7.4	4.5	7.0	5.5	4.5
Turkey	0.9	1.8	9.5	2.0	3.0
Ukraine	3.2	-4.0	3.4	3.2	3.5
Uzbekistan	5.7	1.7	6.2	5.6	5.8

Source: World Bank

rent COVID-19 outbreaks, including from Omicron, weigh on demand. Regional growth is forecast to continue to ease in 2023, reaching 2.9 percent, as fiscal support continues to be withdrawn.

## Gas prices in Armenia also set to rise

(RFE/RL) - Armenia's Russian-owned gas distribution network said on January 13 that it will ask utility regulators to raise the retail prices of natural gas in the country.

The Gazprom Armenia operator did not specify the extent of the price increases sought by it.

The Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) hinted at such rises in a statement released last month. It said that gas mostly imported from Russia could become more expensive for Armenian households on April 1.

Suren Parsyan, an economic analyst, said that in recent years the heat value of gas sold to Armenia by Russia's Gazprom giant has exceeded the minimum level set in Russian-Armenian supply contracts. This fact alone should push up the gas price for households by at least 4 percent,



Parsyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

"But calorific value is not the only factor that determines gas tariffs," he said.

The vast majority of individual consumers in Armenia currently pay 139 drams (29 U.S. cents) per cubic meter of gas. The price is set at 100 drams for low-income families.

International gas prices have skyrocketed over the past year. They are currently much higher than Gazprom's

existing wholesale tariff for Armenia that stands at \$165 per thousand cubic meters.

Electricity prices in Armenia already went up by an average of about 10 percent on January 1.

Rationalizing that price hike, the PSRC cited last month the need to repay \$270 million in loans used for the recently completed modernization of the Metsamor nuclear plant. It also pointed to Armenia's contractual obligation to enable Gazprom to recoup investments made in a large thermal-power plant located in the central town of Hrazdan.

The regulatory body revealed that the Armenian and Russian governments have reached an agreement that commits Yerevan to providing the Hrazdan plant with \$31.8 million annually for the next ten years.

## PM Pashinyan orders creation of working group to restore Yeraskh and Meghri sections of the railway

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has ordered to create a working group for the effective implementation of the program of restoration of the Yeraskh-Republic of Azerbaijan and Meghri sections of the Ar-

menian railway.

Under the decision, the head of the working group will be tasked with submitting information to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia on a quarterly

basis.

The working group will be chaired by Artashes Tumanyan, Adviser to the Prime Minister.

## Fly Arna: Armenia's national airline unveils visual brand identity

The Armenian National Interests Fund (ANIF) and Air Arabia Group, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) operator, on January 14 revealed the visual brand identity of 'Fly Arna', Armenia's national airline to be launched by their joint venture company.

The brand name 'Arna' is derived from company's official name 'Armenian National Airlines' with 'AR' taken from Armenian, 'N' from National and 'A' from Airlines. Chosen following a public competition, the name 'Fly Arna' was identified to be most inclusive and reflective of the spirit of the joint venture company to transform the aviation sector of the country.

With its colors inspired by the Armenia flag, the 'Fly Arna' logo and brand identity was designed to reflect the young, modern and a value-driven national airline that strive to become the most accessible and sensible choice for air travel in Armenia and beyond. Its brand values are *Ambition* – to motivate to build and grow the airline; *Persistence* – to build services that deliver real and tangible value to customers; and *Innovation* – to inspire creative solutions that helps keep a competitive



edge while remaining practical and efficient.

Inspired by the logo and the brand ethos, 'Fly Arna' aircraft livery reflects clarity and a forward-looking airline that is always on the move, with the letter "A" creatively displayed at the aircraft tail. The bright outlook in the brand identity will also be reflected through the aircraft interior, staff uniforms and across all customer touchpoints.

David Papazian, CEO of ANIF, said: "Fly Arna's brand identity is truly reflective of the inspiring spirit and ethos of Armenia. This is highlighted by the involvement of the public in deciding the name to the colors used for the brand identity and the values that Fly Arna will pro-

mote. Today's unveil of Fly Arna's visual identity is an inspiring move that brings us one step closer towards the launch of the airline."

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, said: "Fly Arna's visual identity launch is an important progress in the journey towards the launch of the airline. This step also marks the beginning of a new era in the growth of Armenia's aviation sector, not only contributing to the country's economic growth but providing its people with a reliable and value for money experience. We look forward to its rollout in the coming weeks."

'Fly Arna' follows Air Arabia Group's successful low-cost business model, taking Zvartnots International Airport (EVN) in Yerevan as its base. The Airline Operation Certificate (AOC) process has started and more details about the launch date, fleet, and destination network will be announced in due course.

ANIF and Air Arabia Group announced the launch Armenia's new national airline in July 2021 followed by the reveal of the airline name in September 2021 following hundreds of suggestions from participants.

## Armenian Food Prices Up 13 Percent In 2021

(RFE/RL) - Food prices in Armenia soared by an average of almost 13 percent in the past year, according to official statistics.

Data released by the Armenian government's Statistical Committee shows particularly drastic increases in the prices of not only imported staple foodstuffs such as cooking oil and sugar but also vegetables mostly grown in the country.

The average cost of vegetables was up by as much as 40 percent year on year in December. This resulted in large measure from last June's unusually hot and dry weather that hit domestic agriculture hard.

The Statistical Committee also reported

more than 10 percent increases in the prices of bread, cereals and dairy products.

The rising food prices, which reflect a global trend, pushed up overall inflation to 7.7 percent in December, well above a 4 percent target set by the government and the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) for 2021.

The CBA raised its key interest rate for six times in the course of 2021 in a bid to curb the higher-than-projected inflation which picked at 9.6 percent in November.

Although the increased cost of food products hit low-income households particularly hard, the government remains in no rush to raise the country's minimum

wage that currently stands at 68,000 drams (\$142).

Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Ruben Sargsian said in November that the government is planning to gradually bring the minimum wage to 86,000 drams by 2026. It will "take the first steps" in that direction in 2023, he said.

Opposition groups are demanding a quick and sharp wage increase. A bill circulated by the main opposition Hayastan alliance on Tuesday would raise the minimum wage to 100,000 drams starting from July.

According to the Statistical Committee, the median monthly wage in Armenia reached 202,000 drams (\$420) in November, up by 10 percent year on year.

## Armenian-Austrian Business Forum to take place in Yerevan

An Armenian-Austrian Business Forum will take place on February 3 in Yerevan, the Ministry of Economy said.

Over 20 Austrian companies who are looking for partners in industry, wood processing, brewing, agriculture, hydro-power plants, banking system, education, security,

healthcare and other sectors will participate.

The Ministry of Economy invited Armenian companies to participate in the forum. The deadline for applications is January 19.



## Pitfalls of Armenia's Unnecessary Negotiations with Turkey

By Harut Sassounian

I will attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the upcoming “Armenia-Turkey normalization talks” on January 14, 2022 in Moscow. Armenia may be bungling these negotiations once again!

— To begin with, Armenia does not need to negotiate with Turkey to have the border opened. Such negotiations took place shortly after Armenia's independence in 1991, when Armenia and Turkey opened their mutual border, until Turkey shut down its side of the border in 1993. Since Turkey is the one that closed its border with Armenia unilaterally, it can now open it also unilaterally. I fear that Turkey's intent to hold such unnecessary negotiations is aimed at extorting concessions from Armenia.

— After its overwhelming loss during the 2020 war, Armenia's defeated leader will be negotiating from a position of weakness. A devastated leader cannot have the mental and moral fortitude to negotiate properly with such a problematic and cunning enemy. New leaders must first come to power in Armenia so they can start the discussions, if necessary, from a non-defeatist attitude.

— There is a fundamental problem with Armenia normalizing its relations with Turkey, a nation that committed genocide, killing 1.5 million Armenians in 1915. A century later, Turkey still lies about its mass crimes and denies their occurrence. An unrepentant genocidaire cannot be a trusted party with which one can negotiate in good faith.

— In addition to its past crimes, Turkey outrageously participated in a new massacre of Armenians, killing and wounding thousands of young Armenian soldiers in the 2020 Artsakh war. To make matters worse, Turkey recruited Jihadist terrorists from Syria and arranged for their transport



tation to Azerbaijan during the war. How can Armenia's Prime Minister engage in discussions with an enemy with such recurring hostility? Just imagine if Germany, a country that committed genocide against six million Jews, would attack today's Israel and kill thousands of Israelis. Do you think Israeli leaders would then sit down with today's German leaders and negotiate with them as if nothing happened? Every Jew in the world would be up in arms over such a prospect. Armenia's leaders seem to be oblivious about Turkey's past and present crimes. They are more than happy to negotiate with the criminals in Ankara with a callous attitude. If the Armenian leaders won't defend their nation's rights, how can they expect outsiders to care about Armenia more than them?

— Prime Minister Pashinyan came to power rejecting the rule of former President Serzh Sarkisian with the slogan “Merjir Serzhin” (Reject Serzh). Why is Pashinyan then copying Sarkisian's flawed policies with Turkey? Armenians in and out of Armenia were up in arms over the previous president's ill-fated 2009 Armenian-Turkish Protocols. It does not look like Pashinyan has learned anything from that failed experiment.

— “Negotiations without preconditions” is another mantra repeated by Armenian's previous and current leaders. But the

fact is that, rather than Armenia placing preconditions on Turkey, it is Turkey that is advancing preconditions. During the 2009 Protocols negotiations, Turkey said it did not have any preconditions, nevertheless, several Turkish preconditions ended up in the agreement. Pres. Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, confirmed such Armenian concerns when he said at the end of December while visiting Chicago:

“we want the border to be opened and diplomatic relations to begin. For this, certain conditions must be met and certain issues must be negotiated.”

— The Protocols failed in 2009 because Azerbaijan objected to Turkey opening its border with Armenia. That helped save Armenia's interests that were supposed to be protected not by Azerbaijan, but by the President of Armenia! The current negotiations may fail also, unless Pashinyan is ready to concede whatever Erdogan asks for. Turkey is now demanding that Armenia accept the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by signing a peace treaty, thus giving up Artsakh and Nakhichevan for good, and allowing the so-called “Zangezur Corridor,” not just a road, linking Azerbaijan East with Nakhichevan. Finally, if Turkey comes to the table with preconditions, Armenia should be prepared to walk away or counter with its own preconditions: Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, restitution for consequent Armenian losses, and return of occupied Western Armenia.

— Before signing the 2009 Armenia-Turkey Protocols, Pres. Sarkisian made a half-hearted attempt to visit several Diaspora communities ostensibly to hear their views. Pashinyan has made no such attempt. He has not consulted with anyone from the Diaspora. Pashinyan should

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page 8 realize that relations with Turkey are a pan-Armenian issue, not solely a domestic matter of the Republic of Armenia. He should take into consideration Diaspora's views, even if he is the one who makes the final decision. Moreover, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu recently stated that "extremist groups" in the Armenian Diaspora "should not put pressure on Yerevan," to disrupt the Armenia-Turkey relations. In addition, Erdogan's spokesman Kalin said in Chicago recently: "the current Armenia-Turkey normalization process will destroy the Armenian community of the United States." Such a statement is an unwelcome interference in intra-Armenian affairs. Turkish officials' unwarranted statements should galvanize all Armenians to reject their unacceptable intervention.

— The qualifications of the person conducting the negotiations on behalf of Armenia are extremely important. Erdogan appointed as Turkey's negotiator the seasoned diplomat, former Turkish Ambassador to the United States, and notorious genocide denialist Serdar Kilic. Pashinyan, on the other hand, in line with his many other unqualified appointments, named Ruben Rubinyan, a young neophyte with

zero diplomatic experience. His only claim to fame is that he is a member of Pashinyan's political party and Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament. Amazingly, when questioned about Rubinyan's qualifications, Pashinyan and his political colleagues claimed that Rubinyan's party affiliation is much more important than his inexperience, thereby putting their party's interests ahead of that of the nation. Thus, the outcome of the upcoming negotiations is crystal clear since the wolf will be facing the lamb! There must be more competent and experienced Armenian diplomats who can conduct such sensitive negotiations.

— Pashinyan keeps repeating proudly that the leaders of Russia, the United States, and France support his plans to negotiate with Turkey. Let's not forget that Azerbaijan and Turkey also support this initiative. All of these countries are simply advancing their own interests, not that of Armenia.

— Finally, Pashinyan's much touted claim of economic benefits to Armenia as a result of opening the Armenian-Turkish border is a dubious expectation. Already, without the border being open, Turkish products have flooded the Armenian market. The opening of the border would mean

that the cheaper Turkish products will destroy Armenia's domestic production. A tiny country with a small population cannot compete with Turkish products which enjoy the advantage of "economies of scale" (higher volume at lower cost). To make matters worse, Pashinyan just threw away the only bargaining chip Armenia had by lifting the temporary ban on the import of Turkish goods, thus depriving Armenia of its trump card in these negotiations.

Turkey, a destitute country with a failing economy, collapsed Lira, 12% unemployment, 36% inflation, and raging coronavirus (7th highest number of infections in the world), is desperate to ameliorate its domestic dismal conditions and mend its damaged ties with the United States, Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. An astute Armenian negotiator, realizing the Turkish eagerness to impress the world, would attempt to extract more favorable terms for normalizing relations with Turkey. No one opposes negotiations with Turkey as long as the negotiator representing Armenia is a competent person who is able to bring benefits to Armenia's interests.

## Armenian Ambassador, Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea discuss perspectives of decentralized cooperation



Armenian Ambassador to the UK Varuzhan Nersesyan met with the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea Cllr Gerard Hargreaves.

During the meeting, the possibilities of cooperation and implementation of various

programs in different spheres, in particular, in the spheres of culture, tourism and education were discussed.

Varuzhan Nersesyan noted that Kensington and Chelsea Borough is among the most important regions in terms of Armenian presence in London, taking into account the fact that the Armenian Embassy has been located here since its opening. It is also home to two Armenian churches.

The Ambassador presented to the mayor his vision of the development of the Armenian-British relations, noting that he

would be happy to implement various initiatives through joint efforts.

Varuzhan Nersesyan highlighted the importance of the decentralized cooperation between the Armenian and British municipalities and the encouragement of the projects to enhance them.

Cllr Hargreaves, in his turn, presented to the Ambassador the events taking place within the framework of Kensington and Chelsea, noting that he would be glad to witness a greater Armenian presence and involvement.

## ANCA and allies urge Biden and Congress to hold Azerbaijan and Turkey accountable for war crimes and ongoing hostility

Armenian Americans and allies across the U.S. are joining the Armenian National Committee of America's (ANCA) call on President Biden and Congressional leaders to fundamentally reset U.S. policy toward the South Caucasus, taking concrete steps to: protect Artsakh's security; defend Armenia's sovereignty, hold Baku and Ankara responsible for their war crimes and ongoing hostility; strengthen the U.S.-Armenia strategic partnership, and; lock-in permanent U.S. government-wide remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

The ANCA-led online campaign – [anca.org/priorities](http://anca.org/priorities) – has been used by tens of thousands to share community outrage that U.S. leaders have “failed to openly condemn and materially confront the aggression, war crimes, and human rights abuses committed by dictatorial Azerbaijan and its Turkish/ISIS allies against democratic Artsakh and Armenia. Our government – against all evidence – refuses to condemn the very violence that Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev proudly boasts of having visited upon Armenians living peacefully in their indigenous homeland.”

The ANCA outlines seven decisive ways President Biden and Congressional leaders can end U.S. complicity in Azerbaijan's ongoing aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, including:

— Ending the Presidential waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, fully enforcing this statute, and ceasing any and all U.S. military or security assistance to Azerbaijan, including Section 333 (Capacity Building), Foreign Military Financing, and International Military Education and Training – on the basis of Section 502B(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act, the Leahy Laws, Section 907, and other provisions of U.S. law.

— Providing at least \$100,000,000 in immediate, direct U.S. humanitarian aid to the more than 100,000 Armenians ethnically cleansed by Azerbaijan from their



Artsakh homeland, helping these families rebuild their lives and resettle in safety upon their indigenous Armenian homeland.

— Directing the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control to enforce Global Magnitsky sanctions against senior Azerbaijani officials guilty of committing war crimes against Artsakh and Armenia, among them President Ilham Aliyev, Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov, and former Chief of the General Staff Sadirov Najmeddin Huseynoglu.

— Condemning Azerbaijan's illegal detention and documented abuse of Armenian prisoners of war, demanding their immediate and unconditional release, under the Third Geneva Convention and other instruments of international law. This call should be unilateral, publicly and prominently highlighting the fact that Azerbaijan is the only party to the conflict to hold prisoners of war.

— Conducting a comprehensive investigation – consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 – regarding Turkey's recruitment of Syrian terrorist mercenaries, Azerbaijan's use of illegal cluster bombs and white phosphorous, and potential violations of U.S. arms export and other laws related to the discovery of U.S. parts in the Turkish drones deployed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh.

— Denouncing Turkey's material military backing of Azerbaijan's ethnic-cleansing of Artsakh and ongoing aggression against Armenia, and actively countering Ankara's attempts to arm-twist Armenia

into “normalizing” bilateral ties at the expense of Artsakh's independence and justice for the Armenian Genocide.

— Censuring Azerbaijan's destruction of Christian Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other holy sites, and providing the full range of U.S. satellite and other monitoring resources to academic and civil society organizations tracking this cultural and religious desecration.

“Azerbaijan's aggression and ongoing anti-Armenian actions are clearly consistent with President Ilham Aliyev's public threats to conquer Armenia, including its capital Yerevan and its Sevan and Sunik regions as “historic Azerbaijani territory.” The intentions of Azerbaijan – and its enabler Turkey – are manifestly evident: To continue their aggression against Armenia and Artsakh with the ultimate goal of the genocidal destruction of the first Christian nation,” states the letter to U.S. leaders.

Less than two weeks into the New Year, Azerbaijan ramped up attacks against Artsakh civilians on January 10th in three separate incidents in Martuni, Askeran, and the Goris-Stepanakert Highway. Shots were reported in Martuni's Karmir Shuka village, resulting in the explosion of a car parked near the local kindergarten. In Askeran, Russian forces intervened to stop Azerbaijani attacks on Armenian pomegranate farmers, who were forced to flee to safety, leaving behind farm equipment damaged in the incident. Armenian motorists reported being struck by rocks thrown by Azerbaijani forces onto the Goris-Stepanakert Highway, near the Shushi exit. The Artsakh Foreign Ministry condemned the attacks, stating they once again prove that “the ‘peace-loving’ statements of the Azerbaijani authorities have nothing to do with the real terrorist and expansionist goals of that country towards Artsakh, the Armenian people and the region.”

## Greek, Cypriot communities urge Australia to recognize genocides committed by the Ottoman Empire

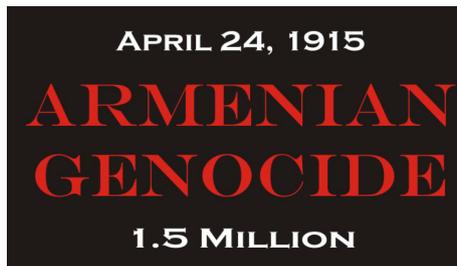
The President of the Greek Community of Melbourne and Victoria, Bill Papastergiadis and the Cyprus Community of Melbourne and Victoria, Theo Theophanous, with the support of the Pontian Federations of Australia, have written to the Prime Minister calling on the Government to formally recognise the genocides committed by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923 of Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and other Christian minorities, *Neos Kosmos* reports.

This follows a motion that was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives on 29 November 2021 calling on the Government to formally recognise these genocides.

The motion, moved by Government member Trent Zimmerman and seconded by Labor's Joel Fitzgibbon, was supported by both sides of Parliament. Other government speakers were John Alexander and Julian Leeser and from the opposition Josh Burns and Steve Georganas.

The presidents argued that as of 2021, there are 31 countries around the world that have recognized these genocides including the US, France, Italy, Brazil, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark and the Vatican City, urging Australia to also step up.

"We do not believe that this should not



be a partisan political issue in the lead up to the coming elections," said the community presidents in their joint statement.

All we have asked of the Prime Minister and in fact we also ask of the Leader of the Opposition is that they respect the unanimous motion passed by the parliament and act upon it."

In their letter to the Prime Minister, they outlined the following: "As Presidents of the Greek Community of Melbourne and Victoria and the Cyprus Community of Melbourne and Victoria together with the Presidents of the Pontian Federations of Australia, we write to you to urge you to act on the motion that was passed by the House of Representatives on 29th November 2021 calling on the Government to formally recognize the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides committed by the Ottoman empire in the period 1915 to 1923."

Citing the 31 other countries which

have recognized these genocides the four presidents argued that "it is now time for the Australian Government to also recognize this genocide formally."

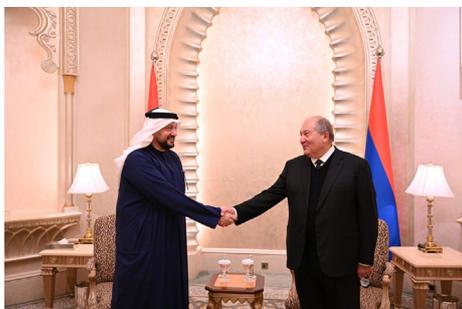
Given that the Turkish Government has steadfastly refused to acknowledge this legacy of past wrongs they said that they believe that it is in the interests of Turkey itself to confront its past and issue a formal apology.

"This is precisely what Germany did following the genocide and holocaust they perpetrated on Jewish people in the second world war. It has been an important moral admission by Germany," they wrote.

"Prime Minister, given the unanimous support by the Parliament for the government to take action to formally recognize the genocide of Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks we ask that you take action to bring this about. This should not be a partisan political issue in the lead up to the coming elections. Our communities would welcome action by your government to seek to address this historical wrong through the first step of recognizing that it occurred."

The call for action was also forwarded to the Foreign Minister, Marise Payne; the Leader of the Opposition, Anthony Albanese; the Opposition Foreign Affairs spokesperson and Senator Penny Wong.

## Masdar to implement another 200-MW solar project in Armenia



The UAE-government owned renewable energy company Masdar will implement another 200 MW solar project in Armenia. The agreement was reached during the meeting of Armenian President

Armen Sarkissian and Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, Chief Executive Officer of

Masdar.

The perspectives of developing cooperation in the fields of renewable energy, latest technologies, science and education were discussed at the meeting.

Stressing that the investment program for the construction of a 200-megawatt photovoltaic power plant in the field of renewable energy in Armenia is the first step of mutually beneficial cooperation with Masdar, President Sarkissian hailed the agreement reached today on another 200-megawatt capacity.

The President noted that the implementation of projects in the field of renewable energy in Armenia with a total capacity of 400 MW creates a good basis for wider cooperation, and is an important step towards

the diversification of the country's energy system. "I expect that this program will create a basis for long-term cooperation," he said.

President Sargsyan also commended the effective cooperation between Masdar Company and the State Interest Fund of Armenia on the implementation of the "Ayg-1" program.

The interlocutors also spoke about the opportunities for large-scale investments in the field of wind energy in Armenia.

In November 2021, Masdar signed an agreement with the Government of the Republic of Armenia to develop a 200-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) plant. The Ayg-1 project will be Armenia's largest utility-scale solar plant.

## There can be no friendship with torturers: French MP quits Friendship Group with Azerbaijan



Member of the French National Assembly Dino Cinieri has quit the France-Azerbaijan Friendship group.

“As the Armenians celebrate Christmas and the great hope that this feast of peace brings, I see with horror that Azerbaijan is martyring and torturing Armenian soldiers

and civilians in the worst possible way,” the MP said in a statement as he announced the decision.

Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan earlier reported new cases of torture of Armenian soldiers. In one case the Azerbaijani servicemen demanded that an Armenian soldier renounce Christianity and convert to Islam. After the Armenian soldier refused to obey, his legs were burned, he was severely beaten and humiliated.

In another case, Azerbaijanis burned the cross-shaped tattoo on the body of a captured soldier with a lighter.

“These barbaric practices are unbearable and unworthy of a member country of

the Council of Europe and of a regime that sits within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,” he added.

Mr. Cinieri noted that “by invading Artsakh on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan wanted us to believe that it was a simple territorial issue.”

“I decide to resign from the France-Azerbaijan Friendship group, so as not to endorse hateful practices which clearly reveal a desire to destroy a people, its culture and its faith. 106 years after the genocide that aimed to exterminate the Armenians, history repeats itself. There can be no friendship with torturers,” Dino Cinieri stated.

## Artsakh Reflects on Azerbaijan’s State-Sanctioned Armenophobia on Anniversary of Baku Pogroms

January 13 marked the 32nd anniversary of the Baku pogroms, during which the Armenian population of the city was forcefully driven out, in what was a continuation of the wave of ethnic cleansing by Azerbaijani authorities that began in February, 1988 in Sumgait and continued in Kirovabad, known as Gyanja.

On January 13, 1990 a mass rally took place in Baku with thousands in attendance.

Afterward, the crowd separated into smaller groups and began attacking and murdering Armenians in their homes with extreme cruelty. The perpetrators had the addresses of their would-be victims. The mob would drag their victims from their apartments, kill them with metal pipes and knives. Women were raped, and many were burnt alive.

The pogroms, which lasted six days, was organized by the Azerbaijani Popular Front. In the end no Armenian was left in the city, which at one point boasted a population of 250,000 Armenians.



It took six days for then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to order a state of emergency. He ordered tanks into Baku and dispatched Soviet Army personnel, who clashed with armed Azerbaijani militants.

Hundreds of Armenians fell victim to the state-sponsored pogroms, which were aimed at ridding the country of its Armenian population. Artsakh’s Foreign Minister David Babayan reflected on Azerbaijan’s state-sanctioned policy of Armenophobia on the anniversary of the Baku pogroms, calling them “one of

the manifestations of Azerbaijan’s genocidal policy and one of the bloodiest events.”

Babayan told Armenpress that January 13, 1990 is one of the most tragic and dark chapters in the history of the Armenian people.

“Mass pogroms targeting Armenians in Baku began that day. We must be united, we must engage in the right policy and develop an educated and patriotic society to be able to avoid difficult trials like the

Baku pogroms,” Babayan said.

He said it was no coincidence that Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev gave an interview on the eve of the anniversary and spoke in the same tone which fueled the massacres in the 1990s.

“This shows that the same ideas still exist there; the same approaches prevail and they try to implement the same plans,” said Babayan adding that Azerbaijan is a state where Armenophobia has become its state-sanctioned ideology and it is a fascist country.



The case of former Minister of Defense of Armenia Davit Tonoyan, Chief of General Staff Artak Davtyan, former Chief of General Staff Stepan Galstyan and 4 others has been sent to court, ARMENPRESS reports the Prosecutor's Office informs.

It is mentioned that the preliminary investigation of the criminal case inves-

## Indictment against Davit Tonoyan, Artak Davtyan and 5 others sent to court

tigated by the NSS Investigation Department revealed that high-ranking officials of the Armed Forces, abusing their official position, with the preliminary agreement with the owner of "Moston Engineering" company, accepted a total of 4232 pieces of outdated ammunition, which had been denied in the past for not meeting technical requirements.

It turned out that the above-mentioned persons, in order to eliminate the existing obstacles for concluding the contract for the purchase of ammunition and to give a legal look to their actions, matched the technical description of the ammunition

with the technical description of the given item kept at the Defense Ministry, indicating in it untrue data on the supply of ammunition through factory boxes to the central warehouse of the N military unit of the Ministry of Defense. Moreover, the mentioned ammunition was acquired at a price almost twice as expensive as the previous purchase of ammunition from the same batch, which is an embezzlement of particularly large amount of money, over 4.6 million USD.

The indictment has been submitted to the Yerevan Court of First Instance.

## "Illegal and morally distorted system" – Armenian law enforcement agencies target syndicate running Ponzi scheme

11 people face criminal charges for launching and operating what Armenian authorities described as a "Ponzi scheme".

The members of the organization began operating in 2016 in Armenia together with a number of foreign citizens, namely nationals of Iran and Canada. The scheme used the UK-registered Vodanet British LTD company name as its cover. It was launched in 2013 in Iran, the Investigative Committee said in a press release.

Authorities said the members of the criminal syndicate calling themselves VODA planned and operated an "illegal and morally distorted system" of recruiting new members and assets. As a result, the syndicate started recruiting many people under the pretext of "phased training courses" to obtain the opportunity to en-

gage in business operations as an "internationally reputed company". The recruited members were told to get registered at voda.net and vodanet.io online platforms and make fake hotel package bookings ranging from 450 to 21,000 USD, which was presented to them as a guaranteed investment and condition for joining their company.

Criminal investigations launched by Iranian law enforcement agencies in June 2018 led to Vodanet British LTD ceasing operations, and the voda.net and vodanet.io websites were shut down, and this in turn led to the fraud mechanism being disbanded and divided among several syndicates.

Then, several members of the syndicate re-organized and registered a com-

pany called Onyxum in Canada, launching an eponymous website and recruiting the main coordinators of Vodanet British LTD and re-launched operations in Armenia already with improved methods with intent to gain more assets from new investors. Onyxum then opened offices in Yerevan and other cities to recruit numerous citizens who were made to believe that they'll be able to make money with the condition of recruiting new members.

Authorities said they continue investigating the scheme to reveal all potential criminals.

The Investigative Committee called on everyone to refrain from using Onyxum.com website or services rendered by its offices.

## Armenophobia the guarantee of political life of Azerbaijani officials – Ombudsman

The real reason and source of Azerbaijan's provocations on the border with Armenia is the state propaganda policy of Armenophobia and hatred which is being carried out by the authorities of that country, Ombudsman of Armenia Arman Tatoyan told reporters on January 12.

"And this is not only a rhetoric, as I met in different cases, but a state policy being applied in life for many years. Look

at the education, science, culture and sport sectors: Armenophobia and hatred pass through all these areas, even after the war the Azerbaijani president has proudly announced that the hatred against the Armenian people has increased in Azerbaijan", Tatoyan said.

He said that this policy of Armenophobia of Azerbaijan will not end as it is the source of the political life of the Azerbaijani

authorities, the guarantee of the political life of their officials.

"Therefore, this is a targeted policy, to keep its own people in Armenophobia, deviate people's attention from their own problems. The system there is such, which, of course, completely violates the system of human rights and democracy", the Ombudsman said.

## History of Armenian Genocide to be taught in Massachusetts schools

The history of the Armenian Genocide will be taught in middle and high schools in the U.S. state of Massachusetts after legislative amendments were passed.

A group of lawmakers had presented genocide education bill No. 692 for the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives approval in February 2021, and it was signed into law by the Governor on December 2, 2021.

The law will take effect from the beginning of the new academic year – July 1, 2022, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute said in a press release.

The amendments to the compulsory education law seek “to achieve and promote the teaching of human rights issues in all districts, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide,



including but not limited to the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Famine-Genocide in Ukraine known as Holodomor, the Pontian Greek Genocide, the forcible transport of Africans to the Americas in the slave trade in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, the violence committed against indigenous people in the Americas, and more recent atrocities in Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Sudan, there shall

be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Genocide Education Trust Fund for the purpose of educating middle and high school students on the history of genocide.”

“The administration of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute welcomed the passage of the bill and sent a letter of gratitude to Senator Rodriguez. In the letter, we underscored genocide education as a preventive factor of the crime, its importance for Armenia and the Armenian nation, and expressed readiness to support the Massachusetts department of education and the state’s educational institutions with materials,” the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute said.

## Ombudsman sends letter to Google urging to refrain from removing Armenian toponyms of Artsakh from digital maps



The Human Rights Defender of the Artsakh Republic Gegham Stepanyan sent a letter to Google, urging not to give in to the Azerbaijani provocations, to ignore the baseless demands presented by Azerbaijan, to refrain from removing the Armenian toponyms and geographical names of Artsakh from the digital maps.

The Ombudsman particularly noted that these efforts of Azerbaijan are another manifestation of Azerbaijan’s long-standing policy of depriving the people of Artsakh of their homeland and denying the Armenian identity of Artsakh. He reminded that the aggression unleashed by Azerbai-

jan against the people of Artsakh in the Fall of 2020, aimed at the seizure of the entire territory of Artsakh and destruction of its people, became the culmination of Azerbaijan’s criminal policy.

In order to support its alleged righteousness of claims over Artsakh, Azerbaijan has been deliberately erasing, destroying, and eradicating any traces of Armenians and Armenian culture and history from every centimeter of the territory under its control.

“The true motives behind the request of Azerbaijan to remove Armenian toponyms from maps can be easily defined: Nagorno Karabakh is not just a place name, but a totality of Armenian culture and history. The Armenian toponyms of Artsakh are memories of places, as well as living memories of the people who gave these names to such places. It is well-known that toponyms serve as symbols of regional culture and thus reflect the history, habitat, and environment of a place. Azerbaijan’s request to remove Armenian toponyms from

the maps is nothing more than an attempt to create desired reality on the maps”, the Ombudsman said.

In the letter, the Ombudsman presented the regulations of international law, which enshrine the right of peoples to freely use and preserve their place names, to inherit from generations. He stressed that international law does not consider toponyms and geographical names to be the property of states, but considers them to be the intangible heritage of peoples.

Gegham Stepanyan noted that the removal of Armenian toponyms will only condone Azerbaijan’s gross violations of human rights of the people of Artsakh and support its efforts aimed at legitimization of the results of illegal use of force.

Appreciating Google’s human-centered approach to use the Armenian geographical names in its maps, the Ombudsman expressed confidence that the company will reject Azerbaijan’s continuing attempt to alter maps and engage in ethnic cleansing.

# ARMENIA

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## Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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