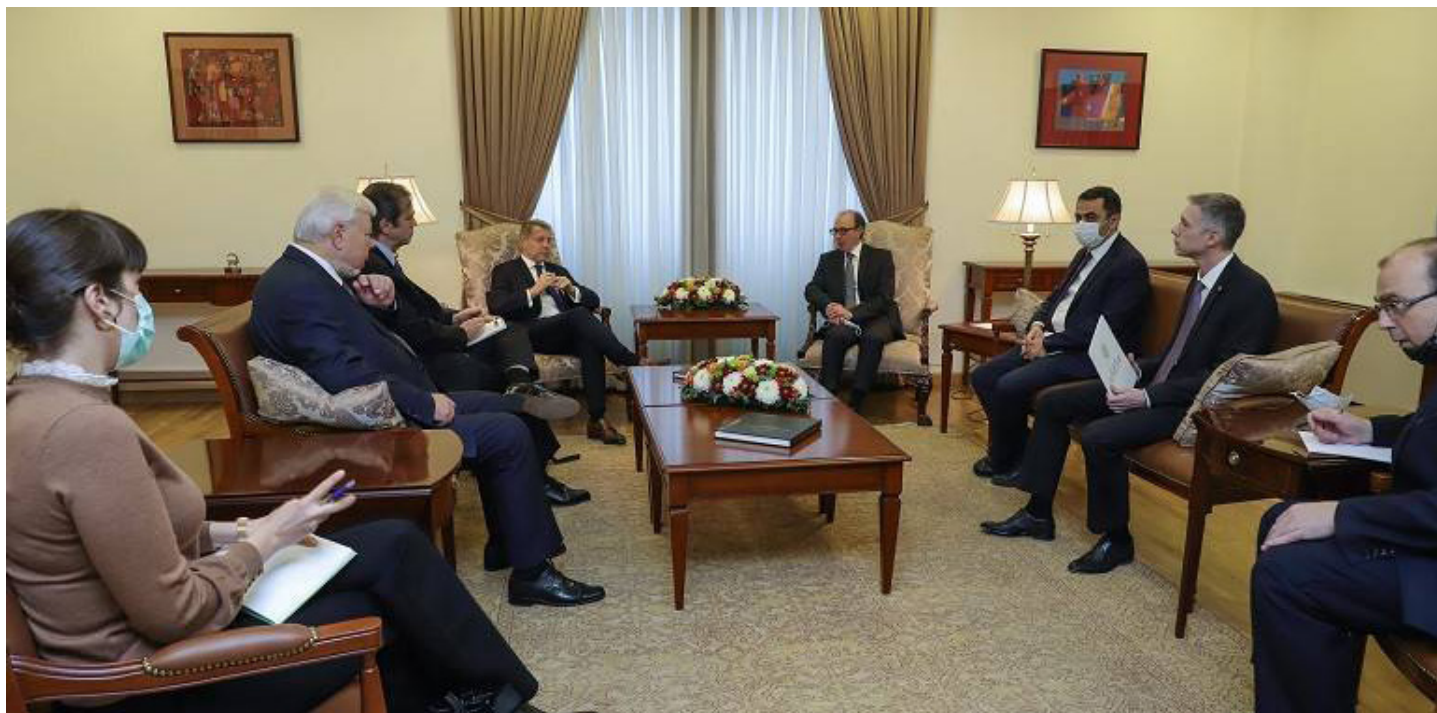


## Status of Artsakh a priority for the Armenian side: Foreign Minister tells Minsk Group Co-Chairs



**Armenia -- The U.S. and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and other diplomats meet with Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan, Yerevan, December 14, 2020.**

Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan received on December 14 representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Stéphane Visconti (France), Andrew Schofer (USA), Alexei Sinegubov, Chargé d’Affaires of the Russian Embassy in Armenia, and Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

The meeting focused on the developments following the establishment of ceasefire in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone, the restoration and protection of the rights of the Artsakh Armenians.

In this context, the Armenian Foreign Minister reaffirmed the principled position of the Armenian parties that the rights and interests of the Artsakh Armenians should be addressed first of all within the framework of the peace process under the co-chairmanship of the OSCE Minsk Group.

As a priority of the Armenian side, Ara Ayvazyan emphasized the determination of the status of Artsakh on the basis of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination, the de-occupation of the territories occupied by Azerbaijan, the provision of conditions for safe return of the Artsakh Armenians to their homes.

The minister also drew the attention of the Co-Chairs on the Azerbaijani violation of its own commitments assumed by the November 9 trilateral statement. The Armenian FM said the obvious demonstration of this was the provocative actions by Azerbaijan in the line of contact yesterday which were carried out during the visit of the Co-Chairs to the region.

Referring to the hate speech by the military-political leadership of Azerbaijan at various levels, the Minister stressed that it once again proves Azerbaijan’s inability to engage constructively in the peace process, to renounce the policy of using force as a threat of force.

During the meeting, the Armenian Foreign Minister and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs touched upon the issues of resumption of the peace process within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

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## De-occupation of Artsakh territories an imperative: Armenia condemns Azerbaijan's violation of ceasefire

The Armenian Foreign Ministry has condemned the gross violation of the trilateral statement by Azerbaijan.

On December 11, at around 8:40 pm, taking advantage of the fact that no peacekeeping forces were deployed in this part of the Artsakh Republic, the special detachments of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces attacked the Artsakh-Azerbaijani line of contact in the direction of Old Tagher and Khtsaber settlements of the Hadrut region.

As a result, six servicemen of the Defense Army received gunshot wounds of various degrees. Azerbaijani forces continued their provocative actions on December 13 in the direction of Mets Shen-Hin settlements in Hadrut region.

"Strongly condemning this gross violation of the commitments made by the top military-political leadership of Azerbaijan in the trilateral statement on the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of Rus-



sian peacekeepers, we emphasize that these actions are aimed at devaluing the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"Adhering to its traditional way of acting, the Azerbaijani side resorted to the provocation during the visit of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to the region. In fact, this challenge to the efforts of the Co-Chairs is a continuation of the belligerent and unacceptable statements made by the leaders of Turkey and Azerbaijan during

the recent parade in Baku. Such a policy once again demonstrates the Turkish-Azerbaijani expansionist policy, which continues to undermine regional security and stability, and is fraught with expansion into neighboring regions, the Ministry added.

It stressed that these actions of official Baku make it more imperative to eliminate the consequences of the recent Azerbaijani aggression, including the de-occupation of the territories of Artsakh and the return of the Armenians of Artsakh to their places of residence.

"Given the impunity of Azerbaijan for violating its international obligations through force and its aftermath, we call on the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to respond unequivocally and clearly to the Azerbaijani side's actions aimed at violating the ceasefire, ethnic cleansing and occupation of Armenian settlements," the Foreign Ministry stated.

## Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Armenia and France

On December 8, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ara Ayvazyan held a meeting with Foreign Minister of France Jean Yves Le Drian in Paris.

The Foreign Ministers touched upon a number of issues on bilateral agenda. Minister Ayvazyan commended the high-level of the Armenian-French relations, emphasizing the commitment to further expand and enrich it in all directions.

At the center of the negotiations were the issues of regional security and stability. Taking the opportunity Minister Ayvazyan highly appreciated the efforts of France aimed at establishing peace and addressing the humanitarian situation resulting from the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh.

Minister Ayvazyan highlighted that Azerbaijan had committed war crimes throughout the war against Artsakh including by using prohibited weapons against the civilian population and deliberately targeting vital infrastructure, which was aimed at creating a humanitarian catastro-



phe in Artsakh and completely evicting the Armenians from Artsakh.

Touching upon the issues of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Artsakh, the Foreign Minister of Armenia highlighted the importance of providing conditions for the return of the Armenians to Artsakh and protecting their rights. Minister Ayvazyan highly appreciated the support of France and the French people to the people of Artsakh during these challenging times, which was also manifested in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Artsakh. In this context, both sides stressed the strict

adherence to international humanitarian law, norms of human rights, respect for the historical-cultural heritage of Artsakh, including through the involvement of relevant international organizations on the ground.

In the context of regional security, both sides expressed concern over Turkey's destabilizing role both with its direct involvement in the aggression against Artsakh and the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters from the Middle East to the region.

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and France exchanged views on the resumption of Nagorno-Karabakh peace process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. In this regard, Minister Ayvazyan stressed the importance of recognizing the status of Artsakh based on the realization of the right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh.

The meeting was followed by the joint press conference of the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and France Ara Ayvazyan and Jean Yves Le Drian.



## Armenian PM stresses the need to resume negotiations with the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on December 14 received OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Stéphane Visconti (France) and Andrew Schofer (USA), Charge d'Affaires of the Russian Embassy in Armenia Alexei Sinigubov and Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

The Premier appreciated the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' visit to the region in the wake of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh. Nikol Pashinyan considered it necessary to resume the negotiations in the frame of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The Premier highlighted as a top priority the determination of Artsakh's statute on the basis of peoples' right to self-determi-



nation, the de-occupation of those territories occupied by Azerbaijan, the establishment of conditions necessary for safe repatriation of Artsakh-domiciled Armenians and the protection of religious and cultural assets.

The Head of the Armenian Government condemned Azerbaijan's breach of its commitments assumed under the trilateral statement, which was reflected in provocative

actions on the line of contact between Artsakh and Azerbaijan on December 11 and 12.

Issues related to the post-war situation, the resumption of the negotiation process, the reinstatement of the rights of Artsakh-based Armenians and their safety were discussed during the meeting.

## Aliyev accuses Minsk Group of playing no role in Karabakh conflict settlement, says he had not invited Co-Chairs to Baku

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs of playing no role in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict as he received the French and US Co-Chairs Stéphane Visconti and Andrew Schofer.

Unfortunately, he said, "the Minsk Group did not play any role in the resolution of the conflict, though it had a mandate to do it for 28 years."

"I participated in negotiations for the last 17 years. Although the Minsk Group was elaborating ideas and trying to be creative, there was no result," Aliyev stated.



Aliyev also said that the visit of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to Baku was their own initiative, he had not invited them.

"It was your idea to come. I can tell you again in front of the cameras, I did not invite the Minsk Group to come. But when I was informed that the Minsk Group wants to come, I said okay, I don't mind, maybe they have something to tell me," Aliyev said.

The reception was also attended by Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Mikhail Bocharnikov and Personal Representative of

the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk. The Russian Ambassador said the Russian government has always noted the importance of the Minsk Group. "That's why, we participated and today we are participating in this group," he said.

## Artsakh President's meeting with OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs cancelled at Armenian initiative

The meeting between the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk and the President of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan has been cancelled at the initiative of the Armenian side, President Harutyunyan's spokesperson Vahram Poghosyan told ARMENPRESS.

"The meeting of the Co-



Chairs and Arayik Harutyunyan was cancelled at the initiative of the Armenian side. The reason of the cancellation is the incomplete format, especially given the fact that the Russian Co-Chair isn't participating in the regional visit," Poghosyan said.

The American and French Co-Chairs - Andrew Schofer and Stéphane Visconti - of the OSCE Minsk Group arrived in Armenia on December 13 after visiting Azerbaijan. The Russian Co-Chair - Igor Popov - is not participating in the visit.

## Pashinyan again rules out resignation

(RFE/RL) - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan continued to reject on December 14 opposition calls for his resignation backed by President Armen Sarkissian, the Armenian Apostolic Church and public figures in Armenia and its worldwide Diaspora.

"Rumors are being constantly circulated about my resignation, even though I have made clear that I will give up the status bestowed on me by the people only on the basis of credible results of an expression of the people's will," Pashinyan said in a televised address to the nation. "As long as there has been no such expression of the will I will continue to perform my duties."

"I want to again emphasize that the number one challenge now is to stabilize the security environment around Armenia, and we are going to consistently follow that path," he added.

Pashinyan did not explicitly express his readiness for snap parliamentary elections, also demanded by opposition forces blaming him for the Armenian side's defeat in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Instead, he again accused them of seeking "leave the people out" of political processes in the country.

One of Pashinyan's close associates indicated last week that the ruling political team is ready to discuss with the Armenian opposition the possibility of fresh elections. Opposition parties said afterwards that they have received no such offers from the government yet.



Most of them want of them want the elections to be held within a year by a new and interim government. The idea has also been advocated by Sarkissian.

"If you have a crisis, if you lose a war ... you have to start anew. Otherwise, the defeat will become an ordinary occurrence," the president told CivilNet.am on Friday.

"You don't need 200,000 or 300,000 [protesting] on the streets to have a crisis. You just need to see it. Therefore, the first step must be the resignation of the government and the formation of a [transitional] government."

Sarkissian met over the weekend with Vazgen Manukyan, a veteran politician nominated as a caretaker prime minister by a coalition of more than a dozen opposition parties holding anti-government protests in Yerevan and other parts of the country. The protests were due to continue later on Monday.

Manukyan was also received by Catholicos Garegin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Garegin

and other top clergymen of the church too have urged Pashinyan to hand over power to an interim government tasked with holding the elections.

Pashinyan came under fresh opposition fire on Saturday as Azerbaijani troops seized two more villages in Nagorno-Karabakh's southern Hadrut district which was mostly occupied by them during the six-week war.

Russian peacekeepers stationed in Karabakh rushed to the scene of the fighting in the following hours. "The situation in that area has been normalized," their commander, Major-General Rustam Muradov, stated on Sunday.

Pashinyan discussed the situation with members of Armenia's Security Council and other officials at an emergency meeting held on Sunday. He accused Azerbaijan of violating key terms of a Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement that stopped the war on November 10. Citing the same agreement, he also said he expects the Russian peacekeepers to help place the two Hadrut villages back under Karabakh Armenian control.

In his televised remarks aired the following morning, the Armenian premier accused his political opponents of disseminating false rumors about additional Armenian territorial concessions made to Azerbaijan in a bid to spread panic and discredit his government. He claimed that the anti-government campaign of "information terrorism" is partly "managed from abroad" but did not elaborate.

## Armenia to hold three days of mourning for victims of Artsakh war

Starting from December 19, Armenia will hold a three-day mourning for the victims of the Artsakh war, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in an address.

"December 19 marks the 40th day of the end of hostilities, and a three-day mourning period will be declared in the Republic of Armenia on December 19. A memorial march will also be organized from the Republic Square to Yerablur,



other commemorative events will be held," the Prime Minister said.

"As of that day, it is possible that not all the bodies of our martyrs will be found, we will have many unrecognized bodies, but I think this kind of state decision can no longer be postponed," PM Pashinyan stated.

He assured that the efforts to search for the bodies, their identification, the clarification of the whereabouts of the missing will further intensify.



## UN confirms plans to send mission to Nagorno Karabakh

The UN maintains its intention to send a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and calls on all parties to cooperate for its early arrival in the region.

The UN is prepared to respond to the humanitarian needs in all areas impacted by the conflict, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, told reporters at a briefing.

That includes scaling up assistance in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as required, he



said.

“Our colleagues at OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] and other relevant UN agencies and enti-

ties are working with all concerned to undertake an initial independent inter-agency assessment in Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas in order to get a clear picture of the humanitarian needs and any other needs on the ground,” Stéphane Dujarric said,

“I think it’s very important that all the relevant actors cooperate fully with us to ensure unfettered access and to make sure the mission can go ahead,” the Spokesperson added.

## Armenia to send more evidence of Azerbaijani atrocities to international structures

The Armenian Human Rights Defender’s Office is sending new evidence of atrocities committed by Azerbaijan during and after this war to international bodies, Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan informs.

Moreover, the office has compiled the evidence obtained since September 27 into a single package, which will be sent to the criminal prosecution bodies of countries that have universal jurisdiction. “The evidence was legally processed by our staff, translated from Azerbaijani or



Turkish into English and Russian, and legal reservation was made,” Tatoyan said in a Facebook post.

Attached to this evidence is a legal analysis, which shows that the Azerbaijani side is artificially delaying the return of prisoners and the exchange of bodies of servicemen.

All the materials will be sent to the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Armenia’s Permanent Representatives in international structures, to diplomatic missions in other countries, as well as to Armenia’s representative before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

## Impossible to demarcate Armenia’s state border on the basis of Google Maps – Ombudsman

It is impossible to demarcate or delimit the state borders of Armenia on the basis of Google Maps or Google Global Positioning System (Google GPS), Armenia’s Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan says.

“It is not clear which version of Google Maps is the basis when Google itself mentions that there are many versions of online maps of the world. Or have we found out what algorithmic systems or positioning

mechanisms underlie a particular version of an online map?” the Ombudsman says.

“The researches and observations of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia in the border settlements confirm that this approach seriously endangers the constitutional rights of life, physical and mental immunity, property of the residents of the border settlements,” Tatoyan adds.

“It is about the protection of the bor-

ders of our state, the physical security and safety of our people and each person,” the Human Rights Defender says, adding that “the issue of demarcations or delimitations requires professional approaches, results of scientific research, detailed on-site work, proper legal bases, etc.”

He stresses that the issue should be one of the exclusive priorities of our country, in the focus of everyone’s attention.

## IMF Approves \$37 Million Loan Tranche to Armenia

The International Monetary Fund has disbursed a fresh \$37 million installment of a loan designed to help Armenia cope with the coronavirus pandemic and economic consequences.

The loan tranche brought to about \$332 million the total amount of funds allocated to the country under the IMF's Stand-By Arrangement worth \$443 million.

The IMF approved the lending program in May as the Armenian economy plunged into recession after three years of robust growth. The decision came shortly after the Armenian government announced plans to borrow around \$540 million to offset a major shortfall in tax revenues and finance its efforts to contain the pandemic.

Armenia's economic woes were compounded by the war in Nagorno-Karabakh that broke out in late September and was stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire six weeks later.



In a weekend statement announcing the disbursement, the IMF said that the Armenian economy is on course to contract by more than 7 percent this year seeing as "the full impact of the twin crises is still unfolding."

"The Fund's financial support will help Armenia meet these challenges, including the urgent social and economic implications of COVID-19 pandemic," read the statement.

"The authorities have responded proactively to mitigate the socioeconomic and health effects of these shocks," it quoted Tao Zhang, the IMF's deputy managing di-

rector, as saying.

"The authorities' 2021 budget is appropriate given weak growth and is embedded in a clear medium-term fiscal strategy. The authorities remain committed to taking measures to safeguard debt sustainability as a result of which public debt is expected to fall to around 60 percent of GDP over the medium-term," added Zhang.

In its draft budget debated by the Armenian parliament, the government projected a GDP growth rate of 3.2 percent for next year.

The IMF expects the Armenian economy to expand by only 1 percent in 2021. Its statement said in this regard that the country's economic outlook is "contingent upon the anticipated global recovery and domestic reform implementation."

The Armenian currency, the dram, has weakened against the U.S. dollar by almost 6 percent in the last two months.

## Russian specialists use Uran-6 multifunctional robotic complex to demine Stepanakert Airport

Russian sappers use the Uran-6 multifunctional robotic complex to demine the area around Stepanakert Airport, the Russian Defense Ministry reports.

Its use ensures complete safety of personnel and allows to increase the productivity of work on cleaning the area from explosive objects.

The Russian specialists also carried out engineering reconnaissance and demining of the area along the gas pipeline on the Stepanakert-Shushi road and in the area of Ajapnyak street of the city of Stepanakert.



In total, engineering units in Nagorno-Karabakh have cleared more than 80 hectares of land, 24.8 km of roads, 168 apartment buildings and 6 socially

significant objects, discovered and neutralized 4,577 explosive objects.

Detected explosive objects, abandoned or non-exploded ammunition are taken to a specially equipped landfill and destroyed. Ammunition that cannot be evacuated is destroyed on site with the necessary security measures in place.

The servicemen involved in mine clearance are equipped with modern protective suits and armed with modern means of searching for explosive objects – mine detectors IMP-S2 and searchers INVU-3M.



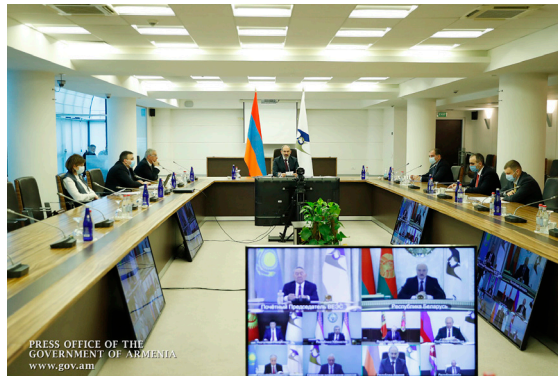
## Yerevan seeks end to Russian entry ban for Armenians

(RFE/RL – Yerevan)- Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on December 11 again called on Russia to lift a coronavirus-related entry ban for Armenian nationals which has aggravated Armenia's economic problems.

The Russian government banned the entry of visitors from many foreign countries this spring in a bid to contain the coronavirus pandemic. A few months later it allowed citizens of some of those countries, including all other members of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) except Armenia, to visit Russia.

The ban directly affected tens of thousands of Armenian migrant workers earning a living in Russia on a seasonal or permanent basis. Many of them had to return to Armenia following lockdown restrictions imposed across Russia in March.

Most migrant workers have had trouble finding jobs in Armenia since then. The Armenian economy is on course to contract by at least 7 percent this year due to the pandemic and the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.



The Armenian government has repeatedly pressed Moscow to lift the ban in recent months. Russian officials have yet to publicly say when that could happen.

Pashinyan raised the matter at a virtual summit of EEU leaders held on December 11.

"Unfettered cargo and passenger traffic with the other countries of the Union is of fundamental importance to us," Pashinyan told the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

"Restrictions are especially sensitive in this area, and the creation of conditions for lifting the bans on the entry of Armenian

citizens into a number of EEU member states is therefore imperative now," he said.

All of those ex-Soviet states have been hit hard by the pandemic. The Armenian authorities have confirmed over 146,000 COVID-19 cases and 2,445 deaths caused by them in the country of about 3 million. The real number of cases is believed to be much higher.

Pashinyan also reiterated his calls for the creation of a single energy market that would lower the cost of Russian natural gas imported by Armenia and other EEU member states.

The gas price is currently significantly lower for consumers in Russia than other ex-Soviet states making up the trade bloc. Armenia and Belarus want Moscow to agree to uniform EEU energy tariffs.

Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected the idea at an EEU summit in May, implying that Yerevan and Minsk should agree first to even deeper economic integration with Moscow which would result in a "single budget and system of taxation" for all EEU member states.

## French city of Bourg-lès-Valence to send 120 tons of humanitarian aid for Artsakh



The French city of Bourg-lès-Valence has raised 120 tons of humanitarian aid for Artsakh, Mayor Marlène Mourier informs.

"This outpouring of generosity for the Armenian of Artsakh brought together and mobilized several thousand residents of the region and about sixty volunteers who have worked tirelessly for more than two weeks," the Mayor said in a Twitter post.

She added that another shipment of the aid will be scheduled soon.





## Iran responds to Erdogan's 'wrong' poem, slams Turkish "expansionism"

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded to a poem recited by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan "wrongly" claiming that Iranian provinces of Azerbaijan were part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Tehran Times reports.

"President Erdogan was not informed that what he ill-recited in Baku refers to the forcible separation of areas north of Aras from Iranian motherland. Didn't he realize that he was undermining the sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan? NO ONE can talk about OUR beloved Azerbaijan," Iran's top diplomat tweeted.

Zarif also published the same tweet in Persian, a language he rarely uses on Twitter. The Persian version of the tweet is slightly different from the English one.

"They didn't tell Erdogan that the poem that he wrongly recited in Baku is related to the forcible separation of areas north of Aras from Iranian motherland," Zarif said in the Persian tweet.

The Iranian foreign minister was responding to a controversial poem recited



by the Turkish president during a "victory parade" held in the Azerbaijani capital on the occasion of what Azerbaijan calls "victory" over Armenia.

"They separated the Aras River and filled it with rocks and rods. I will not be separated from you. They have separated us forcibly," the poem says.

Aras [Araks] river is said to be a symbol of separation of Iranian Azerbaijan from the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Erdogan's poem has sparked outrage on social media platforms in Iran, with many Iranian users on social media warning about

the Turkish leader's "Neo-Ottomanism" ambitions against Iranian territorial integrity.

Some current and former Iranian officials also warned about Turkish "expansionism."

During the Baku parade two Iranian places – Arg of Tabriz and the Sabalan Mountain – were also mentioned in a recitation of epic poems that were broadcasted over loudspeakers. Abbas Akhoundi, the former transport minister of Iran, posted a video of the recitation on his Twitter account, saying this shows that the Republic of Azerbaijan is going with Turkey's regional expansionism.

"This shows the alignment of the regional expansionist policies of Turkey, the support of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the leadership and design of Israel. Azerbaijan has always been not only the protector of the land of Iran but also one of the founders and main pillars of Iranian civilization. Erdogan's move should be condemned. But what do those who deliberately ignore things in Iran say about this?" Akhoundi tweeted.

## Russian peacekeepers take Hin Tagher village in Hadrut region under control



The Russian peacekeepers have taken the village of Hin Tagher in Hadrut region under control, according to a new map released by the Ministry of Defense.

In violation of the trilateral agreement on the cessation of hostilities, special forces of the Azerbaijani army launched an attack on the Artsakh-Azerbaijan line of contact

in the area of Hin Taghlar and Khtsaber villages in Hadrut region of Artsakh.

After hours of fighting, the enemy managed to enter the village of Hin Tagher, and approach the village of Khtsaber.

Earlier on December 13 the Ministry of Defense said the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian military were discussing the return of the parties to the former positions in Hadrut region.

The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that "these actions of official Baku further underline the imperative to eliminate the consequences of the recent Azerbaijani aggression, including the de-occupation of the territories of Artsakh and the return of the Armenians of Artsakh to their places of residence."



## Pashinyan's Six-Month Roadmap: What's Included and What is Left out?

By Harut Sassounian

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan presented on his Facebook page on Nov. 18, 2020 his six-month roadmap of actions he plans to take after the devastating defeat Armenia suffered against Azerbaijan, Turkey and imported mercenary terrorists.

These are the steps Pashinyan intends to take, assuming he stays in power. He has rejected persistent popular demands for his resignation. These are his 15-point plans:

Pashinyan began by stating that "it is time to talk about the ways, methods and programs to overcome the current situation." He admitted that he is "the main responsible for the current situation" and "responsible for overcoming the situation and establishing stability and security in the country."

The Prime Minister stated that that his first priority is the "resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, emphasizing the status of Artsakh and the priority of the return of the people of Artsakh to their places of residence." By negotiating the ending of the Artsakh War with Russia, Pashinyan had left out the two other members of the Minsk Group of negotiators, France and the United States.

In his second point, Pashinyan repeated the importance of the return of the people of Artsakh to their homes. He added that their damaged houses, apartments and infrastructure should be restored. Thousands of refugees from Artsakh have already returned to their homes not occupied by Azerbaijan. The Armenian Government has paid a negligible amount of compensation to the returnees.

The third point: the "provision of social guarantees for the families of killed servicemen and citizens."

The fourth point: "restoration of residential and public structures and infrastructure damaged during the war in the territory of the Republic of Armenia."

The fifth point: "providing social guarantees, prosthetics and professional training for servicemen with disabilities."

The sixth point: "soonest return of captured soldiers and civilians. Provision of social guarantees for their families. Quick clarification of the fate of the missing and provision of social guarantees for their families." This should have been priority number one.

The seventh point: "formation of a system of psychological rehabilitation of the individuals who took part in the war and

society in general."

The eighth point: "approval of the Armed Forces Reform Program and launch of reforms." I hope this includes the modernization of the military by providing it with the latest drones and missiles and establishing an "air shield" or "Iron Dome" over Armenia and Artsakh to protect them from Israeli and Turkish advanced drones acquired by Azerbaijan.

The ninth point: "overcoming the coronavirus pandemic and eliminating its consequences." The tenth point: "restoration of the environment for economic activity."

The eleventh point: "revitalization of programs for solving demographic problems." This probably refers to a plan to provide incentives for the growth of the population, something Armenia desperately needs, particularly after the sacrifice of thousands of its young men.

The twelfth point: "amendments to the Electoral Code and adoption of a new law on [political] parties."

The thirteenth point: "introduction of the institute of professional judges as the first step in establishing an anti-corruption court. Implementation of the law on confiscation of illegal property." This step has already been initiated.

The fourteenth point: "holding regular thematic consultations with representatives of the Armenian political community and civil society." This step is desperately needed to unify the nation.

The fifteenth point: "conducting regular thematic consultations with Armenian organizations and individuals of the Diaspora. Involvement of Diaspora individuals and structures in the above-mentioned processes." Regrettably, the Diaspora has been ignored for far too long except when it comes to fundraising. Besides consulting with the Diaspora, there is a need to establish an institutional structure to deal with the Diaspora in a comprehensive and inclusive manner.

In addition, Pashinyan mentioned that he will make changes in the structure of his government. Indeed, several Ministers have either quit or have been removed since this announcement. It is not likely that their removal is going to satisfy those have been calling for Pashinyan's resignation.

In conclusion, Pashinyan stated that in six months, until June 2021, he will report to the nation about the implementation of these 15 points and "make a decision on what to do next, taking into account public opinion and reaction." This could mean that Pashinyan is trying to buy himself time to

stay in power and calm the public's grief and frustration. It remains to be seen if he lasts that long and what the results of his plans will be.

I would like to mention now several important points that Pashinyan left out of his roadmap. The first immediate priority should be the clarification of the vague provisions of the "Statement" that Pashinyan signed with Aliyev and Putin. This should be an opportunity to minimize the losses and eliminate some of the harshest concessions, such as permitting a road through Armenia's South to connect Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan.

The second priority should be to take all necessary steps to protect the independent status of Artsakh. Otherwise, we risk losing the remainder of Artsakh.

The third priority is the establishment of an investigative committee to review everything that went wrong in the war and to identify those responsible for the grave errors. There have been a lot of accusations of treason or desertion by Armenia's political and military leaders. However, not a single individual has been charged with any wrongdoing. It is important that this committee or tribunal be composed of non-partisan and highly respected individuals to avoid any cover-up by the government. Due to national security secrets, it may not be possible to invite impartial foreign investigators.

The fourth missing point is the elimination of the regrettable division of Armenians into "blacks" and "whites," meaning pro-regime and opposition factions. The prevailing atmosphere of hatred and acrimony is tearing the Armenian society apart. All sides should condemn the use of hostile and vulgar language to describe fellow Armenians who disagree with them.

Finally, a provisional government of technocrats should be established to oversee some of the outlined points and others to return Armenian society to normalcy. Plans should also be made to disband the Parliament and schedule new parliamentary elections in six to 12 months.

Before the election, however, a new constitution should be prepared and a referendum held to adopt its amended provisions which may include electing the President rather than appointing him by Parliament.

All of these steps should be undertaken in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance, regardless of our individual differences, respecting the rule of law and excluding the commitment of violence.

## Interview: Thomas De Waal On What's Next for Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian-Azerbaijani Relations

Following the latest fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan has retaken control over all seven districts around Karabakh that had been occupied by Armenian forces since the early 1990s.

Azerbaijani forces also regained territory in parts of Nagorno-Karabakh itself.

A Russian-brokered cease-fire deal has seen the deployment of nearly 2,000 Russian peacekeepers to ensure security in the enclave and its only overland link with Armenia -- the so-called Lachin corridor through southwestern Azerbaijan.

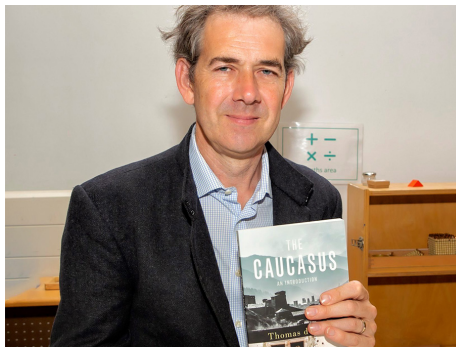
RFE/RL Armenian Service Director Harry Tamrazyan spoke on December 5 to Carnegie Europe's noted Caucasus expert Thomas de Waal about the region's prospects for diplomacy and its changing geopolitics.

**RFE/RL: Since the 1990s, the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been the mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan in negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh. Now, with Azerbaijan having retaken the seven districts around Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as parts of Nagorno-Karabakh itself, is the Minsk Group dead? Or is there still a role for its co-chairs -- the United States, France, and Russia -- in order to have a meaningful impact on the process?**

**Thomas de Waal:** I think we're in a completely different phase of this conflict. We have a cease-fire and truce. But we are very far from a political agreement. And the question of the status of Karabakh, I think, is even more difficult now to solve. As far as the Azerbaijani side is concerned, this question [of a special status for Nagorno-Karabakh] is now off the table. It is no longer up for discussion.

But there still need to be negotiations about the future normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. And I suppose the Minsk Group is the only format where that is possible at the moment. That's going to be very difficult.

I think the Minsk Group has suffered



a lot of reputational damage in the region -- particularly France in Azerbaijan, which I don't think regards France as an honest mediator anymore.

Russia is now in control. There are big questions as to whether the United States and France can still play an important mediating role. But something has to be done.

Personally, I would like to see some improvements. I would like to see another European power which has more influence in Baku. It would be good, in my view, if that European power replaced France. Perhaps Germany. This is not a reflection on the French mediators. It's just a reflection of the fact that French domestic politics means that France is no longer so respected in Azerbaijan.

Secondly, I think the United Nations should play a role. It would be helpful if there was a UN Security Council resolution. The UN is sending agencies now to Azerbaijan -- to Karabakh. It would be good if the UN was involved. And I would also like to see a role for the European Union, which did not have a political profile 30 years ago, but now, I think, needs to play a role.

But let's be honest. It's difficult now to have negotiations. This war has made relations between the two countries even more difficult. So, it's a very difficult place to start.

**RFE/RL: Armenians hope that the truce deal signed by Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan on November 9 is just the first step -- that everything should be settled within the Minsk Group framework. For example, the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. There is nothing about it in these documents signed on Novem-**

**ber 9.**

**De Waal:** The statement by the [Minsk Group] co-chairs from Tirana mentioned that they want to see substantive negotiations. They also mentioned the basic principles, which means that they are still considering the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I think that as far as Azerbaijan is concerned, they are no longer looking at Nagorno-Karabakh -- [the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region] NKAR -- as a territorial unit. Azerbaijani units are in the south of NKAR, or in the Hadrut region, for example. So it will be very difficult, I think, to talk about the territorial autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh. But obviously that, as far as the Armenians are concerned and as far as the Minsk Group is concerned, is the basis for negotiations. Let's see how things go.

I think what's important is if both Baku and Yerevan decided it is important to have a full normalization of relations -- diplomatic relations, open borders, and so on. If they both decide that that is a strategic goal that they want, then I think it is possible to start negotiating. But if each side thinks it is better to live with the status quo, with a closed border, and they're not interested in relations, then I see it as very difficult to negotiate.

**RFE/RL: What is happening on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh? It seems that Armenia has lost its status as a sponsor or guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh security. Russians are in full control on one hand. But on the other hand, the Russians admit that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan -- as Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said. We see now that Azerbaijani soldiers are even going shopping in Stepanakert. It's an unbelievable situation. What is your interpretation of all this?**

**De Waal:** It's true Russia now emphasizes that the area of de jure Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. But de facto, it's



now a Russian enclave. There are Russian peacekeepers there. Russia has become the security patron, not Armenia. They're even talking about making Russian the language of Karabakh. I guess Karabakhis already speak Russian. So yes, Karabakh is now basically under Russian control. And for Russia, it's a strategic asset in the Caucasus which they don't want to lose -- even though they say that technically, of course, it's part of Azerbaijan.

**RFE/RL: Do you think that the United States and other states like France can have an influence on the negotiating process -- if it starts at all? It seems that U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration is willing to actually push through the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh's status. And two chambers of the French parliament called on the government to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh's declaration of independence from Azerbaijan. But the French government has said it will not do so.**

**De Waal:** France and the United States have less influence than they had a few months ago. Russia is very much in the center. And, of course, Russia I think might be interested in an unstable peace which justifies the presence of Russian peacekeepers on the ground. So, no peace/no war, I think, might suit the Russians better than a full peace -- which would be an argument for the Russians to leave the region. So I'm sure the new Biden administration wants to do something. But they are starting from a position of weakness.

**RFE/RL: What do you think about**

**this transport corridor through southern Armenia that is mentioned in the November 9 truce -- a link between Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan? Apparently, it will be controlled by the Russian military. They will set up checkpoints on that road. Is that an encroachment on Armenian sovereignty?**

**De Waal:** I think it's going to be incredibly difficult for the Armenians, who are being asked to facilitate a corridor across their own territory for Turks and Azerbaijanis to use. Presumably there will also be a north-south road connecting Armenia and Iran. But I think it's going to be incredibly difficult for Armenia to agree to this. Again, this is one more reason I think why it's important to have negotiations on a full political agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan -- to make that corridor functional.

**RFE/RL: What is your advice to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government on what it should do next? Should it resign? And can we blame this colossal failure only on Pashinyan? Or are previous Armenian governments also to be blamed for Armenia's losses?**

**De Waal:** I think this is a bigger failure for 20 years. The failure is on both sides -- [Armenia and Azerbaijan] -- to negotiate a peace and negotiate a compromise. But certainly, the Armenian side and Mr. Pashinyan have also not been talking compromise.

I think it was a big mistake [for Pashinyan] to continue to talk about these Azerbaijani territories [around Nagorno-Karabakh] as "liberated" territories, not occupied territories. The world regarded them as occupied territories.

[Former Armenian Prime Minister] Serzh Sarkisian, of course, said once that [the Azerbaijani district of] Agdam "is not our homeland." So, he acknowledged that. But there's been very little public acknowledgment of that in Armenia. But it's from both sides, this failure. It's a strategic failure to talk peace, which is also true from the Azerbaijani side as well. There's been a very aggressive language all these years from Azerbaijan.

I think it's a big tragedy. And of course, it's a bigger tragedy now for Armenia because they have lost so much in this war. I don't have any advice but to be extremely realistic about the future -- that if you live with difficult neighbors you've got to construct an extremely realistic policy about how to do that. Don't live with your dreams but live with your realities. I'm afraid that's the fate of Armenians.

**RFE/RL: Do you think Pashinyan should resign from his post as Armenia's prime minister?**

**De Waal:** I don't know. That's not for me to say. Maybe what Armenia needs is new elections. And maybe Pashinyan would win those elections. But it's not for me to speak on behalf of the Armenian people. I think new elections probably would be helpful in this very difficult context for Armenia.

modern-day Nazi salute!" the Ambassador captioned the photo.

The Grey Wolves group has been [disbanded in France](#) last month after the Armenian Genocide memorial near Lyon was defaced with pro-Turkish slogans.

Politicians from Germany's opposition parties are [urging the government](#) to follow the lead of Paris in banning the right-wing Turkish Grey Wolves organization.

## Azerbaijani general making the Grey Wolves sign at Baku parade

An Azerbaijani general was spotted making the Grey Wolves sign in military parade in Baku. Armenia's Ambassador to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia Tigran Mkrtchyan shared the photo on social media.

"An Azerbaijani general making the Grey Wolves sign in Baku "masquerade."

"Grey Wolves" is a Turkish ultranationalist, neo-fascist organization banned



in some countries. It is a sign of appreciation for Turkey for everything. It's the

## U.S. Senate passes bill mandating sanctions against Turkey

The U.S. Senate has overwhelmingly passed defense bill mandating sanctions against Turkey over its purchase of Russian S-400 missiles.

The Senate passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) by an 84-13 vote on December 11, defying President Trump's threat to veto the bill if it does not repeal liability protections for social media companies, [Axios](#) reports.



The bill provides for the obligation to impose sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in Turkey within a specific

timeframe.

The bill requires the imposition of sanctions within 30 days of the legislation passing. It calls for sanctions on "each person that knowingly engaged in the acquisition of the S-400 air defense system" by Turkey. The bill would allow the president to rescind the sanctions after a year.

Earlier this week, the House passed the bill with an overwhelming majority.

## EU leaders back sanctions on Turkey

*EU leaders have agreed on sanctions targeting individuals and companies in response to Turkey's gas exploration in waters off the coast of Greece and Cyprus, [Deutsche Welle](#) reports.*

European Union leaders agreed on the first steps towards more comprehensive sanctions against Turkey over Ankara's unauthorized gas drilling off the coast of Greece and Cyprus, according to a decision released on December 10 on the sidelines of the leaders' summit in Brussels.

In August, Turkey sent a gas exploration ship to survey the seabed in waters claimed by Cyprus and Greece, triggering a diplomatic row with the EU. Since then, Brussels [has been weighing its options](#) for pressuring Turkey to cease gas exploration in the region.

The decision paves the way for penalizing individuals and companies involved in planning and carrying out the gas exploration with travel bans into the EU and asset freezes.

The vice-president of the Turkish Petroleum Corporation and the deputy director of its exploration department are currently



on an EU sanctions list. The new sanctions would add as yet unspecified people and organizations to that list.

"Regrettably, Turkey has engaged in unilateral actions and provocations and escalated its rhetoric against the EU, EU member states and European leaders," read a statement from the summit in Brussels.

However, Friday's proposal steps back from an arms embargo, or wider sanctions that would target larger sectors of Turkey's economy, both of which [had been under consideration](#).

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement Friday saying the EU's approach was "biased and illegal."

Greece says EU 'credibility' on the line

Greece has pushed for a tougher EU response. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said ahead of the summit on

Thursday that "the credibility of the European Union," was on the line, and said EU leaders had promised consequences during the last summit in October if Turkey "continued its delinquent behavior."

EU leaders left the door open for a stricter measures in the future, instructing EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell to compile a report on EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations to "expand the scope" of action by the EU leaders' summit in March 2021.

The EU has taken a [carrot and stick approach](#) to dealing with Turkey's gas exploration. At the last [EU leaders' summit in October](#), EU leaders offered trade and customs benefits as part of a "positive political EU-Turkey agenda" if Ankara halts its illegal activities" in the eastern Mediterranean.

That offer would remain on the table if Ankara shows willingness for dialogue and compromise, according to the leaders' decision.

On December 9, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters that "any decision to impose sanctions against Turkey won't be of great concern."



## Viva-MTS: New “Corporate 15 000” Package by for Corporate Subscribers

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## New square and theatre in Antony, France, to be named after Patrick Devedjian

The City Council of Antony voted on December 10 to name a new square and new theatre in the city after Patrick Devedjian, *Le Parisien* reports.

Before becoming Member of Parliament, Minister and head of the Council of Hauts-de-Seine, Patrick Devedjian was the Mayor of the city from 1983 to 2002.

"He served as Mayor of the city for nineteen years. He left his deep mark on the city and it was important to pay tribute to his work," said Jean-Yves Sénant (LR), mayor since 2003.

The municipality therefore decided that two places in the municipality would bear the name of Patrick Devedjian: the new



market square and the new theater.

"The market square will become the real central square of the city. It overlooks Auguste-Mounié Street, also named after a former mayor which brings together two emblematic figures of Antony," underlines Jean-Yves Sénant. The inauguration is

scheduled for spring 2021.

As for the new theatre, it will open in September. "It will be called the Firmin-Gémier-Patrick-Devedjian Theater," says the mayor of Antony. He thus wishes to pay homage to "the man of culture" that was the president of the departmental council, whose name was already given, last September, to the [auditorium of the Seine Musicale](#), in Boulogne-Billancourt.

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

## Russia and Oxford to test combining their Covid vaccines

UK and Russian scientists are teaming up to trial a combination of the Oxford-AstraZeneca and Sputnik V vaccines to see if protection against Covid-19 can be improved, the BBC reports.

Mixing two similar vaccines could lead to a better immune response in people.

The trials, to be held in Russia, will involve over-18s, although it's not clear how many people will be involved.

Oxford recently published results showing their jab was safe and effective in trials on people.



The researchers are still collecting data on the effectiveness of the vaccine in older age groups while waiting for approval from the UK regulator, the MHRA.

AstraZeneca said it was exploring combinations of different adenovirus vaccines

to find out whether mixing them leads to a better immune response and, therefore, greater protection.

The hope is combining different vaccines will give either stronger or longer-lasting immunity to the virus.

There are reasons to think this might be beneficial for the Oxford and the Sputnik V jabs.

Both use harmless viruses to deliver the important part of the vaccine (a bit of the coronavirus' genetic code) into the body.

## Nobody stood next to the first Christian nation: Cher calls attention to Azerbaijani violence against Armenians

American Armenian pop star Cher (Cherilyn Sarkisian) has once again called the world's attention to the attack on the "first Christian nation" and slammed the silence of humanity.

Cher shared a message reading: "A dark day for humanity. Nobody stood next to the first Christian nation because all we have is history and culture and that's not some-

thing, we can export... Thanks humanity."

"Armenia is a small country with no natural resources to steal. Turkey tried to destroy her, killed two million of her people. Now Azerbaijan is trying to destroy her. They have "black gold" men kill for or watch others do the killing. Russia wants her land. Bless and protect you, home of my father," Cher tweeted.





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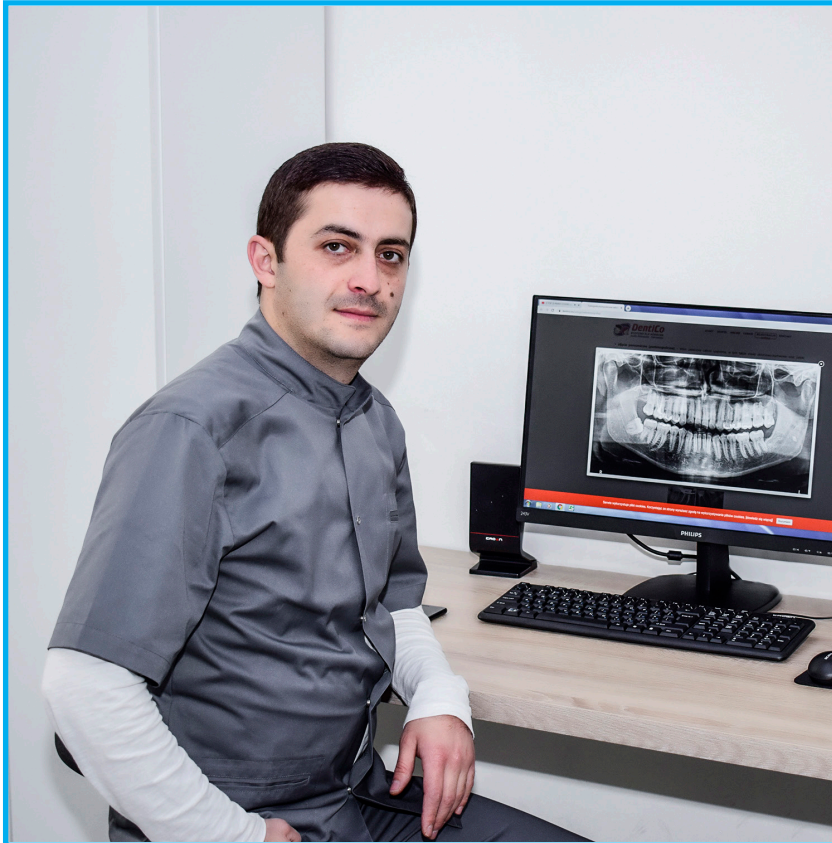


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