

## Thousands Mark 2008 violence anniversary in Yerevan



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*Armenia - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan leads a demonstration on the 11th anniversary of deadly post-election violence in Yerevan, March 1, 2019.*

Thousands of people led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan marched through central Yerevan on March 1 to mark the 11th anniversary of the breakup of post-election protests in Armenia's capital which left ten people dead.

The crowd silently walked from the city's Liberty Square to the site of violent clashes between security forces and opposition protests which broke out on March 1, 2008. Pashinyan laid flowers there, as did many other demonstrators.

"Today, on March 1, 2019, I want to make it clear that the return to the past is impossible in our country," Pashinyan declared in an address to the nation aired earlier in the day. "Armenia will not return to corruption, political persecutions, political violence and abuse."

Pashinyan urged Armenians to join him in paying respects to the victims of the worst street violence in Armenia's history and "all political killings" committed since the country's independence.

In his statement, Pashinyan condemned the former regime for using "illegal force" against the protesters but did not mention Kocharyan or any other suspects by name. He read out the names of the ten victims of the bloodshed instead. "The shots fired on the victims of March 1 were targeted at each of us," he said.

Ter-Petrosian's Armenian National Congress (HAK), from which Pashinyan split in 2013, welcomed the premier's decision to organize Friday's march. The party's deputy chairman, Levon Zurabyan, and other senior

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## Armenian-Iranian high-level talks held in Tehran: Nikol Pashinyan, Hassan Rouhani discuss wide range of issues



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met on February 27 at the Royal Saadabad Palace in Tehran. The narrow-format meeting was followed by extended talks.

Hassan Rouhani thanked the Prime Minister for accepting his invitation to visit Iran. "I welcome you to Iran. I wish to felicitate you for those changes that occurred in Armenia through the democratic way. Our deeply-rooted relations have always been friendly, and we want them to be strengthened and developed ahead. Iran wants to have continued good relations with its neighbors, in particular with Armenia. I am convinced that your visit to Iran will contribute to the further strengthening of bilateral political, economic and humanitarian relations."

Prime Minister Pashinyan thanked President Rouhani for the invitation and a warm welcome: "Iran is close to our country not only in geographical terms, but also in terms of friendly ties, and we have had many occasions to emphasize their importance. Fundamental transformations are taking place in Armenia, which are of internal character and no external power has been involved therein. This is a fundamental point in understanding the essence of the process. I am convinced that new opportunities have emerged in our relations, and we have the necessary political will to implement them," Nikol Pashinyan noted.

Nikol Pashinyan noted that this is his third visit to Iran: he first visited the country as a journalist, then as an MP, and now as the Prime Minister of Armenia. The Head of

Government made a point of the warm attitude enjoyed by the Armenian community in Iran. "It reinforces our friendly attitude towards Iran. We discussed important issues during our private talks, and I hope that during this visit we will be able to find solutions to some of those issues," the Premier said.

Hassan Rouhani expressed conviction that the two sides' political will is sufficient for the Armenian-Iranian relations to be strengthened ahead. The interlocutors expressed confidence that Armenia and Iran will not only maintain the current pace of high-level relations, which are based on mutual trust, but will be able to expand them ahead.

In this regard, the Armenian Prime Minister and the Iranian President singled out the construction of the third 400-kV Iran-Armenia power transmission line, which will help the sides increase the amount of electricity and gas exchanged between the two countries by promoting the development of economic relations and regional cooperation in this area. The parties attached importance to the implementation of the Meghri HPP program and agreed to take practical steps in the near future.

The interlocutors agreed that the bilateral trade turnover still falls short of the current high level of political relations. They deemed it necessary to do their utmost in order to boost trade turnover and mutual investments. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan referred to his government's steps aimed at improving the investment environment.

From the perspective of regional cooperation, the ratification by the respective parliaments of the EAEU-Iran free trade agreement was highlighted on either side. Nikol Pashinyan and Hassan Rouhani expressed conviction that the Agreement will create new opportunities for the furtherance of trade and economic relations between the two countries. They pointed to the expediency of organizing an exhibition-sale of Armenian and Iranian products in Yerevan and Tehran, and holding a business forum after the agreement become effective. The development of international transport corridors and the Iranian side's eventual participation in the construction of specific sections of the North-South Road Corridor were considered to be key areas of cooperation between Armenia and Iran.

The leaders of the energy and transport sectors of the two countries gave details on the ongoing discussions on the development of cooperation. Nikol Pashinyan and Hassan Rouhani attached importance to the activities of the Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission and agreed to hold the Commission's next session this summer.

The interlocutors next touched upon the cooperation in the field of agriculture and the possibility of increasing the export of meat products from Armenia. The parties exchanged views on the possibility of expanding cooperation in information technologies, healthcare, including pharmaceuticals, tourism, nature protection and humanitarian spheres.

Stressing that the Armenian-Iranian cooperation promotes regional peace and stability, Nikol Pashinyan said Armenia is highly appreciative of Iran's balanced position on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Nikol Pashinyan and Hassan Rouhani agreed that a comprehensive and lasting conflict settlement is only possible through peaceful means as brokered by the only internationally recognized entity - the OSCE Minsk Group. The parties availed themselves of the opportunity to exchange views on other regional issues as well.

At the end of the meeting, the leaders of the two countries instructed the relevant government officials to continue holding active discussions in the run-up to the forthcoming intergovernmental commission meeting in a bid to translate them into

## Armenian, Azerbaijani leaders accept Minsk Group Co-Chairs' proposal to meet 'soon'



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have accepted the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs' proposal to meet soon under their auspices around the NK issue, Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) said in a statement.

"The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Feder-

ation, Stéphane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) met with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan on 20 February and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on 21 February to discuss preparations for a meeting of the leaders in the near future, including possible topics for discussion.

The Co-Chairs also held discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in their respective capitals. The Co-Chairs were joined by the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Andrzej Kasprzyk.

During the meetings in the region, the leaders briefed the Co-Chairs on their recent conversation on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January. The leaders and the Co-Chairs dis-

cussed the situation on the ground and their expectations for next steps. The Co-Chairs assessed positively the continuing lack of casualties on the line of contact.

They also welcomed the developing discussions in the region about preparing populations for peace. The leaders accepted the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' proposal to meet soon under their auspices. Following their visit to the region, the Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office travelled to Vienna and Bratislava from 28 February to 1 March to brief the Permanent Representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group countries, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák", the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs said in a statement.

## Armenian speaker slams Russian lawmakers

Visiting Moscow on March 27, parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan criticized pro-government Russian parliamentarians for taking part in what he described as an anti-Armenian demonstration held in Baku.

The Azerbaijani government organized the demonstration on Tuesday as part of an annual commemoration of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians killed in February 1992 following the capture of the Nagorno-Karabakh village of Khojaly by Karabakh Armenian forces. It accuses the Armenian side of massacring them, a charge strongly denied by the authorities in Stepanakert and Yerevan.

The demonstration was attended by three members of the Russian State Duma. It was also covered in detail by a state-run Russian TV channel.

The Armenian ambassador to Russia, Vardan Toghanyan, condemned the lawmakers in a statement issued on Wednesday. Mirzoyan also brought up the issue when he gave a speech in Russia's upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, later in the day.

"I have to note with regret that despite the high level of relations and allied partnership between our countries as well as Russia's consistent efforts at a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh, just yesterday some of our Russian colleagues participated in a markedly anti-Armenian action held in Baku and aimed at undermining regional stability," said Mirzoyan.

He said he is particularly "bewildered" by the fact that one of the State Duma members, Irina Rodnina, is a member of a Russian-Ar-



menian commission on inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Mirzoyan at the same time praised Russia's role in long-running international efforts to end the Karabakh conflict. He also emphasized Armenia's continuing commitment to a "special" and "strategic" relationship with Russia.

Mirzoyan further mentioned the recent dispatch of 83 Armenian medics, sappers and other military personnel to Syria, which was welcomed by the Russian Defense Ministry.

Mirzoyan arrived in Moscow earlier this week at the head of a large delegation comprising deputies from the three political forces represented in Armenia's parliament. He met with Federation Council speaker Valentina Matvienko on Tuesday. Matvienko stressed that he will be the first Armenian speaker to address the council.



## Armenian government body hit by corruption scandal



(Yerevan- RFE/RL)- Two senior officials from an Armenian government agency tasked with combatting financial irregularities in the public sector have been arrested on corruption charges denied by them.

The National Security Service (NSS) claimed on February 28 that they colluded with a private firm to “illegally interfere” in and personally benefit from government-funded supplies of medical equipment to three hospitals. It said a senior executive of “the company linked to them” was also remanded in pre-trial custody on Wednesday.

The indicted officials are Samvel Adyan, the acting head of a State Oversight Service (SOS) division monitoring procurements, and his top aide, Gevorg Khachatryan. They were reportedly detained on Tuesday before being formally charged with forgery of documents and abuse of power resulting in “severe consequences.”

In a statement, the NSS said that Adyan and Khachatryan arbitrarily forced the medical institutions to rig rules for the choice of companies supplying expensive equipment for hemodialysis, a treatment of kidney failure. It said they wanted to make sure that “the business entity sponsored by them” wins tenders for such supplies.

Speaking to RFE/RL’s Armenian service on Tuesday, Health Minister Arsen Torosyan said he asked the NSS to investigate “external interference” in dialysis-related procurements because the new tender rules threatened to disrupt the vital medical services

provided around a thousand patients across the country.

Arman Hovakimyan, the chief executive of Yerevan’s Surb Grigor Lusavorich hospital, also deplored the new bidding specifications. He argued that suppliers are no longer required to maintain the dialysis equipment after delivering it.

“This has meant that we are now deprived of such maintenance,” Hovakimyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian service.

The dialysis equipment tenders were until recently won by a handful of private firms. Earlier this week, one of their owners accused the SOS chief, Davit Sanasaryan, of driving his Frezen company out of business.

Sanasaryan dismissed the allegations, saying that his agency has simply broken up Frezen’s “monopoly” on supplies to Surb Grigor Lusavorich. He said that the company had for years enjoyed privileged treatment by relevant authorities.

Lawyers for the indicted SOS officials made the same claims when they said their clients strongly deny the accusations. Davit Mnatsakanyan, who represents Adyan, said the latter only sought to ensure “equal conditions for all companies” interested in winning the supply contracts.

Sanasaryan defended Adyan and the other arrested official on Thursday, saying that they are among the SOS’s “best and exemplary employees.” “Their guilt has to be proved,” he told reporters.

Sanasaryan seemed unhappy with the NSS’s handling of the high-profile investigation. He said he has urged the security agency to “maintain the secrecy” of the probe and not leak its details to “manipulators.”

“We will continue to examine the hemodialysis market regardless of whether or not some people want it and whose interests are trampled underfoot here,” he added.

The official would not say whether he will resign if his subordinates are convicted. He only noted that the charges leveled against them “do not mean a serious corruption scandal.”

Sanasaryan, 34, is a former opposition and civic activist who actively participated in last spring’s “velvet revolution” led by Nikol Pashinyan, Armenia’s current prime minister. Pashinyan named him to run the SOS shortly after coming to power in May.

Both Sanasaryan and Health Minister Torosyan are senior members of Pashinyan’s My Step alliance.

## Newly appointed Ambassador of USA presents copies of credentials to FM Mnatsakanyan



Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan received on March 1 newly appointed Ambassador of the USA to Armenia Lynne Tracy who delivered the copies of her credentials.

As ARMENPRESS was informed from the press service of the MFA Armenia, Minister Mnatsakanyan congratulated Lynne Tracy on assuming the responsible mission and hoped that the newly appointed Ambassador will have an important contribution to the further development of multi-layered relations between Armenia and the USA.

The sides referred to a broad scope of issues related to the Armenian-U.S. partnership.

The Armenian FM presented to Ambas-

sador Tracy the recent domestic political developments in Armenia and the Government-led reform process based on the broad mandate of the people, highlighting the continuous cooperation with international partners.

Minister Mnatsakanyan and Ambassador Lynne Tracy exchanged views on international and regional urgent issues.

The Armenian FM presented to the U.S. Ambassador the approaches and position of Armenia on the peaceful settlement of Nagorno Karabakh conflict.



## EU envoy sees ‘serious progress’ in Armenian anti-graft fight

Armenia’s current government has made “serious progress” in combatting corruption in the country but should not “rest on its laurels,” a senior European Union diplomat said on February 26.

Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, admitted that the reform-minded government is serious about its repeated pledges to eliminate corrupt practices.

“But political will, being the sine qua non element, is not enough,” Switalski cautioned at a news conference. “You also need other elements such as institutions, laws and a social culture or environment.”

“Regarding the institutions, we can see that the government wants to create a new, independent anti-corruption agency that will have wide-ranging powers,” he said. He also praised the government’s plans to enact anti-graft laws.

Switalski added that the EU stands ready to “help” the authorities in what he hopes will be a sustained and “long” campaign against corruption. “Don’t rest on your lau-



rels because the way [forward] is long,” he said, appealing to them.

The number of high-profile corruption investigations launched by Armenian law-enforcement authorities has risen significantly since last spring’s “velvet revolution.” They have targeted former senior officials as well as former President Serzh Sarkisian’s relatives.

Speaking in the parliament on February 12, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan declared that his administration has already “broken the spine of systemic corruption in Armenia.” Pashinyan said it will now focus on putting in place “institutional” safeguards against the problem. In particu-

lar, he said, it will make information about the personal assets of individuals holding or aspiring to state posts easily accessible to the public.

Switalski made clear that the EU is also encouraged by other reforms initiated by Pashinyan’s government and will reward them with greater financial assistance already this year. He cited statements to that effect made by Johannes Hahn, the EU commissioner for European neighborhood and enlargement negotiations.

Hahn hailed democratic change in Armenia when he visited Yerevan and met with Pashinyan late last month. He singled out the conduct of the December 9 parliamentary elections, saying that they are regarded as free and fair by the international community.

Hahn did not specify the likely amount of the extra EU aid. He said only that it will be allocated from an EU fund designed to reward partner states’ “special achievements” in the areas of democratization and rule of law.

## Pashinyan doesn’t see optimism base for normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations

The position of the Turkish authorities doesn’t enable to seriously talk about the Armenian-Turkish relations, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan said during the meeting with the Armenian community representatives in Iran.

“Turkey continues linking our bilateral relations with the Karabakh issue, in other words with the Armenia-Karabakh-Azerbaijan relations. Therefore, as long as the situation is such, unfortunately, we cannot have a base for optimism. Although we have stated and continue stating that we are ready to discuss these relations without preconditions, but this means that Turkey should not have preconditions, but today



it pushes forward a precondition which is linked with the Karabakh issue”, the Armenian PM said.

In this context Pashinyan stated that the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is very important for the Armenian authorities. “But now a question can

arise: you say that you are ready for these relations without preconditions, blame Turkey on having preconditions, refer to the Genocide, whether this is not a precondition? We say very clearly that the international recognition of the Genocide is not an issue of relations between Armenia and Turkey, it is a matter of fight against genocides and global security agenda, and pursuing the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide we consider as our contribution to the global security and the global fight against genocides. We will continue pursuing the recognition of the Armenian Genocide”, he said.

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specific agreements. selves of the opportunity to exchange views on other regional issues as well.

At the end of the meeting, the leaders of the two countries instructed the relevant government officials to continue holding active discussions in the run-up to the forthcoming intergovernmental commission meeting in a bid to translate them into specific agreements.

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members participated in it. But Ter-Petrosian himself did not show up.

Unlike the HAK, the two opposition parties represented in the current Armenian parliament, Prosperous Armenia (BHK) and Bright Armenia (LHK), declined to join the Pashinyan-led demonstration.

Some of their senior representatives accused the premier of using the unrest anniversary for political purposes.

The BHK and LHK leaders laid flowers at an unofficial memorial to the March 2008 victims earlier on Friday.

## Armenia set for new IMF loan

The International Monetary Fund has all but decided to allocate a fresh \$250 million loan to Armenia, praising the Armenian government's macroeconomic policies and "ambitious" reform agenda.

An IMF mission reported a "staff-level agreement" on the loan on February 26 at the end of a two-week visit to Yerevan which involved talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other senior Armenian officials.

"The agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board, which is expected to consider it in May 2019," the head of the mission, Hossein Samiei, said in a statement.

Samiei said that the "precautionary stand-by arrangement" would be disbursed in several installments over the next three years. It is designed to "support the new government's reform plans and strengthen resilience against external shocks," he said.

"The new government's ambitious structural reform agenda appropriately focuses on fighting corruption, improving the business environment, and developing human capital and infrastructure," added the IMF official. "In this regard, key



measures include establishing an anti-corruption agency, strengthening corporate transparency and governance, and implementing active labor market policies."

Pashinyan reaffirmed his stated commitment to these reforms when he met with Samiei earlier on Tuesday. He also stressed the importance of IMF support for their implementation.

The IMF's most recent lending program for Armenia, worth roughly \$115 million, was launched in 2014 and completed in 2017. Samiei indicated the fund's readiness to provide a fresh loan to the country during a March 2018 visit to Yerevan. He said he held "productive discussions" with then Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan and members of his

cabinet.

That visit came just weeks before the start of Pashinyan-led mass protests that led to the resignation of Armenia's former government. The new government, which took office in May, pledged to carry on with its predecessor's IMF-backed efforts to improve tax collection and cut the state budget deficit.

In his latest statement, Samiei gave a largely positive assessment of the macroeconomic situation in Armenia. He cited "robust" economic growth recorded last year, the government's rising tax revenues, a falling fiscal deficit, and low inflation.

"Looking ahead, growth is expected to moderate to about 4.5 percent in 2019, reflecting a weaker global environment and copper prices, and remain in the

4-5 percent range over the medium term," he said.

Samiei at the same time called for a further improvement in tax administration, saying that is critical for offsetting short-term "revenue losses" which he said will inevitably result from major tax cuts planned by Pashinyan's government.

Income tax rates in Armenia currently range from 23 percent to 36 percent. The highest rate is set for individuals earning 2 million drams (\$4,100) or more.

A government bill which the Armenian parliament is expected to debate soon would introduce a flat rate for all individual taxpayers. It would be initially set at 23 percent and gradually cut to 20 percent. Government officials say that this will discourage tax evasion and stimulate faster growth in the country.

Samiei cautioned that the tax cuts could have positive effects on the economy only in the medium term. "Therefore, it is crucial to implement the envisaged package of tax policy measures to fully offset these [tax revenue] losses, while being mindful of the reform's possible impact on equity," said the IMF official.

## Armenia-Iran gas pipeline sufficient for enhancing import volumes, says economy minister

Armenia's Minister of Economic Development and Investments Tigran Khachatryan says becoming a transit country for Iranian gas will only have positive impact on Armenia.

He says the potential of a gas pipeline is sufficient for enhancing the volumes of imported gas from Iran.

"The possibility of being a transit country for Iranian gas and importing more gas can only have positive impact on efficiently utilizing the existing infrastructure in Armenia. As far as I know the existing capacities allow to double the volumes," he told reporters on February 28 after the Cabinet

meeting.

Earlier on February 27, Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan told Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during an official visit in Tehran that Armenia is ready to become a transit country for Iranian gas.





## Armenia, Russia Sign More Arms Deals



Armenia and Russia have reportedly signed fresh contracts for the supply of Russian weapons to the Armenian army.

Citing the Russian Defense Ministry, the Interfax news agency reported on Thursday that the contracts were signed in Moscow by Armenia's Deputy Defense Minister Davit Pakhchanyan and top Russian defense industry executives. It gave no details.

The Armenian Defense Ministry confirmed the information, according to the Armenpress news agency. It too did not divulge financial details of the contracts or

specify the types of weapons covered by them.

The ministry linked the deal to Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan's recent trip to Moscow. Tonoyan met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoygu and the head of a Russian government agency overseeing arms deals with foreign states.

Tonoyan's office said on February 8 that he and Shoygu discussed, among other things, supplies of Russian-made "state-of-the-art and precision-guided weapons" which would give the Armenian military "preventive superiority" over its adversar-

ies. It did not elaborate.

Earlier in February, Yerevan confirmed the signing of a Russian-Armenian contract calling for the delivery of four Sukhoi Su-30SM fighter jets to the Armenian Air Force. Tonoyan said last week that Yerevan will seek to acquire more such aircraft after receiving their first batch by "the beginning of next year."

The military alliance with Russia entitles Armenia to buying Russian weapons at discounted prices. Moscow lent the Armenian government \$200 million for such arms acquisitions in 2015. The weapons provided to the Armenian military under that deal included, among other things, multiple-launch rocket systems, anti-tank rockets, and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

Yerevan secured another Russian loan, worth \$100 million, for further arms purchases in 2017. It is not clear whether the latest Russian-Armenian defense contracts will be financed from that loan.

According to Interfax, the two sides are now discussing the possibility of a third Russian credit.

## Armenia, Egypt sign bilateral agreement to strengthen economic ties

Armenia and Egypt are strengthening the economic ties.

On February 28 the Armenian-Egyptian Business Association and the International Business Relations Support Council signed an agreement according to which the sides are going to implement joint programs.

The signing ceremony was also attended by Egyptian Ambassador to Armenia Bahaa El Din Bahgat Dessouki.

"This agreement should serve for improving the Armenian-Egyptian economic relations. We are also happy to see the Ambassador here", Chairman of the Armenian-Egyptian Business Association Eduard Manukyan said.

The IBRS Council chair Mariam Manukyan expressed confidence that as a result of the agreement great opportunities will be created this year. "I think that by the end of



the year when we sum up our joint works, we will have a lot to say. And the report will be a great chance to be proud of based on the results of our activities", she said.

The Egyptian Ambassador to Armenia highly appreciated the fact that such an agreement has been signed. "We have perfect relations with Armenia in political, cultural and other areas. However, unfortunately, there isn't a similar high-level coop-

eration in economic and trade sectors. That is the reason we are trying to work on this direction to contribute to the development of both commercial and economic ties", he said.

The Ambassador noted that this agreement is a beginning for broad cooperation. The two countries have great opportunities for trade and even investments. He said sometimes certain people in Egypt, who want to invest in Armenia or launch a business, think that the Armenian market is small. But the Ambassador emphasized that many markets are open for Armenia.

The sides of the agreement should implement joint programs for the benefit of the business field in Armenia, as well as hold business forums and international exhibitions within the frames of which important meetings will take place.

## What kind of threats did Mr. Hoagland warn Mr. Pashinyan about?

By Hovsep Khurshudyan

The interview of Richard Hoagland, an accomplished diplomat and former United States co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, to the "Voice of America" US State Radio Station was recorded and disseminated by the Armenian Mass Media outlets failing to reveal the central ideas and messages.

To read between the lines with intention to decipher the diplomats' ideas is more challenging than processing regular political texts uttered in plain, non-diplomatic language. Those ideas are generally veiled with non-essential and generic phrases. That is why during the process of deciphering diplomats' texts it is very important to put aside the emotions and take heed of new uncommon thesis, which contains the central message. The highlight of Hoagland's interview was not handing over the liberated territories of Artsakh to Azerbaijan. This thesis was described in negotiated documents. Even former Armenian authorities overtly talked about it. Richard Hoagland expressed novel ideas that were unheard of and alarming but on the other hand some ideas infused hope.

### Message number 1.

"There may not overlook very important circumstance. After so many years this is the first time that the Armenian leader has no Kharabakhi roots. Given this fact, he must be very cautious and if he plans to implement significant changes, they should be executed step by step as on the opposite side there are people who are against him and will fight him if he undertakes quick and radical measures. I think vigilant, step-by-step manner of advancement is a smart politics. In case of applying step-by-step politics, you can send different signs."

What means Mr. Hoagland by this? What kind of threats did Mr. Hoagland warn Mr. Pashinyan about? When "many years ago" last time the leaders of Armenia have had no Kharabakhi roots? Yes, at 1999, when Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan had become leaders of Armenia. And what happened after? "On the opposite side there are people who are against him and will fight him if he undertakes quick and radical measures" said Mr. Hoagland. His hints are so explicit going beyond the scope of diplomatic language. No coincidence, that re-



tired diplomat was selected to spread this message. Who are on the opposite side of Nikol Pashinyan - Robert Kocharyan, Serge Sargsyan with their clans and loyal oligarchs. Who were on the opposite side of Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan? The same forces.

There were times when Vano Siradegyan was warning Vazgen Sargsyan about the threats of physical reprisal. Vazgen Sargsyan's wings were clipped when Vahram Khorkhoruni and Artsrun Margaryan were assassinated. But even in that case, Vazgen's physical extermination was not so easy as his legitimacy was shared by another powerful politician Karen Demirchyan as well as such experienced and renowned politicians as Yuri Bachshyan, Leonard Petrosyan and Armenak Armenakyan.

That is why the perpetrators of the October 27 parliaments shooting had to lay down an extremely complex terrorist operation. Who shares the legitimacy with Nikol Pashinyan now?

Vazgen Sargsyan made some erroneous decisions but, nevertheless he was a brave and strong politician. Because of this he surrounded himself with strong and experienced politicians. Without a doubt, Nikol Pashinyan is fearless himself, but where is the courageous/experienced team around him. The team, which should have been as powerful, that the elimination on Nikol Pashinyan from political arena would be not only meaningless for his and people's enemies but also dangerous. Where are those 2-3 politicians, because of whom Prime Minister would be as a 'less dangerous' in the eyes of his enemies, than the politi-



cal who will occupy his seat if he disappears from political arena.

### Message 2.

Indicating the above-mentioned danger on Levon Ter-Petrosyan's example (putting Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan in the same context would be too much), Hoagland advises Nikol not rush when making decision about Artsakh. But you, honorable journalists, in order to create a sensation, put 'the issue of hand over the territories' in the very titles of your articles. The more, after mentioning this thesis Mr. Hoagland rushes to clarify that "this is only my opinion." This view does not coincide with the position of official Washington. This man is conveying an open message to Washington saying that the United States is not interested in the quick settlement of the Karabakh issue at this stage. The reason for this he clarifies in other paragraph saying that the only settlement plan for the time being on the table is "Lavrov's plan", which does not satisfy both sides, because, ATTENTION, "At the moment neither party has accepted this settlement because the deadline for the referendum is not set." Have we heard the truth? In other words, Baku also strives to know the exact date of the referendum. Hoagland reaffirms: "Right now, Yerevan and Baku want to set definite date of referendum." This is a serious and radical change that publicizes the former American co-chair.

Why else Washington does not want the settlement of the Karabakh issue in accordance with Moscow's scenario? "There are



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people with whom I have spoken and who are well-informed on this issue and who are pessimistic and doubt that the Kremlin will actually grant permission for the settlement of this problem. You should look at other conflicts in the region, Transnistria, Abkhazia,

South Ossetia, and now in Ukraine. Some believe that the Kremlin does not want these conflicts to be resolved, because if they are settled, he will lose his influence. For Kremlin the influence is the most cherished value.” Well, Washington does not trust the Kremlin, it’s no secret. But if Washington is against a quick solution to the Lavrov scenario, what should be understood under the “step by step”? “... The sides can remove the military from the contact line, replacing them with border guards. It will also be a positive development. Look, this is also the means of building the same step-by-step confidence

building mechanism”.

Message N3. Washington does not consider the deployment of peacekeepers for the near future.

“... If we look at the other frozen conflicts in the region, in particular South Ossetia, where the EU has provided observer groups and Russia has granted permission to them to act does not mean it’s bringing the conflict settlement closer. ... The issue of peacekeepers is a matter of distant future, it is not relevant today. I do not think this question worries anyone.” By saying anyone he clearly implies to the US. We know well that it is Russia, who concerned about this issue. Russia wants to introduce its or “CSTO” peacekeeping troops in Artsakh. It is not a secret for anyone. And this is probably one of the risks of Lavrov’s plan, which, even if not enshrined in the document, probably, assumes the possibility of

the Kremlin-led troops deployment in Artsakh which is alarming for Washington.

Once Lavrov’s plan was prevented by Sasna Tsrer. As a result, in order to strengthen its position in Armenia, Russia sent a potential heir to Armenia in the form of Karen Karapetyan. The operation “Karen Karapetyan” also failed because of the Velvet people’s revolution. Now, it is Nikol Pashinyan’s turn to slow down and resist the plan of the “normalization” process, which in reality should be called “lavrov’s trap,” with re-centered on confidence-building measures agreed in Vienna in 2016, as a “small steps”. It seems, that, Washington offers its support in the realization of those steps.

And most importantly, the Prime Minister should take political steps to ensure his own security.

## ‘I continue to stand with Armenian people in condemning this horrific massacre’: U.S. Congressman on Sumgait pogroms

U.S. Rep. Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. issued a statement on the massacres of Sumgait, condemning the horrific attacks against the Armenian people committed by Azerbaijan 31 years ago, reports Armenpress.

“I rise today to commemorate the Sumgait pogroms, one of the most horrific attacks against the Armenian people committed by the hands of Azerbaijanis 31 years ago today. On February 27, 1988, hundreds of Armenian civilians living in the city of Sumgait in Azerbaijan were indiscriminately killed, raped, maimed, and even burned alive for no reason other than their ethnicity. This senseless violence was instigated by hostile, anti-Armenian rhetoric from Azerbaijani citizens and officials against innocent Armenians”, the Congressman said in the statement.

He noted that for over three decades, Azerbaijan has taken steps to cover up



these crimes against humanity and dismiss the atrocities at Sumgait. He added that even more disturbing is that the perpetrators of this event and similar violent attacks have since been lauded as national heroes by the Azerbaijani government.

“It is critical for the United States government to recognize and denounce violent assaults against civilians. That is why I continue to stand with the Armenian people in condemning this horrific massacre. Tragically, the Azerbaijani government’s approach toward the Armenian people has

not changed much since the Sumgait pogroms were initiated. We still hear the same violent rhetoric and witness the intimidation tactics aimed at the people of the Republic of Artsakh. If we do not condemn crimes against humanity and allow them to go unpunished and unrecognized, we only strengthen the resolve of those seeking to perpetrate these crimes in the future. It is especially critical to consider this as we prepare to commemorate the 104th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in April.

I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Congressional Armenian Issues Caucus to remember the victims of the pogroms at Sumgait and condemn all acts of violence against people who are targeted simply because of their existence. I hope my colleagues will join me in rejecting violent rhetoric and intimidation and renewing our commitment to achieving a collective peace”, Frank Pallone Jr. concluded.

# In the Name of Nation: Armenia's Leading Telecom Operator News...

## 9 years on the trail of worldwide Armenians



Numerous implemented projects are results of twelve years of collaboration between VivaCell-MTS and the Panarmenian Geographic Association. One of those projects is a book series, which has been published for nine years in a row, and which has become a unique encyclopedia for Armenian and foreign readers worldwide. The book series was presented at "The Pioneers

of Armenian Typography" Hall of the Museum of Typography by the National Library of Armenia.

The Panarmenian Geographic Association has been in charge of creating these culturally significant books with the support of Viva-Cell MTS since 2011. The first four books embrace 800 Armenian monuments of the world, which include a vast, albeit not complete, list of monuments established by Armenians or dedicated to the Armenians of the world.

"The purpose we have had in mind for years has been to know our culture and to celebrate those Armenians who spared no effort to make it known to the world. I must accept that the success of our initiative is a result of both our cooperation and devotion, but equally the glorious lives of each and every one of the renowned Armenians presented in these nine volumes. I want to believe library patrons will enjoy the books, too," VivaCell-MTS Founding General Manager Ralph C. Yirikian said.

The lives of the Armenian musicians of the world are presented in the two following volumes. The information gathered owing to the cooperation of the partnering sides lets readers familiarize with the lives and works of renowned Armenian musi-

cians of the world. The people presented in the books have not only garnered recognition for their talents but have also contributed to building a positive national image for Armenia.

The fruitful cooperation has brought about two more volumes, which are devoted to the Armenian painters of the world. The partners have remained committed to presenting the cultural contribution of the talented Armenians who, by a twist of fate, found home in different parts of the world. The eighth edition celebrates the 200th anniversary of the renowned Armenian marine painter Hovhannes Ayvazovsky.

Armenian cinematographers are introduced in the ninth edition published in 2018; this volume is dedicated to the 110th anniversary of William Saroyan. The book tells about the great Armenian masters of film industry, both living and deceased.

The president of the Panarmenian Geographic Association spoke about the idea of the project, its necessity and importance, the process of its implementation, as well as the cooperation between the two organizations.

VivaCell-MTS and the Panarmenian Geographic Association will continue collaboration in 2019 as well.

## Solar water heater in the kindergarten of border village of Voskevan



Development of border villages remains an important goal for VivaCell-MTS and Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC). Viewing alternative energy as an environmental and economic means to achieve the goal the partners have started yet another joint program in Tavush. In the kindergarten of Voskevan intensive works are being implemented with the purpose of replenishing the existing heating system with solar water heater.

Opened some five years ago, the kindergarten has a protected location and is safe against the potential bullets of the adversary. It has the capacity to accommodate 50-60 kids. Unfortunately, though, it is not operating to the full extent. Ensuring the necessary temperature

for the kids and to heat the two-storied building is quite expensive, particularly, in the winter months, the management of the kindergarten says.

"There are currently 30 children regularly attending the kindergarten. We could have two groups, but have only one. We hadn't worked in the previous years because of problems with the heating. We work this year because we have got gas supply in the building and boilers for each floor. But we use only the one for the first floor. The second floor has a hall, a piano, kids have facilities to train on the second floor, but we cannot organize that because of the low temperatures. If we cannot provide the heating of the building we have to terminate all works," said acting principal of the kindergarten **Nona Muradyan**.

Using Armenia's favorable weather conditions in the border villages has become an important aim for VivaCell-MTS and FPWC. The implemented works will soon be completed. The partners expect to achieve not only ecological, but also economic effectiveness.

"Voskevan is a border village: shoot-



ings are frequent here, and the situation gets escalated every now and then. Despite this situation, people pay significant attention to the young generation. A lot of kids in Voskevan could attend kindergarten but are deprived of that chance because of the conditions. Besides, the community has other serious problems that demand urgent solutions. After solving this problem the saved means will be used for the solution of others," said head of Voskevan administration **Vladimir Ghazinyan**.

New system will help to reduce the community's expenses for the kindergarten heating for almost 40%, which is very important for border villages with other problems.



## European Parliament to host conference on Armenophobia: Artsakh Ombudsman among speakers

Conference entitled “Armenophobia: Historical and Present-Day Resurgence” will be held in the European Parliament on March 6.

The conference has been organized by the initiative of the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) and the Tufenkian Foundation.

The event is hosted by MEP, head of the EU-Armenia friendship group Eleni Theoharous.

Harut Shirinian, Public Relations and Communications Officer at EAFJD, told Armenpress that the main speakers of the conference are Turkish intellectual, human rights activist Ragip Zarakolu, Ombudsman of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan, former Ombudsman of Artsakh Ruben Melikyan, blogger Alexander Lapshin and Polish expert on Armenian studies Jakub Osiecki.

“During the conference various manifestations of Armenophobia and inter-related issues will be discussed. In other words, reports, discussions will provide a comprehensive overview on Armenophobia. We know that there are Armenophobia manifestations in Azerbaijan and Turkey. This means that this policy has not been left in the historical past, we face the same problem also nowadays. And this conference is a good chance to raise the issues relating to Armenophobia in this European structure and discuss the ways of fighting them”, he said.



The conference will also be attended by MEPs, public figures and Armenian community representatives. Harut Shirinian is confident that a broad circle of the international community should be informed about the anti-Armenian policy of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

“Let’s not forget that the manifestations of Armenophobia we are witnessing, take place by the guidance of the Azerbaijani and Turkish authorities. Hatred against Armenians is being spread in schools and kindergartens of Azerbaijan for years: recently Turkish flags on some Armenian schools of Los Angeles, anti-Armenian notes containing hate speech on the walls of the Armenian church in Istanbul have appeared and etc. This list is endless. Our goal is to raise this issue in international structures so that they are informed what the talk is about, understand what this can lead to in case of continuation, and finally their judgments are based on right information”, Harut Shirinian said.

Artsakh Ombudsman Artak Beglaryan told Armenpress that during the conference he and Ruben Melikyan will present information which is fully based on facts. The conference participants will have an opportunity to get acquainted with the content of the report on Armenophobia released by the Artsakh Ombudsman in September 2018. In addition, the anti-Armenian manifestations demonstrated during the April war will be presented.

“All facts are collected and included in the reports. The conference participants will be introduced on the policy run by Azerbaijan, for instance the anti-Armenian propaganda in its schools and kindergartens. The following thesis is pushed forward – all Armenians are enemies, killing an Armenian is a heroic deed”, Artak Beglaryan said.

According to him, the 2016 April events, the atrocities of the Azerbaijani servicemen, beheading cases, tortures of civilians and targeting the Armenian schools are a vivid example of Armenophobia.

“In addition to the facts, we are also going to present the grounds of the Armenophobic policy, its consequences and potential threats. Such discussions are very important, the European partners must see with facts what policy Azerbaijan carries out. During the internal talks they also attach importance to the preparation and release of such reports”, Artak Beglaryan stated.

## Azerbaijan should face Armenian massacres in Sumgait for being sincere – Representative of Armenia gives speech at UN Human Rights Council



The representative of Armenia to the UN gave a speech at the UN Human Rights Council’s 40th session on February 28 in Geneva, responding to the announcements of the foreign ministers of Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The statement of the MFA runs as follows, “The representative of Armenia mentioned in his speech that the motivation of the for-

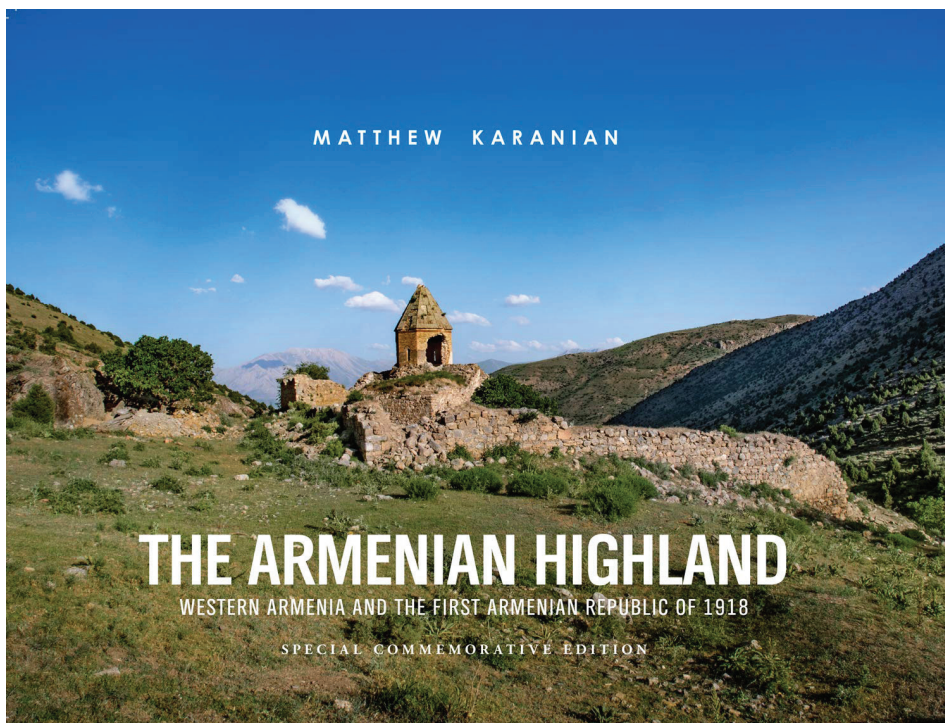
eign minister of Turkey to make such an announcement was the complex of dissatisfaction, combined with the desire to present his country as a regional power. It was mentioned that Turkey is far away from democratic principles and is the last country to have the right to speak about human right violations, since thousands of journalists, human rights defenders and activists, academic representatives and critics of the current leadership of Turkey are either in jail or have been expelled from the country.

Referring to the announcement of the foreign minister of Azerbaijan, it was emphasized that if Azerbaijan is sincere in its goals to establish truth and justice in the region, they should refer to the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait instead of presenting their false history, the so-called “Kho-

jaly events”, which heralded the launch of Armenian massacres and ethnic cleanings in Baku, Ganja (Kirovabad), as well as in Nagorno Karabakh. The extreme exaggeration of false victims is not the best method for preparing peoples to peace.

At the end of the speech it was emphasized, that instead of its traditional anti-Armenian propaganda, Azerbaijan should spare no efforts to protect universal human rights, including the right of the peoples to self-determination, against which it has struggled since the creation of its statehood. In conclusion, the representative of Armenia noted that both Turkey and Azerbaijan, before speaking about human rights, should first make at least minimal efforts to improve their concerning reputation in that sphere”.

## ‘Armenian Highland’ to reveal the hidden lands of Western Armenia



‘The Armenian Highland,’ a hardcover photo-history book celebrating the Armenian nation, will be published on April 15.

Author and photographer Matthew Karanian call the book unique.

“This is an unusual book,” says Karanian. “I have curated a photo-based historical guide to the ancient homeland of the Armenian nation, but I have focused on the part of Armenia that is today located entirely outside the borders of the modern Republic of Armenia.”

These lands are more commonly known today as Western Armenia or as Historic Armenia. But Karanian’s book refers to these lands as the Armenian Highland.

Armenian Highland is a much older name. The Armenian Highland is the geographic term that has been used for millennia to identify the highland plateau of Asia Minor. This vast Highland, also known as the Armenian Plateau, is the ancient homeland of the Armenians.

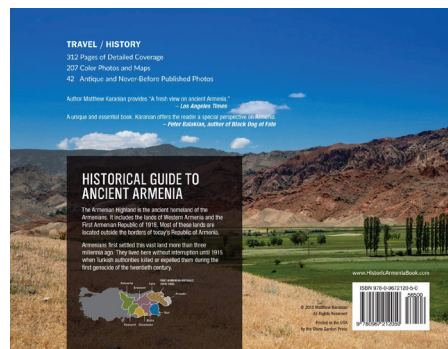
Karanian says ‘Armenian Highland’ also has a forward-looking connotation that is absent from the term Historic Armenia.

“This is our homeland,” says Karanian about the Armenian Highland region. “It’s been our homeland for thousands of years. And it will be our homeland tomorrow, as

well.”

The geographic name Armenian Highland fell into disuse during the decades that followed the Armenian Genocide after Turkey renamed the region and issued revised maps cleansed of the Armenian name.

‘The Armenian Highland’ book tells the



history of the Armenians through a combination of photography, maps, and the author’s scholarly research and fieldwork.

Modern color photos depict the ancient Armenian homeland-- all the Armenian provinces of the former Ottoman Empire as well as Ani and Kars-- as it exists today. Historic images show the same scenes as they appeared one century ago, often juxtaposed with stunning effect.

The field research and photography are original and are the product of the author’s travels throughout the lands of the Arme-

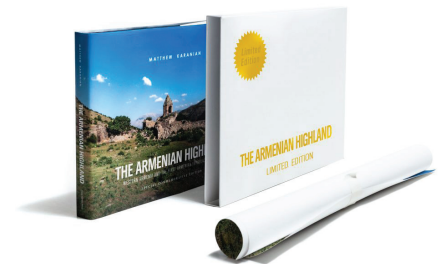
nian Highland from 1997 through 2018.

‘The Armenian Highland’ book also includes detailed maps that show the Armenian nation as it existed until 1915. Many of the maps are adapted from the works of the cartographer and scholar of Armenian history Prof. Robert Hewsen. The book also includes antique maps by Mardiros Kheranian, a famous cartographer whose maps are on display at Echmiadzin and at Yerevan’s National Museum.

The text, the vivid photography, and the detailed maps, all combine to create a single volume resource that introduces the reader to an Armenia that has rarely been seen since 1915.

“No other book has ever depicted the Armenian homeland in this manner,” says Karanian.

“The effect is a book that can reach our



young people who may have forgotten about our roots, as well as an older readership that may have come to think of Historic Armenia as simply a topic for arcane scholarly research,” says Karanian.

Karanian is a lawyer in California. He is a passionate supporter of Armenia who has lived and worked in Yerevan for many years. He has served as an associate dean and professor of law at the American University of Armenia in Yerevan.

The Armenian Highland book will be available from Amazon and at most bookstores on April 15. The book is also available directly from the publisher Stone Garden Press at [www.HistoricArmeniaBook.com](http://www.HistoricArmeniaBook.com)

‘The Armenian Highland’ is printed in the USA on high quality archival paper and published by Stone Garden Press of Pasadena, California.



**City Spa**, one of the founders of Aesthetic medicine in Armenia, that was established 14 years ago, is still following the main principles that were implemented since the launch: to use only clinically and scientifically approved, highly effective and safe with FDA approval products and equipments imported mainly from UK and Europe.

**Depilation:** Last year City Spa launched a very safe, painless and fast acting new machine for permanent hair removal. It is the "Primelase" produced by Cocoon Medical. The machine has an innovative



international leading brands such as ZO Skin health (Beverly Hills US), GLO therapeutics (ColoradoUS). Skin Ceuticals (US) etc.

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method (dynamic mode) which allows to treat very large areas of the body within few minutes.

**Localized fat removal:** In Armenia the first cryolipolysis method was implemented by City Spa in 2016. Cooltech is an innovative machine that acts as a none surgical liposaction, with a new method of cryolipolysis for permanent localized fat removal and body reconturing. It is safe, painless and very effective. City Spa is equipped also with the Wellshape machine for anti-cellulite treatment.



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## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

This is a good time to make adjustments in your life routines so that they will reflect what you really want to accomplish. You can easily stay on target with your goals now. Use your imagination to “see” your accomplishment and then begin with the first step which will lead you to the next.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

Experiences may seem surreal on some level during this week. You may be doing something you never thought you would do. Hold onto the awareness that you might be misinterpreting what happens. It is also possible that you are unconsciously applying a mask to suit the circumstances. If you feel disconnected, you must go back to your heart center.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

You are likely second guessing yourself on a decision you thought was final. Oops! No, it isn't. Do some research on anything concerning your property. There may be a better solution if you dig into the options. Don't hurry yourself into what could be an expensive venture.



Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)

You have a sense of physical strength at this time that will be especially beneficial if you are exercising or in any type of competition. For the next three weeks your activities are on display. Others are noticing your performance, so make it great. You may be standing in the lime-light.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

Because Mercury will be retrograding in your 7th house, changes will be coming to you through others. A partner may change his/her mind about a previously made decision. Those of you engaged in any kind of contract or promise may feel the need to back off and rethink the situation. Those who are recently separated may want to try the relationship again.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

Mercury is changing directions March 5th. This suggests that you will change your mind about something you have been planning. New information will come to light that causes you to abandon the first plan. Use caution as you proceed over the next four weeks. Take your time before you promise.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You are probably thinking twice about an action that sounded good in the beginning. Mercury, will turn retrograde in the house of career and life direction. This is really more of a tweaked change than a larger life change. Now is the time to research the best possible choices, but don't make promises until you are certain.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Venus, your ruling planet, moves into the sector of life related to children, recreation, and romance. The goddess of love is happy in this territory and often brings new energy and light wherever she goes. Opportunities to share your love, personal or humanistic, will be rewarding.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

Venus enters your sign this week and will be traveling “with you” through most of Jan. Her presence gives you an air of poise and people will simply like how you look. Often when Venus is prominent we become more interested in art forms and want to make things in the environment more attractive. We are also more interested in beautifying ourselves.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

You may have a minor struggle with yourself about whether to take care of others or yourself. Helping others may look good, but it isn't what you want to do right now. Because Mercury is turning retrograde this week, you may be splitting your time and attention between both needs.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

Now is the time to talk with your partner. Your communications are open and honest, but not brutal, just the right combination to work things out. If either of you has carried a grudge, put it out there on the table and be willing to play fair while you find a solution.



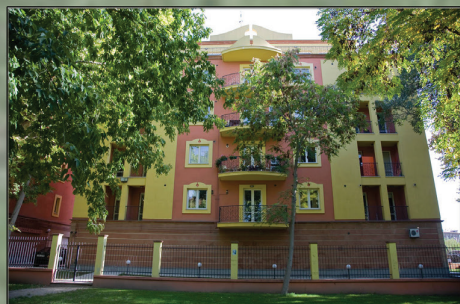
Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Mercury entered your sign on Feb. 10, 2019. Its retrograde cycle will roll backward through your sign again. Then it goes forward and through Pisces one more time. You will feel better if you avoid pressing yourself into any final decisions at this point. It will depart Pisces on April 17, 2019. Focus on what you really want to do next.



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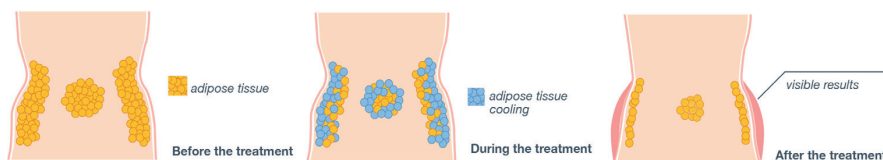
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