

PM Pashinyan pays tribute to the memory of Armenian Genocide victims



On the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Mrs. Anna Hakobyan visited the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial. Prime Minister Pashinyan delivered a message from the heights of Tsitsernakaberd.

“Dear people,
Today, April 24, 2020 marks the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Ottoman Turkey’s long-standing policy of Armenophobia culminated in 1915 during the Young Turk government.
Due to the Genocide that had been perpetrated at a state level for many years, Western Armenia was completely emptied of Armenians. 1.5 million of our compatriots were killed, hundreds of thousands of Armenians became refugees, deprived of the right to live in their historical homeland.
Due to the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian people not only suffered enormous human losses, but were subjected to deportation and a cultural genocide. The loss of the spiritual and religious heritage was irreparable; its material damage was enormous.
The Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire was a crime not only against our ethnic identity, but also against human civilization. And April 24, 1915, became the strongest symbol of this whole process, because on that very day hundreds of Armenian intellectuals, religious and political figures were arrested, exiled, killed or disappeared by order of the Young Turk government.
For 55 years now, we have been commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide on April 24. For the first time, it was marked in 1965, when thousands of Armenians were allowed to hold a mass commemorative event in Yerevan. This was not only due to the “thaw” in the Soviet Union, but also to the fact that in 1946-49 about a hundred thousand Armenians, mostly descendants of Genocide victims, repatriated and became an integral part of Soviet Armenia.

Turkey’s consistent denial of Armenian Genocide a threat to Armenia’s security – FM

Donald Trump commemorates Meds Yeghern, hails Armenians’

Armenia lifts restrictions on inter-regional movement, certain types of economic activity

Artsakh Defense Ministry shares photos of downed Azerbaijani drone

France committed to fighting against Armenian Genocide denial – Macron

French President Emmanuel Macron has sent a letter to Armenian President Armen Sarkissian on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Macron conveyed his brotherly and friendly wishes to President Sarkissian, and the Armenian people.

“On April 24, France commemorates the massacre of 600 Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople, which marked the beginning of the genocide. Today, more than ever, France is committed to protecting the memory of its victims, fighting against denial, and learning a serious lesson from the pages of this tragic story, Macron said in the letter.



“Last year, my country followed my commitment to declare April 24 as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. I have decided that, strictly adhering to the instructions dictated by the current health

situation, this year the day should also be marked in Paris with a brief ceremony in the presence of members of the French government,” the French President said.

“That legacy, and the shared memory between our two countries, is the basis for such a unique relationship. Today, the world’s coronavirus epidemic is forcing us all to face new health, economic and social challenges. We will face these challenges together. And I am convinced that France and Armenia will work together in the international arena for the benefit of more effective multilateralism and newly established solidarity,” Emmanuel Macron stated..

Turkey’s consistent denial of Armenian Genocide a threat to Armenia’s security – FM

The sincere recognition of truth and remembrance of the past are essential requirements for upholding justice, human dignity, combating impunity and uniting in international solidarity, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnat-sakanyan said in an address on the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

He said “Turkey’s consistent denial of the Armenian Genocide and its justification, the land blockade imposed on Armenia and the overt anti-Armenian position in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict threaten the security of the Republic of Armenia and the descendants of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.”

Below is the full text of the statement:

This year on April 24 Armenians from all over the world will join with the friends of the Armenian people and all of humanity to solemnly commemorate the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, paying tribute to the memory of 1.5 million holy martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.

This heinous crime, committed with the intent to destroy in whole the Armenian people and deprive them of their homeland, stands as the first genocide of the 20th century. This crime of genocide impacts on security of the Armenian people today as well.

Turkey’s consistent denial of the Arme-



nian Genocide and its justification, the land blockade imposed on Armenia and the overt anti-Armenian position in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict threaten the security of the Republic of Armenia and the descendants of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Beginning 105 years ago, despite the pledges and promises of international security guarantees, the Armenian people were abandoned and defenseless in the face of this crime of genocide and vulnerable to the unrelenting atrocities of its perpetrators. The Armenian people suffered through the horrific ordeal of Genocide, but against all odds they survived.

In the wake of their genocidal trauma, these heroic survivors were not only able to preserve and promote their national identity everywhere they sought refuge and safety, but also managed to restore and regain the Armenian statehood. For each day since, the primary mission and main

responsibility of the Republic of Armenia has been to ensure the security of its people on the territory of their historic homeland.

The decades-long struggle for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide demonstrated that there is no single force capable of opposing the quest for historical justice and truth. The increasing number of countries recognizing the Armenian Genocide stands as the most important affirmation of this maxim. It is also particularly relevant that those nations who have made significant contributions in saving and providing refuge to the survivors of the genocide have been the most recent countries to join others in recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

The recognition of the past is essential for the present and the future, to serve as deterrence in order to prevent any recurrence of such atrocity or genocide elsewhere.

The sincere recognition of truth and remembrance of the past are essential requirements for upholding justice, human dignity, combating impunity and uniting in international solidarity.

Today, once again bowing to the solemn memory of the holy martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, we reiterate and reaffirm our commitment to the promotion of historical justice and the prevention of new genocides.

Yerevan Disagrees with Russian Criticism

(RFE/RL) - Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan on April 23 insisted that Russian natural gas has never been as cheap for Armenia as was claimed by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and that Yerevan is right to seek a reduction in its current price.

"I agree that during some periods the gas price at the border has been below international levels but I cannot share Mr. Lavrov's view that it was ever two or three times lower than the market-based price," he said in written comments to RFE/RL's Armenian service.

Lavrov dismissed on Tuesday complaints that European Union member states are now paying less for Russian gas than Armenia and Belarus because of the collapse in international oil prices. He argued that unlike EU consumers, the two ex-Soviet states allied to Russia buy Russian gas at fixed prices that had been set well below international market-based levels.

"When the existing price for Armenia and Belarus was two or three times lower than the international price this was taken for granted and nobody said that it's politics," he said, adding that both countries should honor their "contractual obligations."

Grigoryan insisted that the Armenian government is not seeking to take advantage of the crumbling oil prices that are hitting the Russian economy hard. He claimed that Yerevan recently asked the Gazprom giant to cut the price of gas delivered to Armenia primarily because the Russians wanted to raise it.

Gazprom raised its wholesale price for Armenia from \$150 to \$165 per thousand cubic meters in January 2019. Nevertheless, the cost of gas supplied to Armenian households and businesses has remained unchanged since then.

Armenia's Gazprom-owned gas distribution network has incurred additional losses as a result. Last month it asked the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) to allow a roughly 11 percent rise in its retail prices.



Lavrov also said that internal gas prices set by Armenian utility regulators make it harder for Gazprom to agree to a deeper discount.

In the context of the gas issue, the Russian minister also criticized ongoing criminal investigations into major Russian companies operating in Armenia. He singled out the Armenian railway network managed by the Russia Railways (RZD) giant.

Grigoryan dismissed that criticism, saying that the Armenian authorities cannot allow any company to operate "beyond the law." "On this issue we have a mutual understanding with our Russian partners at the highest political level," he added without elaborating.

An Armenian law-enforcement agency raided the Yerevan offices of the network called South Caucasus Railway (SRC) and confiscated company documents in August 2018. The Investigative Committee alleged afterwards that SRC inflated the volume of its capital investments by 400 million drams (\$830,000).

Both SRC and its Russian operator denied any wrongdoing. Russia's Deputy Transport Minister Vladimir Tokarev said last September that the criminal investigation has effectively disrupted RZD's operations in Armenia.

A spokeswoman for the Investigative Committee said on Thursday it has still not charged anyone as part of the continuing probe. Nor have the investigators identified any concrete suspects in the case, she said.

Investigators indicted several SRC employees in a separate probe which was completed recently. The latter are accused of embezzling a total of 8 million drams (\$16,600).

In late 2018, law-enforcement authorities also launched a fraud inquiry into Gazprom's Armenian subsidiary. They have not indicted any senior executives of the gas operator either.

Armenia not to reopen schools and universities this year



Armenia will not reopen schools and universities by the end of the current academic year, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Arayik Harutyunyan informs.

Instead, the Ministry could consider reopening the educational establishment a week before September 1. Besides, additional classes could be organized on Saturdays in September and October.

The Minister said no exams will be held in the fourth and ninth grades in general schools. High-school students will not take exams, either.

The final score will be summed up based

on the results of the grades received before March 15 and during the first term.

In higher educational establishments, the form of exams will be decided by each institution in strict compliance with anti-epidemic norms.

Applicants will only take one exam. They can register from May 25 to June 15 and select the specialization and the educational establishment.

Entry exams will be organized in early July. No oral exams will be organized.

The Minister will provide more details on entry exams on April 30 or May 1.

Donald Trump commemorates Meds Yeghern, hails Armenians' contribution to the US

In contrast with landmark resolutions adopted by the U.S. Congress late last year, President Donald Trump again declined on April 24 to describe the 1915 mass killings of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey as genocide.

Just like his predecessors, Trump continued to use instead the Armenian phrase “Meds Yeghern” (Great Crime) in a statement on the 105th anniversary of the genocide.

“Today, we join the global community in memorializing the lives lost during the Meds Yeghern, one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century,” read the statement. “Beginning in 1915, 1 and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in the final years of the Ottoman Empire.”

“On this day of remembrance, we pay respect to those who suffered and lost their lives, while also renewing our commitment to fostering a more humane and peaceful world,” it said, praising the “strength and resiliency of the Armenian people in the face of tragedy.”

Trump has previously issued virtually identical statements on what the White House calls Armenian Remembrance Day marked on April 24.

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate recognized the Armenian genocide in separate resolutions passed in October and December respectively.

The Trump administration distanced itself from the resolutions. “The position of the



Administration has not changed,” a U.S. State Department spokeswoman said later in December.

The two leading Armenian-American advocacy groups strongly criticized Trump for not following the U.S. lawmakers’ example.

“The Administration’s statement falls short of the national consensus as reflected in the unequivocal affirmation by the Congress of the United States which overwhelmingly adopted H.Res. 296 and S.Res. 150 last fall, as well as by 49 American states,” Bryan Ardouny, the executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, said in a statement.

“Despite last year’s near-unanimous Congressional recognition of the Armenian Genocide, President Trump has, once again, granted Turkish President Erdogan – an openly anti-American dictator – a veto over honest U.S. remembrance of Turkey’s WWI-era genocide of millions of Armenians and other Christians,” charged Aram Hamparian, the executive director of the

Armenian National Committee of America.

For three consecutive weeks the Senate resolution was blocked by Republican senators at the behest of the White House concerned about its damage to U.S.-Turkish relations. Nevertheless, the Republican-controlled chamber eventually approved it by unanimous consent.

The Turkish government strongly condemned the Senate action, with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu calling it a “political show” that “has no validity whatsoever.”

But Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan thanked the Senate and the House for the “historic” resolutions.

Meanwhile, Trump’s likely Democratic challenger in the November 2020 presidential election, former Vice President Joe Biden, again used the word “genocide” in his statement on the genocide anniversary issued on April 24.

“If elected, I pledge to support a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide and will make universal human rights a top priority for my administration,” he said. “I stand today with all Armenians and the Armenian-American community, which has contributed so much to our nation, in remembering and honoring the victims of the Armenian Genocide.”

Biden strongly supported Armenian genocide recognition when he was a senator. In particular, he co-sponsored in 2007 a relevant resolution that never reached the Senate floor.

Canada’s Trudeau commemorates Armenian Genocide victims

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has issued a statement commemorating the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

“Today, we join Armenian communities in Canada and around the world to commemorate and honor the memory of victims of the Armenian genocide – a dark period of history that we must never forget,” Trudeau said in the statement.

“On this solemn day, we pay tribute to those who unjustly suffered and lost their



lives as a result of this tragic period. We also honor their descendants, including Canadians of Armenian heritage who have contributed so much to strengthening our

country,” he added.

“As we recognize the strength and spirit of the Armenian people, we also look forward with hope to a future of peace and mutual respect. Hatred and violence must never again be met with indifference,” the Prime Minister said.

He reiterated Canada’s commitment to building a world where everyone can feel safe from discrimination and persecution, no matter who they are, where they are from, or what they believe.

Armenian FM rules out concessions in the Karabakh issue

Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan has ruled out any concessions in the Nagorno Karabakh peace process. According to him, the peaceful settlement is possible only through mutual concessions.

“The Armenian side will never assume any approach that could endanger the security and pose a threat to the people of Artsakh, especially considering that the threat is real,” Minister Mnatsakanyan told a press conference today.

According to the Minister, “the mutual concession must be proportionate, and should fully reflect the elements of security and status.”

Referring to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s statement that the proposal on step-by-step solution to the Karabakh issue is being actively discussed, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said such proposals

“unacceptable to the Armenian side” were made in 2014 and 2016, but are not on the table today.

“Since 2018 our discussions have been restricted to the approaches of the sides on separate elements,” the Minister said, adding that in no way will any of the Armenian sides agree to concessions that could jeopardize the security of the people of Artsakh.

As for the “territories” mentioned in Lavrov’s commentary, Minister Mnatsakanyan said “those form a security zone and defensive lines.”

The Minister added that the realization of the right to self-determination is an absolute priority to the Armenian sides in the negotiation process.

“Realization of the right to self-determination means clarification of the status and the right to free expression of will without

restrictions,” he stated.

The Foreign Minister also stressed that Armenia is full involved in the negotiation process and will carry its role till the end. He noted, however, that the authorities of the Republic of Armenia have no mandate given by the people of Artsakh.

“Artsakh recently held parliamentary and presidential elections, empowering the authorities with a relevant mandate through a competitive, free and democratic vote. Over the past two years authorities of the of Armenia have been consistently working with the Artsakh side, and the same will be the case with the new authorities,” Zohrab Mnatsakanyan stated.

The Minister made it clear that no decision related to the people of Artsakh can be adopted without the people of Artsakh.

Artsakh Defense Ministry shares photos of downed Azerbaijani drone



The Defense Ministry of the Republic of Artsakh has shared the photos of the Azerbaijani Orbiter drone downed on April 21.

The air defense units of the Artsakh Defense Army downed an Azerbaijani Orbiter unmanned aerial vehicle as it entered Artsakh’s airspace, the Defense Ministry said earlier.

The Artsakh Defense Ministry says the number of flights carried out by the en-

“In addition to various types of fighter jets and helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles are involved in these operations, which, unlike

emy’s air forces in the areas adjacent to the line of contact between the Azerbaijani and Karabakh armed forces, which are of both educational and reconnaissance nature, has increased.

the first ones, often try to penetrate into the airspace of the Artsakh Republic for reconnaissance purposes,” the Ministry said in a statement.

The Artsakh Defense Ministry urged the Azerbaijani side to refrain from provocative steps and assures that any offensive action will receive a worthy response.



The amount of agricultural loans to be increased

Nikol Pashinyan on April 21 held a regular consultation on the government's anti-crisis action plan. The meeting first summed up the results of daily monitoring of 13 government-approved programs.

The following was reported on the economic assistance measures: within the framework of the first measure 249 credit applications worth 13,159 million drams have been approved; within the framework of the second measure 2943 applications were approved, out of which 2632 - micro-credits for supporting agriculture, 311 - credits for other agricultural purposes. A total of 4,343 million drams has already been allocated as part of the second activity. Under the third program, 343 applications totaling 3,926 million drams have so far been approved. In the frame of the 5th activity, 9901 beneficiaries have received 1,597 million drams. 83.4 million drams were paid to 1485 actual beneficiaries as part of the 10th activity.

The following was reported on the ongoing social assistance activities: the 4th, 6th and 7th activities are complete; all identified beneficiaries received financial support. As part of the 8th event, financial assistance was provided to 80,505 beneficiaries, the amount of assistance amounted



to 5,571 million drams. 4227 applications are being processed at this point of time.

As part of the 9th program, 51,791 beneficiaries received assistance, the total volume is 1,398 million drams; 130 thousand applications are being processed. The 11th and 12th events have been completed and the planned payments are made in full. The 13th activity is still underway.

A number of issues related to the implementation of current programs were raised. The Prime Minister highlighted the effective implementation of the aforementioned activities and gave relevant instructions to those responsible.

Further steps to neutralize the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus were then discussed. In particular, the issue of increasing the credit portfolio provided for

agricultural purposes was raised. The results of yesterday's Prime Minister-chaired consultation were reviewed in that context, including the support toolkit and the proposals.

A common approach was formed during the exchange of opinions that followed, namely it was decided that the amount of credit resources provided to the farming sector should be stepped up at this stage and further steps should be discussed upon its completion.

Nikol Pashinyan reiterated that the Government prioritizes the agricultural sector as an important area of anti-crisis support and given the effectiveness of this tool, it will expand the volume of the loan portfolio provided as part of the second activity. The Head of Government instructed the responsible officials to submit the draft for approval as shortly as possible.

Proposals for environmental projects with a social bias and issues related to implementation mechanisms and instruments were discussed during the meeting. The Premier suggested continuing discussions on specification of proposals and development of new programs.

Armenia Finance Minister says foreign debt increase is unavoidable

Armenia is still among countries having a low burden of foreign debt, but in the current coronavirus-related conditions an increase of the debt is unavoidable, Finance Minister Atom Janjughazyan said at a news conference while commenting on the bill to amend the budget.

"The proposed scenario implies a 324-billion-dram deficit. For funding this 324-billion-dram deficit we are considering all



potential options, including the involvement of loan funds from international financial organizations – our partners at the

International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and all our other partners. We are also considering as an option the involvement of debt through placing state bonds from the domestic market. The change of the debt's volume is unavoidable, both in absolute and relative terms", he said.

He said the actions they are taking is precisely for this kind of situation.

43.3 billion drams provided in social and economic assistance as part of anti-COVID-19 effort

Chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, a regular consultation was held in the Office of Government to discuss Armenia's socio-economic situation amid the ongoing pandemic.

The meeting first summed up the government's anti-crisis actions. It was reported that as of today AMD 43.3 billion has been made available in social and economic assistance as part of the ongoing anti-COVID-19 effort. The following indicators are currently recorded: 1st program - 264 satisfied applications, the amount of assistance - 19.5 billion drams; 2nd program - 3887 satisfied applications and 5.2 billion drams respectively; 3rd program - 430 satisfied applications, 4.8 billion drams; 5th program - 11,296 ben-

eficiaries, 1.8 billion drams; 8th program - 86 522 beneficiaries, 6 billion drams; 9th program - 72,403 beneficiaries, 1.9 billion drams; 10th program - 2365 beneficiaries, 141.7 million drams.

The process of identifying beneficiaries and assisting with these programs is still going on. The 13th and 14th activities are underway, and planned financial assistance will be provided over the next week. The 4th, 6th, 7th, 11th and 12th activities are complete, the following indicators are recorded: 4th program - 2093 beneficiaries and 209.3 mln drams respectively; 6th program - 6723 beneficiaries, 457 million drams; 7th program - 8751 beneficiaries, 875 million drams; 11th program - 450,827 beneficiaries; 786 million drams, 12th pro-

gram - 486,434 beneficiaries, 1.8 billion drams.

Touching on the possibility of expanding the scope of targeted social support, the meeting reviewed a number of proposals, including the ones concerning eligibility criteria and vulnerable groups. The Premier instructed to finalize the proposals and submit them for approval.

The meeting next focused on longer-term strategic projects. Development prospects, opportunities and industry priorities were discussed from the perspective of ongoing global processes. Issues related to socioeconomic assistance and toolkits were raised during the exchange of views that followed.

Armenia lifts restrictions on inter-regional movement, certain types of economic activity

Armenia has eased restrictions on inter-regional movement and some types of economic activity.

According to the Commandant Tigran Avinyan's decision, checkpoints between different provinces will be removed; instead, efforts will be focused on tightened control over other restrictions.

Special regimes may be established in separate settlements depending on the degree of risk of spreading of the infection.

Restrictions on the movement of people and public transport are maintained.

Temporary restrictions on certain types of economic activity have been lifted. In particular, the ban will be lifted from polygraphic



activity, production of pesticides and other agrochemicals, stone sawing and processing, production of metal construction structures, manufacturing of electrical wiring harnesses, repairing of finished metal products, machinery and equipment, installation of industrial machines and equipment.

Certain types of wholesale and retail sale

in non-specialty stores, book publishing, production of TV programs, post-production activities and distribution will also be allowed.

Restrictions will also be lifted from the activity of trade unions, computer and communication equipment repair, repair of household electronic devices, home gardening.

Production of textile and garment, shoes, electrical equipment, furniture, as well as the activity of sports clubs could be allowed based on individual applications.

All activity should comply with rules of sanitary-epidemiological safety.

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PM Pashinyan pays tribute to the memory...

The government of Soviet Armenia decided to declare April 24 a day of remembrance for Genocide victims and to build a memorial in Tsitsernakaberd. That majestic monument became a vivid symbol of our people's eternity.

At the same time, a movement for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide started in the colonies of the Armenian Diaspora. The movement that spearheaded the political and social structures in the Diaspora for many decades succeeded in many countries owing to advocates' tireless efforts.

The Armenian Genocide has been officially recognized by 30 countries around the world, and we are grateful to all those states, international organizations, religious and secular leaders who expressed solidarity with the Armenian people and recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide.

Dear compatriots,

Armenians all over the world are today commemorating the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide. Why did our feelings failed to fade away after a century, and the memory is now even brighter in our hearts? The answer is simple. More than a century has passed, but the consequences of the Genocide have not been eliminated. Turkey has not yet apologized for what it did. That is why we declare that we remember and demand.

At the same time, we consider that the recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not only our national cause, but it is a matter of global agenda, because April 24 is not only a day of remembrance for our innocent victims, but a day of commemoration of a major crime committed against mankind, a day of calling for the fight against denial, a day of responsibility to prevent other serious crimes against humanity.

And yet, April 24 is first of all the most compelling opportunity to think about the past and the future of our nation, our people, the right moment for self-recognition, for appreciating our strength and the steps to take ahead.

So, what conclusions should we draw from April 24?

First, the Young Turk government issued a death sentence against the Armenian people in 1915 and did everything to enforce that



awful decision. The one and a half million sanctified Armenian martyrs strengthened our will to live, create, get stronger, remember and demand; our nation triumphed over death.

The second and equally important consequence is that we are still facing the challenges posed to our people at the outset of the twentieth century. And the only way to effectively defy these challenges is to have a powerful statehood and build an Armenia ready to face security threats.

Yes, we must spare no effort to achieve a lasting peace in the region, to resolve all disputes and conflicts on the basis of mutual respect by means of negotiations and through peaceful means. But only a capable, dignified and sovereign state can defend itself.

Yes, we must spare no effort to deepen our relations with our allies, to make them more institutional and reliable, and to increase the number of our allies in the world. But only a capable, dignified and sovereign state can create a real opportunity to achieve such a result.

In order to have a highly capable, dignified and sovereign state, we need an education system that meets all modern standards, a dynamically developing high-tech economy, a well-established military-industrial complex, a powerful army and special services. By consolidating the pan-Armenian potential around the Armenian statehood we will guarantee our nation's scientific, diplomatic and economic progress. To solve this practical problem, we must be able to formulate our national concept, our national ideology, our vision, which will form nationwide consensus on our national values, national goals and national strategy, which will protect, preserve and develop our identity. It will provide guarantees for our competitiveness in the modern world and in the future. In the near future, I will

present a draft of such a concept and strategy for a pan-Armenian discussion.

Dear compatriots,

This year we are marking April 24 in exceptional conditions. The new type of coronavirus has placed us all in an unimaginable situation when the 55-year-old April 24 march of hundreds of thousands of citizens shall not be held in a bid to avoid the current epidemic.

First of all, I would like to thank all our compatriots for their understanding of the government's decision. I should note that our compatriots are facing a similar situation in the Diaspora.

Amid the ongoing crisis, we have tried to find an opportunity to ensure a greater coverage of April 24 events: this year millions of people from around the world will have the opportunity to attend the April 24 march that will take place in a virtual space.

To participate in the march, you must continue to stay at home, and just send your name to the short number 1915, if you are in Armenia, and to +374 33 19 15 00, if you are abroad, which means that your names will be displayed from this evening until dawn on the pillars of Tsitsernakaberd Memorial.

The virtual march will start at 22:00 tonight. It will continue until dawn, and thousands of your foreign friends and acquaintances will have the opportunity to participate in it.

Dear compatriots,

April 24 has been a symbol of our national unity, consolidation and discipline for many years. This symbol must be much stronger; much more visible today, and I am sure it will be such.

And therefore,

Long live freedom!

*Long live the Republic of Armenia!
Long live the Republic of Artsakh!
Long live the Armenian Diaspora!
Long live us and our children, who now live and will live in a free and happy Armenia!*

We remember and demand!"

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan laid a wreath at the Memorial. He joined Mrs. Anna Hakobyan to lay flowers at the Eternal Flame commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

It is not wise for Armenian officials & Catholicos to be in conflict



By
Harut Sassounian

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic which is killing hundreds of thousands of people around the world, including in Armenia, and paralyzing the economy and societal life as we know it, the biggest controversy these days in Armenia and the Armenian communities in the Diaspora has become a statement issued by His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, and the harsh reaction by various Armenian officials and some members of the media.

Unfortunately, such a confrontation was not unexpected. Ever since the Velvet Revolution which brought Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to power in Armenia, there has been a tense atmosphere prevailing in Armenia and the Diaspora regarding those supporting Pashinyan's government and those opposing it. While there is nothing wrong to be on the opposite sides of a political issue, the confrontation is so heated that often insults, cuss words, and even physical threats are exchanged, particularly on social media. In an earlier interview with the Armenian media, I had urged that Armenians should not treat those who disagree with them as enemies! I had said that "we can disagree without being disagreeable."

It is understandable that most Armenians viewed the previous leaders as oppressors under whose unjust rule the Armenian people suffered tremendously. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians emigrated to Russia, Europe and North America not just because of economic hardships, but also due to social inequalities. Therefore, to a degree, it is natural that the majority of Armenians would harbor such toxic feelings toward the previous regimes.

However, I suggest that Armenians should focus on rebuilding the economy of Armenia rather than being consumed with hatred

for the rest of their lives. Those who abused their positions and enriched themselves should be tried in courts and properly punished for their misdeeds.

Turning to the latest episode of the current acrimony, Catholicos Karekin II issued a statement to News.am last week, suggesting that former President Robert Kocharyan's detention in prison be changed. Here is the translation of the statement by the Catholicos:

"Under the circumstances of this pandemic, we are seeing that in various countries of the world special attention is being paid to individuals who are detained in prisons, welcome steps are being taken toward releasing those who do not pose a danger to society or changing the terms of their detention, in order to protect them from this virus. In such issues the position of the Church is based on the divine message of love, care, and compassion, and in this context, our counsel is that the authorities of our homeland continue to take the necessary steps in this direction. Regarding Robert Kocharyan, the second President of Armenia, being informed of the expert opinions of doctors about his health, we consider it important that along with implementing justice all preventive means and measures be taken, including the changing of the method of detention, in order to protect his health from future complications during this pandemic period."

The next day, Alen Simonyan, the Deputy Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, a member of the ruling party, wrote in his Facebook page the following harsh response to the Catholicos: "Today Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II said that he considers it important to change the terms of detention of Robert Kocharyan. Let me say that thousands of citizens of Armenia have already for a very long time considered it important the issue of changing the All Armenian Catholicos. I think citizen Ktrij Nersessian [the layman's name of the Catholicos] who has been continuously silent, silent and silent for decades, today, under the new conditions, can freely be the guarantor of citizen Robert Kocharyan, and for that sufficient funds can be found."

Also reacting to the Catholicos was Mane Gevorgyan, spokeswoman of the Prime Minister. She curtly stated that the government does not intend to comment on the "hopes and desires" of the Cathol-

icos. The spokeswoman also recalled that Priest Vahram Melikyan, spokesman of the Mother See of Etchmiadzin, had presented a guarantee that if businessman Samvel Mayrapetyan is released from jail and goes to Germany for treatment, he would return to Armenia, but has not done so since January 2019.

To make matters worse, the Deputy Primate of the Diocese of Yerevan, Archbishop Navasard Kchoyan was charged by the Armenian government last week with fraud and money laundering. The National Security Service [NSS] claimed that Archbishop Kchoyan had colluded with an Armenian businessman to defraud a third person. The NSS announced that Kchoyan owned 33% of an offshore company. Archbishop Kchoyan's lawyer denied the accusation.

Etchmiadzin reacted by urging government officials and the media to respect Archbishop Kchoyan's presumption of innocence. The Church headquarters also stated that it is "bewildering" that the NSS announced the charges one day after Catholicos Karekin II called for a change in the detention terms of former President Robert Kocharyan. Several high-ranking clergymen also criticized the officials who had attacked the Catholicos.

We hope that the mutual accusations will cease as Armenians would become more respectful of everyone's freedom of speech, without insulting those who disagree with them. At a time that the pandemic is taking many innocent lives and Armenia's economy is in peril, it would be wiser to concentrate on resolving the grave issues facing our nation.

Unique Virtual March on April 24
Since public gatherings are banned in most countries, the HyeID non-profit organization is suggesting a unique way of commemorating the Armenian Genocide this year from the comfort of your homes.

During the week of April 24, please go to the weblink: April24.hyeid.org and click "join," indicating your agreement to the following statement: "We have to stay home this April 24, but we join the on-line march... We demand Justice for Turkey's Genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915." Your agreement will be shown on the worldwide map on screen, indicating the number of those who have joined the on-line march in each country.

Garó Paylan submits inquiry to Turkish Parliament on 105th anniversary of Armenian Genocide

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Diyarbakır MP Garó Paylan has submitted an inquiry to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in the 105th year of Armenian Genocide.

Speaking to *bianet*, Paylan said “until a few years ago, the society of Turkey took very important steps to face the great calamity that happened 105 years ago.”

“The vast majority who did not know or recognize the issue could, at least, realize that a bad incident took place in 1915. Maybe, they did not call it a genocide, but they came to the point of condemning what happened back then and comprehend that what happened was terrible,” he said.

Paylan added however, that with processes of both peace and democratization coming to an end in 2015, all doors that were opened about Armenian Genocide have started to be closed one by one.

In other words, there was an attempt to hinder the steps that were taken to face, talk about and comprehend this issue and to serve justice with a fair memory, he said.

“As a matter of fact, the ones who talked about this issue faced investigations. There are five summaries of proceedings against me for talking about it. Others who want to



talk about this issue are also faced with the stick of the judiciary. Seen in this light, I can say that we are in a worse situation than five years ago,” Garó Paylan added.

On April 24, he has submitted a Parliamentary inquiry to the Speaker's Office.

“Armenian Genocide has been debated at dozens of parliaments around the world, it has been recognized as a genocide. But none of them has healed the wound of Armenian people,” the MP said.

“As a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, I know that the only Parliament that will heal the wound of the Armenian people is the Grand National Assembly of Turkey,” he stated.

“It is only when our Parliament faces this issue and justice is served that the wound of Armenian people will heal. Armenians of Turkey all around the world have been

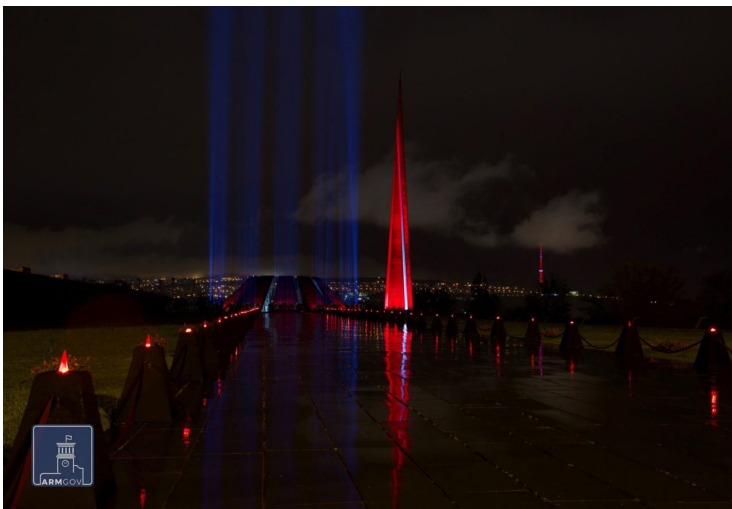
expecting this from the parliament of their homeland for 105 years. That is why, I have another Parliamentary inquiry,” Paylan said.

The lawmaker says he could use the word genocide with ease in the years 2015 and 2016, but after 2016, the word genocide has been banned at the Parliament and his Parliamentary questions and inquiries have been rejected on the ground of using the word genocide.

In his Parliamentary inquiry submitted to the Speaker's Office today (April 24), HDP MP Garó Paylan has reiterated that “while the great calamity faced by the Armenian people in this land has been debated and recognized as a genocide by the parliaments of several states, it has not yet been debated at the Parliament of Turkey until today.”

Accordingly, Paylan has requested that a Parliamentary investigation be launched “so that the responsible parties of Armenian Genocide can be identified and justice can be served, albeit late.”

Minute of Luminous Remembrance from the Armenian Genocide Memorial hill



The Tsitsernakaberd Memorial lit up at 9pm on April 23 to mark the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The lights in the streets and squares of Yerevan and the regions went out at 9 pm and all church bell rang for three minutes.

Citizens turned off the lights in the apartments and turned on the telephone lights or lit candles near the windows, thus joining the action entitled Illuminated Commemoration Vigil.

As public events have been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Government will lay 105 thousand flowers at the Eternal Flame on behalf of all of us on April 24.

Only the President, the Prime Minister, the Parliament Speaker and the Catholicos visited the Genocide Memorial at 10 am.

Armenian philanthropist Aso Tavitian passes away



His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians, has informed about the demise of philanthropist Aso O. Tavitian.

“We are deeply saddened by the sudden demise of Aso Tavitian – great philanthropist, humanist, patriot and beloved friend of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the Armenian people. His death is a great loss for the Holy Church and the whole na-

tion,” His Holiness said in a message.

The Catholicos said it is impossible to list all his patriotic deeds.

“The Armenian Church had a special place in his multifaceted activity,” His Holiness said, describing the support as a unique “tribute to the efforts aimed at strengthening the national identity and spirit.”

“Our beloved Aso also supported the education and upbringing of the new gen-

eration with a view of seeing a stronger Armenia. Through the Tavitian Foundation, about 350 young people from Armenia have continued their higher education at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and continue to bring their service to our homeland in various fields,” the Catholicos said.

Business leader and philanthropist Aso (Assadour) Ohanes Tavitian was born in Bulgaria to parents who were survivors of the 1915 Genocide.

He immigrated to New York in 1961 as a Cold War refugee. The same year he received a scholarship to attend Columbia University. After receiving his master’s degree in nuclear engineering, Tavitian co-founded SyncSort Inc., one of the first software development companies that emerged after IBM unbundled its software, and served as its CEO from 1975 to 2008.

The company played a pivotal role in the development of the software industry. In 1995 he established the Tavitian Foundation which provides scholarships to students of Armenian and Bulgarian origin and sponsors projects that focus on the development of the Republic of Armenia.

Senator Bob Menendez calls on Trump to join Senate and recognize the Armenian Genocide

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Bob Menendez once again called on President Donald Trump to join the Senate in acknowledging the truth of the Armenian Genocide in order to prevent it from happening again.

“I am honored to join everyone in New Jersey and around the world in commemorating the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. I have been proud to lead the Resolution affirming the facts of the Armenian Genocide. And I am especially proud that last December after years of work the Resolution in the Senate passed by unanimous consent. This historic milestone will never have been accomplished without the support and commitment of the Armenian-American community”, the Senator said in his video address on the



occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Mr. Menendez said this year the Administration should follow the Senate’s lead in recognizing this tragedy as what it was – a Genocide. “Acknowledging the truth of this Genocide is necessary to prevent it from happening again. And I call on President Trump to join us as we work to place real meaning in the words “never again””,

he said.

On December 12, 2019, the US Senate struck a historic blow against Turkey’s century-long obstruction of justice for the Armenian Genocide, unanimously adopting S.Res.150, an Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)-backed measure that locks in ongoing US recognition of this crime. The resolution, identical to a measure (H.Res.296) adopted 405 to 11 in the US House in October, officially rejects Turkey’s denials of its genocide against Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christian nations. Passage of the resolution – spearheaded by Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) – marks the first time that the Senate has recognized the Armenian Genocide.

Viva-MTS livestreamed Garik and Sona's live concert for the first time on Facebook

VIVA MTS

Armenia's leading telecommunications and digital services provider Viva-MTS, has initiated to organize an online concert for the first time.

The company streamed a virtual concert of Garik and Sona

The musicians performed live on Sunday, April 26, at 21:00 on the official Facebook page of Viva-MTS fb.com/MTSArmenia/. Broadcasting was possible via virtual reality at 360 degrees thanks to the "VR Ticket" project. The project ensured the club atmosphere of the concert.



network reach and spreading a wide range of Voice and Data services all across Armenia. Having the best of the Armenian people interest at heart since its launch on 1st July 2005 and in a short period of time Viva-MTS has managed to build a nationwide

network and a considerable customer base. Viva-MTS drives innovation and aims at always being at the forefront of any development serving the Armenian mobile communications market. The company follows the guidance provided by ISO 26000 (International Standard of Social Responsibility) and ISO/IEC 27001:2013 (Information Security Management System). For more information visit www.mts.am

Mobile TeleSystems PJSC ("MTS") is the leading telecommunications group in Russia and the CIS, offering mobile and fixed voice, broadband, pay TV as well as content and entertainment services in one of the world's fastest growing regions. Including its subsidiaries, the Group services over 100 million mobile subscribers in Rus-

sia, Ukraine, Armenia and Belarus. Since July Y2000, MTS' Level 3 ADRs have been listed on the New York Stock Exchange (ticker symbol MBT). Additional information about the MTS Group can be found at: www.mtsgsm.com



on its Facebook page's live platform. For the first time, the band gave an exclusive online concert as part of a partnership with Viva-MTS. The concert was available exclusively on the official Facebook page of Viva-MTS.

#StayHome, and the stars will come to visit you

Viva-MTS (MTS Armenia CJSC) is Armenia's leading telecommunications operator, having the widest

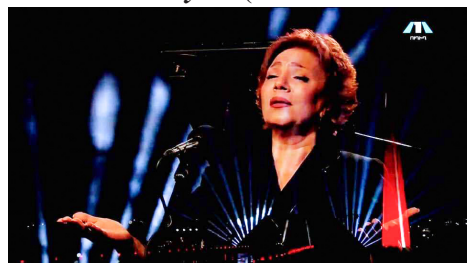
2020 Commemoration of the 1915-23 Armenian Genocide in Turkey... under Covid19 Quarantine: All-Night Concert of Many and Many...

By
Gourgen James Khazhakian,
Chief Correspondent,
A Genocide Survivors Descendant

1915-23 Armenian Genocide Martyred Sainted Victims commemoration was UNIQUE not only 'cause of (damned) COVID19 pandemia quarantine, but also a beautiful format (even in spite of some organizational problems): amazing digital light effects (see a pic) and a concert of many and many artists in "all-night vigil" format that lasted the whole eight hours – from 22.00 to 06.00 sharp, and... with air temperature from +2+3 to ZERO...

So there were leading soloists of the Alexander Spendiaryan Natl Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, members of the Young Artists Program of the Theatre, chamber groups of the State Philharmony Orchestra, State Symphony Orchestra, quartet of the State Chamber Orchestra, "Hover" Choir, duet of an eminent duduk player **Kamo Seyranyan** (RA Honored Artist) and a prominent opera singer **Liana Alexanyan**, folk singer **Gourgen Dabaghyan** and many others...

So among Opera House soloists where **Hayk Tigranyan** with *Arshak's arioso* from "Arshak the Second" opera by **Tigran Chukhajyan**, **Marineh Deinyan** (RA Honored Artist)

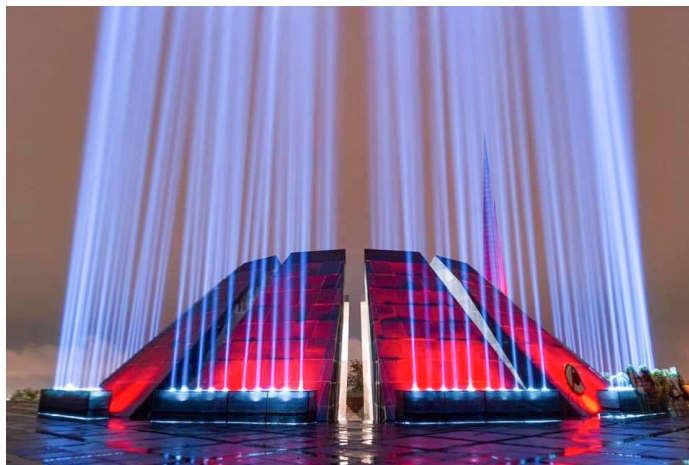


ist) with *Norma's aria* from "Norma" opera by **V. Bellini**, **Magda Mkrtchyan** (RA Honored Artist) with "Havoun, Havoun" by Saint **Grigor Narekatsi** and "Horjam" by **Makar Yekmalyan**..., **Christineh Sahakyan** (RA Honored Artist) with the Great **Komitas' 'Chi-**

nar Es" and "Kanche' Kroonk", **Artsvik Demurchyan** with "Ais Gisher, Lusnyak Gisher" (This Night, Moon Night) by **Komitas** and some others. And the concertmeisters there were **Armen Aghajanyan** and **Yelena Var-dazaryan**:

Some of the soloists shared their insights with your author:

Marineh Deinyan: "...It was great honor for me to be involved in this unique "Night of Commemoration" ... and it was a debt ... what I had to do in memory of the innocent victims of my Nation ... I was indebted to my own relatives as well ... who were also the victims of that brutal massacre ... From the very first moment I was excited... And... affected seeing our Monument



completely with different sacrament.... And if in this case it would be impossible to speak sing ... At that moment, there was just an unspeakable desire to express ... restraining my excitement..."

Hayk Tigranyan: "Night of the Commemoration", this artistic event that was a tribute to the memory of the victims of the 1915 Genocide, transformed the culture of mourning and weeping of the Armenian Nation turning it into a beacon of eternity representing the true Armenian type. My participation in this evening was an exceptional reality in my life and a very special opportunity to express my love and gratitude for the immortal memory of the martyred



HEROES. This was an evening that will always remain in all my life as a reality that expresses the most devoted and deepest emotional inner world.

My song was dedicated to Armenia of Renaissance, living and creating Armenia."

As it was mentioned above, the Opera House Young Artists Program soloists headed by the Program Founding Head **Levon Javadyan** (a nice pianist who accompanied to many of them that exciting night) performed as well.

So they were **Lousineh Stepanyan** with "Quia respexit" from I.S. Bach's "Magnifikat", **Juliana Grigoryan** with **A. Dvorak's** "I Remember; my Mother Said...", **Elen Yeghiazaryan** with **Romanos Meliqyan's** "Mi Lar" (Don't Cry!), **Tigran Hakobyan** with *Saro's aria* from "Anoush" opera by **Tigran Chukhajyan** and some others.



P.S. General and Artistic Director of our Opera House, Honored Artist of Russia Maestro **Constantine G. Orbelian** (who was "locked" in the US due to Covid19 pandemia) who watched live broadcast of the Concert said he was very satisfied with the performances of Opera soloists as well as Young Artists Program participants.

2020 Aurora Humanitarians announced



On April 24, 2020, on the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative hosted an online discussion to honor those who perished a century ago and celebrate modern heroes, including those fighting the global outbreak of COVID-19. In accordance with the symbolic traditions upheld by the Initiative for many years, Aurora revealed the names of 2020 Aurora Humanitarians, chosen by the Aurora Prize Selection Committee for their courage, commitment and impact.

“We’re part of the globe; we’re part of humanity. We’re setting an example that morally righteous nations can remind the humanity occasionally, during terrible times, that we are not alone. We are each other’s keepers. We represent the nation that stands for solidarity and compassion,” noted Vartan Gregorian, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and Aurora Prize Selection Committee member.

The online discussion “Aurora. Standing in Solidarity,” moderated by Nicola Stanisch, Aurora’s Executive Director, brought together Noubar Afeyan, Vartan Gregorian and Ruben Vardanyan, Co-Founders of the Aurora Humanitarian

Initiative; Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, and Marguerite Barankitse, inaugural Aurora Prize Laureate.

Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, took the virtual stage to announce the 2020 Aurora Humanitarians: Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman, Angélique Namaika, Sophie Beau and Klaus Vogel, Sakena Yacoobi. “Aurora is about building a broader humanitarian movement and maintaining a cycle of giving and is focused on gratitude in action. By bringing these traditions online today, we are adapting to our current situation, bringing people together, remembering the kindness of humanity and celebrating the work of these heroes,” said Lord Darzi.

On behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, an Aurora Prize Laureate is honored each year with a US \$1,000,000 award and a unique opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by supporting the organizations that have inspired their humanitarian action. The 2020 Aurora Humanitarians have nominated the following organizations:

Marguerite Barankitse, the inaugural Au-

rore Prize Laureate, brought up all the ways solidarity can strengthen a community and benefit humanity on a global level: “I think that we should stand up together. There are so many people and we can share; we can break this indifference and create compassion. Aurora Prize creates a brotherhood of people who have lost so much. If those survivors can say: “OK, I can give back to others,” then we can also give back to others.”

Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, drew parallels between the inspiration behind the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and the current crisis: “The human spirit that motivates people to save others is the one that very few of us have experienced but that many Armenians are the beneficiaries of. Today, that same spirit is being thrust upon all the world. There are modern day saviors in every community and there are survivors who can’t understand why this is happening with the virus. And they feel now what Armenians felt a 105 years ago. I can’t but point out that while the perpetrator is different, the effect is much the same.”

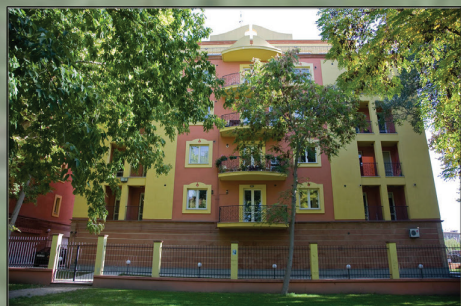
Ruben Vardanyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, highlighted the significance of the date and called for new solutions to come out of the crisis.

“What we’re commemorating today is crucial not only for the Armenians but also for the world. We are facing a new challenge now, and it’s all about the key issues – our human values. Looking forward and remembering your past, I think, are the critical messages for today. The pandemic crisis creates a new reality that we have to accept. But while we’re isolated locally, we at the same time remain connected globally. We’re all part of the global picture,” he said.

During the online discussion, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative also officially announced the opening of the nomination period for the 2021 Aurora Prize and called for putting forward inspiring humanitarians, including those fighting the global outbreak of COVID-19.

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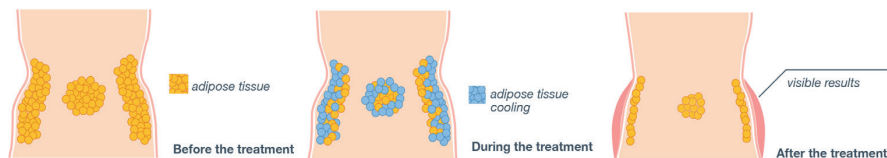
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