

Armenian, Azeri Leaders Meet in Abu Dhabi



UAE - Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev meet in Abu Dhabi, July 10, 2025.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan met in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on July 10, 2025, and discussed different aspects of Armenia-Azerbaijan inter-state normalization agenda.

It was confirmed that bilateral negotiations represent the most efficient format to address all issues concerning the

normalization process, and on this basis, it was agreed to continue such result-oriented dialogue.

The leaders, taking stock of the progress made with respect to border delimitation process, instructed the respective state commissions to continue practical work in this regard.

The sides also agreed to

continue bilateral negotiations and confidence building measures between the two countries.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan expressed their gratitude to H.E. President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates for warm hospitality and organization of their bilateral meeting.

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Pashinyan congratulates Macron on France's National Day



Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has sent a congratulatory message to President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic on the occasion of France's National Day, highlighting the enduring friendship between the two nations and reaffirming Armenia's commitment to shared democratic values.

In his message, Pashinyan extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to President Macron and the French people, emphasizing the significance of July 14

as a celebration of the universal principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

"This day provides an excellent opportunity to once again highlight France's unique role in enshrining and promoting the universal values of liberty, equality, and fraternity," Pashinyan noted, underscoring the shared commitment of both countries to these ideals.

The Armenian Prime Minister praised the historic and strategic partnership between Armenia and France, built on a

foundation of common values and a centuries-old friendship. He expressed gratitude for President Macron's personal efforts in strengthening bilateral ties, which have evolved into a privileged and strategic relationship.

Pashinyan also highlighted the broadening scope of cooperation between the two countries, particularly in key areas such as combating climate change, protecting biodiversity, and advancing artificial intelligence. He reaffirmed Armenia's willingness to contribute to global efforts in addressing these urgent challenges.

The Prime Minister further thanked France for its continued support and President Macron's personal engagement in promoting peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

"I extend my sincere wishes for peace and prosperity to you and the people of France," Pashinyan said, expressing hope for President Macron's upcoming state visit to Armenia later this year.

France celebrates its National Day each year on July 14, marking the anniversary of the 1789 Storming of the Bastille—a symbol of the French Revolution and a turning point in the history of democracy.

Armenian PM, UAE President discuss bilateral cooperation

Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, who is in the United Arab Emirates on a working visit, met with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.

During the meeting, issues on the agenda of bilateral cooperation were discussed. The sides emphasized the high level of mutual trust and the broad opportunities for the development of cooperation between the two countries in the economic, investment and humanitarian spheres.

Prime Minister Pashinyan emphasized the importance of the continuous development and deepening of friendly relations between Armenia and the UAE, noting that bilateral cooperation has great potential in both the economic, investment and humanitarian spheres.

The UAE President warmly welcomed Prime Minister Pashinyan, emphasizing that the UAE greatly values partnership relations with Armenia and are ready to take joint steps towards the implementation of mutually beneficial initiatives.

The parties reaffirmed their mutual willingness to continue constructive dialogue and cooperation for the benefit of the two peoples.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the UAE exchanged views on the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process and the "Crossroads of Peace" project of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan welcomed the fact of reaching an



agreement on the draft peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan and expressed hope for its signing as soon as possible. Prime Minister Pashinyan noted that Armenia appreciates the role of the UAE in promoting regional stability and contributing to international security.

Other issues of regional importance and mutual interest were also discussed.

No third-party control: Deputy FM reaffirms Armenia's principled stance on unblocking regional communications



Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Mnatsakan Safaryan reaffirmed the country's principled stance on the unblocking of regional transport and economic connections, in response to a journalist's question earlier today, Spokesperson for the Armenian Foreign Ministry Ani Badalyan says.

"Safaryan reiterated that Armenia's position is grounded in key principles

such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national jurisdiction. He emphasized that any proposals or solutions discussed in this context must fully align with these core values, leaving no room for misinterpretation," Badalyan said.

She emphasized that the Deputy Minister firmly rejected any notion or terminology suggesting "control" over communications by a third party, underscoring that such an idea is unacceptable and contrary to Armenia's position.

"Despite these clear statements, some media outlets and social media users have distorted the topic, circulating misleading headlines and contributing to an unfounded public narrative – particularly in light of [recent talks held in Abu Dhabi](#)," the

Spokesperson said.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again stresses that Armenia's vision for unblocking regional communications is rooted in the above-mentioned fundamental principles. Media partners are urged to refrain from publishing misleading or deliberately distorted content that misrepresents the official position," Ani Badalyan stated.

She provided a direct quote from the Deputy Foreign Minister's interview with Radio Liberty: "This process must be implemented under the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and jurisdiction of the Republic of Armenia. If it is consistent with these principles – yes, it can be carried out."

Russia ready to contribute to Armenian-Azerbaijani normalization, says official

Russia is ready to contribute to the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin said in an interview with Izvestia newspaper.

His comments came after the July 10 meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev held in Abu Dhabi, where both sides highlighted the effectiveness of bilateral talks.

"Russia is ready to contribute to the normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan," said the Russian diplomat, adding that the main directions for achieving peace between the two countries are outlined in the trilateral agreements signed by



Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan between 2020 and 2022.

According to Galuzin, it is necessary to move forward on preparing a peace treaty, unblocking economic links and transport communications in the region, delimiting borders, and establishing dialogue

between civil societies and the parliaments of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"And, of course, the Russian side, as one of the participants in the trilateral agreements, is ready to continue supporting their implementation — naturally, in a manner acceptable to both sides," the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister added.

After the July 10 Armenian-Azerbaijani summit, the Foreign Ministry said both sides confirmed that "bilateral negotiations represent the most efficient format to address all issues concerning the normalization process, and on this basis, it was agreed to continue such result-oriented dialogue."

EU encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to sign peace deal as soon as possible

The EU encourages Armenia and Azerbaijan to proceed with the signing and ratification of the peace agreement as soon as possible, the lead spokesperson of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Anitta Hipper said following the meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Abu Dhabi.

"The EU welcomes the meeting between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Abu Dhabi on 10 July," Hipper



said in comments to [Armenpress](#).

"The EU strongly supports the normalization process between the two countries.

As indicated earlier, we welcomed the finalization of the negotiations on the draft agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations in March 2025. It is an important step towards lasting peace and security in the region. We encourage both sides to proceed with the signing and ratification of the draft peace agreement as soon as possible. The EU stands ready to provide additional support and expertise, should the sides request it," she said.

US reaffirms support for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process amid Abu Dhabi talks

The United States reiterated its support for efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability in the South Caucasus, as Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met in Abu Dhabi for bilateral talks on July 10..

At a State Department press briefing, Spokesperson Tammy Bruce noted that the US continues to follow developments closely and stands behind initiatives that seek to bring lasting peace to the region.

"The United States supports those efforts to promote peace and stability in the South Caucasus," Bruce said, when asked about a possible link between recent



remarks by Secretary Rubio and the Abu Dhabi meeting.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio had recently expressed hope for progress in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations, stating the administration's commitment to global stability.

Bruce added that while the State Department is aware of press reports regarding the high-level meeting in Abu Dhabi, there was no additional information to share at this time.

"As you know, I think the Trump Administration and Secretary Rubio's approach speaks for itself. His remarks at the cabinet meeting show this is an administration working for peace. They will do what and go wherever they need to go," she said.

Bruce concluded by reaffirming that the commitment to peace remains a central tenet of the administration's foreign policy agenda.

Armenia preparing to host 2026 Summit of the European Political Community

The first meeting of the commission tasked with organizing the 8th Summit of the European Political Community (EPC) was held under the leadership of Arayik Harutyunyan, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister of Armenia and Chair of the Commission.

During the meeting, participants discussed both organizational and agenda-related matters concerning the upcoming summit. It was noted that the 2026 spring session of the EPC



Summit will be hosted by Armenia – a development that highlights the country's active engagement in European political processes, its commitment to strengthening regional cooperation, and the progress of its democratic reforms.

Chief of Staff Arayik Harutyunyan emphasized the importance of the summit and the need for well-coordinated and efficient preparations. He underscored the necessity of interagency cooperation and timely implementation of tasks

according to the established schedule.

Armenia-US Defense cooperation discussed in Yerevan

On July 11, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan received US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Kristina Kvien and the newly appointed Defense Attaché, Colonel Matthew Crowe.

The Defense Minister congratulated Colonel Crowe on his appointment and wished him success in his mission.

The sides discussed the current state and future prospects of defense cooperation between Armenia and the United States, commending the existing level of collaboration. The American side reaffirmed the commitment to supporting ongoing defense reforms in Armenia.

The meeting also included an exchange of views on regional and international



security issues.

Armenia, EU deepen cooperation on reforms, connectivity, and security



Armenia and the European Union held the sixth meeting of the Armenia-EU Partnership Committee, established under the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in Brussels on 8 July. The parties discussed the implementation of CEPA and the expanding Armenia-EU cooperation.

Armenia and the EU underlined the significant momentum in their partnership, based on their commitment to common values. They welcomed the important announcements made by Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan and EU High Representative/Vice President Kaja Kallas during her visit to Armenia on 29 and 30 June 2025. These include a political agreement on the new Armenia-EU Partnership Agenda and the adoption by the Commission of a proposal for the visa liberalization action plan. These decisions will bring Armenia and EU closer.

Armenia and the EU further welcomed the progress in implementing the EUR 270 million Resilience and Growth Plan, which supports Armenia's closer sectoral cooperation with the EU and leverages large-scale investments in connectivity and businesses in the framework of the EU's Global Gateway and in line with the "Crossroads of Peace" initiative.

The Partnership Committee reviewed developments related to the rule of law, justice reform, law enforcement, human rights and fight against corruption. The EU commended Armenia's commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights and tangible progress in this regard. The EU emphasized the need for sustained reforms in these fields and additional measures to eliminate discrimination on all grounds. The two sides stressed the importance of meaningful involvement of civil society in decision-making and public affairs.

Armenia and the EU also discussed ways to promote inclusive regional connectivity, enhance economic diversification and mutual trade, accelerate the digital and green transitions, enhance cooperation in the field of energy security, and strengthen cooperation on climate action.

Regarding foreign, security and defense policy, the parties welcomed the

recent signing of the agreement between Armenia and the EU establishing a framework for Armenia's participation in EU crisis management missions and operations, and the launch of the first Armenia – EU Security and Defense Consultations. Both sides discussed new areas of cooperation, with a focus on building resilience to counter hybrid and cyber threats, foreign interference and disinformation. They also reiterated the important contribution of the EU Mission in Armenia to peace and stability in the region.

The Partnership Committee also discussed regional developments and the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process. The EU welcomed the agreement on the text of a draft peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, calling for its signature and ratification. The EU also underlined its full support to Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders based on 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration. The EU also expressed its support to Armenia's efforts to reach full normalization of relations with Türkiye.

The meeting was co-chaired by Vahan Kostanyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Audrone Perkaskiene, Deputy Managing Director of Eastern Europe and Russia at the European External Action Service.

Business tycoon Samvel Karapetyan announces formation of new political force

Russian-Armenian business magnate Samvel Karapetyan has announced the formation of a new political force. The statement was published by his nephew, Narek Karapetyan.

According to Karapetyan, they aim to create a fundamentally new political force. He announced his respect for other political parties and figures, stating: "However we have our own vision for building a better future for Armenia. We will follow our own path with a new team, while not ruling out political cooperation with like-minded individuals. We will strive to unite our



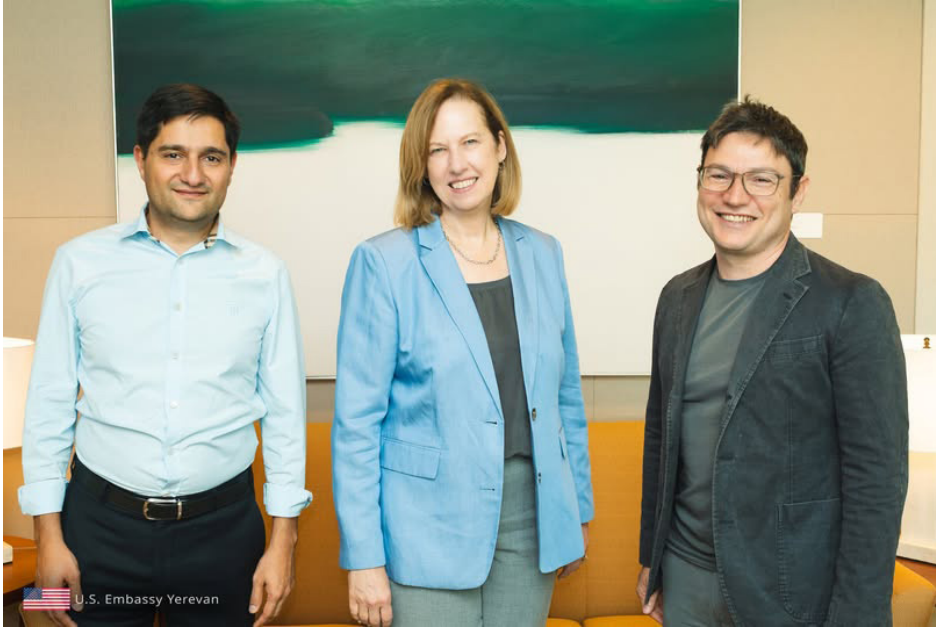
people around just and great goals."

Karapetyan also noted that the process of forming the political team has already

begun.

On June 17, Karapetyan, a Russian-Armenian billionaire and owner of the Tashir Group, accused the Armenian government of conducting an anti-church campaign, declaring that he would intervene "in his own way" to stop it. Authorities said his statements made in Yerevan amount to a threat to seize power. As a result, investigators filed criminal charges against him for "publicly calling for the usurpation of power." A court subsequently approved a two-month pre-trial detention. Karapetyan has denied any wrongdoing.

US Ambassador briefed on Firebird's upcoming AI Data Center in Armenia



US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien met with representatives of the American company Firebird to discuss the

launch of a major technological initiative in Armenia – a 100-megawatt artificial intelligence (AI) data center.

The planned project marks a significant step in deepening US-Armenia economic ties and reinforces Armenia's growing role as a regional leader in technology and innovation.

Describing the meeting as a productive exchange, the US Embassy in Yerevan emphasized the innovative nature of the initiative, highlighting the potential for increased collaboration between the two countries in the high-tech sector.

"We are excited about the potential for deeper collaboration and shared US-Armenia growth," the Embassy said in a statement.

The AI data center is expected to bring cutting-edge technology infrastructure to Armenia, boost digital capacity, attract investment, and create new opportunities in the country's rapidly expanding tech ecosystem.

Armenia, UAE Foreign Ministers discuss Economic cooperation, regional peace

While accompanying Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during his visit to the United Arab Emirates, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan held a meeting with UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In a statement shared on social media, Mirzoyan described the discussion as a "good exchange" and noted that the two sides explored avenues for strengthening economic ties and investment opportunities between Armenia and the UAE.



The Armenian minister emphasized that regional peace and enhanced connectivity can contribute to a more favorable environment for such cooperation.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of Prime Minister Pashinyan's high-level engagements in Abu Dhabi, including talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as part of ongoing efforts to advance peace in the South Caucasus.

Armenian, Iranian Defense Ministers discuss regional, global security

On July 9, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan held a telephone conversation with the Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh.

During the conversation, the Ministers

discussed international and regional security topics, as well as issues related to bilateral cooperation.

Both sides underscored the importance of enhancing stability and peace in the region.



Armenia's permanent population grew by 84,000 in 2025 – UN Population Fund

Florence Bauer, UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, has presented a brief report on global and Armenian population trends in the context of World Population Day.

According to a press release from the Public Relations Department of the UNFPA Armenia Office, the theme of World Population Day 2025 is “Empowering young people to create the families they want in a just and hopeful world.”

A new report from UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, sheds light on the factors preventing people from having the families they desire. As part of the report, 14,000 people across 14 countries were surveyed to better understand the challenges they face.

“The biggest hurdle is economic. More than half of respondents (54%) said their financial situation, lack of affordable housing, job insecurity, or the high cost of child-care has played, or could play a role in not having the number of children they want.”

World Population Trends

It took hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to reach 1 billion, but in just the past 200 years, it has increased sevenfold. It is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion by 2050, and 10.9 billion by 2100, before beginning to decline.

According to the report, there have been major shifts in fertility rates and life expectancy in recent decades. In the early 1970s, women had an average of 4.5 children. By 2015, the global total fertility rate had dropped to fewer than 2.5 children per woman. Meanwhile, global life expectancy rose from 64.6 years in the early 1990s to 72.6 years in 2019.

As a result, the structure of societies is expected to undergo a dramatic transformation—with a growing proportion of elderly people, a shrinking share of youth, and a potentially smaller workforce.



In addition, the world is experiencing a high degree of urbanization and accelerating migration flows. The year 2007 marked the first time that the urban population surpassed the rural population. By 2050, approximately 66 percent of the world's population is expected to live in cities.

The report also addresses population trends in Armenia. It notes that Armenia's urban population is about 1.8 times larger than its rural population. As of January 1, 2025, Armenia's permanent population was approximately 3 million 75 thousand people— an increase of around 84,000 compared to 2024 (Statistical Committee).

According to the medium forecast scenario, assuming other factors remain constant, Armenia's population is projected to decline to about 2 million 373 thousand people by 2050.

In Armenia, similar changes are expected. The share of the elderly population is projected to rise significantly. Between 2018 and 2023, the average number of children born per woman in Armenia increased slightly, reaching 1.9. However, more than 60% of households in Armenia do not have children. About 16% have two

children, 15% have one child, and 7% have three or more children, according to the Statistical Committee.

At the same time, couples in Armenia most often express a desire to have three children (UNFPA).

“Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate economic (financial resources, housing, employment), social, health, institutional, and other barriers that prevent young people from having as many children as they would like,” the bulletin emphasizes.

World Population Day is celebrated annually on 11 July to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues.

The Day was established by the then-Governing Council of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 1989, an outgrowth of the interest generated by the Day of Five Billion, which was observed on 11 July 1987. By resolution 45/216 of December 1990, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) decided to continue observing World Population Day to enhance awareness of population issues, including their relations to the environment and development.

The Day was first marked on 11 July 1990 in more than 90 countries.

Why Armenia Is Seeking to Normalize Relations with Türkiye

By Olesya Vartanyan

Armenia is intensifying its diplomatic outreach to Türkiye, betting that improved ties could either unlock a peace deal with Azerbaijan or at least help prevent another military flare-up along its tense borders.

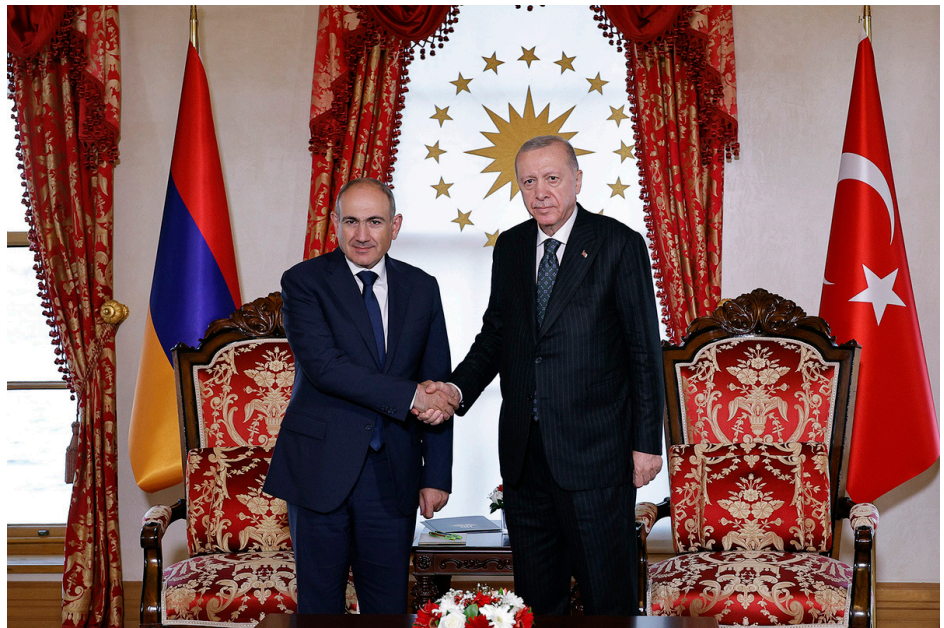
Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan recently made a historic trip to Istanbul: the first official visit by an Armenian leader to Türkiye. He was received at Dolmabahçe Palace, once a symbol of Ottoman power and now a hub of regional diplomacy, hosting everything from Ukraine talks to Syria outreach. Armenia's message was clear: it acknowledges Türkiye's rising influence.

This shift marks a major turn. Armenia and Türkiye lack formal diplomatic ties and have long distrusted each other. Earlier efforts at rapprochement collapsed amid the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan from the 1990s, in which Armenia opposed any Turkish role. In the 2020 war, Türkiye decisively backed Azerbaijan—both politically and militarily—helping to secure Baku's victory and deterring Russian involvement.

With no Ankara backchannel, Pashinyan watched Turkish drones fly near the Armenian capital. The decision to sideline Türkiye had backfired, senior Armenian officials acknowledged, pushing Ankara squarely into Baku's camp.

Post-war, Armenia recalibrated. Normalizing ties with Türkiye became a foreign policy priority. Within a year, special envoys met. When a major earthquake hit Türkiye in 2023, Armenia quickly sent aid. That same year, Pashinyan met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, signaling a thaw. Pashinyan also made symbolic gestures, such as recognizing Palestinian statehood shortly after a call with Erdoğan, aligning with Ankara during its tensions with Israel over Gaza.

Armenia's outreach has also taken a cultural turn. Pashinyan has urged Armenians to move beyond the notion of a



"historical Armenia" that includes lands now within Türkiye, including Mount Ararat, long a national symbol. Instead, he is promoting Mount Aragats, a dormant volcano within Armenia, as a new national symbol, and emphasizing reconciliation over resentment.

Despite these steps, the road to normalization remains rocky. Three years ago, special envoys agreed to open the border and launch direct trade, and ministers discussed cultural cooperation. Yet the border remains closed, and even symbolic steps—such as exchanging ambassadors—have not materialized.

Behind the delay lies a deeper political knot: Türkiye wants Armenia to finalize a peace treaty with Azerbaijan first. Baku and [Yerevan have reportedly agreed on a draft](#). But Azerbaijan is demanding that Armenia amend its constitution to remove references to a 1990 declaration that asserts a claim over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia concedes that the clause is outdated and symbolic, but says that removing it will require a referendum, which would likely take two years. After almost thirty-five years of conflict, Azerbaijan appears willing to wait.

Türkiye, meanwhile, is playing a long game. Officials see open borders and trade as a way to deepen Armenia's economic

dependence and boost Ankara's regional influence. But loyalties are clear: Azerbaijan comes first. Symbolically, Erdoğan hosted Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev just a day before Pashinyan's visit. The Turkish and Azeri leaders are close: Aliyev even campaigned for Erdoğan during his difficult 2023 re-election bid. Amid economic headwinds, Baku's investments in Türkiye have become increasingly vital.

Still, both Ankara and Yerevan seem intent on keeping dialogue alive—if only to prevent the worst. The Armenia-Azerbaijan border remains volatile, with some military positions only meters apart. Azerbaijan holds key high ground and enjoys clear military superiority. Analysts warn that a fresh offensive could split Armenia in two within a couple of days.

To avert disaster, Türkiye has been engaging behind the scenes. When tensions have spiked, Ankara has reportedly dispatched delegations to Baku urging restraint. Some Western diplomats view Ankara's efforts as part of a broader push to rebrand itself as a stabilizing force in the region.

Paradoxically, Türkiye may now be the only regional actor capable of restraining Azerbaijan. Russia's influence has waned with its Ukraine war, and Iran is distracted by its crisis

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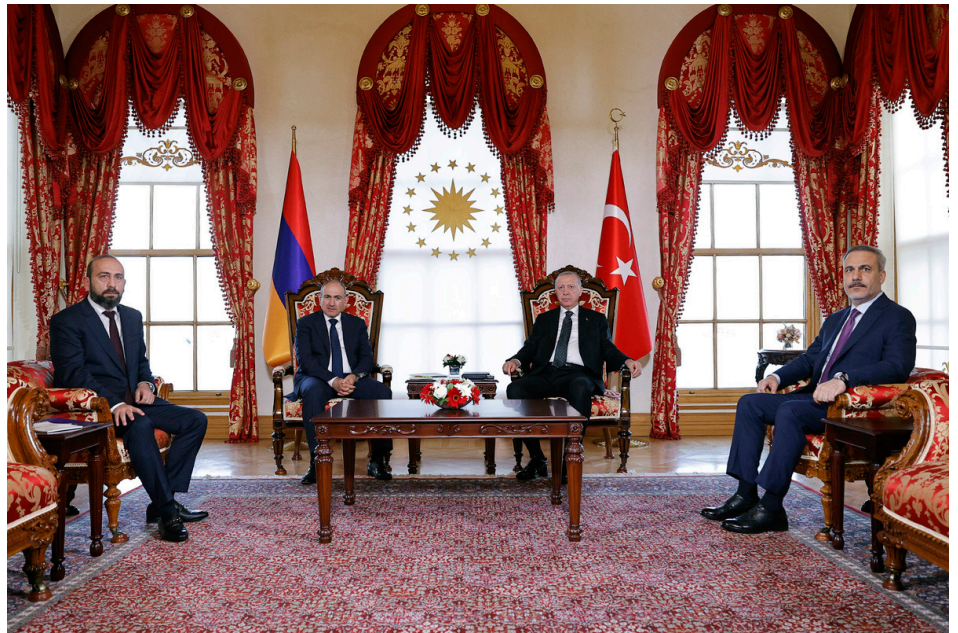
page 8 with Israel and the United States. For Armenia, Türkiye—once seen purely as a threat—is increasingly viewed as the last line of regional deterrence.

These developments may also yield other tangible benefits. One key issue stemming from a possible peace deal is transportation across the South Caucasus. The so-called Middle Corridor aims to link Asia and Europe, and part of it could theoretically pass through Armenia, connecting Türkiye, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia.

For Armenia, participation is crucial. Its borders with Türkiye and Azerbaijan have been closed since the 1990s, leaving it excluded from major transit and energy routes. After the 2020 war, Yerevan launched the “Crossroads of Peace” initiative, seeing reopened borders as a chance to overcome its isolation and revive historical transit links.

Azerbaijan wants to begin by opening a southern route, which it calls the “Zangezur corridor,” through Armenia to its Nakhchivan exclave. While the 2020 Russian-brokered ceasefire envisioned some form of Russian oversight, Armenia now insists on full control over any corridor, including customs and security. Baku, however, remains skeptical and refuses to invest in a route it sees as vulnerable, for example, to political changes in Yerevan. It is therefore demanding a third-party guarantor to ensure long-term stability. Türkiye reportedly agrees, though Armenia still hopes Ankara will ultimately accept its sovereignty over the route.

The closest the sides came to



compromise was under EU mediation. Brussels proposed a model based on the post-2008 Georgia–Russia precedent, in which an independent foreign operator manages the logistics of routes through the disputed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and shares data with all parties. While the context differs, the mechanism was deemed workable. But the EU-led negotiations stalled amid renewed border clashes and the 2023 crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh that ended its existence as an ethnic Armenian enclave.

Today, the only player capable of reviving talks may be the United States. The Trump administration—eager to showcase its global conflict resolution efforts—has reportedly floated a new plan like the EU model but grounded in American strategic logic: U.S. business participation as a stabilizing force, akin to a recent deal on rare metals in Ukraine.

Washington appears determined to push forward. One option is to pressure Baku to drop its constitutional demands—perhaps by inviting Aliyev to the White House. But more realistically, it may lean on Yerevan to accept the U.S. model, even if doing so delays the final peace and leaves the borders formally closed.

Though still early, one U.S. official has expressed cautious optimism. “Maybe President Donald Trump will even win a Nobel Peace Prize for it,” he said—apparently in earnest.

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US responds to reports about proposal to Armenia and Azerbaijan

The US State Department has commented on reports claiming that President Donald Trump’s administration has made a proposal to Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the unblocking of connections in the South Caucasus.

In response to a query from [Armenpress](#), the US State Department said it has no information to share regarding these reports.

“The United States supports efforts to



promote peace and stability in the South

Caucasus. We have no information to share regarding the referenced press reports,” a US State Department spokesperson said in written comments.

A [report](#) published earlier by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, citing diplomats, claimed that the United States is advancing its proposal to Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the unblocking of regional connection routes.

Attorney reveals gross violations in Ruben Vardanyan's ongoing trial in Baku

Attorney and representative of Armenian prisoners of war before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Siranush Sahakyan, has provided clarifications regarding the egregious violations of Ruben Vardanyan's rights taking place before the courts in Baku.

According to the human rights defender, in flagrant breach of fair trial guarantees, particularly the principle of equality of arms and adversarial hearing, both the investigative authorities and the court have disregarded all motions filed by the defendant, conducting a one-sided, pre-determined investigation. Moreover, the judges denied Ruben full access to the case materials, while simultaneously incorporating falsified records into the case file. Jurisdictional safeguards were also violated: the case was referred to a military tribunal despite the fact that Ruben is a civilian and has never held any affiliation with law enforcement or security services.

"As a result, the proceedings have created a fundamentally unfair scenario in which the defendant is stripped of any meaningful opportunity to contest the charges or assert his innocence. In such conditions, the very notion of a fair trial is reduced to a façade, entirely devoid of substance" Sahakyan emphasized.

In a comprehensive document, she has presented a detailed account of grave human rights violations committed by the investigative authorities and judiciary of Azerbaijan against Ruben Vardanyan, a political prisoner unlawfully detained since September 2023. The factual findings outlined below reveal a brazen and systematic denial of his right to a fair trial.

An examination of the case materials relating to the criminal proceedings brought against Mr Vardanyan, together with the conduct of the trial before the Baku Military Court, exposes numerous and severe breaches of both binding international human rights standards and the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (CPC RA).

The cumulative effect of these violations constitutes a flagrant denial of justice and underscores the Azerbaijani authorities' deliberate and systematic disregard for due process, rendering the politically motivated nature of the proceedings against Mr Vardanyan indisputable.

1. Violation of Procedural Norms in Charging Ruben Vardanyan as a Defendant, and Violation of His Fundamental Right to Be Informed of the Charges and His Rights (Violation of Articles 90.7.2, 224, 224.3 of the CPC RA)

Upon his detention, Ruben Vardanyan was not informed of the nature and cause of the accusations against him, nor was he provided with any formal documentation outlining his rights—a breach of his procedural guarantees, particularly in light of his right to prepare an effective defence.

Following the formal filing of charges, he was likewise not served with a written notification of his rights, despite this being an express legal requirement under Azerbaijani law.

These violations are clearly evidenced in the case materials:

- Page 144, Volume 422 — the "Notification of Rights" is unsigned;
- Page 148, Volume 422 — the "Notification of Rights and Obligations" was never served;
- Page 151, Volume 422 — the "Notice of Explanation" is incomplete;
- Page 157, Volume 422 — no explanation of "Rights and Obligations" is recorded.

Moreover, the investigative authorities failed in their duty to communicate the substance of new charges brought against Mr Vardanyan. The decision dated 5 December 2024 was not served upon him within the 48-hour timeframe prescribed by the CPC RA. Instead, it was only disclosed months later, on 7 March 2025, and only upon the initiative of the defence through a formal motion.

2. All Motions Filed by Ruben Vardanyan Were Ignored by the Investigative Authorities and the Court (Article 28.4 of the CPC RA)

Pursuant to Article 28.4 of the CPC RA, the investigative authorities and the court are under a legal obligation to examine all motions and requests submitted by the defendant and his legal counsel, as well as to consider any complaints alleging procedural violations.

Similarly, the European Convention on Human Rights requires that decision-making procedures uphold the principles of adversarial proceedings and equality of arms, and incorporate adequate

safeguards to protect the rights and interests of the accused.

These fundamental guarantees were plainly disregarded in Ruben Vardanyan's case. In particular:

- The administration of the pre-trial detention facility is obligated, among other things, to ensure that a detainee has the opportunity to access notary services (Article 161.1.17 of the CPC RA). Mr Vardanyan, both personally and through his defence counsel, repeatedly submitted motions requesting the issuance of a power of attorney authorising a lawyer to initiate civil proceedings in an Azerbaijani court against the newspaper *Bakinsky Rabochy*, which had published defamatory material damaging to his honour and reputation. These requests were denied without any basis. Following the complaint, the court dismissed the request on the ground that such matters of accessing notarial services were "not within its competence," despite its clear authority to ensure that the accused is afforded the means necessary to exercise his civil and legal rights while in detention. In response to the persistent and systemic disregard for defence submissions, the defence team filed a motion for the recusal of the judicial panel. This motion, too, was summarily denied – further underscoring the lack of impartiality and procedural fairness in the conduct of the trial.

- The motion for the recusal of the investigator, submitted by Mr Vardanyan on 30 October 2024 in light of numerous procedural violations and breaches of his rights, was arbitrarily rejected.

- The official decision setting out additional charges against Mr Vardanyan, dated 5 December 2024, was not served on him either on the day of issuance or at any point thereafter. Furthermore, no Russian-language translation of the decision was provided, in direct contravention of his right to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation in a language he understands.

- The indictment in the criminal proceedings against Mr Vardanyan lacks

page 10 the signatures of the competent prosecutorial authorities and, as such, cannot be regarded as a valid legal instrument under domestic procedural law.

- Although the indictment comprises six volumes, drafted entirely in Azerbaijani, a Russian translation was only provided to Mr Vardanyan at 20:37 on the evening preceding the initial court hearing on 15 January 2025. This belated disclosure constitutes a gross breach of Articles 292.4 and 298.4 of the CPC RA, as it deprived the accused of a meaningful opportunity to familiarise himself with the charges. Moreover, the translation itself was riddled with substantive errors, thereby further obstructing Mr Vardanyan's understanding of the accusations.

- The case file also contains falsified records and procedural documents, undermining the integrity of the proceedings.

3. Gross Violations During the Judicial Proceedings Against Ruben Vardanyan

Despite Azerbaijan's status as a State Party to both the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the judicial proceedings instituted against Ruben Vardanyan have been marked by persistent violations of due process:

- The criminal case against Mr Vardanyan is being adjudicated not by a court of general jurisdiction, as required under applicable domestic and international standards, but by the Baku Military Court (a three-judge panel chaired by Judge Zeynal Agayev). International human rights law recognises the universally applicable principle that military tribunals must not exercise jurisdiction over civilians. The referral of Mr Vardanyan's case to a military court, in this context, is itself indicative of a lack of judicial independence and constitutes a manifest violation of his right to an impartial hearing.

- Although the proceedings have been formally declared open to the public, in practice, all hearings have been conducted behind closed doors and under conditions of strict control. Access to the courtroom has been systematically denied to foreign jour-

nalists and independent international observers, undermining the transparency and public scrutiny essential to a fair trial.

- The court further denied Mr Vardanyan access to the indictment and broader case file, in violation of Articles 284–288 of the CPC RA. Repeated motions submitted by the defence seeking additional time to familiarise with the voluminous material—comprising 422 volumes, or approximately 105,000 pages—were summarily dismissed. Mr Vardanyan informed the court that he had been afforded only 17 working days to review the entirety of the case materials. The court granted only a ten-day extension, a portion of which included public holidays, effectively reducing the extension to just four additional working days—an absurdly inadequate timeframe in the circumstances.

- The court also failed to comply with the procedural requirements governing the conduct of preliminary hearings, as set out in Articles 299 and 300 of the CPC RA. The preliminary hearing held on 27 January 2025 was marred by significant procedural irregularities, depriving Mr Vardanyan of the ability to exercise critical procedural rights.

- The court violated the requirements for holding a preliminary hearing (Articles 299–300 of the CPC RA). The preliminary hearing (of January 27, 2025) was conducted with significant procedural violations, resulting in Ruben Vardanyan being unable to exercise his key rights. Article 299 of the CPC RA requires that the preliminary hearing address several foundational matters, including:

- the legality and completeness of the pre-trial investigation;
- the exclusion of inadmissible evidence;
- the consideration of motions and recusals;
- grounds for terminating or suspending proceedings;
- a review of the preventive measure in place;
- the compilation of a list of admissible evidence; and
- the identification of witnesses to be summoned.

In Mr Vardanyan's case, none of these matters were meaningfully addressed. The

hearing was conducted under conditions where the defence had been denied sufficient time to review the case materials, no proper translation of key procedural documents was provided, and the court failed even to ask whether the defence intended to raise motions or statements. Moreover, as set out in Article 300 of the CPC RA, the decision issued following the preliminary hearing must be provided to the defendant and his counsel within three days. In Vardanyan's case, this decision was provided in violation of the prescribed deadline and in a distorted translation, further evidencing the systemic nature of these violations. Thus, the court failed to fulfill the procedural obligations established for this stage, thereby depriving the defendant of the right to an active defense at a crucial phase, when the foundations for subsequent proceedings are laid. A violation of procedural rights at the preliminary hearing stage effectively distorts the entire further process.

- Failure to comply with the timeframes for providing court decisions.

The court's decision following the hearing on January 27, 2025, was provided to Mr. Vardanyan with significant delay (specifically, on February 5, 2025), whereas Article 300.4 of the CPC RA requires that it be delivered to Ruben within three days.

- Mr. Vardanyan was denied the opportunity to prepare his defence.

The Baku Military Court not only refused to adjourn the hearing scheduled for 27 January 2025—thereby compelling the trial to proceed on the merits—but also failed to ensure that Mr Vardanyan and his legal counsel were afforded the necessary time and facilities to prepare an adequate defence. Multiple motions submitted by Mr Vardanyan and his attorney were either ignored or summarily dismissed, including requests:

- to access specialised legal literature and Internet resources relevant to the preparation of the defence;
- to review “classified” video materials forming part of the evidentiary record;
- to receive legal documents and defence materials from counsel without censorship or prior inspection by detention authorities;
- to be guaranteed timely access to accurate Russian-language translations of

page 12

page 11 procedural documents and case materials.

Not only were these motions arbitrarily denied, but the fact that they were filed was omitted from the official records of the court hearings.

Moreover, in further violation of fundamental procedural guarantees, neither Mr Vardanyan nor his counsel was provided with transcripts of the court proceedings—effectively impeding their ability to review the conduct of the hearings and prepare subsequent motions, appeals, or objections.

• Ignoring Motions and Statements by Ruben and His Defense Counsel in Court Rulings.

Ruben's motion requesting the court to ensure that the administration of the pre-trial detention facility provide him with access to notary services in order to execute a power of attorney for filing a civil lawsuit was denied, with the court claiming that such requests are "not within the court's competence."

As this and all other motions by Ruben were grossly and unjustifiably ignored, Ruben and his defense counsel submitted a motion for the recusal of the judicial panel. This request was also denied.

• Denial of Procedural Equality (Articles 9 and 121.1.3 of the CPC RA)

More than twenty motions submitted by Mr Ruben Vardanyan were left unexamined by the court. While the judicial panel maintained that these submissions had been "considered," the official hearing transcripts reveal no record of such consideration, exposing a clear discrepancy between the court's assertions and the documented proceedings. Notably, the defence's application for correction of the hearing transcript dated 27 January 2025 was itself disregarded, underscoring the court's unwillingness to rectify the procedural record.

Despite the presence of compelling evidence of systemic procedural violations and the infringement of Mr Vardanyan's rights, approximately ten motions for the recusal of the judicial panel were either summarily dismissed or entirely ignored. The court repeatedly cited a purported "lack of evidence of the panel's interest" as grounds for rejection—an explanation devoid of factual or legal basis. Some motions, such as the recusal request dated 11 March 2025, were simply not addressed at all.

• Invalidity of Procedural Protocols

Due to Fundamental Defects (Article 134 of the CPC RA)

The case file contains procedural protocols marred by serious violations that, under applicable legal standards, render them null and void. In particular, several protocols—including interrogation records dated 30 October 2024 and 5 December 2024—are devoid of the requisite signatures of both the defendant and his defence counsel.

• Manipulation of Court Records and Misrepresentation of Procedural History (Article 51.7 of the CPC RA)

The official transcript of the court session dated 6 February 2025 falsely asserts that all eight motions submitted by Mr Ruben Vardanyan and his defence counsel were considered during the preliminary hearing held on 27 January 2025. In reality, only two of those motions were addressed. This misrepresentation is directly contradicted by both the court's own decision from the preliminary hearing and the excerpt from the protocol decision of 27 January 2025.

The manipulation of procedural records did not stop there. For example, the court failed to consider or respond to the written comments and objections submitted by Mr Vardanyan and his defence counsel regarding the transcript of the hearing held on 22 April 2025.

• Violation of the Principle of Public Hearings and Transparency (Article 27 of the CPC RA)

At every stage of the proceedings, representatives of the international community were systematically denied access to the courtroom. Attendance was restricted exclusively to pro-government media outlets operating under the control of the Azerbaijani authorities, thereby depriving the trial of independent observation and scrutiny.

In several instances, these state-affiliated media outlets misrepresented or selectively reported the actual content of statements made by Mr Ruben Vardanyan and his legal counsel, particularly in relation to procedural motions, recusal requests, and other substantive submissions. This selective and distorted reporting further undermined the transparency of the proceedings.

The violation of the principle of a public hearing is further underscored by the court's inconsistent approach to the classification of the proceedings. Although the trial was formally declared to

be open to the public, the court repeatedly invoked the alleged confidentiality of certain materials and the presence of "classified" evidence in the case file—most notably in its written response to the attorney's inquiry dated 19 March 2025. Such assertions were used as a pretext to exclude independent observers and shield the proceedings from international oversight, in clear contravention of the right to a public trial.

4. Key Requests by the Defense Necessary for a Fair Trial That Remained Unanswered

As of February 19, 2025, the following legitimate requests by the defense had not been granted, making it impossible to ensure an effective defense in court:

- Request for conditions allowing proper review of the case materials;
- Request for copies of key documents important for the defense;
- Request for official translations of critical procedural documents;
- Request for the right to review all court hearing transcripts (motions dated January 30 and February 12, 2025);
- Request for the right to view video materials and other digital media contained in the case file;
- Request for the right of counsel to transmit documents to and from the defendant (in accordance with the Law on Advocacy);
- Request for the defendant to have access to the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan and international legal standards via electronic resources;
- Request for international legal counsel to be permitted to attend court hearings (Article 310.3 of the CPC RA);
- Request for the provision of an official indictment signed by an authorized person;
- Request for the opportunity to allow members of Ruben Vardanyan's family to review the indictment;
- Request for the right of the accused to study the case materials with a translator from 10:00 to 18:00 (Article 91.5.22 of the CPC RA).
- Requests to the SGB Pre-Trial Detention Facility that were ignored:
 - Request to arrange for a notary to visit the detention

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Two Armenian sites included in UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List

During the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, currently taking place in Paris, two nominations submitted by Armenia — “*Urartian Heritage of Yerevan*” and “*Garni Archaeological Site and Symphony of Stones*” — have been reviewed and officially approved for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List.

The nominations were prepared under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia. The process involved the *Research Center for Historical and Cultural Heritage* and the *Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Museum-Reservations* SNCOs, with the engagement of leading scholars and experts.

The session is being held from July 6 to 16 in Paris, France. The Armenian delegation is led by Aram Hakobyan, Armenia's



Ambassador to UNESCO. Harutyun Vanyan, Head of the Department for Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments at the Ministry, is also participating in the session in his capacity as National Coordinator for the 1972 Convention.

The newly included sites are Armenia's 6th and 7th entries in the Tentative List. The first four — *Dvin Archaeological Site*, *Ereruyk Cathedral and Site*, *Noravank*

and the Upper Amaghu Valley, and Tatev Monastery, Tatevi Anapat and Adjacent Areas of Vorotan Valley — were added in 1995. The 5th site, *Dragon Stones and Cultural Landscape of Tirkinkatar*, was submitted in 2024. The full list of Armenia's tentative inscriptions can be accessed [here](#).

Currently, Armenia has the following sites inscribed on the official UNESCO World Heritage List: the *Monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin*, the *Cathedral and Churches of Echmiatsin* and the *Archaeological Site of Zvartnots*, and the *Monastery of Geghard and the Upper Azat Valley*.

Inclusion in the Tentative List is a mandatory step before a site can be nominated for full inscription on the World Heritage List. Armenia continues to actively pursue this process to safeguard and promote its cultural and historical heritage on the international stage.

page 12 center;

- Request for the return of documents seized from the attorney during the inspection on January 15, 2025, during a visit with the defendant.

Significance of the Identified Violations

Why This Matters: The Impact of Procedural Violations on the Fairness of the Proceedings

The violations of the Criminal Procedure Code identified in the case of Ruben Vardanyan are not mere formalities—they directly affect his fundamental right to a fair trial, guaranteed by both Azerbaijani law and international legal standards.

The denial of access to case materials, the severely limited time afforded to review voluminous documentation, and the systematic refusal to consider defence motions have made it impossible for Mr Vardanyan to mount an effective defence. Collectively, these violations have created a legal environment in which he is effectively stripped of any meaningful opportunity to contest the charges against him

or to present exculpatory evidence. The adversarial nature of the proceedings has been entirely eroded.

International organizations, including the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the French Senate, as well as a number of NGOs and experts, have recognized Ruben Vardanyan as a political prisoner and called for his release. His detention and trial are viewed as part of a broader campaign by Azerbaijan against ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Respect for procedural guarantees and the right to a fair trial is not a discretionary matter; it is a foundational element of the rule of law and a core indicator of a state's commitment to human rights. International vigilance and intervention in this case are imperative not only to secure justice for Ruben Vardanyan, but also to uphold the integrity of the international legal order and to ensure protection for other unlawfully detained Armenians

Conclusion

The cumulative procedural violations outlined above demonstrate unequivocally that Mr Ruben Vardanyan has not been afforded a fair opportunity to defend himself before a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal. He has been denied access to essential case materials, stripped of his fundamental procedural rights, and isolated from international observation and support.

This approach constitutes a gross violation of both Azerbaijani domestic law and international fair trial standards. It undermines the very notion of justice and exposes the proceedings as a politically driven exercise lacking any legitimacy.

We therefore call upon international organisations, human rights mechanisms, and world leaders to take urgent notice of this case and to press the Republic of Azerbaijan to comply with its international obligations, most notably, the right to a fair trial as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments.

Golden Apricot 22nd International Film Festival Kicks Off in Yerevan

The 22nd edition of the Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival has officially opened. The annual celebration of cinema is taking place from July 13 to 20 this year.

The opening film of this year's festival is *A Simple Accident*, the latest work by acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May and won the top prize—the Palme d'Or.

As in previous years, the international festival will showcase a wide range of competition films from around the world, along with acclaimed titles from some of the most prestigious film festivals.

The president of the International Competition jury for this year's Golden Apricot is Abderrahmane Sissako, the renowned Mauritanian filmmaker and recipient of the Cannes and César awards.

Other jury members include:

- Eric Nazarian, Armenian-American



screenwriter and director, a previous Golden Apricot awardee and participant in San Sebastián and Turin film festivals;

- Athina Rachel Tsangari, co-founder of the Greek New Wave and co-creator of Yorgos Lanthimos' early work, as well as the director of the acclaimed *Attenberg* and creative director of the Athens Olympic Games ceremonies;
- Adilkhan Yerzhanov, a leading

voice in contemporary Central Asian cinema;

- Ada Solomon, a prominent Romanian producer whose films have won the Berlinale's Golden Bear and received Oscar nominations.

Among this year's special guests are:

- Amir Naderi, a living legend of Iranian cinema;
- Marco Müller, former director of the Venice, Locarno, and Rotterdam film festivals;
- Athina Rachel Tsangari, prominent Greek filmmaker;
- Phedon Papamichael, two-time Oscar and BAFTA nominee cinematographer.

The festival will also welcome world-renowned photographer Antoine d'Agata and the stars of *Anora*, Karen Karagulian and Vache Tovmasyan, as special guests.

The \$100 million blueprint to rebuild Armenian Christianity in America

The \$100 Million Blueprint to Rebuild Armenian Christianity in AmericaThe numbers tell a story of quiet collapse. In the United States today, only **3% of Armenian-Americans** attend church regularly. Daily Bible readership hovers around **1,000 individuals**. Most parishes have no benchmarking, best practices, or KPIs, aging congregations, and digital engagement strategies that lag behind by decades. And yet, until now, few have responded with the urgency the crisis demands.

Khachkar Studios is changing that with a sweeping new initiative: a **\$100 million campaign** to not only reverse decline but to redesign the very framework of Armenian Christian life in the diaspora. It's the most significant investment of its kind in Armenian Church history, and it comes with a comprehensive strategy.

At the heart of the initiative is the **"U.S. Armenian Christian Ecosystem 12 Body Parts"** model — a systems-based framework that evaluates a church's health not only by spiritual energy, but by operational effectiveness. These "body parts" include: philanthropic support, religious content across the spectrum of media, regular

Sunday attendance, school students, bible studies, management, and leadership training.

Backed by **69 years of data**, the model provides a way to measure and repair what's broken. What it found was sobering: **11 of the 12 Body Parts** are underperforming at critical levels. In many areas, Armenian churches fall into the **bottom decile** of U.S. Orthodox Christian institutions. The challenge isn't just spiritual — it's structural.

To address this, Khachkar Studios is launching a five-year pilot program. Up to 37 churches and ministries will receive **\$300,000 to \$400,000** each to implement tailored transformation projects. These reforms are selected from an **eight-activity "Pilot Menu,"** offering proven interventions, ranging from digital Bible programs and high value-add role model targeted video production, to lay training seminars and pastoral leadership tracks.

But this is no passive grant. Churches will be required to demonstrate measurable progress, supported by **5,000 hours of senior management world-class benchmarking and management excellence.**

Implementation is guided, performance is tracked, and impact is analyzed.

Khachkar Studios has outlined three primary benchmarks for success. First, to **double the number of "Faithful" weekly attendees from 12,894 to 27,847**. Second, to **increase daily Bible readers from 1,000 to 41,423**. These goals represent a radical leap — not incrementalism, but transformation. Third, achieve a **6.1X SROI (Social Return on Investment)**.

Media plays a central role. Khachkar's "Good News" division will lead the largest Christian Armenian digital content push in U.S. history — producing **seven "Good News" workstreams**: 1. Short-clips, 2. Podcasts, 3. Analyses, 4. Written Content, 5. Events, 6. News, and 7. Music at **25 times the volume** of all other Armenian religious institutions combined. The \$100 million initiative isn't just money — it's a mandate. A plan. A blueprint. For churches willing to be honest about their struggles and brave enough to change, it may be the single most important opportunity in a generation. For those who choose inaction, it might be the final warning.

Tamara Stepanyan's 'In the Land of Arto' set to open 2025 Locarno International Film Festival



Tamara Stepanyan's *In the Land of Arto*, starring Camille Cottin and Zar Amir, is set to open the 2025 Locarno International Film Festival at the Piazza Grande on August 6, [Screen Daily](#) reports.

Cottin plays a woman who arrives in Armenia to legalize the death of her husband but discovers he has been lying to her about his identity and is actually a

former soldier who deserted the war. She embarks on a journey as she uncovers her former spouse's past and a country haunted by a never-ending war.

Amir, who won Cannes' best actress prize in 2022 for Ali Abbasi's *Holy Spider*, also stars alongside a mostly Armenian cast and an appearance by *Holy Motors* star Denis Lavant.

Producers are Stephane Jourdain for La Huit and Camille Gentet for Pan Cinema. Armenia's Visan co-produces.

The film is the fiction feature debut for France-based Armenian-born filmmaker Stepanyan known for documentaries *Embers*, that played at Locarno in

2013 and won the best documentary prize at Busan International Film Festival, 2019's *Village Of Women*, and *My Armenian Phantoms* that premiered at this year's Berlinale.

In a statement, Brussels-based Be For Films' CEO and head of sales Pamela Leu called *In The Land Of Arto* "a deeply personal and resonant film" and said Stepanyan "brings a rare combination of sensitivity and strength to her storytelling, shaped by a journey that defied conventions and borders...Her voice, already celebrated in the world of documentary, marks a powerful new chapter in contemporary Armenian cinema."

Armenian referees to officiate UEFA Conference League matches

Armenian referees will officiate matches in the first qualifying round of the UEFA Conference League taking place today, on July 10.

**KF Vllaznia (Albania)
vs. BFC Daugavpils (Latvia)**

Referee: Ashot Ghaltakhchyan
Assistant referees: Sargis Hovhannisyan, Harutyun Hambardzumyan
Fourth official: Henrik Nalbandyan

FK Željezničar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) vs. FC Koper (Slovenia)

Referee: Artem Gasparyan
Assistant referees: Atom Sevgulyan, Khachatur Hovhannisyan
Fourth official: Yura Mahtesyan
FK Dečić (Montenegro) vs. FK Sileks (North Macedonia)

Referee: Zaven Hovhannisyan
Assistant referees: Mesrop Ghazaryan,

Vanik Simonyan



Fourth official: Vardan Manukyan

Kim Kardashian gifted encyclopedia on Armenian history



American TV star Kim Kardashian shared a video on her Instagram page showcasing an Armenian encyclopedia she received as a gift.

"How cool is this Armenian encyclopedia? They made me a huge copy, and it has all of the history of Armenia inside. It includes all of the treaties, maps, religious documents, and agreements that are so prominent in Armenian culture," Kardashian said.

She also introduced the English version of the encyclopedia.

"This is an encyclopedia that I think it is for sale now. It explains everything in English about Armenian history. This is so important and so cool," she added.

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