Armenia declared martial law and general mobilization on September 27 following the outbreak of large-scale hostilities around Artsakh.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the decision after holding emergency meetings of his government and Security Council. “I am calling on [reserve] personnel embedded with troops to present themselves to their territorial military commissariats,” Pashinyan wrote on his Facebook page.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said that thousands of people across Armenia have already volunteered to fight in Artsakh. It said Artsakh Armenian forces do not need such assistance yet.

“The dictatorial regime of Ilham Aliyev has once again resorted to hostilities,” Pashinyan said in a televised address to the nation later in the day. “It’s a war against the Armenian people. It’s a war against our independence, freedom and dignity.”

“The Armenian people are ready for that war because they have always been conscious of the fact that the Armenophobia and hatred with which the Azerbaijani dictatorship has for decades been feeding its people could not lead to any outcome other than war,” he said. Pashinyan also blamed Turkey and its “aggressive behavior for the outbreak of hostilities. “I call on the international community to use all its levers to keep Turkey from any possible intervention which would further destabilize the situation in the region,” he added.

Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan issued, meanwhile, a written appeal to the nation accusing Azerbaijan of launching a large-scale offensive along the “line of contact” around Karabakh and saying that Baku will be “strictly punished” for that.

“As a guarantor of the security of Artsakh, the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia are prepared to provide any assistance to ensure the security of Artsakh’s population,” said Tonoyan.

“This adventure will have severe consequences for the enemy,” he added. “Our response will be tougher than ever before.”
Armenian PM briefs France’s Macron on hostilities unleashed by Azerbaijan

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held a telephone conversation with President of France Emmanuel Macron.

The Prime Minister said that on September 27 Azerbaijan launched hostilities all the way along the line of contact with Artsakh. Nikol Pashinyan expressed deep concern over the current situation and its further escalation. In particular, he stressed that Azerbaijan was resorting to provocations with a view to launching military operations on the state borders of the Republic of Armenia.

Calling his interlocutor’s attention to Turkey’s strongly biased and aggressive stance, the Premier stressed the need to prevent the possible intervention of that country.

Deeply concerned over the current situation, President Macron said that the further escalation is unacceptable. He considered it important to take all necessary measures to halt the hostilities and defuse the tension.

He stressed the need to intensify the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs with a view to reinstating peace in the region.

Prime Minister Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Prime Minister Pashinyan spoke in detail about the situation on the line of contact between the Karabakh and Azerbaijani armed forces.

Nikol Pashinyan expressed deep concern over the hostilities unleashed by Azerbaijan, the aggression against Nagorno Karabakh. He considered inadmissible the further escalation, the involvement of extra-regional forces in it.

Vladimir Putin expressed deep concern over large-scale hostilities. The Russian President stressed the need to make the necessary efforts to prevent further escalation of the conflict and to end hostilities.

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) made the following statement:

The Co-Chairs view with concern reports of large-scale military actions along the Line of Contact in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. We strongly condemn the use of force and regret the senseless loss of life, including civilians. The Co-Chairs appeal to the sides to cease hostilities immediately and to resume negotiations to find a sustainable resolution of the conflict.

The Co-Chairs call on the sides to take all necessary measures to stabilize the situation on the ground and reiterate that there is no alternative to a peaceful negotiated solution of the conflict.
We will not surrender any millimeter of our motherland – PM Pashinyan

The Armenian people has never kneeled down and it will never happen, we will never surrender any millimeter of our motherland, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said in his speech at the National Assembly.

Pashinyan recorded that there is nothing unexpected from strategic viewpoint in what has happened. “Because, in fact, the problem is that our people are facing a dilemma to abandon the rights of the people of Artsakh or to get war. I want to very clearly record that the position of Azerbaijan during this entire process has been the same. And in the negotiation process Azerbaijan consistently developed this concept – either we abandon the rights of the people of Artsakh, their right to self-determination, or we get war. And it’s this concept that today has led us to the conflict. The Republic of Armenia and the Armenian people should firmly support the rights of the people of Artsakh and the rights of the entire Armenian people in general”, Pashinyan said, emphasizing that the Armenian people should stand strong and protect their right of living on their holy land.

He noted that as a Commander-in-chief he has not come to the National Assembly to say what our soldiers and Generals are ready to do. “I have come here to say what I am ready for. I am ready to be martyred for the sake of our motherland, the Armenian people has never kneeled down and will never kneel down”, Pashinyan said, adding that no millimeter will be surrendered to the enemy and that we have to win because we have no alternative.

On September 27 early morning the Azerbaijani military has launched a massive cross-border artillery attack on Artsakh, including on civilian settlements. Peaceful settlements are also under bombardment, including the capital city of Stepanakert.

The Azerbaijani side suffered losses in its military equipment, including 4 helicopters, nearly 15 UAVs and 10 tanks. The losses of the Defense Army are being clarified.

Dozens of civilians in Artsakh were wounded as a result of the Azerbaijani attack. A woman and a child were killed in the Azerbaijani attack.

Karabakh conflict: US says external parties’ participation in the escalating violence would exacerbate regional tensions

The United States is alarmed by reports of large scale military action along the Line of Contact in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone that has resulted in significant casualties, including civilians, Spokesperson for the Department of State Morgan Ortagus said in a statement.

“We extend our condolences to the families of those killed and injured. The United States condemns in the strongest terms this escalation of violence,” he said.

Deputy Secretary Biegun called the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, and the Foreign Minister of Armenia, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, to urge both sides to cease hostilities immediately, to use the existing direct communication links between them to avoid further escalation, and to avoid unhelpful rhetoric and actions that further raise tensions on the ground.

“The United States believes participation in the escalating violence by external parties would be deeply unhelpful and only exacerbate regional tensions. We urge the sides to work with the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to return to substantive negotiations as soon as possible. As a Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States remains committed to helping the sides achieve a peaceful and sustainable settlement to the conflict,” Morgan Ortagus stated.

About 4,000 militants from Syria fighting on Azerbaijani side

According to intelligence information, about 4,000 militants from Syria are taking part in the military actions unleashed by Azerbaijan, the Armenian Unified Infocenter informs.

According to verified information, there are 81 victims among the militants.

Armenian Defense Ministry Representative Artsrun Hovhannisyan said that the Azerbaijani side had 200 losses in manpower. It has also lost 4 helicopters, 27 UAVs, 33 tanks and war machine guns, two units of engineering armor.

As a result of the counterattack of the Defense Army, 11 units of armor of the adversary have been captured along with other military equipment including a BMP 3.

The Armenian side has confirmed 58 losses among the military. Two civilians – a woman and child – have also been killed in Azerbaijani shelling.
The Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan has called on the international community to take all steps and direct all of their efforts to prevent the Azerbaijani military aggression and violation of the peace and security for the civilian population of Nagorno Karabakh.

“Early this morning Azerbaijan began launching indiscriminate military aggressive air and artillery attacks against the Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) along the entire line of the border.

Numerous civilians reported that villages, towns and the capital of Stepanakert are targeted. This extremely worrying news was also officially reported by the Human Rights Defender and the Defense Army of Artsakh.

Large-scale violence and damages have been already caused to civilians. Life and health of Armenian children, women and the entire population of Nagorno Karabakh is under a very real threat.

We call on the worldwide international community and on International Human Rights organizations to take all steps and direct all of their efforts to prevent this military aggression and violation of the peace and security for the civilian population of Nagorno Karabakh,” Tatoyan said in the statement.

According to the President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan, in addition to Azerbaijan, Turkey also fights against Artsakh, Harutyunyan said in a briefing.

“Turkey also fights against us. The main modern weapons and ammunitions of Turkey are used – UAVs and airplanes. I am not speaking about mercenaries or volunteers from other countries. Artsakh is fighting relying only on the Defense Army of Artsakh and there can be volunteers only from Armenia”, Harutyunyan said, adding that there is also a decision by the Armenian Government to declare martial law and mobilization.

The President of Artsakh emphasized that the Defense Army successfully fulfils its tasks.

“Yes, we have lost a position, maybe will lose more, but we will definitely occupy positions as well. The outcome of the war is predictable for us, the enemy’s plan will be a failure. They have already suffered hundreds of casualties and dozens of military equipment have been destroyed”, Arayik Harutyunyan said.

The Armenian side has destroyed 4 Azerbaijani helicopters, 33 tanks and combat vehicles, 27 UAVs and 2 military engineering vehicles. Azerbaijan has also suffered 200 human losses. Armenia has reported 58 casualties so far.

Armenia has no motive to start a war, Azerbaijan was the first to start. Thomas de Waal

There is no reason for Armenia to kick-start another bout of conflict with Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, Thomas de Waal, British journalist and senior associate at the Carnegie Eu-

On September 27 early morning the Azerbaijani military launched a massive cross-border artillery attack on Artsakh, including on civilian settlements. Peaceful settlements are also under bombardment, including the capital city of Stepanakert.

The Azerbaijani side has suffered serious human losses and military equipment, including 3 helicopters, 20 UAVs and 30 tanks. Armenia has reported 16 casualties. Dozens of civilians in Artsakh were wounded as a result of the Azerbaijani attack. A woman and a child were killed in the Azerbaijani attack.
**Armenian Constitutional Court Fails to Elect New Chair**

(RFE/RL – Yerevan)- After three days of discussions, members of Armenia’s Constitutional Court failed to elect its new chairperson on September 25.

The position has been vacant ever since the Armenian parliament enacted in June controversial constitutional amendments initiated by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The amendments call for the gradual resignation of seven of the court’s nine judges locked in a standoff with Pashinyan’s political team. Three of them had to resign with immediate effect. The constitutional amendments also required Hrayar Tovmasyan to quit as court chairman but remain a judge.

Tovmasyan and the ousted judges consider their removal illegal and politically motivated. They have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to have them reinstated.

This did not stop the parliament controlled by Pashinyan’s My Step bloc from electing three new court judges earlier this month. One of them, Yervand Khundkaryan, was the only candidate nominated for the post of court chairman.

The nine justices spent three days discussing practical modalities of the election and Khundkaryan’s candidacy. One of them, Edgar Shatiryan, told reporters afterwards that Khundkaryan failed to garner at least five votes needed for succeeding Tovmasyan as court chairman. He said he and his colleagues will meet on Monday to start the election process anew.

Shatiryan did not confirm or deny news reports saying that only three judges backed Khundkaryan’s appointment and that the six others voted against him or did not vote at all.

Another judge, Vahe Grigoryan, openly voiced his opposition to the nominee when he spoke to journalists ahead of the vote. Grigoryan was appointed to the Constitutional Court one year after the 2018 “Velvet Revolution” that brought Pashinyan to power. He was at odds with Tovmasyan and six other court members installed by former Armenian governments.

Despite challenging the legality of his ouster, Tovmasyan took part in the discussions on the new court chair held behind the closed doors. He insisted on Thursday that there is no contradiction between his participation and rejection of the constitutional changes.

“I will continue to fight until constitutionality in Armenia on this issue is restored,” said the former chief justice. “I don’t know when I will succeed, but I will keep fighting.”

Tovmasyan also said that he will not take part in Friday’s vote because he believes the Armenian authorities have made sure that Khundkaryan’s election is a forgone conclusion. But he claimed the following morning that the authorities are now also considering “other scenarios” as well.

Khundkaryan headed the Court of Cassation, Armenia’s highest body of criminal and administrative justice, until the National Assembly approved his appointment to one of the vacant Constitutional Court seats. He was nominated by a national convention of judges held in August.

Several Armenian civic groups have strongly criticized Khundkaryan’s appointment, saying that it will not address what Pashinyan has repeatedly described as a lack of public trust in the Constitutional Court.

The critics argue that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled against Armenia in connection with several verdicts handed down by Khundkaryan in the past. In particular, the Strasbourg-based court ordered the authorities in Yerevan in 2008 to compensate the independent TV station A1+ controversially pulled off the air in 2002.

Pashinyan strongly defended on September 16 the choice of Khundkaryan and the two other new judges. He said that their critics are primarily concerned with their own parochial interests, rather than the rule of law.

Alen Simonian, a deputy parliament speaker representing Pashinyan’s bloc, echoed the prime minister’s stance on Friday. He said that there are no candidates acceptable to everyone in Armenia.

“There will always be attempts to promote one’s own candidate and have an influence,” Simonian said before the Constitutional Court vote. “We chose a candidate after taking into account all concerns.”

Meanwhile, representatives of the two parliamentary opposition parties reiterated that they believe the recent constitutional changes were enacted in breach of other articles of the Armenian constitution.

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**Gagik Tsarukyan detained for two months**

Leader of the Prosperous Armenia Party Gagik Tsarukyan will be remanded in custody. The court of general jurisdiction announced the decision at 11 pm on September 26.

Yerem Sargsyan, one of Tsarukyan’s defenders, said the court cited the risk that he could obstruct the investigation as a basis for the decision.

His lawyer Samvel Dilbandyan described the decision as “illegal and baseless” and said it would be appealed at a higher court. Gagik Tsarukyan has been charged with vote buying under Article 154.2 of the Criminal Code of Armenia (Forcing the voter to divulge the results of the ballot, checking the ballot list to reveal the results of the vote, entering the ballot booth (room) as well as breaching the confidentiality of the voting otherwise).

The National Assembly voted in June to strip Gagik Tsarukyan of parliamentary immunity and sanction his arrest.
New EU aid package for Armenia unveiled

The Armenian government announced on September 24 that the European Union will provide it with 60 million euros ($70 million) in fresh assistance designed to help it deal with the coronavirus crisis, reform courts and root out corruption in Armenia.

The government revealed and approved two relevant agreements negotiated with the EU’s executive body, the European Commission, during its weekly session chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

One of the agreements calls for 30 million euros in funding for the government’s efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic and mitigate its socioeconomic consequences. According to a government statement, some of it will be spent on the purchase of new equipment for Armenian hospitals treating COVID-19 patients.

“This is an exceptional program aimed at supporting anti-crisis measures taken by the government for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan.

“I want to stress that this is only one of the programs on neutralizing consequences of COVID-19,” he said. “We are also discussing with our European partners two other programs. We will present final agreements on them to the government.”

The EU already promised 51 million euros in coronavirus-related aid to Armenia in April. It was not clear if the EU funding announced by the Armenian government will be provided in addition to that sum.

The government said that the EU will also allocate another 30 million euros in support of its ongoing judicial reforms and fight against corruption. It said the aid will be spent, among other things, on the forthcoming creation of special anti-corruption courts and new law-enforcement divisions tasked with combating graft.

Presenting this program, Justice Minister Rustam Badasyan said the EU aid will also be used for tackling corruption among judges. This, he explained, will be done through increasing the capacity of a state anti-corruption body which began recently scrutinizing the declared assets of judges and their relatives.

“This will lead to the implementation of our plan to have a judicial system free from corruption,” added Badasyan.

Armenia’s economic activity index declines by 6.4% in 8 months

Armenia’s economic activity index has declined by 6.4% in January-August against the January-August 2019, according to the data released by the National Statistical Committee.

Industrial production volume increased by 0.9%. However, the construction, trade turnover and services fields recorded a decline in the aforementioned period – 19.1%, 11.5% and 10.8% respectively.

In January-August consumer price index and industrial production price index recorded increase by 0.8% and 1.5% respectively. Electricity production increased by 1.9%. Average nominal monthly salary also increased by 4.7%, comprising 187,061 AMD.

Decline was registered in the external trade turnover volumes in January-August, by 10.2%; moreover, the export decreased by 6% and the import by 12.4%.

The decline in the economic activity is connected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which affected the economics of almost all countries of the world.
US-based SADA Systems planning a Global Center for Technology Solutions in Yerevan

The US-based SADA Systems tech company is planning to establish a Global Center for Technology Solutions in Yerevan.

The issue was discussed at a meeting between Armenian High-Tech Minister Hakob Arshakyan and SADA Systems founder Hovik Safoyan.

The Minister stressed the importance of establishing such a center in Armenia and the need for clear mechanisms for the inflow of talent, noting that the ministry’s global programs and emerging infrastructure are aimed at this important goal.

Touching upon the role of the Diaspora, Minister Arshakyan noted that for mutually beneficial cooperation it is necessary to properly assess the resources, to cooperate on mutually beneficial terms.

Hovik Safoyan noted, in turn, that the best investment will be the establishment of a new enterprise on the spot, which will include technical-engineering, professional, management services, support, application development, will be called to identify and train talents.

According to the SADA Systems founder, the company is planning a real business, where Armenian talents will gain experience and work for the benefit of Armenia’s development.

Armenia to buy 600 thousand doses of Covid-19 vaccine

Armenia is planning to buy about 600 thousand doses of Covid-19 vaccine for about 300 thousand people in risk groups, the Ministry of Health informs.

This will cost $6,330,000 USD, given the average $10.55 cost per one dose, which could still decrease as a result of negotiations.

The Ministry said the acquisition of the Covid-19 vaccine is needed to control the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and, consequently, to improve the epidemic situation.

To this end, negotiations are underway with all possible parties, in particular vaccine manufacturers and international partners.

A special opportunity has now been created for getting the vaccine. A joint procurement platform has been set up, coordinated by international partners through the COVAX FACILTY Foundation. The latter negotiates directly with vaccine manufacturers, helping to speed up the process, setting common vaccine prices, and supporting the acquisition of a number of vaccines at guaranteed prices for the countries involved in the fund.

The Ministry of Health has signed an agreement with the COVAX FACILTY Foundation to purchase the vaccine and is planned to buy about 600 thousand doses.

The first batch of the vaccine (for 3% of the population) is expected to be delivered in 2021, after the licensing of safe and effective vaccines.
People of Nagorno-Karabakh should be able to determine their status without limitation – Armenian PM tells UN General Assembly

The authorities of Azerbaijan have been consistently using the conflict for legitimizing their long grip on power, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at the general debate of the 75th session of the General Assembly.

“For decades, Armenia and the Armenians have been useful enemies for the leadership of Azerbaijan to justify low living standards, the absence of democracy and systematic violations of human rights in their country,” he stated.

The full text of the Prime Minister’s address is below:

Honorable General Assembly President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

This year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations, which was born out of the ashes of the Second World War. We remember the sacrifice of our grandparents, their tribulations for peace and the future of humankind.

Today, the first time ever the UN General Assembly is being held in a virtual format. No matter how uncomfortable and undesirable it is, the meeting in this format proves the determination of humankind to continue cooperation; it shows our dedication and commitment to the UN and multilateral cooperation.

Indeed, the pandemic has an unprecedented impact on all aspects of human life. Addressing global challenges requires recommitment of all states to effective multilateralism and international cooperation with the central role of the United Nations.

We appreciate the primary role of the UN, in particular the World Health Organization and the UNDP, in the global response to Covid-19. We are grateful to all our partner countries who supported Armenia and, on our part, we extended our share of help to our friends. This collective effort is an important manifestation of international solidarity.

In the spirit of our collective pledge to leave no one behind, we share the conviction that equitable access to all essential health technologies and products to combat the virus is a global priority, and no one, including those living in conflict areas, should be denied or be limited in access to remedies to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

Likewise, vaccines against COVID-19 are a global public good and should be accessible and affordable to all peoples without any discrimination.

I want to once again stress Armenia’s unequivocal support to the Secretary-General’s appeal for a global ceasefire and UN Security Council Resolution 2532 on COVID-19, demanding general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While global efforts were directed at coping with Covid-19, we have been witnessing deplorable attempts to destabilize peace and security in our region. This July Azerbaijan ventured yet another act of aggression. The armed forces of Azerbaijan initiated a military offensive in the border-line Tavush region of Armenia.

As Armenia had called for an immediate de-escalation and agreed to end hostilities of hours after their outbreak, Azerbaijan continued targeting civilian population and infrastructure, and attacking Armenia’s borderline areas by employing artillery, heavy weaponry, UAV’s, and large infantry units. Moreover, the Azerbaijani authorities had also escalated their war threats, which crossed all the imaginable boundaries of a civilized world. Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense even threatened to launch a missile strike at the Nuclear Power Plant in Armenia, which is tantamount to a threat of “nuclear terrorism.”

The July battles shattered the myth of Azerbaijan’s military superiority and validated the obvious that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is long overdue for the Azerbaijani leadership to acknowledge this fact and renounce the use of force and threat of force in the context of the conflict resolution.

Armenia reaffirms its commitment to the exclusively peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh is a basis of the peace process, which is recognized by the international community and the international mediators, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, in particular. By virtue of this right, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should be able to determine their status without limitation. To this end their elected authorities should be able to take part in the negotiations. The aspirations and needs of people living in the conflict zone should become the priority of the negotiation agenda.

Ensuring comprehensive security of the people of Artsakh who have been exposed to existential physical security threats is another key priority for Armenia.

Freedom, democracy and respect for basic human rights are integral requisites of an environment conducive to achieving a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Only legitimately elected governments can genuinely express the interests of their people and move towards a compromise.

The authorities of Azerbaijan have been consistently using the conflict for legitimizing their long grip on power. For decades, Armenia and the Armenians have been useful enemies for the leadership of Azerbaijan to justify low living standards,
the absence of democracy and systematic violations of human rights in their country.

The ceasefire must be strengthened by concrete actions on the ground. Renouncing bellicose rhetoric and hate speech, expanding OSCE monitors on the line of contact and the borders, establishing an investigative mechanism into ceasefire violations and setting up direct communication lines between commanders on the ground are essential in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the July escalation, calls from the international community were mostly about the respect of the ceasefire, dialogue and restraint. Turkey, however, much in line with its destabilizing policies of power projection in its other neighboring regions, including the East Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East, spared no effort to fuel tensions in the South Caucasus, as well.

With its unilateral support to Azerbaijan and the expansion of military presence there, Turkey undermines efforts to peace and stability in the region, as well as the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to this end.

Turkey directly threatens Armenia and puts on show aggressive military posturing by way of provocative joint military drills with Azerbaijan in close vicinity of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey builds its policies in our region on traditions of kinship, on exploiting conflicts, on the justification of the Armenian Genocide and on the impunity for that crime. Turkey poses a security threat to Armenia and the region. In this context, Armenia will continue to actively engage in regional and international efforts to maintain peace and security through dialogue and cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the challenges we have been facing this year, Armenia continues its engagement with international operations of preserving international peace and security. Armenian peacekeepers serving in Lebanon, Mali, Kosovo, and Afghanistan have contributed to the security and stability there. We are ready to expand our participation in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN.

Ladies and gentlemen, Armenia prioritizes the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On July 10, 2020, Armenia presented its Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Sustainable Development Goals. The theme of this year’s High-Level Political forum – Accelerated action and transformative pathways – perfectly reflects Armenia’s national priorities and policies of the past two years since the non-violent Velvet Revolution in 2018.

Powered with the strong popular mandate, our Government is very determined to advance ambitious reforms, aimed at building a competitive and inclusive democratic society with strong institutions. The reform agenda embraces every area of public life and puts a strong emphasis on human rights, the rule of law, combating corruption, independent judiciary and improved public administration.

We pursue large-scale economic and social development and rely on technological, environmental and educational high standards. This week our Government launched the Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050 with 16 mega goals, based on a bold vision for modernity and progress.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, we are compelled to recognize the many existing challenges to human dignity and human rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Armenia will continue to strongly contribute to international cooperation for the protection and promotion of all human rights.

Both in its domestic policies and the foreign policy agenda, Armenia underlines the important priority of promoting equal rights and active participation of women and youth in political and public life.

The protection of women’s rights in conflict zones and their participation in all stages of conflict resolution are critical. Practical implementation of the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is amongst the important priorities of our Government.

Prevention of genocides has been an unwavering priority of Armenia. As a nation to have endured its horrors, we have a moral responsibility before humanity to preserve the memory of the victims of genocides and to contribute to the efforts of the international community to prevent the recurrence of horrendous crimes.

We appreciate the strong international support expressed also in the Human Rights Council to Armenia’s efforts to advance an effective international prevention agenda.

Armenia promotes platforms for inclusive dialogue among governments, parliaments, international organizations, academia and civil society on the genocide prevention agenda. The “Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide” Held in Armenia, has become one such regular platform for dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 75th anniversary of the United Nations is a fitting occasion to reaffirm the strength of its three interconnected pillars of peace, development and human rights. The ongoing conflicts, persistence of radicalism and intolerance, transnational and global challenges continuously reveal our collective vulnerabilities and interdependence. As ever, we need effective multilateralism and therefore a strong and reformed United Nations for a better future, peace and security for generations to come.
Nagorno-Karabakh will be defending every single inch of their land – Armenia FM tells Al Jazeera

Nagorno-Karabakh will be defending every single inch of their land and of their security and Armenia is the guarantor, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said in an interview with Al Jazeera.

“These threats of force have been very usual in the parlance of the Azerbaijani Government and in the regime in Baku, the latest was in the UN General Assembly, and they have just brought this into a practical implementation. Once again, they will be repelled,” the Foreign Minister said.

The full text of the interview is provided below:

Al Jazeera: You heard them quite clearly the Azeris saying that they won’t stop until they would liberate this territory, they are saying full-scale war. Do you consider yourself to be in a full-scale war now?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: What we have been hearing is exactly the choice of war and at the expense of the peace process, the breakdown of the peace negotiations by Azerbaijan and the massive attack that they have in a premeditated pre-planned manner across the entire perimeter on the line of contact between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. This morning has been the proof of the intentions of Azerbaijan to push for their maximalist positions in an aggressive manner to put our people at risk.

We have been consistently insisting that at the heart of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the security of our people and today have once again brought to prove that we have to care about the security of our compatriots, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh who have been firm on the defense of their freedom, of their security against this aggression. And the aggression is preplanned not just by Azerbaijan but with the massive support of Turkey which has its military presence by Azerbaijan but with the massive support and which has been showing its aggressive, unilateral support to Azerbaijan and aggressive approach towards Armenia. This is very, very disturbing and it’s a massive escalation and the consequences for which Azerbaijan bears all responsibility.

Al Jazeera: It’s also an escalation which you say they started. They actually say you attacked first at 6AM or an hour before.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: I totally reject this absolute disinformation which is the method of Azerbaijan. We had no intention of doing anything which would bring to escalation. Armenia has been very firm on its position that the solution is strictly through peaceful means, strictly on the basis of a compromise. We wouldn’t do anything that would be against our declared intentions.

For us, as I am saying, the whole point is about the security of our compatriots. They are very firm and very resolute to defend themselves and Armenia remains a very resolute guarantor of their security. We urge Azerbaijan to stop this aggression and come to their senses and come back to the peaceful process.

Al Jazeera: Are you in a position to actually stop them if they say they are going to go to a full-scale war and liberate this territory. What position is Armenia in to defend?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: Nagorno-Karabakh will be defending every single inch of their land and of their security and Armenia is the guarantor. These threats of force have been very usual in the parlance of the Azerbaijani Government and in the regime in Baku, the latest was in the UN General Assembly, and they have just brought this into a practical implementation. Once again they will be repelled.

Al Jazeera: Foreign Minister, you talked about negotiation. How would you see that happening? Who would be the broker, how would you step back from the brink here.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: There is an established format of negotiations. That is internationally recognized format which includes mediators – the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship comprising Russia, the United States, and France. We are in constant contact with the Co-Chair countries at all levels. And we are working towards the ways in which we can bring the whole situation back to normality for the negotiating process. We are committed to this.

However, this should not have been confused with our resolve in Nagorno-Karabakh and in Armenia to defend ourselves in Nagorno-Karabakh and in Armenia. The resolution has to be based on the compromise. The maximalist position that has been pouring out of Baku all these years has no room for progress in the negotiating process. The Prime Minister of Armenia has been consistently insisting that any solution should be acceptable to the people of Armenia, to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, and to the people of Azerbaijan – a compromise-based solution, not a solution which only meets the demands of just one party. That is totally rejected. Azerbaijan has never reciprocated our call for a compromise solution, but they have been opting for a military solution, opting for aggressivism. And what we see now is the manifestation of this consistent policy of Azerbaijan.

Al Jazeera: The established mechanism, which you talk about for discussions, which is already in place, can that bring in orders? We have got Russia, we have got Iran, we have got France, all talking about a de-escalation, calling for de-escalation immediately, and you have also got Turkey, which squarely backs the Azeris and it seemed to be in more of a fighting mode. Can the current mechanism deal with any further threats from any other player as well?

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: A clarification: the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship mechanism is a Co-Chairmanship of three countries comprising Russia, the United States and France.

Within these negotiations, if Azerbaijan is so “determined” to put blame on Armenia, then I’m calling on Azerbaijan to immediately accept the investigative mechanisms and the risk reduction mechanisms and the observation mechanisms for ceasefire violations we have been insisting upon for so many years and they have been rejecting exactly to cover their intentions, their bellicose and aggressive intentions and to engage in a blame game as they are doing now. If they want de-escalation they should have agreed and they can agree now on the mechanisms which can strengthen the ceasefire regime and strengthen the risk reduction.

So this is our call again but this was totally rejected by Azerbaijan and this blame game that they are proposing that they are trying to impose on us is totally rejected. They bear full responsibility for the entire situation that we are having now.
SOCIETY

Paris hosts tribute to French-Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian

Six months after French Armenian politician Patrick Devedjian’s death, the Hauts-de-Seine department, of which he was president, paid him a strong tribute on Friday. Many political figures were in attendance to pay tribute to Devedjian’s memory during this long day of remembrance, Le Figaro reports.

Many of them met at 10:30 am in the cathedral of Nanterre. Attending the mass were former President Nicolas Sarkozy, former Prime Ministers François Fillon and Jean-Pierre Raffarin and others.

Patrick Devedjian’s wife and two of the four sons spoke during the mass, celebrated according to the Armenian rite in the presence of an Armenian choir, with a reading of the same gospel as that which had been chosen for Jacques Chirac (gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew).

The main event was held at Seine Musicales, which now bears his name. The place was one of the great projects of Patrick Devedjian. The site was built under a partnership contract signed in July 2013 between the General Council and the Tempo Île Seguin group. President Devedjian laid the foundation stone there on July 5, 2014.

The event was attended by Georges Sifredi, successor of Patrick Devedjian at the head of the department, many elected officials from Ile-de-France and Hauts-de-Seine. The mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo was forced to cancel her participation because of the news of stabbing attacks in the 11th arrondissement.

The chairman of the Hauts-de-Seine departmental council and former minister Patrick Devedjian died from the consequences of the coronavirus on March 29.

Armenia honors health workers fighting Covid-19

More than 100 medical workers of Nork Infection Clinic Hospital, St. Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center and other medical institutions were awarded with letters of gratitude of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia for their devotion to the prevention and treatment of coronavirus in the Republic of Armenia.

On the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Armenia, a number of public administration employees were also honored with letters of gratitude from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia for their conscientious and effective work, high responsibility in the fight against the coronavirus epidemic.

The letters of thanks were handed by the Chief of Staff of the RA Prime Minister Eduard Aghajanyan.

“First of all, let me congratulate all of us on Independence Day. September 21 is, perhaps, one of the most important, if not the most important, holidays in the Republic of Armenia. I think this is the best occasion to celebrate, to pay special attention to our citizens who have played a special, important role and continue to play a role in our public life,” Aghajanyan noted in his opening remarks.

According to him, due to the coronavirus epidemic, both Armenia and the whole world are going through rather difficult challenges.

“We must state that although the coronavirus epidemic is not over, our government, thanks to your direct participation, has been able to take proportionate measures to withstand this crisis,” said Eduard Aghajanyan.

Unfortunately, he said, we cannot consider the epidemic over. Therefore, he wished everyone inexhaustible strength and energy on the way to further work.

The Noyan Tapan Highlights www.nt.am 28 September #34(1301)•2020

Previous Next
Armenia’s Independence Celebrated in Three Baltic States: A Huge Job Done by the Armenian Embassy

Compiled and edited by
Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent

Below The Highlights presents very impressive and saturated events were held by the Armenian Embassy to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia headed by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Baltic States, a rep of the (real) Armenian intellectual/artistic elite, H.E. Mr Tigran Mkrtchyan in three countries within only a week.

Lithuania

On September 18, upon the initiative of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Lithuania and Honorary Consulate of Armenia in Vilnius, an exclusive concert and reception was held at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia, the 29th anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian-Lithuanian friendship, personified by Gegham Grigoryan. Among the guests were Lithuanian Minister of Health Aurelijus Veryga, His Grace Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the Baltic States, Archbishop of Vilnius Gintaras Grušas, high-ranking officials from Foreign Ministry, diplomats accredited in Lithuania, as well as representatives of the Armenian community.

During the reception preceding the concert, Armenian Ambassador Mkrtchyan presented the achievements of the Armenian-Lithuanian relations in the past year, touched upon the programs postponed due to the epidemic. The Ambassador especially thanked the Lithuanian Minister of Health for the great humanitarian assistance provided by Lithuania to Armenia during the epidemic, as well as thanked the team of Lithuanian doctors who visited Armenia and their head Marius Ciurlionis.

In his welcoming speech at the opening of the concert, Ambassador Tigran Mkrtchyan mentioned the great concert celebrates three interconnected anniversaries. The Ambassador greatly emphasized the role of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia adopted on August 23, 1990 and the Lithuanian Independence Restoration Act adopted on March 11 of the same year in the agreement of mutual recognition of each other, signed on August 14, 1991. According to that, Lithuania became the first country in the world to recognize Armenia’s independence, and Armenia became the seventh country to recognize Lithuania’s independence.

To Lithuania Tigran Mkrtchyan and Honorary Consul Karapet Babayan delivered welcoming speeches. Ambassador Mkrtchyan presented the achievements of the Armenian-Lithuanian relations in the past year, touched upon the programs postponed due to the epidemic. The Ambassador especially thanked the Lithuanian
The Ambassador emphasized that it happened a few days before the 1991 Soviet coup d’etat attempt, which further values the fact of mutual recognition.

Tigran Mkrtchyan mentioned that the role of individuals was great in building such friendship, in establishing close ties between the two countries and peoples. And one of the strongest pillars of the Armenian-Lithuanian friendship undoubtedly was Gegham Grigoryan, who had performed at the Lithuanian Opera House for about a decade, starting from 1980. Tigran Mkrtchyan added that all the main participants of the concert - conductor Vardan Grigoryan, world-famous opera singer Asmik Grigoryan (soprano), who is the shared pride of Lithuanians and Armenians, opera singers Barsegh Tumanyan (bass) and Hovhannes Ayvazyan (tenor) - all of them are closely related to Gegham Grigoryan (Vardan Hasmik Grigoryans are the latter’s children, Barsegh Tumanyan is his friend), and that makes the concert even more symbolic.

Ambassador Mkrtchyan noted that it is a great honor for the Republic of Armenia that this concert marks the opening of the 101st concert season of the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre.

The program of the concert that included some of the best pieces of world and Armenian opera works, was concluded by a recording of a Lithuanian classical work performed by Gegham Grigoryan.

**Latvia**

On September 21, a concert and reception dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia and the Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Armenia was held in the famous White Hall of Latvia’s historic Rundale Palace, performed by the Brussels-based “Akhtamar” quartet.

The event was attended by His Grace Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the Baltic States, Parish priest Father Khosrov Stepanyan, high-ranking Latvian officials, diplomats accredited in Latvia, members of the parliament, representatives of local self-government bodies and Armenian community.

Armenia’s Ambassador to Latvia Tigran Mkrtchyan delivered a welcoming address at the opening of the concert. Ambassador Mkrtchyan spoke about the path taken by Armenia after the Velvet Revolution in Armenia in 2018, particularly emphasizing. “The democratic route, democracy in general in our country and abroad, is something that is maintained and developed through daily struggle and daily work.”

Then, the Ambassador touched upon the dynamics of the development of the Armenian-Latvian relations, emphasizing. “This year, the long-awaited visit of the President of Latvia to Armenia was planned, which was postponed due to the situation created by the COVID-19 epidemic. But we hope it will happen in the near future. This year, the visit of Latvian Minister of Justice to Armenia was also scheduled, which is very important, especially in terms of the most vital reforms in the field of justice in Armenia. Unfortunately, that visit was also postponed for the same reason, but it will definitely take place.”

Ambassador Mkrtchyan also spoke about the achievements in the cultural sphere between the two countries in 2019. The Ambassador mentioned. “Last year we celebrated the independence on this very day with a very beautiful event - the liturgy of Komitas, which was performed by the Latvian Radio Choir at St John’s Church. The project of that concert had a pleasantly unexpected development. A CD of the liturgy was recorded by performance of the same choir, and now it is talked about not only in Latvia and Armenia but also beyond our borders. The international press regularly writes about this project, and we hope it will be discussed for a long time.”

Before the start of the concert, Ambassador Mkrtchyan introduced the “Akhtamar” quartet, noting that it was founded in Belgium and is well known both in Europe and in Armenia.

**Estonia**

On September 24, upon the initiative of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia a concert and reception dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia and the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia were held at the historic Kadriorg Palace in Tallinn.

The event was attended by high-ranking representatives of the Estonian executive and legislative bodies, heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Tallinn, intellectuals, representatives of local self-government bodies and the Armenian community. In his welcoming speech, Ambassador Mkrtchyan referred to the mutual support of Estonian and Armenian leading political forces - the Popular Front of Estonia and the Armenian National Movement - during the period of independence and mutual visits of leaders of these movements to each others capitals, adding that a number of Estonian-Armenians such as Rafik Grigoryan, Artem Davidyants and others, stood out for their activity in the struggle for Estonian independence.

*To be Continued*
Opera House: #ՀԱՂԹԵԼՈՒԵՔ #ПОБЕДИМ #WEWILLWIN #GANAREMOS #NOUSREMPORTERONS

Al. Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theatre Sunday’s post is the following:

AND…

On the occasion of the Armenia’s 29th Independence Day General and Artistic Director of Opera and Ballet House Honored Artist of the Russian Federation Maestro Constantine Orbelian delivered an address:

Dear Friends, our dearest Spectator, dear Compatriots, Sisters and Brothers, dear Colleagues, Today, all Armenians celebrate one of the most important days in the modern history of our people – The Independence Day. Independence that generations have dreamed of and gave their creative minds and arm strength to make that dream come true. September 21 is a symbol of our faith and will!

Happy Independence Day! Long live the Republic of Armenia! With kind regards, yours Constantine Orbelian

On 21 September, on the occasion of the Independence Day, “Hero of Our Times” awarding ceremony took place in “Zvartnots” Cathedral in which Opera Theatre symphony orchestra headed by leading conductor Maestro Harutyun Arzumanyan and the following soloists:

ARTSVIK DEMURCHYAN /soprano
MARY MOVSISYAN /soprano
HOVHANNES AYVAZYAN / RA Honored Artist / tenor

SARGIS AGHAMALYAN / RA Honored Artist / tenor

RAFFI GAL-STYAN and Theatre’s ballet company Staging by Ruben Muradyan /Honored Artist of RA/
2. G. Garvarentz. Lyrics by Charles Aznavour “Ave Maria”
Pianist: Yelena Vardazaryan

On 26 September at 20:00 at the Theatre’s Grand Foyer PARISIAN BOHEME concert evening was held.
The program was following:

SOFYA SAYADYAN /Honored Artist of RA/soprano
1. F.Poulenc “Les chemins de l’amour”
2. P.Viardot “Ay Lyuli”

Pianist: Olga Khachikyan /Honored Artist of RA/

SOFIA TUMANYAN /mezzo-soprano
1. E.Curtis “Non ti scordar di me”
2. V.Chiara “La Spagnola”

Pianist: Vasily Rolich

HAYK TIGRANYAN /bass
1. J.Massenet. Le Chevalier des Grieux’s aria from opera “Manon”
2. Ch.Gounod. Méphistophélès’s aria from opera “Faust”

Pianist: Yelena Vardazaryan

Leading ballet soloists: SONA VARDANYAN and C. Saint-Saëns “Dying swan” Staging by M. Fokin
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