



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

## TRANSLATIONS FROM YEREVAN NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES

### POLITICS

#### 1. BAKO SAHAKIAN AGAIN DECLARES NECESSITY OF NKR'S PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

On January 15, NKR President Bako Sahakian met with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs, Matthew Bryza (U.S.), Yuri Merzliakov (Russia), and Bernard Fassier (France), who arrived in Stepanakert the same day. As Noyan Tapan was informed by the Chief Information Department of NKR President's Administration, a number of issues concerning the Nagorno Karabakh settlement were discussed during the meeting.

B. Sahakian emphasized the necessity of NKR's participation in the negotiations process, without which it is impossible to solve that problem. He also said that the anti-Armenian propaganda and bellicose statements in Azerbaijan not only fail to contribute to formation of an atmosphere of mutual confidence between the parties, but also have a very negative impact on the negotiations process. The NKR President once more stressed that official Stepanakert is for conflict's peaceful settlement and establishment of a direct dialogue with Baku.

B. Sahakian attached a special importance to the monitoring of the OSCE mission on the NKR and Azeri armed forces' contact-line as one of the main components of preservation of ceasefire, considering impermissible politicization and speculation of that issue in Azerbaijan.

The Co-chairs, in their turn, expressed readiness to as far as possible support the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, as well as establishment of stability in the region sharing the NKR President's position on NKR's participation in the negotiations process.

#### 2. "PASSPORTS-2007" OPERATION TO CONTINUE DURING 2008 ELECTIONS AS WELL, HEGHINE BISHARIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

Electoral violations are committed in all populated areas of the country even before the start of the official election campaign of the February 19 presidential elections. Heghine Bisharian, the head of the central preelection headquarters of Artur Baghdasarian, the Chairman of the Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) party, a candidate for presidency offered by OYP, stated at the January 16 press conference. In her words, village heads phone OYP members and say that they have received an order "from above" to ensure 70-90% votes for RPA candidate, Prime Minister Serge Sargsian in the elections. Besides village heads, according to H. Bisharian, regional governors, mayors, school headmasters, hospitals' chief physicians, and other employees of state institutions have also received an order of "acting" in favor of the pro-governmental candidate under the threat of being deprived of their job.

Besides, according to H. Bisharian, an unintelligible, unfounded big sum, 170m drams (nearly 550 thousand USD) is envisaged by the 2008 budget for printing new passports. "No one explains what we will do with so many new passports, has the number of 16-year-old people increased so abruptly or if there is some other reason," H. Bisharian asked with bewilderment. She added that in all probability, the authorities are going to use the mechanism "put into operation" during the 2007 elections, when forged passports were put into circulation. "Therefore, the "Passports-2007" operation will also continue in 2008," the OYP Vice-Chairwoman said.

#### 3. LOCAL TV COMPANIES REFUSE TO PROVIDE TV AIR TO OYP CHAIRMAN [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The preelection headquarters of Artur Baghdasarian, the Chairman of the Orinats Yerkir (Country of Law) party, a candidate for presidency, have been already formed in the whole territory of Armenia. Heghine Bisharian, the head of the central preelection headquarters of the latter, the OYP Vice-Chairwoman, said at the January 16 press conference. She said that they also attach importance to existence of public offices, the main function of which is giving high-quality legal consultation to voters. Besides, according to H. Bisharian, boxes of suggestions have been placed in all populated areas, through which voters can make suggestions and statements addressed to A. Baghdasarian.

The OYP Vice-Chairwoman said that they have some problems with informing society about the OYP candidate's program: for instance, local TV companies refuse to provide even paid TV air to Artur



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

Baghdasarian and his co-thinkers. "I am surprised why private TV companies do not wish to gain money, besides, do not wish to carry out their information function," H. Bisharian stated.

#### 4. YURI MANUKIAN HAS NO RIGHT TO CALL ALL COMMUNISTS FOR SUPPORTING ANY CANDIDATE, CPA LEADER SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The decision not to support any candidate in the presidential elections made at the 37th congress of the Communist Party of Armenia (CPA) has been kept unchanged. Ruben Tovmasian, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of CPA, stated at the January 16 press conference. Meanwhile he said that theoretically CPA is ready to support the candidate, who will admit that the Soviet period was the golden age of the Armenian people, will agree to declare November 29 a state holiday and will guarantee the right of work, rest, free treatment and education of each citizen.

Touching upon the call of Yuri Manukian, the Chairman of the United Communist Party of Armenia, voiced the day before, according to which, all communists should vote for pro-governmental candidate S. Sargsian, R. Tovmasian said that UCPA or any other force considering itself communist has no right to make such a statement. "It is tactlessness when a non-existing party makes a statement on behalf of all communists," the CPA leader said.

#### 5. AZERBAIJANI EXPERT SEES PREREQUISITES FOR SETTLEMENT OF KARABAKH PROBLEM THIS YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

There are real grounds for registering progress in settlement of the Karabakh problem in 2008, Azerbaijani expert, director of the "Third Opinion" Information Analytical Agency (Baku) Rauf Rajabov expressed an opinion during a talk with NT correspondent.

According to him, the Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev's recent statement that there will be a breakthrough in this issue this year is a noteworthy one. The statement of the RA prime minister Serge Sargsian - one of the most likely candidates for the post of the Armenian president, that Armenia is in favor of Turkey's joining the European Union is not an accidental one either. Turkey is a strategic partner of Azerbaijan, and improvement of relations between Armenia and Turkey, according to R. Rajabov, will have a positive impact on relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

R. Rajabov considered as wrong the opinion that Azerbaijan supports military solution of the conflict. In his words, the fact that Azerbaijan initiated discussions of the problem in the UN shows that it favors the problem's solution from the viewpoint of international law. As for belligerent statements made in Azerbaijan, R. Rajabov said that these statements have not been made by the direct participants of negotiations on solution of the Karabakh problem: the country's president, his special representative and the foreign minister who state that Azerbaijan is in support of the Prague process.

#### 6. PERSONALITY PROTECTED BY LAW TO BE IN FOCUS OF ATTENTION OF VAZGEN MANUKIAN'S PREELECTION CAMPAIGN [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The main slogan of the preelection campaign of Vazgen Manukian, the Chairman of the National Democratic Union, will be a slogan regarding not so much state and political problems, but rather ensuring freedom of personality protected by the law. Vazgen Manukian said this to NT correspondent mentioning that the subject of a person confidently looking at the future will be voiced in the slogan of his preelection campaign. "Today a person in Armenia experiences something like he experienced in the years of the USSR, when roads were built, various objects were launched, but a person felt himself only some small screw of all that. I think construction of a strong state is connected with the circumstance of who solves these problems, as they are solved if a person feels himself a free citizen," V. Manukian said.

As regards the issue of what subjects will be the central ones in his forthcoming preelection campaign, V. Manukian said that the subject of Nagorno Karabakh settlement, development of regional cooperation, including normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, and other issues will be primary. In V. Manukian's words, issues concerning socio-economic bloc will be very important. As he classed, a feudal system works in the country today and in spite of the development of some branches, the most part of the income goes to feudals or oligarches, which are under authorities' control.

It should be mentioned that Vazgen Manukian's candidature was nominated for the presidential elections at a regular congress of the National Democratic Union in late November 2007.



## 7. CEC CANNOT BE GUARANTOR FOR HOLDING FAIR, TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS, NOR ZHAMANAKNER PARTY MEMBER CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The RA presidential elections cannot be legal and it is just a formality to speak about holding them transparently and fairly. Hrach Sargsian, a member of the Nor Zhamanakner (New Times) party's ruling body, said at the January 16 discussion on the subject "The RA Central Electoral Commission and Ensuring of Legality and Transparency of Elections." According to him, "CEC cannot be the guarantor of holding fair, transparent elections, as it is dependent on the body forming it, the authorities."

According to Armen Martirosian, a member of the RA NA Zharangutiun (Heritage) faction, CEC's formation should correspond to the situation formed in the political sphere. According to him, only two out of the eight members of CEC represent the opposition sphere at present. In A. Martirosian's opinion, that is one of the reasons that CEC is not able to fulfil its duties. In particular, according to him, CEC does not solve the problem of unequal coverage of the candidates by media. "The election campaign has already started for some of the candidates and CEC undertakes no steps in this direction," he said.

Whereas, as Sona Sargsian, OYP representative in CEC, said, the election campaign for opposition candidates will start from January 21 from TV air, at that, at a very inconvenient hour, at 17:00, when the most of the people is at work. Touching upon inaccuracies in electoral rolls, S. Sargsian said that they become a basis for committing mass falsifications.

## 8. NATIONAL UNITY DID NOT ATTACK LEVON TER-PETROSIAN FIRST [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The National Unity party did not attack the first President the first, but it had to respond to his statement that all candidates, who will not join him, are the placemen of the authorities. Alexan Karapetian, the Vice-Chairman of the National Unity party, the head of the central preelection headquarters of Artashes Geghamian, a candidate for presidency, said at the January 16 press conference.

According to him, Levon Ter-Petrosian through newspapers "serving him" discredits the leader of the National Unity trying in this way to raise his own rating, but he will not manage to do it. "We do not consider that he is the candidate, for whom the people waits and who will lead the country by a way preferable for us," A. Karapetian said. In his words, the National Unity will deliver a counter-blow to all those, who will try to cause instability in the country.

A. Karapetian called all candidates for replacing their personal insults by disputes over preelection programs. In response to journalists' question, he said that A. Geghamian is ready to dispute with any candidate, provided that the dispute should be broadcast on live air.

The head of the central headquarters said that 53 coordinating headquarters have been created in the whole territory of the country, 41 out of which in the regions, 12 in Yerevan. Each of these headquarters has 10-15 sub-headquarters. The program of election campaign events consists of 8 parts and 83 sub-points. It has been made up in consideration of the experience of the U.S., European countries, and Russia. There will be surprises, new methods will be used during the election campaign. Not agitation for show, but direct contacts with voters will be accentuated. In consideration of weather conditions, the meetings will be organized in halls. A. Karapetian said that they had no difficulties connected with creation of preelection headquarters, as they are placed in party's offices, which have been working for already several years.

## 9. IN OPINION OF ARSHAK SADOYAN, MAIN PURPOSE OF LEVON TER-PETROSIAN IS TO CLEAN HIMSELF [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The most correct way of fighting election rigging is to back the candidature of the NDU chairman Vazgen Manukian in the presidential elections, the chairman of the Alliance of National Democrats (AND) party, member of V. Manukian's pre-election headquarters Arshak Sadoyan expressed this opinion at the January 16 press conference. In his words, the opposition should unite around V. Manukian, "on whom it is impossible to find filth".

A. Sadoyan said that if it were possible to control the process of elections, V. Manukian would win without fail. However, the problem is that all the elections have been rigged so far, and this time the elections will be rigged again. According to him, at first the authorities planned to hold elections in two rounds but upon seeing the political situation, they have decided to hold elections in one round. As A. Sadoyan put it, the election results will be "drawn" in favor of the prime minister Serge Sargsian.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

The AND leader said that the ideas about Levon Ter-Petrosian's being the main opposition candidate at the upcoming elections are artificially formed by the press that supports him, whereas the main goal of the first Armenian president is "to clean himself from the previous filth".

## 10. ACCORDING TO ARAM MANUKIAN, VAZGEN MANUKIAN SHOULD HAVE BEEN SECOND PRESIDENT OF ARMENIA [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The only possible way of getting rid of the current Armenian authorities is to form a multi-party political coalition around the first president Levon Ter-Petrosian, member of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) board Aram Manukian said at the January 16 press conference. In his words, simple political calculations show it, and those unable to make such calculations either do not know arithmetic or help intentionally the authorities.

A. Manukian said that many representatives of all state and local government bodies already work secretly in favor of L. Ter-Petrosian, and in the second half of February when the pre-election race will become most active, there will be sharp changes in the power and political system.

According to A. Manukian, the prime minister Serge Sargsian has a stable rating, while rating of L. Ter-Petrosian is increasing slowly but steadily. If these dynamics continue, the latter will win at the first round of elections.

He expressed confidence that the forces supporting the first president will be able to prevent election rigging. "I guarantee that those to commit falsification against us will not benefit from it, we have all resources to prevent rigging," A. Manukian stated. In his words, the best option is that the authorities resign of their free will, which has been proposed to them. In this case there will be no tension and shocks in the country, and the current authorities "will remain in their historical role as organizers of the Karabakh movement".

A. Manukian said there are almost no ideological contradictions between L. Ter-Petrosian and Vazgen Manukian, and it would be logical if the latter backed the candidacy of L. Ter-Petrosian. According to him, Vazgen Manukian should have been the second president of the country, and it would have been so if he had been a bit more patient at that time.

## 11. VAHAN HOVHANNISIAN CONSIDERS CREATION OF COMPETITIVE ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN COUNTRY AS HIS PRIORITY TASK [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The external and internal threats facing Armenia require large-scale system changes, is stated in the pre-election program of Vahan Hovhannisian, the ARF Bureau member nominated as candidate for the post of president of the RA.

"The wrong perception of liberal ideology and its extreme use, the disregard of the basic point of a social state, and the reduction of the state's role in free market regulation have resulted in the current economic order when the state is governed through economic groupings. They have monopolized the most profitable branches of the economy and formed an economic system that is almost free of competition, serves their interests and is guided by them," is said in the program.

According to the candidate, the monopolies have ceased being an economic phenomenon and have some influence on all spheres of society's life. So establishment of a competitive economic order will be his priority task. According to V. Hovhannisian, the state policy will be aimed at dissolution of the groupings with economic power. According to him, the state should ensure equal conditions for economic entities and should not interfere in their activities.

## 12. VAHAN HOVHANNISIAN: IN FOREIGN RELATIONS ARMENIA SHOULD BE GUIDED EXCLUSIVELY BY NATIONAL INTERESTS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

"In foreign political relations, it is necessary to be guided exclusively by national interests," is said in the pre-election program of Vahan Hovhannisian, the ARF Bureau member nominated as candidate for the post of president of the RA.

According to him, today the superpowers try to make Armenia conduct its foreign policy guided by their own interests which mainly oppose each other. The confrontation of superpowers in the region caused competition, which is increasing with every passing day, especially among the South Caucasian states. In order to win regional competition, Armenia should conduct an active policy full of initiative.

In the opinion of the presidential candidate, one of Armenia's priorities is deepening of Eurointegration process, bringing the country into line with European standards.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

Prior to international recognition of status of liberated Artsakh, Armenia should promote the establishment and development of international links of the NKR. Direct participation of the NKR in negotiations on peaceful settlement of the problem should be ensured. The settlement of the problem should be unequivocally acceptable to citizens of Armenia and Artsakh.

It is stated in the program of V. Hovhannisian that Armenia should raise the issues of Turkey's hostile attitude, the Armenian-Turkish border, and Turkey's responsibility for the Armenian Genocide at international instances.

Deepening and expansion of cooperation with direct neighbors - Georgia and Iran is of strategic importance to Armenia. Armenia should strive to sign bilateral agreements with Georgia on providing assistance in all spheres of economic, social, political and cultural life of Armenians traditionally living in Javakhk and neighboring regions. There are extensive opportunities for developing Armenian-Iranian cooperation in energy, trade and economic, transport communication sectors, which allow to work out and implement strategic programs.

## 13. VARDAN OSKANIAN: WE MISS HRANT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

On the occasion of the first anniversary of murder of Hrant Dink, the editor-in-chief of the Agos newspaper, RA Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian sent a letter to the newspaper's editorial staff. The letter read:

"I should confess that I have had two very deep and unforgettable shocks in the years of taking this post: the first was in 1999 when Armenia's stability was endangered by terrorists, the second last year when I received a telephone call on the mournful news of Hrant Dink's murder. In both cases these were attacks on not a personality, but on ideas and values.

Hrant's murder was an attack on the attempt to build the Turkish state on democratic bases. The killers' target was his idea about a Turkey, which does not limit freedom of speech and tolerates open discussions and perceives its citizens belonging to national minorities as equals.

We miss Hrant. He visited Armenia several times a year. In September 2006, when he spoke at the Armenia-Diaspora forum, his message was that as members of the European family Turkey and Armenia can have normal relations, as even those not wishing it will start to look for ways of dialogue in Turkey. It was pleasant to hear that, as it corresponded to our wishes.

He also made a speech at the International Conference dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide we organized in April 2005 in Yerevan. Everybody listened with respect to his emotional and logical appeal to conduct a dialogue, to differentiate today's Turkish Republic from the state having committed a crime nearly 100 years ago. He remembered with passion himself explaining the Turkish authorities that the Armenians are looking for the roots the Ottoman empire cut, when it tried to completely exterminate a whole people and to tear it off from its home, culture, and traditions.

Each time he came to Yerevan we found some minutes to talk. It was very important for me to hear from him about the moods in Turkey. Hrant was the very person, whom one could ask it, as he was not just a person living in Turkey. He was proud of its two, Turkish and Armenian identities and was insulted and got angry when he was accused of "insulting the Turkish identity" for his efforts to find verges of consent between these two identities.

When he was first accused of "insulting the Turkish identity" by Article 301 I asked whether my writing a letter or speaking publicly will be useful. He registered confidently: "I am thankful to you, but don't worry, my own efforts are sufficient now: the God supports me and I will lead my struggle till the end."

In the future he remembered with surprise that "on the one hand, they call Armenia and Armenians for a dialogue and on the other, condemn or wish to neutralize their citizen, who struggles for establishment of this dialogue."

Hrant Dink was sincere and brave, but he was not simple-minded. Nevertheless, he could not predict such a "neutralization." His sincere and brave voice was silenced. Moreover, some people heard a simple message in his murder, that the danger they are facing is deeper than a simple legal condemnation.

This message was one of the "achievements" that murder gave to the people having a contribution to formation of the extremist atmosphere giving a nuance to Turkey's home and foreign policy. I think the cruelty, impunity, and violence of Hrant's murder serves several purposes. First, to reduce Europe's interest in Turkey, which is the very thing some people wish to see in Turkish political circles. Second, to intimidate the Armenians and other minorities of Turkey for them not to pursue protection of their civil and human rights. Third, to intimidate the impudent Turks, who quite sincerely started studying these difficult and delicate issues.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

In Armenia we have affirmed for more than a decade that though it is Armenians, who suffered from historic unfairness and it is Armenians, who are on the opposite side of the border kept closed by Turkey, nevertheless, at any time we are ready for a dialogue with our neighbor at the moment when normal relations are established between us and when this last closed border of Europe is opened and someone wishes to speak to the point on the opposite side of the border. We are ready.

A year ago we were agitated by a fit of deep mourning in all layers of Turkish population, especially in those, who were terrified by the crime committed by a young man and considered it as continuation of hatred and hostility in the next generation.

Hrant Dink's family, his colleagues in the Agos newspaper in Armenia and in Turkey are consoled a little with the fact that today and tomorrow, I am sure, both Armenians, who share his ideas on mutual understanding and harmony between peoples, and Turks, who share his dream of living in peace with neighbors and history, will remember Hrant."

## 14. SWEARING CEREMONY OF 38 NEWLY APPOINTED JUDGES TAKES PLACE AT JUSTICE COUNCIL SITTING [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The swearing ceremony of 38 newly appointed judges took place at the January 17 sitting of the Justice Council in the presence of the RA President. As NT was informed by the RA President's Press Office, the latters were appointed judges by the RA President's decrees of November 30 and December 18, 2007.

Assuming the high post of a judge, they swore to execute "judge's duties in correspondence with the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Armenia, to be unbiased and to follow exact principles, to be fair and humane, to piously keep all requirements put forward to the status of the judge, ensuring supremacy of law and keeping high the authority of the judicial power."

## 15. TODAY WE DO NOT HAVE ARMENIA WE DREAMT OF, ARMAN MELIKIAN SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

"Today we do not have the Armenia we dreamt of and we are not on the way that will lead us to it, as we made rather serious mistakes on our way and today we have received a disabled government system," Arman Melikian, a candidate for presidency, stated at the January 17 press conference.

According to him, for having "the Armenia we dreamt of" we should get rid of the corruption government system in the country by introducing a democratic government system. According to A. Melikian, Armenia should become a country where a citizen will have a possibility to take a direct part in country's developments. Otherwise, in his words, it means that the state does not appreciate its citizen, and the state "has been seized by a group of people," who try to use their position for serving it for their own interests.

The candidate for presidency said that he has not included promises on raising pensions, salaries, benefits in his preelection program, as it can be fulfilled only in case of real estimation of resources.

Touching upon the Nagorno Karabakh settlement, A. Melikian said that in case of being elected President he will suggest reconsidering the current approaches in the negotiations process. In his words, the approaches should be completed with "universal, fair, acceptable principles, including those for the Azeri party." At the same time, he said that he is against any discussion on returning the liberated territories. According to A. Melikian, the territories should become the ownership of the Armenians of Azerbaijan as a compensation for their losses.

## 16. FATHER OF CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENCY ARAM HAROUTIUNIAN DIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The father of Aram Haroutiunian, the leader of the National Consent party, a candidate for presidency, Sergei Haroutiunian, died in the morning of January 17, at the age of 88. He suffered from cancer.

The National Consent party presents its deep condolences to A. Haroutiunian on the occasion of his father's death.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

## 17. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS PRESENT RA FOREIGN MINISTER WITH RESULTS OF THEIR VISIT TO NKR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

On January 17, RA Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian received the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs, Matthew Bryza (United States), Yuri Merzliakov (Russia), and Bernard Fassier (France). The Co-chairs informed him about the results of their negotiations with the Artsakh authorities held in Stepanakert, presented their impressions from the monitoring held on the contact-line of NKR and Azeri armed forces.

As NT was informed by the RA Foreign Ministry Press and Information Department, during the meeting, V. Oskanian and the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs touched upon the issues of the negotiations document, over which the parties have not reached an agreement yet.

## 18. ARA NRANIAN: TODAY'S OLIGARCHS COME FROM YEARS OF POWER OF ARMENIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

There were shortcomings and mistakes both in the political and economic policies during the years of power of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) Party, member of the National Assembly "ARF" faction Ara Nranian said at the January 17 debate. In his words, the society waits for ANM representatives to explain the reasons for these shortcomings. "There is no game against us" slogan was put into circulation in the years when the first president Levon Ter-Petrosian was in power. Besides, according to A. Nranian, today's oligarchs come from those years - the early 1990s.

Admitting that some mistakes were made under the ANM, the member of the social-political initiative "Aylntrank" ("Alternative") Vahang Khachatrian at the same time underlined that one should not forget that in those years the country and authorities bore the burden of the war and the collapse of the USSR. "There were indeed people who grew rich in those years but it was impossible to foretell that they would become oligarchs later," he said.

## 19. OSCE MINSK GROUP CO-CHAIRS DO NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF KARABAKH'S RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS TABLE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

No decision on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict can be made without the consent of the Karabakh party. OSCE Minsk Group American Co-chair Matthew Bryza said this at the January 17 joint press conference of Co-chairs.

French Co-chair Bernard Fassier stated that the sooner the Karabakh party is involved in the negotiations process "the better for everyone." According to him, the reason of Karabakh party's absence from the negotiations is not the decision of the Co-chairs, but the decision of the Armenian party. "Before the presidency of Robert Kocharian they were participants of the negotiations, but after he was elected President of Armenia he started representing the Karabakh party as well at the negotiations." The French diplomat emphasized that the issue of NKR's return to the negotiations table should be decided by the Armenian party. "This completely depends on the Armenian party and when the NKR can join the negotiations - time will show this," Bernard Fassier stated.

As regards the issue of what will be the position of the Co-chairs if the Armenian party makes such a decision, Russian Co-chair Yuri Merzliakov stated: "We do not look so far yet, we solve problems as they emerge. At present we do not see such a sharp necessity of Nagorno Karabakh's involvement in the negotiations."

Yuri Merzliakov said that such a moment may come after the coordination of the basic principles of agreement by the current negotiations parties. In his words, the issue of Karabakh party's participation in the negotiations can emerge when elaboration of agreement will be spoken about, where a great number of details will appear and much attention will be paid to the problems of Nagorno Karabakh.

## 20. PREPARATION OF FULL AGREEMENT ON NAGORNO KARABAKH SETTLEMENT WILL START IN CASE OF REACHING AGREEMENT ON BASIC PRINCIPLES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The issue of Nagorno Karabakh status is the central principle being discussed today in the negotiations process on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Matthew Bryza, the American Co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, stated at the January 17 joint press conference of the Co-chairs.

According to him, the goal of the Co-chairs' visit to the region is to clarify the positions of Armenian and Azeri Presidents over the proposals presented to the both countries' Foreign Ministers at



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

the meeting within the framework of the OSCE Madrid Summit by the heads of Foreign Ministries of the United States, Russia, and France in late 2007.

M. Bryza mentioned that both sides should get acquainted with these proposals in detail. He expressed an opinion that the sides strive for finishing this process as soon as possible. "Both Presidents have community of views over the character of the document including the basic principles of settlement," the American mediator stated.

French Co-chair Bernard Fassier said that "Madrid proposals" take into consideration the opinions of the sides and are deprived of any ambiguity. "These are the best proposals our countries present for solving the Nagorno Karabakh problem on the basis of a compromise," Bernard Fassier stated.

According to Russian Co-chair Yuri Merzliakov, no partial agreement will be adopted. The document proposed by the mediators, which is at the negotiations table today, contains basic principles of settlement, and in case of achieving coordination of sides' opinions on these principles, the text of the full agreement will be worked out, which will take much time and will include many details. "Today no one expects final solution of the problem," the Russian diplomat said.

## 21. ALM OWNER SETS UP 100 CAMPAIGN OFFICES [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Owner of a notorious ALM Holding, Tigran Karapetian, who was nominated by his People's Party as a presidential candidate for the February 19 ballot, said today his supporters have already set up over 100 offices across the country to campaign for him.

Speaking at a news conference he said overall 300 such offices will be set up. He Karapetian reiterated that he is the only alternative candidate as he has never been in any government, saying also he has a steady number of supporters.

He argued that voters should fight against vote-rigging at polling stations when they see such attempts, otherwise, according to him, it is impossible to prevent vote fraud.

Tigran Karapetian also said he is ready to give air time to all candidates on his ALM TV.

## 22. ARF SUGGESTS SETTING UP JOINT OFFICE TO SUPERVISE ELECTION [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Armen Rustamian, chairman of a parliament committee on foreign affairs, who runs the election campaign of a deputy parliament speaker Vahan Hovhanesian, nominated by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) as a presidential candidate, called on all-level government officials, who are banned from advertising presidential candidates, to keep away from electoral process.

Speaking at a news conference today he said the central election headquarters of the party received information that some officials, banned by the law from participating in election-related developments, are advertising one of the presidential candidates.

He said if these officials did not stop the ARF would not only unveil their names, but would also present concrete information about when and where they did so.

Armen Rustamian also slammed the Yerevan municipality for urging political parties and non-governmental organizations to refrain from holding mass rallies and processions citing icy streets and heavy traffic in downtown Yerevan. Rustamian said officials should understand that political forces should have rostrums to convey their programs to the voters and mass rallies are one of them.

Rustamian also argued in favor of setting up a joint headquarters by all political forces contesting the election to supervise the process of voting and foil all attempts of fraud.

He said only by raising the level of oversight over the election and availability of solid vote-rigging evidence the candidates could contest the outcome of the polls if such a need arises.

## 23. ARMENIAN RECEIVES HEAD OF OBSERVING MISSION OF OSCE OFFICE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsian received today the head of the observing mission of the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Gert-Hinrick Arens and the delegation headed by him.

Armenian governmental public relations official told Armenpress that during the meeting Sargsian highly underscored the visit of the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights observing mission to Armenia and pointed out that Armenian government and the party headed by it are ready to support the mission and are always ready to meet in case of necessity.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

The two sides also underscored the conduction of elections in accordance with international standards.

During the meeting Gert-Henrikh Arens presented to the Armenian prime minister the work carried out by the long-term and short-term observing missions assuring that the international community is also ready to support the successful conduction of elections in Armenia.

## 24. ARMENIAN DEFENSE MINISTER RECEIVES MATTHEW BRYZA [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Armenian Defense Minister Michael Harutyunian received today U.S. assistant state secretary, OSCE Minsk Group co-chair Matthew Bryza.

Press secretary of the defense minister Seiran Shahsuvarian told Armenpress that during the meeting the sides referred to the document of suggestions of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs presented to the sides in Madrid.

Matthew Bryza noted that 2008 will be a resolute year for all. According to him, in case of expression of kind will it will be possible to come to final agreement and regulate the issue.

The sides also referred to the current state of Armenian-American cooperation and expressed assurance that Armenian-American relations will develop and boost more during the running year.

Speaking about the Armenian peacekeepers implementing their mission, Bryza highly assessed Armenia's participation in the international peacekeeping missions and pointed out the high level of preparedness and responsibility displayed by the Armenian peacekeepers.

The sides also discussed a number of issues connected with the reforms carried out in the Armenian armed forces.

## 25. NEXT MONITORING OF KARABAKH-AZERBAIJAN CONTACT ZONE TO BE CONDUCTED IN THE END OF THE MONTH [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

The next monitoring of the contact zone of Karabakh and Azerbaijani armed forces will be conducted in the end of the month. The previous monitoring was conducted on January 16 with the participation of personal representative of the OSCE chairman in office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

OSCE Minsk Group French co-chairman Bernard Fassier said that the monitoring must be continuative, so that no human life will be harmed. According to him, during the past year around 30 people died and the loss of so many people is inadmissible.

Yuri Merzlyakov noted that the sides had a constructive attitude towards the conduction of monitoring and understand that in this way it must continue in future.

## 26. CEC SECRETARY SAYS AMENDED ELECTORAL CODE TO PROMOTE MORE DEMOCRATIC CONDUCTION OF ELECTIONS [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

The newly amended Armenian Electoral Code gives an opportunity to conduct more democratic elections. Secretary of the Armenian Central Electoral Commission Abram Bakhchagulian said today that CEC has actively participated in the development of changes of the Electoral code and raised a number of issues.

The secretary said that with the support of the OSCE and IFES, CEC has to once again conduct training for the members of the electoral commissions which will be held in the first half of February.

According to him, in Armenia the voters lists are better than in CIS and even Eastern European countries as the CEC always holds the voters register and not from elections to elections. The index of quality is that on May 12 only 80 people had to apply to court for restoration of their voting right.

The CEC secretary also said that the printed ballots are numbered. On February 19 in the real time regime it will be possible to follow the pace of elections on-line.

## 27. VENICE COMMISSION SUGGESTS LEGAL SUPPORT IN KARABAKH CONFLICT REGULATION ISSUE [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe has expressed readiness to display legal support for the regulation of Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

"We may give legal advice which will help the regulation of the issue but for it the political agreement of the sides is necessary," Secretary of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio said today in an interview to Trend news agency.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

The Venice Commission together with the EU and OSCE cooperated in regulation of the Kosovo, Trans-Dniester, Serbia-Montenegro as well as South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts.

G. Buquicchio noted that the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs may apply to Venice Commission for getting legal help.

## 28. AZERI PRESIDENT RESUMES WAR RHETORIC [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev has resumed his belligerent rhetoric telling a gathering of his country fellows in Agdam region bordering Nagorno-Karabakh that the war with Armenia was not over yet.

"Although Armenia repeats from time to time that it has won the war, it is not true, as only the first phase of the war is over," Aliyev told Thursday.

Aliyev cited increased military spending and steady economic growth as guarantees of bringing Nagorno-Karabakh back.

Aliyev claimed that in the past Armenia was ready to pull out its troops from four regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. Now, seeing the growing economic might of Azerbaijan, he said, Yerevan is willing to return all seven regions.

According to Aliyev, this is evidence that Azerbaijan will soon attain to its ultimate goal. He further claimed that authorities in Yerevan realize well that time is not playing into their hands.

"Nagorno-Karabakh will never be independent. This is also supported by the international mediators. Armenia accepts, though unwillingly, this reality," he was quoted by Trend news agency as saying.

## 29. ARMENIAN AND AZERI LEADERS CAN SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT TALKS: U.S. COCHAIRMAN [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

The parties to the (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict have the right to share information regarding the negotiation, the US Minsk Group co-chairman Matthew Bryza was quoted by Trend news agency as saying today in Baku.

His remark was in response to a question of a reporter about whether the leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh was aware of all details of the confidential talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"For example, I know that Armenian president and foreign minister share this information with other government members. The same is true regarding Azerbaijan", he said.

As for the participation of Nagorno-Karabakh in the negotiation process, he said when saying that Nagorno-Karabakh must also be involved in this process he means both its Armenian and Azeri communities.

"Yet it is still early to speak about it. The parties decide for themselves whether to increase the number of sides or not. Our main task is to bring the talks to success. The current visit to the region is connected with discussions of a plan, presented to the parties in Madrid", he said.

Bernard Fassier, the France Co-chair of OSCE Minsk Group, stated for his part that the time is necessary for both sides to evaluate their latest proposals.

## 30. PRIME MINISTER'S LOYALIST PREDICTS HIS OUTRIGHT VICTORY IN FEBRUARY ELECTION

Eduard Sharmazanov, a spokesman for the governing Republican Party, who also holds a parliament seat, said today prime minister Serzh Sarkisian's ultimate task is to ensure that the February 19 presidential election does not fall short of meeting international standards and mark another tangible step in making Armenia a strong democratic nation.

Serzh Sarkisian's presidential election manifesto unveiled last week promises to turn Armenia into a "strong democratic state" where all citizens are equal before law and live in an "atmosphere of mutual respect, love and indulgence."

Sharmazanov told a news conference that the ruling party has already set up 1,300 campaign offices across the country.

"All political groups and non-governmental organizations which have voiced their endorsement of prime minister Sarkisian are engaged in relevant work. I am sure that the people will again choose to vote for our party as they did during the past May 12 parliamentary elections," Sharmazanov said.

Sharmazanov quoted the prime minister as saying that "We all shall work hard to make clean and fair elections in Armenia become a strong tradition."



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

The spokesman said the authorities have the will to press for it. He further said all political institutions should understand that there is no alternative to democracy.

"We do not need a vulnerable president, we need a president elected by the people," he said, questioning again former president Levon Ter-Petrosian's chances of winning the ballot.

The spokesman predicted that Serzh Sarkisian will get enough votes to win the election outright and avoid a run-off with an opposition candidate.

"In the last two decades Serzh Sarkisian has been in the climax of major domestic and foreign policy developments, he has been serving his nation in every area and in every position he held," Sharmazanov said.

Sharmazanov also quoted a late prime minister Vazgen Sarkisian as saying that no one could ever question Serzh Sarkisian's integrity, patriotism, professionalism and commitment.

Eduard Sharmazanov declined media speculations that Serzh Sarkisian may replace territorial minister Hovik Abrahamian as head of his election campaign. Particularly, a local daily claimed today that Hovik Abrahamian is a government official with a tainted reputation that would only damage Sarkisian's campaign.

## 31. PEOPLE'S PARTY OF ARMENIA SHARES EX-PRESIDENT'S APPROACHES

Stepan Demirchian, chairman of an opposition People's Party of Armenia, said today despite a set of differences between his party's approaches to resolving some key issues and those spelled out in Ter-Petrosian's election manifesto, his party will support ex-president's presidential bid.

Demirchian told a news conference today that apart from these difference there is also a lot that connects his party and Ter-Petrosian's supporters, for example, Ter-Petrosian's vision of how to improve relations with neighbors, how to enhance higher birth rates and resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Demirchian said many members of his party, including his deputy Grigor Harutunian are involved in campaign offices of the former president and will be campaigning for him once the official start is given.

Stepan Demirchian said he is sure that the main battle for presidency will be between Ter-Petrosian and prime minister Serzh Sarkisian.

## 32. NO PEACEFUL AGREEMENT WITHOUT NAGORNO-KARABAKH, KOCHARIAN SAYS

President Robert Kocharian said today the content of a package of proposals designed by the OSCE Minsk Group for peaceful settlement of the Karabakh issue and its general rationale are acceptable for Armenia, but he added that regarding some points of the document that was handed to Armenia and Azerbaijan in late November, Armenia has a different opinion.

He said discussions will continue on the sticking points. He said the package of basic principles for the peaceful settlement of the conflict allows the sides to seek a solution that would benefit all sides.

Kocharian was speaking to journalists during a visit to Yerevan municipality. He said he did not expect a soonest solution, saying also the talks will be continued by Armenia's next president

Kocharian was asked to comment on a remark by the French co-chair, Bernard Fassier who said that it was up to Armenian leadership to decide whether to involve the Karabakh side into the talks or not because it was left out of the process by Armenian leadership.

Kocharian said Armenia never decided to leave Karabakh out. He explained that as a result of his active talks with late Azeri president Heydar Aliyev, which nearly resulted in signing a peaceful agreement in 2001 in Key West, USA, Nagorno-Karabakh was left out. He added that before that the talks were actually frozen and in a deadlock. He said Nagorno-Karabakh is in the process as co-chairs visit Stepanakert and negotiate with its leadership.

Kocharian said no peaceful agreement could be signed with Nagorno-Karabakh authorities. He said Karabakh would be involved into the talks once the sides agreed on the basic conflict settlement principles.

## **BUSINESS**

### 33. DESPITE WEAK JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND CORRUPTION, ARMENIA AGAIN RANKED AMONG MOST ECONOMICALLY FREE COUNTRIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The regular classification "Index of Economic Freedom" was published, according to which Armenia is again among the world's most economically free countries: it is in 28th place among 162 countries. Based on the opinion of the Wall Street Journal of Heritage Foundation (US), Armenia is the



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

most economically free country among CIS countries and is in 15th place out of 41 countries of the European region. It is indicated that Armenia needs to increase protection of the right of property, reduce corruption and strengthen the judicial system. In the past few years, Armenia has been among the relatively free countries in the world, surpassing even several EU countries in this respect.

By the 2008 index, Georgia is in 32nd place, Turkey is in 74th place, Azerbaijan is in 107th place and Russia is in 134th place.

The Index of Economic Freedom is calculated based on 50 variables which include all aspects of the business environment in the given country.

## 34. PATENTS FOR 138 INVENTIONS GRANTED IN ARMENIA LAST YEAR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

At the January 17 sitting, the Armenian government approved the bill on useful models of inventions and industrial models. The head of the Intellectual Property Agency of the RA Ministry of Trade and Economic Development Armen Azizian told reporters after the sitting that the bill aims to improve the legislative field on intellectual property and bring it into line with European standards.

The bill envisages simplifying the procedure of granting patents for inventions and useful models of inventions. It was stated that the RA Law on Patents does not correspond to international standards as it stipulates a complicated procedure of granting patents. Under this law, two patents are granted: at first a preliminary patent for up to 10 years is given to the inventor, after which a second patent is granted for a 20-year period. The bill envisages granting one patent for 20 years by a simple procedure.

A. Azizian added that at present the agency has to publish the patent within 1-2 months after the submission of the bid on patent for the purpose of general familiarization. According to the bill, the person submitting the bid may keep the essence of his/her invention secret up to 18 months.

Last year the agency granted patents for 138 inventions, only 3 of which have been put in use. Most of patents are related to medicine, energy, mining industry.

## 35. ARMENIA TO SHOWCASE ITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AT BERLIN FAIR [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Over 30 Armenian companies producing brandy, wines, vegetable and fruits preserves, honey and dried fruits will showcase their products at International Green Week fair in Germany's Berlin that opens today.

Armenian agricultural minister David Lokian will lead an Armenian delegation participating in it. Armenian companies were assisted greatly by German KfW bank and GTZ organization.

Farming issues and global supply and demand will be discussed at a special forum and an international conference of agriculture ministers during Green Week, which runs until January 27.

More than 400,000 visitors are expected to attend the exhibition, which is now in its 73rd year. Around 100,000 products are on display by 1,610 exhibitors from 52 countries.

## 36. ARMENIA SHOULD DEVELOP BY WAY OF LIBERALIZATION OF ECONOMY, VAHAGN KHACHATRIAN CONSIDERS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

Existence of equal economic possibilities, ensuring of free competition and immunity of property is considered as important in the economic part of the pre-election program of first RA President Levon Ter-Petrosian, a candidate for presidency. Vahagn Khachatrian, a member of the Alternative public-political initiative, said this at the January 17 dispute adding that in general, the countries, which take the way of liberalization of economy, develop successfully and quickly.

According to V. Khachatrian, all branches of economy, except the sphere of high technologies, should be also liberalized in Armenia. While, according to the representative of Alternative, the robber authorities and, in particular, President Robert Kocharian, have created economic monopolies for the purpose of building a one-pole power pyramid. "It would be right if Kocharian at once declared Armenia a constitutional monarchy," V. Khachatrian said.

Ara Nranian, a member of the ARFD NA faction, said that limitation of monopolies and establishment of competitive relations are spoken about in the pre-election program of Vahan Hovhannisian, a candidate for presidency nominated by ARFD. According to the MP, in case of being elected the ARFD candidate will pursue fulfillment of party's pre-election provisions adopted as far back as in 2007, in particular, raising the minimum salary up to 50 thousand drams (nearly 165 dollars).



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

## DIASPORA

### 37. EVERYTHING WILL BE DONE FOR DISCLOSURE OF HRANT DINK'S MURDER, TURKISH MINISTER OF INTERIOR SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

Responding to questions related to the murder of the editor-in-chief of "Agos" weekly newspaper Hrant Dink, which were asked during discussions at Turkey's Great National Assembly, the Turkish minister of the interior Beshir Atalai stated that no issue in this case will remain undisclosed.

"All evidence related to this case has been presented to court. If there are any concerns about some facts that have not been presented, you may apply to court. Our duty is to do everything in order to disclose this crime," Atalai said, adding that the murder of Hrant Dink has caused great pain to everybody and had a negative impact on people's notions of Turkey.

"Administrative inspectors have been sent to examine the evidence related to the case. You may be sure that if any new evidence is revealed, the appropriate measures will be taken. We do not allow that some dark issues will remain in this case, we will do everything possible with this aim," Beshir Atalai said.

### 38. MURDER OF DINK INCREASES NUMBER OF UNSOLVED POLITICAL CRIMES IN TURKEY, TURKISH MP SAYS [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The murder of the editor-in-chief of "Agos" weekly newspaper Hrant Dink increased the number of unsolved political crimes in Turkey. The deputy of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) Akin Birdal made this statement at Turkey's Great National Assembly.

"It was an obviously committed crime that was not prevented. There have been many political murders which, unfortunately, have not been disclosed. The murder of Hrant has increased the number of such crimes," Birdal stated.

Speaking about Article 301 of the Criminal Code of Turkey and reminding the state minister Cemil Cicek's words that Article 301 is no pain of anybody, A. Birdal said: Article 301 is business of us. It is an article that disturbs peaceful lifestyle".

### 39. ARMENIAN YOUTH OF MOSCOW TO ORGANIZE PICKET AT TURKISH EMBASSY ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF HRANT DINK'S MURDER [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The Youth Union of New Nakhichevan and Russian Dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church on January 19 initiates a series of public events dated to the first anniversary of the murder of the editor-in-chief of "Agos" weekly newspaper Hrant Dink. The Youth Union proposes remembering on January 19 all crimes committed by Turkey against ethnic and religious minorities.

According to "Yerkramas" newspaper of Armenians of Russia, a liturgy in memory of killed Christians in Turkey will be celebrated in Surb Harutyun Church in Moscow on January 19. On the same day a picket will be organized at the Turkish embassy, as well as the round table "Truth Makes US Free" will be conducted at the spiritual-education center "Hayordats Tun" of the Armenian Apostolic Church, during which a film about Hrant Dink will be demonstrated and information about nationalists' crimes in Turkey will be made public. A statement calling on the Turkish authorities to stop prosecution of the Turkish publisher Recep Zakaroglu who may be sentenced to 3-year imprisonment for "insulting Turkishness" will be adopted during these public events. It is also envisaged to adopt and send a resolution to leaders of the EU, the U.S. and Turkey.

"Yerkramas" reported that the national and cultural autonomy of Assyrians of Moscow will also join the events' organizers. The lecturer of the Swedish University Orebro Fuad Deniz (an Assyrian by origin), who won international recognition for his studies and publications on the Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, was killed by unknown radicals recently.

### 40. STREET IN FRENCH LYON TO BE NAMED AFTER HRANT DINK [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

A street in France's second largest city of Lyon will be named after Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish Armenian journalist killed a year ago outside the office of his bilingual Agos weekly in Istanbul.

Ms. Hilda Choboyan, chairwoman of the European Armenian Federation for Justice, said to Armenpress the ceremony will be attended by Lyon mayor.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

She said commemorative events will be held also in many European cities on January 19, which will mark the first anniversary of Dink's murder. One of the events will be held in the Dutch city of Assen's De Boskampe cemetery near a monument to the victims of the Armenian genocide.

In a related event the International Press Institute (IPI), the global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists in over 120 countries, criticized in an open letter the ongoing failure of the Turkish government to reform the internationally denounced article 301 of the Turkish penal code.

IPI recognized Hrant Dink last year as World Press Freedom Hero.

"Article 301, which criminalizes 'insults to Turkishness', has serious ramifications for freedom of speech in Turkey," said David Dudge, IPI Director.

"By silencing speech on certain issues, the article risks fuelling hatred and violence in Turkish society. Bearing in mind that Dink was murdered by a Turkish nationalist, it is possible that his murderer felt in some way justified by the fact that Dink had broken this pernicious law. Indeed, it is likely that he may have become a target in the first place due to the high profile nature of the trial."

"For this reason, article 301 may encourage a vicious cycle of violence, leaving those brave enough to speak out on taboo subjects in Turkey isolated and possibly in grave danger."

The IPI strongly urged the government of Turkey to ensure that article 301 is repealed, along with other articles in the Turkish penal code which inhibit freedom of expression and which do not conform to the standards expected of a modern democracy.

## 41. REMEMBERING HRANT DINK [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the assassination of Hrant Dink, Editor of the weekly Agos newspaper of Istanbul, Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian wrote an opinion piece, at the request of the Agos newspaper. The piece appeared in the Thursday, January 17 edition of Agos in Armenian and in Turkish, and in English in the Turkish daily newspaper Today's Zaman.

The Minister wrote: "I can confess that I have lived two deep and unforgettable shocks during my years in this office - once in 1999 when the stability of Armenia was threatened by gunmen and the second time last year when I received the call that Hrant Dink had been assassinated. Both were attacks not on men, but on ideas and values.

Hrant's murder was an assault at democratic state-building of the Turkish state. His murderers took aim at his vision of a Turkey that allowed free speech, that tolerated open discourse, and that embraced its minority citizens, like himself.

We miss Hrant. He would come to Armenia a couple of times a year. In September 2006, when he spoke at the third Armenia Diaspora Conference, his message was that as members of the European family, Turkey and Armenia would have normal relations, because even the unwilling in Turkey would be induced to find a way to dialogue. That was music to our ears, echoing as it did our own wishes.

He also addressed the "International Conference on the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide" we held in Yerevan in April, 2005. Everyone respected his ardent, reasoned plea for dialogue, for distinguishing between today's Turkish Republic and the perpetrators of atrocities nearly 100 years ago. He recounted passionately how he had explained to Turkish authorities that Armenians are looking for their roots - the same roots which the Ottoman Empire slashed when it attempted to completely eradicate a people and tear it away from its home, its culture and its traditions.

Each time he came to Yerevan, we would find a few minutes to talk. It was important that I hear from him about the mood in Turkey. Hrant was the right person to ask, because he was not just an Armenian living in Turkey. He was proud of both his identities - Turkish and Armenian - and was insulted and angered that while trying to reconcile them he was accused of 'insulting Turkishness'.

When he was first charged under Article 301 for 'insulting Turkishness', I asked whether it would help if I wrote a letter or spoke publicly. He responded confidently. "My thanks and gratitude, but right now, I'm all I need. So help me God, I'm going to take my struggle and my rights all the way to the end."

Later, he wondered how "On the one hand, they call for dialogue with Armenia and Armenians, on the other hand they want to condemn or neutralize their own citizen who is working for dialogue."

Hrant Dink was candid and courageous, but not naive. Still, he could not have predicted this kind of 'neutralization'. His honest and brave voice was silenced. Worse, some saw in this assassination a clear message that the danger they face lies deeper than a mere judicial conviction.

This message is just one of the dividends that this killing offered those who contributed to the fanatical nationalist environment which colors Turkish politics in and out of Turkey. The brutality, the impunity, the violence of Hrant's murder serves several political ends. First, it makes Turkey less interesting for Europe, which is exactly what some in the Turkish establishment want. Second, it scares



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

away Armenians and other minorities in Turkey, from pursuing their civil and human rights. Third, it scares those bold Turks who are beginning to explore these complicated, sensitive subjects in earnest.

In Armenia, we have insisted for more than a decade, that although we are the victims of historical injustice, and although we are on the other side of a border that Turkey has kept closed, we are prepared at any time for dialogue with our neighbor on any subject, so long as there are normal relations between us, so long as this last closed border in Europe is opened, so long as someone on the other side wants to talk. We are ready.

A year ago, we were moved by the outpouring of fundamental, human grief at all levels of Turkish society, especially by those who have been scared by the demonstration of such violence on the part of an adolescent, and seen it for what it is - the continuation of hatred and enmity into the next generation. Hrant Dink's family, his colleagues at and around Agos, his friends in Armenia and in Turkey, will find some comfort knowing that today and tomorrow, Hrant will be remembered - by Armenians, who share his vision of understanding and harmony among peoples, and by Turks, who share his dream of living in peace with neighbors and with history."

## 42. HRANT DINK'S LAWYERS ACCUSES AUTHORITIES OF FAILING TO ARREST ACTUAL PERPETRATORS [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

Thousands are expected to gather in front of Agos Turkish-Armenian weekly in Turkish Istanbul on January 19 to commemorate the one year anniversary of its editor, Hrant Dink's death.

According to Turkish daily Zaman, Dink's lawyers have prepared a report on legal developments in the case from last year. The report notes that state authorities failed to apprehend the actual perpetrators of the murder and had made no substantial progress in the administrative investigations.

The report, prepared by Dink family attorneys and submitted to the interior and justice ministers, reads: "In addition to the main legal case, there was no significant progress in the investigations carried out with regard to the negligence of the security forces in the murder; the state failed to bring the actual perpetrators to trial."

The report further states: "The preliminary investigation was limited to Pelitli, the hometown of Ogun Samast, the prime suspect of the murder, who was apprehended after the incident. The authorities failed to reveal the intricate network behind the murder."

"The transcripts of the phone calls included in the case dossier were not made by experts." "The videotape recordings of the ATM at an Akbank branch located near the murder site were not found." "How the prime suspect, Ogun Samast., came from Trabzon and who he met in Istanbul still remain a mystery."

"No permission was granted to open investigations against a number of official figures, including the Trabzon and Istanbul police chiefs."

## 43. REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS PAYS TRIBUTE TO HRANT DINK'S COURAGE

On the eve of the first anniversary of the death of Hrant Dink, Reporters Without Borders paid tribute to his courage and reiterated its solidarity with his family and fellow journalists who defend his memory.

The editor of the Armenian- and Turkish-language weekly Agos, Dink was gunned outside the newspaper's office in Istanbul on 19 January 2007, in a murder that caused an outcry in Turkey and throughout the world.

"The authorities must push ahead with the investigation in order to identify all those, whoever they are, who were involved in this terrible crime, one that had all the elements of a tragedy foretold," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The authorities must show they are capable of shouldering their share of the blame for this murder and they must embark on a thorough overhaul of Turkey's legislation and the way the state apparatus operates.

"Amending or repealing article 301 of the criminal code, which punishes 'humiliating the Turkish identity,' is an escapable part of the reform process, and we encourage the authorities to do it as quickly as possible.

"This is the only way to ensure that Dink is the last victim of hatred in Turkey," Reporters Without Borders added. "Let us not forget that about 100,000 people marched behind Dink's coffin on 23 January 2007. Let us not forget that they chanted: 'We are all Hrant Dink, we are all Armenians'."

The first one-day hearing in the trial of Dink's alleged murderers was held in the Istanbul suburb of Besikta on 2 July. The second was held on 1 October and the next is to take place on 11 February. There is no longer any doubt about the identify of the youth who fired the shots, Ogun Samast, and his



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

---

accomplices Erhan Tuncel and Yasin Hayal, said to be the masterminds. The essential issue raised by the trial is the involvement of the security forces in the murder, whether in its gestation or execution or in support for the three leading defendants afterwards.

The Dink family lawyers have on several occasions complained about the destruction of evidence and the refusal of the authorities to go after members of the police or gendarmerie. One of the most glaring examples is a phone conversation between Tuncel and Mühittin Zenit, a policeman based in the northeastern city of Trabzon, where most of the 19 defendants are from. It took place half an hour after Dink's murder and shows that Zenit had been aware of a plan to kill Dink. He has nonetheless been transferred to the Department of Intelligence.

Fethiye Cetin, one of the Dink family lawyers, also points out that the video of the murder that was recorded by a surveillance camera outside a bank located next to the newspaper was never viewed because the police did not request the recording in time.

Interior minister Besir Atalay nonetheless told parliament this week : "The justice system is functioning well in the Dink case. No dimension of this event has remained outside its scope." Bahri Bayram Belen, another of the Dink family lawyers, immediately responded : "Unnecessary administrative decisions blocked judicial investigations of state employees that should have been carried out." He added : "Since the initial investigation, certain enquiries (...) have not been appropriately conducted because the security forces did not participate."

Parliament is looking into the case. An investigative sub-commission of the human rights commission began on 4 January to conduct enquiries aimed at clarifying the circumstances in which the murder took place. Headed by a former journalist, Mehmet Ocaktan, it has already conducted investigations in Istanbul and Trabzon.

The irregularities have been confirmed by another parliamentary commission of enquiry. Its report said : "Although interior minister experts thought Directorate of Security officials in Istanbul, both senior and junior, could be held responsible for failing in their duty to supervise (before the murder), only one judicial investigation into the head of the police intelligence service in Istanbul, A. Ilhan Güler, was authorized."

The prime minister's office has meanwhile announced that it has completed its own report after eight months of investigation. The prime minister agreed to conduct this investigation in April after getting a letter from Dink's daughter, Rakel Dink, in which she referred to the many irregularities and said she feared that justice would never be done.

Another recent development is the emergence of the possibility that Samast, the main defendant, could be older than his ID papers say. Doctors who examined him in May concluded that he could be 18, not 17. The court must rule on this question, which could have a major impact on the trial. If the court decides that Samast is not, after all, a minor, the trial should be declared open to the public, while Samast would face the possibility of life imprisonment instead of a 20-year sentence.

Dink was the victim of a state-endorsed nationalism that bans any mention of certain aspects of Turkish history such as the genocide of Armenians in the last years of the Ottoman empire. This nationalism finds expression in article 301 of the criminal code, entitled "Humiliation of Turkish identity, the republic and the institutions or organs of the state," under which "openly humiliating the government, the judicial organs of the state, or the military or police structures" is punishable for six months to three years in prison.

Dink had been prosecuted under this article. His son, Arat Dink, was given a suspended sentence of a year in prison on 11 October for publishing in Agos the interview father had given to Reuters in which he said the massacres of Armenians from 1915 to 1917 constituted genocide. In all, 120 people have been prosecuted under the article, which has emerged as major tool for restricting free speech since it took effect in 2005.

The authorities have repeatedly stated their intention of amending the article. Justice minister Mehmet Ali Sahin, for example, told the Anatolia news agency on 6 November that the government had decided to amend it. He said the cabinet would consider the various amendment proposals "at the first opportunity." At the start of this month, the justice ministry submitted a draft amendment to the national assembly's laws commission, which must now examine it. It proposes replacing "humiliating the Turkish identity" by "humiliating the Turkish people" and "humiliating the republic" by "humiliating the Turkish republic."

It proposes eliminating paragraph 4 of the article that says "any expression of thought in the form of criticism cannot be sanctioned."

The proposed amendment would also reduce the maximum penalty from three years in prison to two. The justice ministry's permission would henceforth be required for anyone to be prosecuted under the article. (The new deputy prime minister, former justice minister Cemil Çiçek, thinks a commission,



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

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rather than the ministry itself, should decide whether to give permission.) And finally, it would also eliminate paragraph 3, which says : "If a Turkish citizen living abroad humiliates the Turkish identity, the penalty is increased by a third."

This falls well short of satisfying Reporters Without Borders, which calls for the complete repeal of article 301, as the proposed amendment offers no solution to the problem of the article's arbitrary application by judges.

Many tributes will be paid to Dink throughout the world. In Istanbul, a rally is to be held at 3 p.m. tomorrow outside Agos.

## ARTS

### 44. SHOGHAKN FOLK ENSEMBLE TO PERFORM ON TOUR IN U.S. AND CANADA FROM JANUARY 19 TO MARCH 2 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The Shoghakn folk ensemble will perform on tour in the United States and Canada between January 19 to March 2 on the initiative of the RA Ministry of Culture and the Traditional Crossroads American company. As Hasmik Haroutiunian, a solo singer of the ensemble, said at the January 16 press conference, there is much interest in traditional music in the whole world.

Armenian folk, gousan, lullaby songs will be performed by duduk player Gevorg Dabaghian, kanon player Karine Hovhannisian, H. Haroutiunian and other members of the ensemble before foreign spectators at authoritative American concert halls, in particular, New York's Carnegie Hall, Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, Virginia, Santa-Barbara and San-Diego Universities and Armenian cultural centers. At the same time it was mentioned that on the Ministry's initiative it has been decided to dedicate Shoghakn's February 26 concert to be held at Fresno University to writer William Saroyan's jubilee. The writer's 100th anniversary will be solemnly celebrated this year both in Fresno and in Armenia.

According to H. Haroutiunian, since 2000 the ensemble has been cooperating with the Traditional Crossroads company. The company periodically releases Shoghakn's disks, which are mainly spread abroad. Unfortunately, according to the ensemble's solo singer, the ensemble having 14 years' biography is almost unknown in Armenia, as Shoghakn is not able to organize concerts in the homeland. "That is why we are known abroad, but not in Armenia. However, our task is to do our best to present our pure music in the homeland as well. Some steps are being already taken with the Ministry of Culture in that direction," H. Haroutiunian said.

### 45. THIS YEAR RA MINISTRY OF CULTURE TO HOLD CONTESTS DEDICATED TO PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

This year the RA Ministry of Culture will hold a number of contests, each of which will contribute to development of Armenian culture. Karine Khodikian, the RA Deputy Minister of Culture, said at the January 16 press conference.

In her words, the Ministry will announce a grant competition of ethnographic ensembles for the purpose of promoting preservation, spreading and development of national non-material cultural heritage, promoting organization of ethnographic festivals. Ethnographic ensembles having two years' experience and two concert programs, acting in various regions of Armenia, who with their activity contribute to preservation and spreading of folk lore and ethnography traditions of the given populated area, can take part in the competition. The competition will consist of three stages. Three winners will be given grants in the amount of 5m drams (nearly 16 thousand USD) each.

A contest of TV and radio broadcasts will be also announced. The broadcasts should be 15-30-minute and should be dedicated to some side of non-material cultural heritage, folk lore, national rituals, to name but a few. Authors of at least three TV broadcasts can take part in the contest.

A statuette and a monetary prize of 100 thousand drams will be given to the main prize-winner of the contest to be held for the purpose of promoting publishing, publishers' cooperation, best publishing technologies.

This year the Ministry of Culture will also hold the first international fonts' contest "Font 2008," in which citizens and organizations of Armenia and abroad can take part. The author of the fonts to be recognized the best will receive the chief prize and a monetary prize of 100 thousand drams and the participants taking the second and third places will be give diplomas.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

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## 46. BAMO TO FINISH RECONSTRUCTION OF CONCERT AND SPORT COMPLEX RENOVATION BY SEPTEMBER [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

The Moscow-based construction group BAMO, owned by an ethnic Armenian businessman, Murad Muradian, said the reconstruction of the Karen Demirchian Sport and Cultural Complex, Yerevan's largest and most imposing buildings, will be over by next September .

The company paid \$5.4 million to become the owner of the complex in 2005.

Vahagn Gevorkian, deputy director of the complex, told Armenpress that the renovated complex will have a modern heating system and all its infrastructure and facilities will be replaced by modern ones.

The complex will have also a skating-rink and contemporary stages.

The Sport and Cultural Complex was built at the initiative of Karen Demirchian (late Soviet ruler of Armenia, killed in 1999 October 27 attack on the parliament) in 1983 and became one of the modest modern Soviet facilities of its kind.

BAMO pledged to invest \$10 million to get the building into shape.

## 47. CULTURAL COOPERATION PROGRAM SIGNED BETWEEN BULGARIAN AND ARMENIAN GOVERNMENTS [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

A program on "Cooperation between Bulgarian and Armenian governments in cultural sphere for 2007-2009" was signed in Sofia in December.

An official from the public relations department of the Armenian Ministry of Culture told Armenpress that the program encourages the cooperation in theatrical, music, dancing, fine art, museum work, architectural spheres, exchange of art figures and specialists, direct cooperation in film sphere etc.

## SOCIAL

## 48. LIBRARY OF NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION OF RA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE TO BE INCLUDED IN NETWORK OF IIEP DEPOSITORY LIBRARIES [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The library of the National Institute of Education of the RA Ministry of Education and Science will be included in the network of depository libraries of the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP). NT correspondent was informed by the PR department of the ministry that starting from this year, the library will regularly receive IIEP's publications. The National Institute of Education has already received nearly 50 titles of professional literature.

The IIEP was established in 1963 with the aim of developing the planning and management capacities of the educational systems of UNESCO member states. Taking into account difficulties with obtaining professional literature on education, the Paris-based IIEP created a network of depository libraries in various countries in 1990. About 180 libraries in 80 countries currently receive a free copy of IIEP's publications which are released in English, French, Russian, Spanish, etc.

The institute offers annual courses, effective training, extension programs and other courses on planning and management of education and development of efficient educational policy. Since its establishment, the IIEP has prepared about 6,000 education experts and executives.

## 49. YEREVAN-MOSCOW-SHOUSHI-BETHLEHEM TV BRIDGE TO BE BROADCAST LIVE BY ARMENIAN PUBLIC TELEVISION ON JANUARY 18 [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

On the initiative of "Shoushi Rebirth" Foundation, Yerevan-Moscow-Shoushi-Bethlehem television bridge will take place on January 18, which will be broadcast live by the Public Television of Armenia at 21:30 local time. The foundation's PR officer Marina Grigorian told NT correspondent that this day was not chosen accidentally: a lot of Armenians celebrate Christmas according to the old style - on January 18 and many of them attend the liturgy in Bethlehem Church.

According to M. Grigorian, during the TV bridge, the cultural workers at the Armenian embassy in Russia and the Yerevan municipality will speak about the importance of Shoushi's rebirth and development. Video films about Shoushi, which was a cultural and religious center at one time, as well as video material about the foundation's programs will be demonstrated during the television bridge.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

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## 50. HEAD OF TAX SERVICE UNIT ARMEN OHANIAN ARRESTED ON CHARGE OF HOOLIGANISM [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/17/08]

The Special Investigation Service on January 16 arrested Armen Ohanian, the head of 9th unit of the Operative Investigation Department of the State Tax Service adjunct to the RA government, on suspicion of committing hooliganism with the use of arms, NT correspondent was informed by the Special Investigation Service.

According to information of preliminary investigation, on December 27 A. Ohanian showed obvious contempt for street vendors and buyers at 117 Arehestavorneri Street (Yerevan), disturbed public order by using his "Makarov" pistol and committing an act of violence against a resident of house No 117. Based on the application of the victim, a criminal case was opened under the RA Criminal Code's Article 258 Part 4. Investigation is underway.

## 51. OVER 2,000 BABIES BORN IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH IN 2007 [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

A total of 2,145 babies were born in the Nagorno-Karabakh republic (NKR) in 2007 which is 2 per cent more as compared to the figure of the same period of 2006.

The National Statistics Service of the NKR said 40,3 per cent of the new-born babies were born in capital city Stepanakert.

Last year the death rate as compared with 2006 reduced 0.7 per cent. The fatality in 2007 was 918 people increasing 5.9 per cent against the same period of 2006.

The high birth rate was registered in Stepanakert, Kashatagh and Martuni districts correspondingly.

## 52. JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AND YMCA NGO SIGN CONTRACT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL/ COMMUNITY CENTER [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Yukiko Izuma, a representative of the Japanese embassy in Armenia and Gagik Muradian, chairman of the Young Men's Christian Association/Shelter NGO (YMCA/Shelter) signed today in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia. a grant contract for the first stage of the construction of a school/community center in Ishkhanasar village of Syunik marz.

The Government of Japan through its "Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects" will make available an amount of 85,753 USD for this project that will support the community of Ishkhanasar to promote its sustainable development and enhance the access and the quality of basic education through the construction of a new school/community center building.

During the first stage of the project the construction of the school/community center building will be implemented through YMCA Shelter with the funds provided by the Government of Japan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Representation in Armenia.

The first stage is planned to be finalized by the end of 2008. In the second stage of the project the construction will be finalized with the participants of other donors.

The village's population now is 75 families. Children have their classes in neighboring villages' school. The new school building will be for 50 students.

## 53. UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL DROPS TO 6.7 PERCENT [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

Unemployment level in Armenia dropped to 6.67 percent as of December 31, 2006 from 7.2 percent 12 months before.

Sona Harutunian, chief of the state-run Employment Service, said today the figure reflects the number of people who applied to the agency's regional branches in search of jobs.

She said the real picture of the unemployment level is not clear because there are no exact figure about covert employment, when employers underreported routinely the number of their employees and different methodologies used for relevant studies.

All registered jobless people receive an allowance of 12,000 Drams (\$40) a month, which make 60 percent of the minimum wage.

They should visit regional employment offices on a regular basis to see if there are jobs for them. An unemployed person who fails to do so for six months becomes ineligible for the allowance and is withdrawn from the list.

Sona Harutunian said rural population who own land plots and are engaged in farming only are not regarded jobless. According to some estimates, there are 500,000 such people in Armenia.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

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## 54. TOTAL OF 15,681 BABIES BORN IN YEREVAN LAST YEAR [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

A total of 15,681 babies were born in Armenia's capital city Yerevan in 2007. Yerevan has 10 maternity hospitals.

In the first two weeks of this year 611 babies were born, 329 boys and 282 girls.

## 55. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN SYUNIK SLIGHTLY DOWN [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

Unemployment level in Armenia's southern province of Syunik last year dropped to 13.3 percent from 15.1 from a year before.

The highest unemployment rate-16.7 percent- was in the provincial center-Kapan- down from 19 percent in 2006.

Ruben Poghosian, head of Kapan employment center, said to Armenpress about 11,000 residents of the town were registered as jobless by the end of last year. More than half, 60 percent- were women between 31-50 with secondary and vocational education.

## SPORTS

## 56. WIJK AAN ZEE TOURNAMENT LEADERS LEVON ARONIAN AND MAGNUS KARLSEN DRAW GAME IN 4th TOUR [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

The two leaders, Levon Aronian and Magnus Karlsen (Norway) competed on January 15, in the 4th tour of the International Chess Festival being held in the city of Wijk aan Zee, Holland.

In tournament B, Gabriel Sargsian drew the game with Ervin L'Ami (Holland), Sergei Movsisian representing Slovakia with Etienne Bako (France). G. Sargsian shares the 10-12th places with 1.5 points, S. Movsisian the 4-6th places with 2.5 points.

January 16 is announced a rest day in the tournament. The games of the 5th tour are fixed for January 17, in which L. Aronian will compete with Vishvantan Anand (India).

## 57. ARMENIAN FOOTBALL NATIONAL TEAM RISES TO 85th PLACE ON FIFA CLASSIFICATION LIST [NOYAN TAPAN, 01/16/08]

On January 16, FIFA published the new list of classification of football national teams. The national teams of Argentina, Brazil, and Italy are successively in the first three. The Armenian national team has rose from the 93th to the 85th place. Azerbaijan's national team takes the 116th and Georgia's national team the 76th place.

## 58. SIRANUSH ANDREASIAN HEADS ARMENIAN WOMEN CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

After the 4<sup>th</sup> round of the Armenian women chess championship Siranush Andreasian beat Liana Aghabekian and gaining 3.5 points continues leading the championship.

Nelly Aghinian and Lilit Galoyan having 2.5 points are in the second and third places. Anahit Kharatian, Narine Gasparian and Marianna Gasparian are sharing 4-6 places having 2 points each. Liana Aghabekian, Lia Martirosian and Lusine Karapetian having 1.5 points are sharing 7-9 places.

Naira Movsisian is on the 10 place having 1 point.

## 59. FIFA RANKS ARMENIA 85TH [ARMENPRESS, 01/17/08]

On January 16 FIFA issued the new ranking table of national football teams. The top three teams are Argentina, Brazil and Italy.

The Armenian national football team has advanced form the 93rd to the 85th position. The Azerbaijani team is 116th, Georgia is 76th.



# AGBU ARMENIA NEWS BULLETIN

Friday, January 18, 2008

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60. ROBERT ARZUMANIAN TO PLAY FOR DANISH FC [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

One of Armenia's best football players, Robert Arzumanian, who played for Pyunik FC and the national team, has signed a 12-month contract with Danish Randers FC.

The Danish club is now on the sixth position of the national championship.

61. LEVON ARONIAN STILL IN LEAD OF CORUS CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP [ARMENPRESS, 01/18/08]

After five rounds of the 70th Corus Grandmasters chess tournament on Thursday in the Dutch Wijk an Zee in the elite Group A India's Vishy Anand, who has been going through a sluggish patch, drew with leader Levon Aronian of Armenia in an Anti-Meran Gambit.

Anand has two points and is still languishing in 10th place, while Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan, Levon Aronian and Magnus Carlsen of Norway share the lead with 3.5 points each.

In Group B, Hari drew with the hugely talented and in-form ethnic Armenian Sergei Movsesian of Slovakia and inched his way to the sole second spot with 3.5 points, half a point behind sole leader Etienne Bacrot of France.

Also in Group B, Humpy, who had lost two earlier rounds, drew with Gabriel Sarkisian of Armenia and remained in 13th place with 1.5 points from five rounds. Sarkisian is 10-th.

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