



BULLETIN

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Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

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A summary of events in the UK, Armenia and elsewhere

London Events

- . Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian meets Azeri counterpart in London
- . Armenian Embassy honours Baroness Cox
- . Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baibourtian visits London for bilateral consultations
- . Armenian Community of the UK remembers Sumgait and protests against vandalism in Nakhichevan

London, 18-19 January. Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian met in London with his Azerbaijani counterpart Eldar Mammadyarov to prepare ground for two the presidents' meeting in France.

The two Ministers separately met with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia), Steven Mann (U.S.) and Bernard Fassier (France), then had joint meetings.

Minister Oskanian described the London meeting as difficult but conducted in a positive atmosphere, where the parties attempted to further reconcile serious differences on certain key elements.

Vartan Oskanian also met with Douglas Alexander UK Minister for Europe to discuss the Armenia-EU Action Plan with the European Neighbourhood Policy and a number of regional and international issues.

London, 13-16 February. Mr. Armen Baibourtian, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia was on a working visit to London.

The Deputy Minister was received by officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, other UK Government departments and discussed a wide range of bilateral relations. He also met with representatives of the British Council, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Foreign Policy Centre, and the BBC World Service.

London, 15 February. At the Jolly St. Ermin's Hotel in London, the Embassy of Armenia organised a reception to honour Baroness Caroline Cox of Queensbury, Chair of the British-Armenian All-Party Parliamentary Group, on the occasion of her receiving the "Mkhitar Gosh Medal" governmental award bestowed on her by a Presidential Decree. She had earlier received her medal from President Kocharyan in Yerevan.



Baroness Cox welcomed by Ambassador Gabrielyan

Ambassador of Armenia, HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan, delivered a congratulatory speech, in which he highly appreciated the role the Baroness has played not only in voicing the concerns of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh in the international community, but also in the development of British-Armenian relations. In her response, Baroness Cox touched upon the roots of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the deprivations suffered by the Armenian population in Karabakh, and their heroic deeds. She appreciated the high government award, and emphasized the honour and privilege of being next to and struggling together with the people of the Nagorno-Karabakh.



Baroness Cox with Deputy Foreign Minister A. Baibourtian and Executive Secretary of the BAAPPG, Mrs. Odette Bazil

Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, Ambassadors, representatives of the UK Government Departments and local governments were present at the reception. Also present were Mr. Armen Baiburdian, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and representatives of the Armenian Community in the UK.



Lady Cox conversing with Councillor Warwick Lightfoot Mayor of RBKC and Councillor Ronnie Raymond-Cox, Locum Tenens of the Lord Mayor of Westminster

Baroness Caroline Cox made her 60th visit to Nagorno-Karabakh in the autumn of 2005.

London, 24-28 February. "Hay Dat UK", an organisation affiliated to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, held events commemorating the 18th anniversary of the Sumgait pogroms and in protest against vandalising Armenian cross-stones in Old Julfa, Nakhichevan. A public meeting was held on 24th February in Navasartian Centre, London, to inform the wider public of recent destruction of Armenian monuments in Nakhichevan, through talks and short documentaries.

On 28th February, organised by "Hay Dat UK", London-Armenians stood a three-hour Vigil in front of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Kensington, London, to protest against vandalising tombstones and cross-stones in the Armenian cemetery of Old Julfa. The date of 28th February, the anniversary of the Sumgait pogroms was a symbolic choice by the organisers of the Vigil to stress the continued nature of anti-Armenian policies by Azerbaijan dating back to the tragic events of 1988.

(The Armenian Embassy in London issued a press release about the destruction of khachkars (cross-stones) in the Armenian cemetery of Old Jougha on December 20, 2005.)



Armenian cross-stones in Nakhichevan

On Sunday 26th February, Requiem Mass was conducted "For the Souls of the Armenian victims of the 1988 Sumgait pogroms", at the St. Yeghiche and St. Sargis Armenian Churches in London.

Events in Armenia and elsewhere

- . No breakthrough and no failure in Rambouillet talks
- . New ombudsman elected by the Armenian Parliament
- . Destruction of khachkars in Nakhichevan condemned
- . Murderer proclaimed as "man of year" in Azerbaidjan
- . New British Ambassador in Armenia
- . Sumgait victims remembered in Armenia
- . New appointments in the Armenian Government and the Armenian Embassy in UK

Yerevan, 10 January Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian held a press conference to sum up Armenia's foreign policy activities in 2005.

He pointed out that during 2005, the economic growth rate was maintained, constitutional reforms were carried out and Armenia had continued to integrate with the European family. He also mentioned that positive steps had been made towards the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

European integration was specially underlined: "We began the talks under the European Union's New Neighbourhood policy that is to be finalised in 2006," Oskanian said. "The process will allow us to move from phase of rapprochement to

that of integration.”

Yerevan, 13 January. President Robert Kocharyan held another of his regular meetings with the Heads of the diplomatic missions of the EU member states accredited to Armenia and the representative of the European Commission delegation.

According to President Kocharyan, the start of serious negotiations over the Armenia-EU Plan of Action in the framework of the European “New Neighbourhood” initiative is a significant progress in Armenia’s relations with the European Union.

In reference to the current stage of the NK peace process, Robert Kocharyan stated that the negotiations carried out to that date provided for a chance of progress.

Geneva, 16 January. The 62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights convened its first meeting on 16 January 2006 in order to elect the Bureau of the 62nd Session. Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office in Geneva was unanimously elected Vice-Chairman of the Commission for its 62nd Session.

Armenia has continuously been a member of this 53-strong UN body since 2002. During its 60th and 61st Sessions in 2004 and 2005 respectively Armenia was a member of the Bureau of the Commission as Regional Co-ordination for the Eastern European Group.

Yerevan, 25-24 January. Belgian Foreign Minister, Karel de Gucht, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE for 2006, paid a working visit to Armenia. Receiving Mr. de Gucht, President Robert Kocharyan praised the OSCE and its Minsk Group for their ongoing efforts in the peace process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The parties pointed out that it is crucial to continue the peace process and settle the conflict by peaceful means.

Following Minister de Gucht's meeting with Nagorno-Karabakh’s President Arkadi Ghukasyan, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian hosted a working dinner for the Belgian delegation. The two ministers focused on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Yerevan, 6 February. Anthony J. Cantor, the newly appointed Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Armenia presented his credentials to President Kocharyan.



After the ceremony

Stockholm, 7-9 February. President Robert Kocharyan conducted a three day official visit to the Kingdom of Sweden.

The President had meetings with King Carl XVI Gustaf, Prime Minister Goran Persson and other leaders of Sweden, with business circles, opened a Swedish-Armenian business forum and made a speech at the Swedish Foreign Policy Institute, where he urged the EU “to encourage harmonisation of reforms in South Caucasus states and give them a common direction”.



The President reminded the audience that “unsettled conflicts and different degrees of commitment to reforms hamper regional development”. He emphasised that “the shortest way to conflict settlement lies through cooperation and extension of contacts” and reiterated Armenia’s readiness for practical steps in this respect.

At a press conference in Stockholm President Kocharyan declared that following some very recent public statements of high-ranking Azeri officials, his optimism regarding the outcome of the peace talks to be held in Paris in a day or two was a “very cautious” one.

Paris, 10-11 February. By the invitation of the President of France Jacques Chirac, talks to negotiate a settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were held between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents at the castle of Rambouillet in the neighborhood of Paris.



President of Armenia welcomed by President of France

On the 10th February, Jacques Chirac held separate meetings with Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Ilham Aliiev. Afterwards, the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan started negotiations at the Rambouillet castle. Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and Foreign Ministers of the two countries participated in the negotiations which continued in a tête-à-tête format.



The negotiations

Negotiations continued also on the 11th of February and although no major breakthrough was announced, Armenian officials considered the fact of the Paris talks as positive and said peace negotiations had no alternative.

Brussels, 16 February. The European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the Azerbaijani government's destruction of the Armenian cemetery in Jougha, a unique archaeological treasure located in the present Nakhichevan autonomous republic administered by Azerbaijan.

The resolution, which was approved by a vote of 85 to 5, noted that, "serious allegations have been raised about the involvement of the Azerbaijani authorities in the destruction of these monuments" and stressed that Azerbaijan has not provided answers on that matter. Based on these and other findings, the European Parliament "strongly condemns the destruction of the Djulfa cemetery [...]" and "demands that Azerbaijan allow missions dedicated to surveying and protecting the archaeological heritage on its territory, especially Armenian heritage [...]."

The measure also asks Azerbaijan to "allow a European Parliament delegation to visit the archaeological site at Djulfa."

EU, CoE and US officials have expressed concern about the destruction of khachkars and have called to stop the vandalism.

Yerevan, 17 February. The National Assembly of Armenia elected Mr. Armen Harutiunyan as the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) in the Republic of Armenia.

It was the first time ever an ombudsman was elected in Armenia. It has become possible following the adoption of constitutional amendments in November 2005.

Baku, 17 February. Azeri officer Ramil Safarov, who beheaded fellow Armenian officer Guren Margaryan (at a NATO language course in Budapest in 2004) with an axe while the latter was asleep, has been announced "man of year of Azerbaijan". This title was awarded to him by the National-Democratic Party (NDP). The title has been awarded to Safarov "for merits in protecting state and national interests".

Safarov became quite popular in Azerbaijan after ghastly 'feat'. Several committees have been created to support him and his family. Not only his brutality has not been condemned by the Azeri government, but also various public figures have expressed their admiration and otherwise glorified him. There has been no attempt by officials to curb or discourage the campaign of making a hero out of a murderer.

The incident has sparked public indignation in Armenia and Armenian communities abroad.

Yerevan, 17 February. President Robert Kocharyan received the European Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and New Neighborhood policy, Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Speaking of the Individual Plan of Action for Armenia in the framework of the European New Neighborhood (ENP) policy, the President assured of Armenia's commitment to fulfill all the obligations and planned actions in time and on a proper level. Robert Kocharyan said, "Armenia is ready for serious reforms, and we view the Individual Plan of action as a serious tool in stimulating these reforms."

Brussels, 20 February. The European Union appointed Swedish diplomat Peter Semneby as its new Special Representative for the South Caucasus. He replaced Ambassador Heikki Talvitie who held that position for three years.

Yerevan, 28 February. The Government and the public of Armenia, led by President Robert Kocharyan, visited a memorial in Yerevan to lay a wreath to the monument erected in commemoration of innocent Armenians brutally killed by Azeris in the town of Sumgait, Azerbaijan, in 1988.

Commemoration events were held across the country with a big rally staged at the Republican Square of Yerevan attracting more than 100,000 people.



President Robert Kocharyan laying a wreath at the monument to Sumgait victims

Background to the Sumgait pogroms. Inspired by Gorbachev's perestroika on February 20, 1988 the Nagorno Karabakh Oblast Soviet (Regional Council) of People's Deputies appealed to the Supreme Soviets of Azerbaijan SSR and Armenian SSR for the

transfer of Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast from Azerbaijan to Armenia.

Communist authorities of Azerbaijan created a nationalistic hysteria in the mass media, thus transforming the problem into an ethnic conflict. High-ranking Azerbaijani officials threatened an armed invasion of Nagorno Karabakh. On February 22, a crowd numbering thousands of people, started to move towards Stepanakert from the neighbouring Azerbaijani region of Agdam "to restore order." Bloodshed was very narrowly avoided.

Massacres of Armenians in Sumgait (a city located a half an hour drive away from the Azerbaijani capital, Baku) took place in broad daylight, witnessed by numerous gapers and passers-by. The peak of the atrocities committed by Azeri perpetrators occurred on 27-29 February 1988. The events were preceded by a wave of anti-Armenian statements and rallies that swept over Azerbaijan in February 1988. The perpetrators who broke into Armenian homes were aided by lists of the names of residents prepared in advance. They were armed with iron rods, stones, axes, knives, bottles and canisters full of benzene. According to witnesses, some apartments were raided by groups of 50 to 80 persons. Similar crowds (up to 100 people) stormed the streets. There were at least 53 murders - most of those burnt alive after being assaulted and tortured. Hundreds of innocent people were wounded and disabled. Many women, including adolescent girls, were raped. The direct and indirect result of these horrors was the creation of tens of thousands of refugees.

Neither the police, nor emergency aid workers interfered. The Soviet army arrived in Sumgait on 29 February. However, it limited itself to shielding against the ravaging mob that threw stones at the soldiers and did little to protect Armenians.

The assault of a sovereign government against its citizens continued. Sumgait was only one in the wave of Armenian pogroms that swept Azerbaijan. Others were in Shushi in May 1988, Kirovabad (Ganja), Shemakh, Shamkhor, Mingechar and Nakhichevan, all during November and December 1988. The active role of the authorities was evident throughout.

Yerevan, 28 February. Thousands of Armenians gathered at Yerevan's Republic Square to rally "Against Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian criminal policies."



100 000 protestants gathers to rally in Yerevan on 28th February

The participants adopted a statement addressed to the international community. It reads:

"For millennia, the indigenous Armenian population of Karabagh has been creating innumerable masterpieces of small and large-scale pagan and Christian architecture and cultural monuments on the territory of its motherland. ...After the Russian-Persian war of 1813, and the Russian-Persian and Russian-Turkish wars of 1827-1828, Eastern Armenia, including Karabagh, became part of the Russian Empire.

After the October Revolution of 1917, in the framework of the notorious Communist plan of exporting revolution to the East (specifically to Turkey), the greater part of the historical Armenia was used to create the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. In 1921, under Turkish pressure, Nakhijevan and Karabagh were transferred to Azerbaijan. It was done in support of Stalin's maxima according to which in the name of the world revolution Armenia "must sacrifice both its former territory as well as the remaining part of its people" ("Life of Nationalities" magazine, March 4, 1921).

...In the period right after the World War II and up to the collapse of the USSR, Azerbaijan used all iniquitous means to expel the indigenous Armenian population. At the beginning of the perestroika, there were no Armenians in once Armenian Nakhichevan! The same fate was awaiting the Armenians of Karabakh, the Parliament of which, in full compliance with international and existing Soviet laws, adopted a legitimate decision to secede from Azerbaijan and re-unite with its motherland – Armenia (1988).

The decision of the legislative body of Karabakh and the peaceful meetings were

retorted by the bloody pogroms in Sumgait (1988), which resulted in dozens of killed and hundreds of wounded. Over twenty thousand Armenians were deported. The impunity of the criminals in Sumgait escalated barbarism, which climaxed with the mass pogroms in Baku (1990) and the expulsion of over 200 thousand Armenians.

In the end of 1991, Baku started full-scale military actions in Karabakh. Azeri authorities turned Shushi, Khojalu, Aghdam and other towns into menacing pillboxes, the liquidation of which became a matter of life and death for the people of Karabakh.

The bloodbath imposed on Karabakh by Azerbaijan lasted for two years; moreover, many border regions of Armenia were also under regular shelling.

The Armenians won this war against all odds, and paid for their freedom with thousands of lives. Only in Karabakh, more than 150 populated areas with ancient cemeteries, monuments and all the life-support infrastructures were destroyed. The Armenians were doomed to win; the alternative would have been death. Peace, which has been maintained in the region for the last twelve years, is guaranteed only by the Armenian regular army of Karabakh.

Instead of looking for the ways to resolve the conflict, all these years Baku has been conducting an unprecedented war, which according the international conventions is defined as xenophobia: hatred toward anything alien, and in this case, anything Armenian.

In this dangerous situation, when this war of xenophobia that threatens the security of the Armenian people, the offensive against the honour and dignity of the Armenian people is in full swing, the Armenia people consider the continuation of any sort of negotiations senseless and unacceptable, if these negotiations are to be merely self-serving and unconstructive.

We demand the fulfillment of the following conditions and demands, realized under strict supervision of the international community, in full compliance with the international norms:

1. Resumption of legal proceedings against the instigators and perpetrators of the

Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, because these crimes against humanity were tried in different towns of the USSR and the culprits were released after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2. Condemnation of the shameful veneration of the Azeri murderer, who decapitated in Budapest a sleeping man only because he was an Armenian.

3. Immediate termination of the acts of vandalism, conducted by the regular army of Azerbaijan against the Armenian cemetery of Julfa and initiation of legal proceedings against the instigators and perpetrators of these acts of vandalism in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan.

4. To call Azerbaijan to account for the aggressive propaganda of xenophobia, racism and violence against the Armenian people.

The Petition is adopted by the participants of the rally "Against Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian criminal policies."

New appointments in the Armenian Government

. ***Gevorg Gevorgyan***, formerly head of the *HaiFilm* studios, was appointed Minister of Culture of Youth.

. ***Armen Gevorgyan***, formerly First Assistant to the President of Armenia, was appointed President's Chief of Staff.

Changes in Embassy Staff

Dr. Karine Khoudaverdian, Counsellor of the Embassy, returned to Armenia after the completion of her more than three years of service in London.

She is replaced by ***Mr. Mher Margaryan***, First Secretary.



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