

Armenian PM says economic ambitions must be revived in 2021



Issues related to the 2022 macroeconomic framework were discussed on January 15 during meeting chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

“2020 was a very problematic year not only because of the war but also because of a new type of coronavirus. We must clearly state that 2021 will be a year of recovery of our economic ambitions. We need to formulate what can be done to overcome the difficulties, to really restore the economic ambitions we had.”

“We face many economic challenges, but we also have many opportunities. Of course, first of all we must focus on the solution of humanitarian problems, on the other hand, we must say that the trilateral statement signed in Moscow on January 11 and its possible implementation can create completely new economic opportunities for the Republic of Armenia. We are ready to take full advantage of these opportunities, I repeat, not only to restore

our economic ambitions, but also to set a higher milestone,” PM Pashinyan stated.

Minister of Finance Atom Janjughazyan presented the general forecasts for the economic development and the macroeconomic framework for 2022. He noted that due to the coronavirus epidemic and the war in Artsakh, it is expedient to start discussions on the budget process earlier.

The meeting discussed, in particular, the 2022 draft state budget, 2022-2024 medium-term expenditure programs, economic policy, economic growth forecasts, fiscal framework, current and capital expenditures.

The Prime Minister noted that the quality of the programs implemented in 2021 will have an impact on the macroeconomic framework of 2022, and it is necessary to be consistent in ensuring high performance of the programs.

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Status of Artsakh remains a key principle of Karabakh conflict settlement – Armenian FM

The status of Artsakh has been and remains the key principles of Karabakh conflict settlement, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazyan told reporters on January 14.

The comments come in the wake of a statement of Russian Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group Igor Popov, who said Russia had never suggested handing over the seven regions to Azerbaijan, ignoring the issue of status.

“As you know Armenia once gave its consent to the Kazan document, as it contained a full package of basic principles for the settlement of the conflict. Even after Azerbaijan rejected the document, the talks continued on the basis of the fundamental principles. Even during the war, Azerbaijan



agreed to continue negotiations on the fundamental principles. I unequivocally agree with Mr. Popov that the status of Artsakh was the most important principle of the conflict settlement, and remains so,” the

Foreign Minister said.

He added that “the statement of November 9 is not a document on settlement of the conflict.”

“It’s a document on ceasefire, on ending the war, which addresses some of the fundamental principles. However, the conflict cannot be considered settled unless all fundamental principles have been addressed. Namely, the issues of status and self-determination,” Minister Aivazyan stated.

He referred to the most recent statement of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, which stresses the need for a comprehensive settlement based on fundamental principles.

Armenian soldier wounded In Artsakh



Artsakh’s Defense army said that one of its soldiers was shot and wounded by Azerbaijani forces on January 13.

The Defense Army said that the 20-year-old soldier, Vartan Kirakosyan, was rushed to a Artsakh hospital and underwent “successful” surgery there.

“His condition is assessed as serious

but stable,” read a statement issued by it.

The statement added that the army has launched an investigation into the “blatant violation” of the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the war in Karabakh on November 10.

Azerbaijan did not immediately comment on the reported incident. Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in Artsakh also did not react to it as of Wednesday evening.

The Russian Defense Ministry insisted on Tuesday that “the ceasefire regime is being observed along the entire Line of Contact” in and around Karabakh.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Ara Aivazyan spoke by phone later on Wednesday. Statements on the phone call issued by their press offices did not mention the reported shooting.

They said Lavrov and Aivazyan discussed the implementation of fresh agreements reached by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at a trilateral meeting held in Moscow on Monday.

In particular, Aliyev and Pashinyan reaffirmed their plans to open the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for commercial traffic as part of the truce accord that was brokered by Putin.

In a phone call reported on Wednesday, Putin briefed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the results of the Armenian-Azerbaijani summit hosted by him.

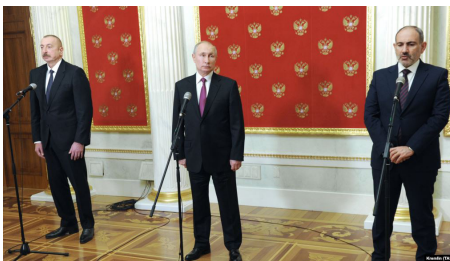
According to the Kremlin, the two leaders also discussed “some aspects” of the upcoming opening of a Russian-Turkish center that will monitor the ceasefire regime in the Karabakh conflict zone.

Joint statement issued following meeting between Nikol Pashinyan, Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev

A joint statement was issued following the trilateral meeting held between RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, RF President Vladimir Putin and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Moscow. Below is the text of the joint statement.

“We, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin declare the following:

1. With a view to implementing Paragraph 9 of the November 9, 2020 Statement in terms of unblocking all economic and transport links in the region, we are hereby endorsing the proposal made by RF President Vladimir Putin on setting up a tripartite working group under the joint chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Deputy Chairman of the RF Government.



2. The Working Group will hold its first meeting by January 30, 2021, according to the results of which it will draw up a list of primary tasks arising from the implementation of the aforementioned Paragraph 9 of the Statement. The priorities shall include rail and road communications, as well as the identification of other directions as agreed upon by the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation, hereinafter referred to as the Parties.

3. In order to implement the primary

directions, the Working Group’s co-chairs will approve the composition of expert subgroups in these areas from among the officials of the competent authorities and organizations of the Parties. Within a month after the Working Group’s meeting, the expert subgroups will submit a list of projects, which should specify the necessary resources and activities for their implementation and approval at the highest level by the Parties.

4. By March 1, 2021, the Working Group shall submit for the Parties’ approval at the highest level a list and timetable of activities to restore or build new transport infrastructure necessary for initiating, implementing and providing for the safety of international traffic through the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, as well as ensuring the safety of transportations carried out by the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia through the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia.”

Opposition alliance vows more efforts to topple Pashinyan

(RFE/RL) - Opposition leaders promised on January 15 more efforts to force Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign as they began touring Armenia's regions in a bid to drum up greater support for their campaign.

The two leaders representing a coalition of more than a dozen opposition parties met hundreds of supporters in Gyumri at the start of the tour. They admitted that protests staged by their Homeland Salvation Front following the Russian-brokered ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh failed to attract large crowds.

"I thought that that there are one million people in Yerevan and they all will take to the streets because they were humiliated, but people were so depressed and aggrieved ... I know many people who cry at home but don't bother to come out. We have a lot to do about that," said Vazgen Manukyan, a veteran politician who has been nominated by the opposition alliance



to serve as a caretaker prime minister.

"Many people sitting at home are urging us to act more resolutely," complained Ishkhan Saghatelyan of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), a key member of the alliance.

"People must take to the streets, organize themselves and oust this government. There is no other option," he said, adding that the alliance will also keep pressing pro-government lawmakers to stop supporting Pashinyan.

"That Nikol will leave is a fact ... He won't avoid that. The question is when he will do that," claimed Saghatelyan.

The parties making up the alliance as well as other opposition groups hold Pashinyan responsible for Armenia's defeat in the recent war in Karabakh and want him to hand over power to an interim government that would hold snap parliamentary elections by the end of this year.

The prime minister has rejected the opposition demands backed by President Armen Sarkissian. He has dismissed the street protests against his rule as an "elite revolt" not backed by most Armenians.

A group of Pashinyan supporters blocked a highway outside Gyumri in a bid to bar Manukyan, Saghatelyan and other opposition figures from entering Armenia's second largest city. Police intervened to unblock the road.

Manukyan, who had served as the country's prime minister and defense minister in the early 1990s, labeled the protesters as "tramps" hired by Pashinyan's My Step bloc for cash.

Azerbaijan challenging the trust-building efforts of international mediators

The Armenian side has always supported the humanitarian contacts between the societies of the region, which should be based on mutual respect and tolerance, Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan has said.

The comments come after representative of the Foreign Ministry of Russia [stated](#) that the Russian side has always supported the implementation of the humanitarian contacts between the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies.

"We highly commend Russia's efforts aimed at establishing peace and stability in the region. The Armenian side has always supported the humanitarian contacts between the societies of the region, which should be based on mutual respect and



tolerance and be aimed at creating mutual trust. Certainly, relevant prerequisites should be established for such programs," Naghdalyan said.

She added that the statements of the leadership of Azerbaijan in recent days demonstrate that Azerbaijan is not yet ready for that.

Furthermore, she noted, creating ob-

stacles for the repatriation of the Armenian prisoners of war, issuing a stamp glorifying the ethnic cleansing of Armenians, as well as the consistent threats being voiced by President Aliyev attest to the fact that Azerbaijan is challenging the trust-building efforts of international mediators.

"The provocative statements made by the President of Azerbaijan in Shushi, as well as the attempts to present the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Church, which had been targeted during the war, as a "war prize and symbol of victory" are particularly deplorable," the Spokesperson said.

"These realities prove that the conflict is still far from being resolved, and the peace process is necessary to establish lasting peace in the region," she concluded.

Armenian opposition unimpressed with Moscow summit

(RFE/RL) - The two opposition parties represented in Armenia's parliament claimed on Tuesday that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan failed to achieve anything during his talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin on January 11.

They singled out Pashinyan's failure to secure the release of Armenian soldiers and civilians held by Azerbaijan two months after a ceasefire deal brokered by Putin stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan, Putin and Aliyev met in Moscow to discuss the deal's implementation. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, they said their governments will set up a joint "working group" that will deal with practical modalities of restoring transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The statement made no mention of the unconditional exchange of all prisoners also envisaged by the Russian-brokered deal. Pashinyan confirmed that he and Aliyev did not reach any agreements on the issue.

"The enemy's agenda is being fully realized while the Armenian side's is not," said Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK). "Why? Because the symbol of our defeat [Pashinyan] continues to hold talks."

"Pashinyan was taken to Moscow for



doing only one thing: to sign up to the unblocking of transport routes and arteries vital for Azerbaijan," agreed Naira Zohrabyan of the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK).

Both Marukyan and Zohrabyan stressed that in the run-up to the Moscow summit Pashinyan said that the release of the Armenian prisoners of war is essential for opening the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for commercial traffic.

A senior member of the ruling My Step bloc, Ruben Rubinyan, insisted that the joint statement issued by Aliyev, Putin and Pashinyan is "beneficial for us" even though it makes no references to the POWs. He argued that the planned opening of the border will allow Armenia to have rail links with Iran and Russia.

"The Russian president backed in principle the Armenian side's position [on the POWs,]" Rubinyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Pashinyan thanked Putin for that support when they met separately in the Kremlin following Monday's trilateral meeting. "This is the most sensitive and painful issue for us," he said.

Putin stated, for his part, that the summit was "useful" despite Aliyev's and Pashinyan's failure to agree on the release of the Armenian captives. "I hope that there will be an agreement on all problems, including the issues of humanitarian character," he told the Armenian premier.

According to Yerevan-based human rights lawyers, more than 100 Armenian POWs and civilians remain in Azerbaijani captivity. They include 62 soldiers who were taken prisoner in early December when Azerbaijani forces seized the last two Armenian-controlled villages in Karabakh's Hadrut district occupied by them during the six-week war.

In a letter to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres publicized last week, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov branded those soldiers as "saboteurs" and indicated the Azerbaijani authorities' intention to prosecute them on relevant charges.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned Baku's plans as a gross violation of international law and the Karabakh truce agreement. It accused the Azerbaijani side of "using Armenian prisoners of war as hostages to advance its political agenda."

Issues hindering the return of POWs discussed at the National Assembly

A closed working discussion organized by MPs Gor Gevorgyan and Sofia Hovsepyan on "Issues of return of prisoners of war in Armenia" took place in the National Assembly on January 15.

Human Rights Defender Arman Tahtoyan, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Service, human rights activists Artak Zey-



nalyan and Siranush Sahakyan, deputies of the National Assembly's Bright Armenia faction took part in the discussion.

Issues hindering the return of the captives were discussed at the meeting, a number of proposals were voiced, and further actions were clarified. The effectiveness of joint work was highlighted.

Moscow denies Pashinyan's claims on Karabakh peace plan

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has misrepresented proposals to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh jointly made by Russia, the United States and France, according to a senior Russian diplomat.

Igor Popov, the Russian co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, has specifically denied Pashinyan's claims that the three mediating powers pressured the Armenian side to give seven districts around Karabakh back to Azerbaijan and offered it nothing in return.

Pashinyan repeatedly criticized their peace proposals during and after the recent war with Azerbaijan. He dismissed critics' arguments that he could have prevented the disastrous war by accepting the proposals based on the so-called Madrid Principles of a Karabakh settlement, which were first put forward by the U.S., Russian and French mediators in 2007.

In a January 4 article, Pashinyan claimed that the most recent version of the peace plan drafted by Russia and backed by the two other co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group amounted to a proposed "surrender of lands" to Azerbaijan "in return for nothing." He said it left open the key question of Karabakh's status.

Popov bluntly denied that in written comments posted on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website on Wednesday. He argued that under the Minsk Group plan Karabakh's population would be able to



determine the disputed territory's internationally recognized status in a future legally binding referendum.

Popov also stressed that the plan tied Armenian withdrawal from two of the seven districts, Lachin and Kelbajar, to the determination of Karabakh's status.

"Therefore, the claims that Russia proposed [the Armenians] to return the seven districts 'for nothing,' forget about the status and calm down do not correspond to reality," he said.

"Neither the Armenian nor the Azerbaijani side rejected these proposals, even though a full agreement [between the two sides] was never reached. But the bottom line is that negotiations were held on a regular basis up until 2018 when Yerevan came up with new approaches," Popov added in another jibe at Armenia's current leadership.

Pashinyan and his office declined on Thursday to comment on Popov's extraordinary remarks.

Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan acknowledged in that regard that Moscow

has never neglected the issue of Artsakh's status. "I definitely agree with Mr. Popov in that Artsakh's status has been and remains the most important aspect of the conflict's resolution," he told reporters.

Asked about the clear contradiction between Pashinyan's and Popov's statements, Ayvazyan said: "I don't comment on the prime minister's statements and other comments which are often taken out of context."

Meanwhile, Armenian opposition figures -- and former President Serzh Sargsyan's political allies in particular -- seized upon Popov's statement to again denounce Pashinyan's policies on the Karabakh conflict.

Armen Ashotyan, the deputy chairman of Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK), said Popov branded the Armenian prime minister a liar. In Ashotyan's words, the Russian mediator also effectively accused Pashinyan of torpedoing the Karabakh peace process and paving the way for the autumn war won by Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani army recaptured four of the seven districts which had been occupied by Karabakh Armenian forces in the early 1990s. Baku agreed to stop its military operations on November 10 in return for an Armenian pledge to withdraw from the three other districts.

The Armenian opposition blames Pashinyan for the defeat and demands his resignation. The latter rejects these demands.

MEP submits urgent question to European Commission on Azerbaijani attacks on Armenian church in Shushi

Member of European Parliament Loucas Fourlas has submitted an urgent written question to the European Commission on the attacks carried out by Azerbaijani military forces against a church in the city of Shushi, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) informs.

In his urgent question, Fourlas criticized the action of the Azerbaijani army



supported by Turkish military forces, and asked for measures for the protection of civilians and religious sites.

Loucas Fourlas mentioned that according to the Human Rights Watch publication, the military forces of Azerbaijan carried out two attacks against Ghazanchetsots church on 8 October 2020. He asked whether the EC intends to act so as to protect the church and civilian population.

Armenian Minister reports 8.5% GDP drop in 2020

The World Bank forecasts a 3.1 percent GDP growth in Armenia in 2021 and expects it to raise to 4.5 percent in 2022.

“Growth in the South Caucasus is projected to rise to 2.5 percent in 2021, as the shocks related to the pandemic and conflict dissipate, and as tourism recovers alongside improving consumer and business confidence,” WB said in a new report on Global Economic Prospects.

The World Bank believes the peace statement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is expected to help alleviate geopolitical tensions in the region.

Economic activity in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) is estimated to have con-



tracted 2.9 percent in 2020 in the wake of disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is expected to erase at least five years of per capita income gains in about a fifth of the region's economies and raise the poverty headcount.

Economies with strong trade or financial linkages to the euro area and those

heavily dependent on services and tourism have been hardest hit.

Due to a resurgence of COVID-19, the pace of recovery in 2021 is projected to be slower than originally anticipated, at 3.3 percent.

Growth is then expected to rise to 3.9 percent in 2022, as the effects of the pandemic gradually wane and the recovery in trade and investment gathers momentum.

The outlook remains highly uncertain, however, and growth could be weaker than envisioned if the pandemic takes longer than expected to fade, external financing conditions tighten, or geopolitical tensions escalate again.

Armenian PM, Kazakh Ambassador discuss economic cooperation prospects

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received on January 14 Ambassador of Kazakhstan Timur Urazayev who is completing his diplomatic mission in Armenia, the Armenian Parliament told Noyan Tapan.

The PM thanked the Ambassador for the productive cooperation aimed at developing the Armenian-Kazakh relations. He highlighted constantly developing the bilateral ties and emphasized the fact of close partnership of the two countries also in the multilateral formats – in the EAEU, CSTO and CIS. According to Mr. Pashinyan, Armenia and Kazakhstan have a great cooperation potential in the field of economy.

Ambassador Urazayev thanked the



Prime Minister and the Armenian government for the close partnership, assuring that he will invest all efforts in the future for the development of the Armenian-Kazakh friendly relations. The Ambassador said over the past five years the bilateral ties

have constantly expanded in all spheres. As for the economic partnership, Mr. Urazayev said despite the COVID-19 pandemic the trade turnover volumes between Armenia and Kazakhstan have increased by 50% in 2020, which, according to him, is a good precondition for keeping and boosting the growth rates.

Issues relating to the economic cooperation prospects, Kazakhstan's chairmanship priorities in the EAEU, as well as other regional topics were discussed during the meeting.

Governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province says ready to establish border market with Armenia



Governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province Mohammad Reza Pour Mohammadi has stated that given the province's high priority in expansion of international trade, it is ready to establish a border market with Armenia, IRNA reports.

"If the will to es-

tablish this border market also exists in Armenia, we can establish it in very near future", he said in an extraordinary meeting of the provincial government officials and the private sector firms in the presence of Iran's ambassador to Armenia.

Commenting on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Mohammad Reza Pour Mohammadi said Iran remained neutral during the recent clashes between the two countries, seeking peace and tranquility.

Armenia, Belarus announce competition of joint science and technology projects

Belarus' State Committee on Science and Technology and the Science Committee at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia have announced a competition of joint S&T projects to be implemented in 2021-2022, *BelTA* quotes the press service of the State Committee on Science and Technology and the Science Committee as saying.

The competition is held in several priority areas: digital information, communication and interdisciplinary technologies; biological, medical, pharmaceutical and chemical technologies; energy, construction, ecology and environmental management; engineering, instrumentation and innovative materials; agro-industrial and food technologies; safety and security of an individual, society and the state.

Applications shall be accepted until 26 February. The documents must contain a



business plan, written obligations of the state customer to actually use R&D results and to participate in the financing.

The competition of joint S&T projects

is held in accordance with the agreement between the governments of Belarus and Armenia on cooperation in science and technology of 31 October 2000.

Negative COVID-19 test to be required for travel to US – Embassy

The US Embassy in Armenia informs that starting January 26, 2021, all air passengers will be required to have a negative COVID-19 test before their travel to the United States.

"The Centers for Disease Con-



trol and Prevention announced that air passengers are now required to get a viral test (for current infection) within three days of travel and provide written documentation to the airline", the Embassy said in a statement.

Misappropriation of Armenian cultural values do not contribute to regional peace – Armenian MFA Spox

The misappropriation and distortion of the cultural values of the Armenian people, the violation of the rights of the Armenian people do not contribute to regional peace, Spokesperson for Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan said in a statement.

The statement comes after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's remarks on January 13 during the meeting with Salim bin Mohammed Al-Malik, Director-General of ISESCO, which once again demonstrate that the Armenian cultural heritage in the territories under the Azerbaijani control is seriously endangered, and the state of Azerbaijan cannot be the guarantor of the proper protection of cultural and religious heritage.

"The distortion of the identity of the Armenian heritage is an attempt of cultural looting, which is also a gross violation of the relevant international legal instruments," Naghdalyan said.

She noted that thousands of Armenian religious and secular monuments were created centuries before Azerbaijan was established and have no relation to the Azerbaijani identity. The attempts to alienate these monuments from the Armenian people have no historical, religious or moral grounds.

"It is noteworthy that in order to justify



the destruction of the Armenian cross stones (khachkars) in Nakhijevan Azerbaijan also put forward the "thesis of Albanisation", and this demonstrates the perilousness of the practice of destroying and distorting the identity of the Armenian monuments," the Spokesperson said.

She emphasized that the fake thesis of presenting the Christian heritage of Armenians or other peoples of the region as Caucasian Albanian has no serious circulation outside of Azerbaijan and is not perceived by the international academic community.

"Notably, President Aliyev made this statement in the presence of the Director General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization thus trying to introduce a religious dimension to the issues of protection of cultural heritage. By undermining the efforts of the international community aimed at preserving Artsakh's cultural heritage, Azerbaijan continues to hinder the access of the international specialized organizations, primar-

ily UNESCO, to the region by accusing the latter of being biased. Meanwhile in fact, Azerbaijan is the one to speculate irresponsibly on the religious factor while Armenia has always pursued the policy of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation between civilizations, considering cultural heritage as a universal and common value," the Spokesperson said.

"The preservation of many Armenian historical-cultural and religious monuments that fell under Azerbaijani control must be an important part of the peace process, taking into account the numerous facts of systematic destruction of the Armenian cultural and religious heritage in the past. In this context, the Azerbaijani leadership and state propaganda machine must immediately put an end to the deplorable approach of misappropriation, distortion of the identity of Armenian churches, and at least demonstrate due respect towards cultural and religious monuments," she added.

"The misappropriation and distortion of the cultural values of the Armenian people, the violation of the rights of the Armenian people do not contribute to regional peace. In this regard the proper protection of religious sites, both from the physical and spiritual perspectives, can create preconditions for peace in the region," Naghdalyan concluded.

Armenia to submit complaint to ECHR against Azerbaijan

The Republic of Armenia is going to file a complaint against Azerbaijan to the European Court of Human Rights. The representative of the Republic of Armenia before the European Court of Human Rights Yeghishe Kirakosyan informed "Armenpress".

"We have been carrying out preparatory work for a long time – evidence collection, evaluation, complaint preparation



processes. We are going to file a complaint against Azerbaijan in the near future. It will include a rather wide range, from the logic

of protecting the rights of the victims, the wounded, the displaced, to the claims on lost or damaged property, which we think are quite numerous," Kirakosyan said.

According to him, the complaint will also discuss all violations of international law, including violations of international humanitarian law, which Azerbaijan committed during the war by methods and means prohibited during the war.

Mobilization of foreign terrorist fighters in conflicts a new alarming trend, Armenia's envoy to UN says



Armenia remains firmly committed to the global fight against terrorism and is actively engaged in international and regional activities aimed at the implementation of the counter-terrorism conventions and their additional protocols, as well as the relevant resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, Armenia's Permanent Representative to the UN Mher Margaryan said at the UN Security Council VTC Meeting on "20th Anniversary of Resolution 1373 (2001) and the Establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee: Trends, challenges and opportunities."

He stressed that mobilization of foreign terrorist fighters in conflicts represents a new alarming trend.

"Our region is not immune to the scourge of terrorism and its radical ide-

ology and violent practices. Amidst the outbreak of an unprecedented global pandemic, on 27 September 2020 Azerbaijan, with the direct support of Turkey, employed thousands of foreign terrorists' fighters in a large-scale military aggression against Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh)," Armenia's envoy to the UN said.

"The offensive led to massive loss of human life, displacement of tens of thousands of civilians, destruction and desecration of religious and cultural heritage and other gross violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. The ISIL-style torture, inhuman treatment and executions of prisoners of war and civilian hostages by the Azerbaijani forces was widely disseminated and glorified in the media outlets and social networks," he added.

Mr. Margaryan noted that "the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters by Turkey from the Middle East and their transfer to Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone is a well-established and documented fact, acknowledged by law enforcement agencies of several countries

and extensively reported by independent observers.

"The UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries of the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner in its Statement of 11 November 2020 has referred to "widespread reports that the Government of Azerbaijan, with Turkey's assistance, relied on Syrian fighters to shore-up and sustain its military operations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, including on the frontline. The fighters appeared to be motivated primarily by private gain, given the dire economic situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In case of death, their relatives were reportedly promised financial compensation and Turkish nationality," the Ambassador stated.

"It is even more disturbing that the Syrian fighters deployed to Azerbaijan are allegedly affiliated with armed groups and individuals that, in some cases, have been accused of war crimes and serious human rights abuses during the conflict in Syria, thus seemingly perpetuating a cycle of impunity and risking further abuses of international law," Mher Margaryan stated.

Any threat of violence against Armenian nationals condemnable – Ombudsman

Any measure of the announced unblocking of economic and transport ties concerning our country must be implemented with the high guarantee of the rights of the citizens of Armenia and, first of all, the inhabitants of the border settlements enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan says.

According to the Ombudsman, the actions or decisions of the highest state governing bodies of the Republic of Armenia should be based on the extent to which the rule of law is ensured in the country by that action or decision. This, in turn, means strong guarantees for the life, property and all other rights of every person living in Armenia, and full protection against all risks in real life.

"It is a matter of fundamental importance that any implementation of the provisions of Article 9 of the Tripartite Statement of November 9, 2020 and the subsequent Tripartite Statement of January 11, 2021 must take into account that the highest authorities of the Azerbaijani have pursued a policy of ethnic cleansing against the Armenians of Artsakh," the Ombudsman said, adding that the hatred towards Armenians is growing day by day along accompanied by notorious propaganda of hostility and threats of a genocide.

"Any attempt at making demands to the citizens of Armenia with threats of abductions, violence and intimidation, is absolutely condemnable. It directly violates international human rights law, and grossly

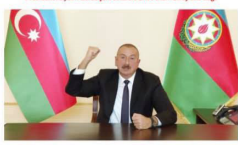
violates both the internationally recognized rights as well as those guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia," Arman Tatoyan said.

"Despite it all, if any act based on a provision of an international act, in the short or long term, leads to an act or a decision that violate the rights of the people of Armenia, it cannot have any legal force, as it will be violative of the rule of law and, consequently, the RA Constitution," he added.

"These are the obligations of our state before every person living in Armenia, obligations that our state has undertaken to protect human rights, which stem directly from the international treaties it has signed and ratified," the Human Rights Defender concluded.

New report reveals organized hate speech and animosity towards Armenians in Azerbaijan

Screenshot. In his nationwide address, Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan stated: "We are driving them (Armenians) away like dogs! Azerbaijani soldiers drive them away like dogs!"^[1]



The Human Rights Defenders of Armenia and the Republic of Artsakh have published a joint ad hoc public report on Organized Hate Speech and Animosity towards Ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan.

"President of Azerbaijan and other authorities speak of the entire Armenian people and population of Armenia with open threats of ethnic cleansing and genocide," Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan says.

"They openly insult the dignity of the Armenian people, incite hostility, they do it to humiliate the personal dignity of every Armenian in the world, every person living in Armenia," the Ombudsman says.

The monitoring of the staff of the

Human Rights Defender of Armenia confirms that this is a policy of deep state hatred and enmity towards Armenians. It is institutional in nature and is based on ethnicity and, in some cases, religious affiliation.

The Ombudsman draws attention to the fact that the Presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan often compare the war of September-November 2020 with the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and the massacres of Armenians in Baku. In particular, he reminds of the praise for the organizers and perpetrators of those atrocities, including members of the Caucasus Islamic Army, in the speeches of December

10 (during the military parade in Baku).

Another issue the Human Rights Defender points to is that during this war, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces use the same words and expressions as the President of Azerbaijan when torturing Armenian soldiers and civilians, beheading them alive, mutilating the bodies of the victims and committing other atrocities.

Moreover, he says, the expressions of the President of Azerbaijan and other public figures became slogans inspiring atrocities against Armenians in this war (for example, "Azerbaijani soldiers chase them like dogs", "Armenia is a worthless country ... it is an artificial state created on the ancient lands of Azerbaijan," "Azerbaijan is coming to end Armenian weddings," etc.).

"In other words, the real causes of these war crimes are obvious. Moreover, the Azerbaijani military are proud of the atrocities, well aware that they will only be encouraged and praised for it in their own country," Arman Tatoyan says.

Screenshot. Social media post on Twitter: "Let history play out properly this time".



Aznavour Foundation distributes aid to war-affected families

Since September 2020, the Aznavour Foundation and its partners helped thousands of families affected by the war in Artsakh. To this day, five planes have been sent to Yerevan carrying humanitarian aid collected in France and Switzerland.

The Aznavour Foundation distributes humanitarian aid (clothing, hygiene items, medical supplies) through partner organizations that work directly with the affected families in different communities of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Beneficiaries and families are asked to contact the following partner organizations in their region for available support packages:

- "Protestant Solidarity France Armenia" association / SPFA Arménie (Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, 5



Mashtots str.; Martuni N1 kindergarten, 3 G. Nzhdeh str.);

- "Teryan" center (Yerevan, 72 Teryan str., tel. 099424523);
- "Bari npatak" charity organization (Yerevan, Erebuni community, tel. 010 459330 or 099 459330);
- "My Step" Foundation (Aragatsotn region: cultural houses of Oshakan, Voskevaz, Voskehat, Sasunik, Agarak,

Karin; Armavir region: Mrgashat cultural house, Lori region: Stepavan culture house);

- Headquarters of "Gyumri without makeshift shelters" charity organization (Shirak region, Gyumri, N30 basic school, 7 Saltykov-Shchedrin str.);
- Dilijan community center (Tavush region, Dilijan, 61 Myasnitsyan str.).

The Aznavour Foundation informs that in addition to the above-mentioned communities, humanitarian aid collected by the Foundation has been distributed in other regions and communities (Syunik, Vayots Dzor, Kotayk, Aragatsotn, Tavush), where the batch to be distributed is currently finished.

In the near future, the Foundation will receive a new batch of aid to be distributed to the organizations, and the information will be updated accordingly.

Turkey and Azerbaijan spending millions to hide the truth about invasion of Artsakh – Serj Tankian

Turkey and Azerbaijan spend millions around the world to deny the truth about the Armenian Genocide, System Of A Down frontman Serj Tankian said in a Twitter post.

And now, he says, they're trying to hide the truth about the Turkish-Azeri invasion of Nagorno-Karabagh and the territory's real history.

"We won't stand for it," he tweeted.

The comments come after a public outcry led by the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) forced the ABC

(Australian Broadcasting Corporation) to republish an article it originally removed from its website, which featured an interview with Serj Tankian on the national broadcaster's Triple J Radio Station.

However, the new version of the article has been heavily edited to appease Azerbaijani and Turkish complaints.

Inside System Of A Down's reunion and the ~~Armenian Genocide~~ ^{conflict} that spurred it

Lochlan Watt

Friday 18 December 2020 1:28pm

ABC
AUSTRALIA

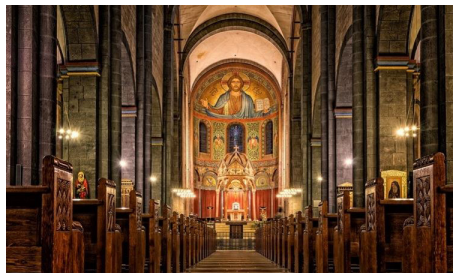


Armenian church in Bursa, Turkey, put up for sale

An Armenian Catholic Church in Bursa has been put up for sale for 6.3 million Turkish liras (about \$800,000) on sahibinden.com.

The advertisement is titled "Historical church that can become a culture and art center/museum/hotel in Bursa," reports Gazete Duvar.

The website notes that the church, which was built for the Armenian population in the region, passed into private



ownership, and had been used as tobacco warehouse since 1923 and then as a weaving factory.

It adds that the church, located in a region included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, can be used for touristic purposes.

Member of the Turkish Parliament from HDP Party, ethnic Armenian Garo Pylan, has slammed the decision.

"Armenian Church for sale in Bursa. Can the place of worship be sold? How can society and state allow this? Shame on you!" Paylan said in a Facebook post.

Exhibition displaying Artsakh's manuscript heritage to open in Yerevan's Matenadaran

Exhibition presenting the manuscript heritage of Artsakh will open in the Matenadaran - the Mesrop Mash-tots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, next week.

Director of the Matenadaran-Gandzasar scientific-cultural center Aram Torosyan told Armenpress that the manuscripts which were written and kept in Artsakh, the books published in Shushi, archival documents, catholicos writings, etc, will be displayed during the exhibition. There will be a total of 80 exhibits. Torosyan stated that over 100 manuscripts have been displayed in the Artsakh branch of Matenadaran since 2015.

"During the recent war when the whole world witnessed how Azerbaijan was tar-



getting the cultural centers of Artsakh, such as the Ghazanchetsots Church in Shushi, the Matenadaran-Gandzasar cultural center has organized the evacuation of the exhibits from Artsakh.

We transferred them to the Matenadaran in Yerevan. But I want to note that

their transfer is temporary as we will definitely return them to Artsakh, and the exhibition will again take place in Gandzasar. Meanwhile, the directorate decided to display the treasures of Artsakh in the Matenadaran.

The exhibition will open soon and will last until we decide to return it back to Artsakh, probably in the middle of the year. Although it's not clear yet as there are some technical, security issues which should be clarified before the return.

The Matenadaran-Gandzasar center must continue its activity. The building has not been damaged, the staffers are working, the state oversight service is conducting control", Aram Torosyan said.

Biden names Armenian American Ike Hajinazarian as Regional Communications Director at White House

Joe Biden has named Armenian American Ike Hajinazarian as Regional Communications Director at the White House.

Ike Hajinazarian most recently served as the Western Pennsylvania Regional Press Secretary for the Biden campaign after working on the campaign in communications roles during the primary and general elections in New Hampshire, Nevada, Texas, Ohio, and other states.



Prior to joining the campaign, he worked on Capitol Hill, first as Press As-

sistant to Senator Joe Donnelly of Indiana, and later as the Deputy Press Secretary on the House Homeland Security Committee's Majority Staff.

Born in Columbus, Ohio to Lebanese-Armenian immigrant parents, Hajinazarian is a graduate of Indiana University and the George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management.

Trump impeached for second time

The US House of Representatives has impeached President Donald Trump for "incitement of insurrection" at last week's Capitol riot, the BBC reports.

Ten Republicans sided with Democrats to impeach the president by 232-197.

But his trial in the Senate will not happen until after Joe Biden, a Democrat, is inaugurated as the new US president next week.

Mr. Trump, a Republican, is the first president in US history to be impeached twice.



The Democratic-controlled House voted on Wednesday after two hours of impassioned debate as armed National Guard troops kept watch inside and outside the

Capitol.

The FBI has warned of possible armed protests planned for Washington DC and all 50 US state capitals ahead of Mr. Biden's inauguration on 20 January.

In a video released after the vote in Congress, Mr. Trump called on his followers to remain peaceful, without mentioning his impeachment. "Violence and vandalism have no place in our country... No true supporter of mine would ever endorse political violence," he said, striking a sombre and conciliatory tone.

Azerbaijani social networks full of hatred towards Armenian children – Ombudsman

Azerbaijani social networks are full of hatred and calls for murder, torture, bloodshed and other ill-treatment of Armenian children, Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan alarms.

For example, he says, pictures of Armenian kids are being used to organize surveys on whether they would kill an Armenian child.

All the evidence is detailed in the Human Rights Defender's special [report](#), which covers only the period of this war, refers to the organized hatred and enmity towards Armenians in Azerbaijan as a deep cause of ethnic torture and inhuman treatment.

Screenshot. Social media post on Facebook: "If you saw an Armenian child during the war, would you kill him?"

In the "comments" section, other social media users wrote: "YES, I WILL KILL."



Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh receiving Sputnik-V vaccine

Military medics of the Russian Peacekeeping Contingent have begun vaccinating peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian Defense Ministry informs.

About two thousand doses of the Sputnik-V vaccine were delivered to a special purpose medical unit in special thermal containers,

Vaccination is carried out in two stages. From 14 to 31 January, the whole person-



nel will receive the first shot of the vaccine. The second shot will be given from 1 to 21

February.

Representatives of the command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, as well as military personnel of medical units were the first to receive the vaccine.

A peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation was deployed in Nagorno Karabakh to control the ceasefire after the leaders of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan signed a statement to end the hostilities.

UNESCO experts not allowed to visit churches in Azerbaijani-controlled parts of Artsakh – Catholicos



Churches and historical monuments on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh controlled by Azerbaijan are under threat, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, told Izvestia.

According to him, Baku refuses to let UNESCO representatives to personally as-

sess the situation around the heritage. At the same time, the Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church notes that Russian peacekeepers are making every effort to ensure the preservation of historical and cultural monuments.

Karekin II expressed gratitude to Vladimir Putin for his personal contribution to ending the war in the region.

He said a special department has been created in the Armenian Apostolic Church to control the preservation of monuments of international importance, Karekin II said.

According to him, the clergy appealed to religious leaders, international cultural organizations and structures, as well as to UNESCO. However, he added, the proposal to admit UNESCO observers to the territories controlled by Baku did not find support from Azerbaijan.

The Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church expressed hope that through the efforts of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, including Russia, it would be possible to take immediate steps to preserve the monuments.

Foreigners are now allowed to enter Armenia both via air and land borders – MFA



Restrictions on the entry of non-Armenian citizens to the Republic of Armenia through the land border have been canceled, the Armenian Foreign Ministry says.

All foreigners are now allowed to enter both via air and land borders, despite the government decision to extend the quarantine for another six months.

Upon entering the territory of the Re-

public of Armenia via air and land borders travelers will be asked to provide a COVID-19 PCR test certificate with negative results taken within the previous 72 hours. The certificate should be in Armenian, Russian or English, include the name, surname, date of birth, and passport number of the examined person, printed on the official letterhead of the medical institution conducting the test, identifying all contacts of the organization, test result, signed and sealed by the head of the medical institution.

In order to detect symptoms of infection all passengers are subject to a relevant examination conducted by the Health and Labor Inspectorate immediately upon

arrival (including remote temperature checking, external examination, additional inquiries in case of clinical symptoms typical to the infection).

Non-holders of the relevant certificate are subjected to PCR sampling at the airport or border checkpoint sampling points and to compulsory isolation until the negative PCR test result will be obtained.

If corresponding symptoms are detected as a result of examination the person will be hospitalized.

The PCR test-related and possible treatment expenses should be covered by the arriving person.

Iranian athlete hands over his gold medal to family of Armenian soldier killed in Artsakh



Iranian champion in Kyokushin karate Ahmad Bagheripoor, the gold medal winner of the 12th open championship in Armenia in 2017, has decided to hand

over his gold medal to the family of Arthur Sukiasyan, an Armenian athlete who died during the 2020 Artsakh war, the Armenian Embassy in Iran reports.

Arthur Sukiasyan and Ahmad Bagheripoor were friends and participated in many tournaments together.

On January 13, the Iranian athlete handed his gold medal to Gor Shahverdyan, third secretary of the Embassy of Armenia in Iran to be presented to Sukiasyan family in Armenia.



Armenia's Oscar Entry 'Songs of Solomon' acquired by Cloudburst for 2021 release



Cloudburst Entertainment has acquired rights to Songs of Solomon, Armenia's official entry for this year's International Feature Film Oscar race. The drama, directed by Arman Nshanian, who also produced the pic with Oscar-winning Green Book producer and co-writer Nick Vallelonga and Asko Akopyan, will get a 2021 release date, DEADLINE reports.

Nshanian's feature directorial debut, written by Audrey Gevorgian based on a true story, centers on a brave Turkish

woman who, at a time of dire prejudice during the Hamidian massacres, risks her own life and the life of her family to save her best friend who is hunted down for her religious beliefs. The pic spans 1881-1915 in Constantinople and culminates in the last concert given by Archbishop Solomon, the composer also known as Komitas. Samvel Tadevossian, Arevik Gevorgyan, Tatev Hovakimyan, Sos Janibekyan, Nshanian, Artashes Aleksanyan and Jean-Pier Nshanian star.

"Songs of Solomon explores a difficult time in Armenian history but ultimately is a beautiful reminder that the power of friendship translates beyond cultural boundaries," Cloudburst CEO Steve Fedyski said. "We are thrilled to bring this impactful story to screens everywhere."

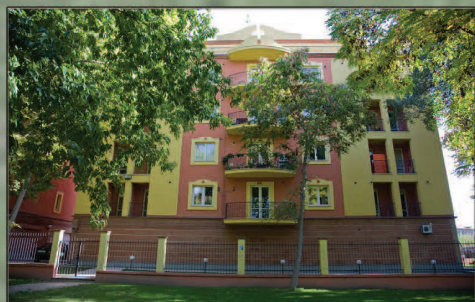
Added Vallelonga: "Asko Akopyan and I are honored to partner with Cloudburst on the distribution of Arman's stunning and important film. Like Green Book, the film explores the power of music in a culture, as well as promoting the hope that we must all work together to overcome, respect and accept our differences with love and peace."

Karo Kavoukjian, Steve Fedyski, Ken Rather, Jeff Wallner and David Polemeni are executive producers.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announces its shortlist in the International Feature category on February 9.

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