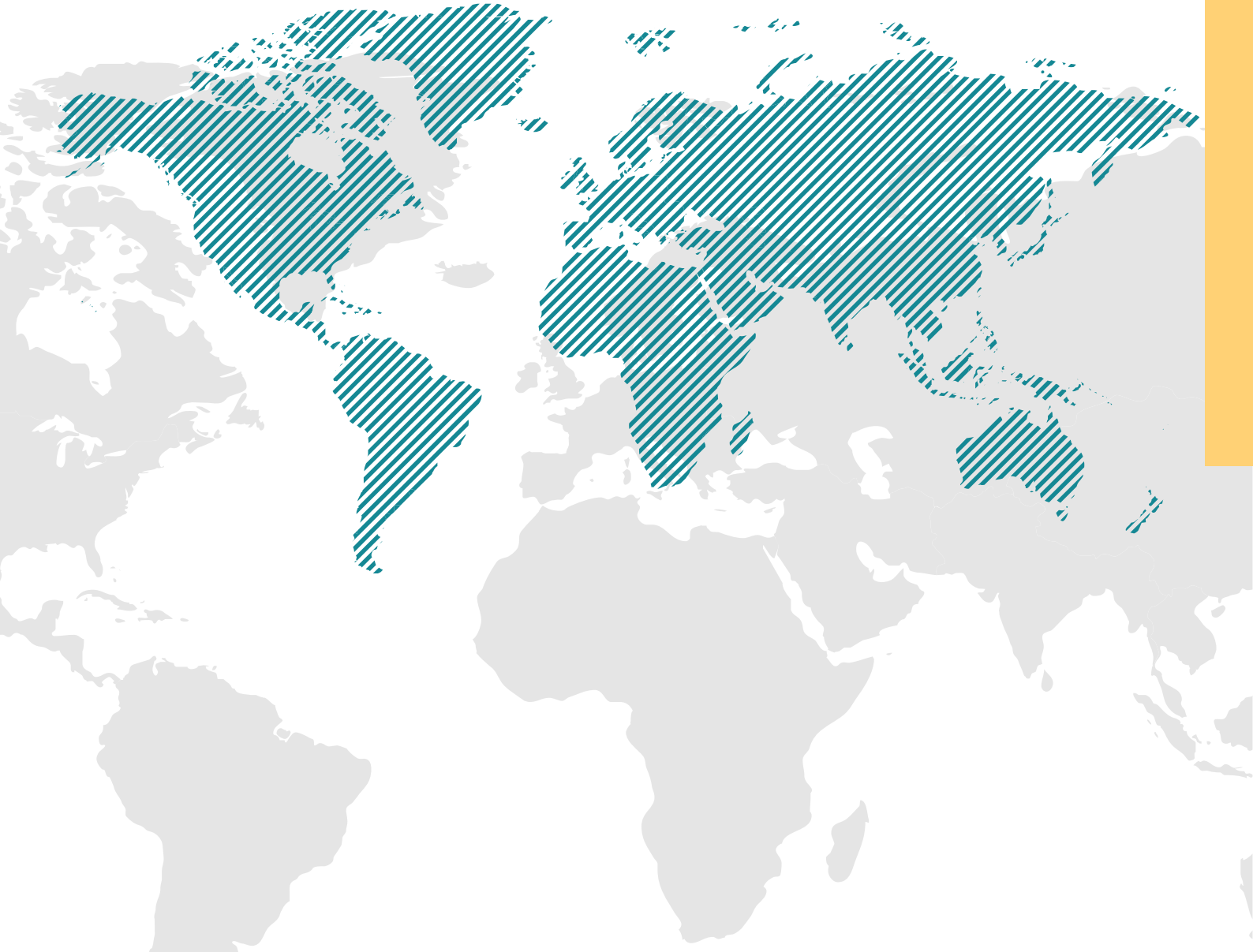




**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
DIASPORA AFFAIRS REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**



BIENNIAL REPORT

2019 - 2021

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FOREWORD BY THE RA PRIME MINISTER NIKOL PASHINYAN



Dear Compatriots from Around the World,

I am pleased to address you once again on this second anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs. Working with and developing closer relations with the Armenian Diaspora has always been a fundamentally important goal of the post-revolution Armenian government. Guided by the Strong Armenia-Strong Diaspora principle, we see the prospect of the Diaspora's survival and development only in the presence of a democratic, stable, and progressive Armenian state. Armenia is the hearth and home of our, your, and all of our identities, and the life of the entire Armenian nation must be built around that hearth. Each and every one of us must prioritize the building and strengthening of this collective hearth and home, bolstering our resolve to rebuild our country together.

From the beginning of Armenia's independence, the Diaspora has had a considerable presence in all aspects of Armenia's development. The unified and dedicated efforts of our compatriots in the Diaspora during the difficult months of the Coronavirus pandemic in Armenia and throughout the Second Artsakh War was similarly invaluable. This far-reaching unprecedented mobilization truly gave us strength and stamina.

Today, Armenia and Artsakh are crossing a difficult path, which can only be overcome effectively if our global potential is united and our efforts maximized. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, I once again express to all representatives of the Diaspora our readiness for open and sincere cooperation.

Respectfully,

Nikol Pashinyan

RA Prime Minister

FOREWORD BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS, ZAREH SINANYAN



Dear compatriots,

The Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs is now two years old and despite the historically difficult circumstances of the past year, we have remained committed to the future and prosperity of Armenians living in Armenia and in the Diaspora, the preservation of Armenian identity, and the maximal integration of these two inseparable parts of the Armenian nation. In pursuit of our mission we are grateful to our Diaspora partners who stand steadfastly next to the homeland in one of the most trying periods in our nation's history.

This biennial report summarizes the main directions of work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs since its inception. Our policies and programs are based on the undeniable fact that Armenia will thrive only with maximal involvement of the Diaspora and that without a strong Armenian statehood, the Diaspora's future is in peril. To this end we have embarked on building strong bridges of collaboration with Armenian communities around the world, which, in turn, has paved the way for new avenues of cooperation and partnership. Through collaboration and the active participation and commitment of our Diaspora compatriots, we can overcome the significant challenges that our people face, we can create the Armenia of the future, and in doing so strengthen and empower the Diaspora.

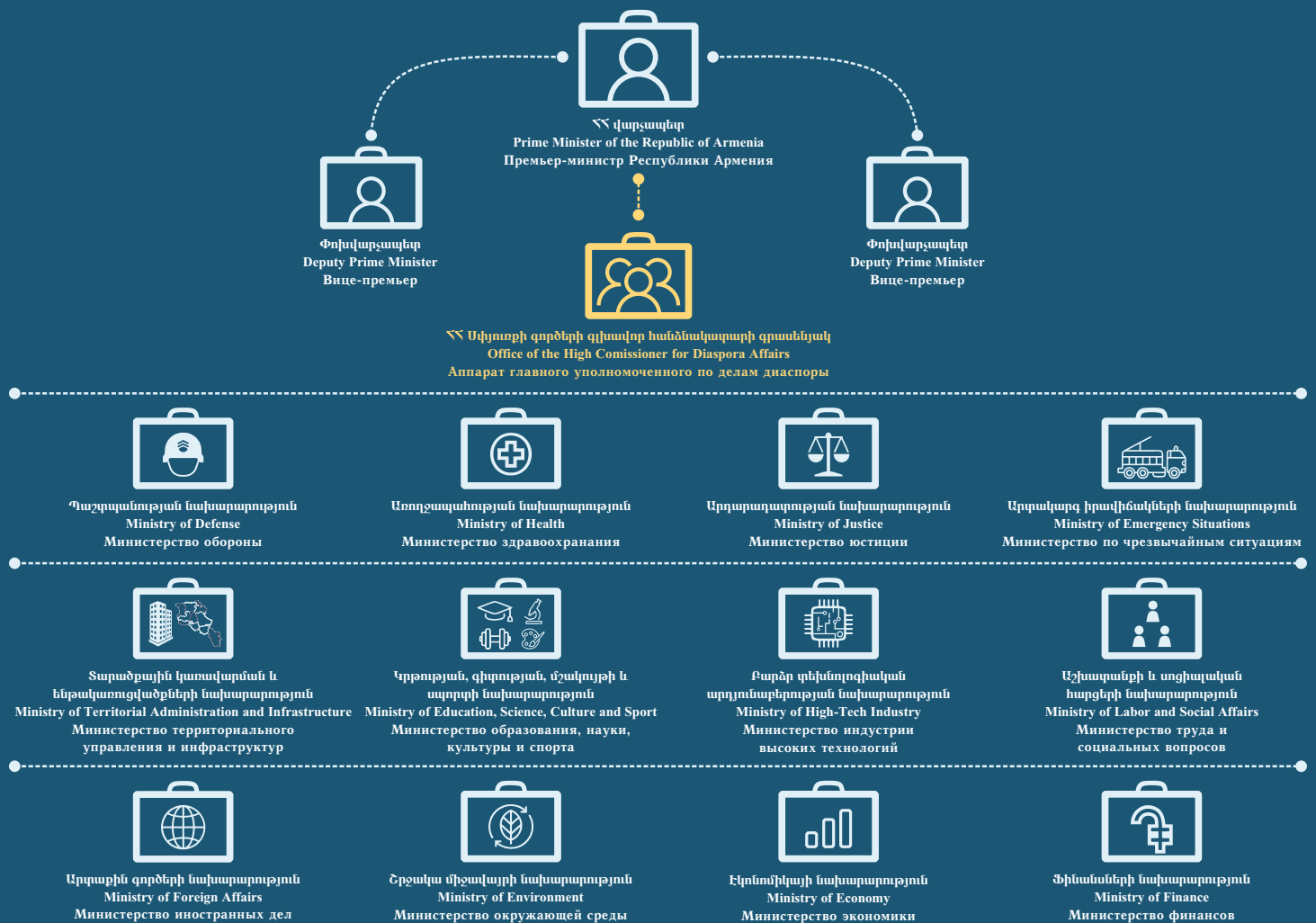
Sincerely,
Zareh Sinanyan
High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs was established on **June 11, 2019**, by the **Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia**. The Office is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to strengthen Armenia-Diaspora relations.

The Office's strategic focus areas include the following 9 directions:

1. Encouraging state-centered identity formation in the Diaspora
2. Cultivating strong Diaspora ties with the homeland through partnerships, programs and events
3. Supporting youth leadership and community organizing in the Diaspora
4. Consolidating and involving Pan-Armenian organizations in Armenia's development
5. Bringing Armenian professional potential to bear on strengthening institutions in Armenia
6. Promoting repatriation and ensuring a smooth integration process for repatriates
7. Assisting Diaspora investors and philanthropists with their projects in Armenia
8. Mapping the Diaspora's professional potential
9. Keeping the Diaspora informed regarding current events in Armenia and in Diaspora communities





Our Office is made up of a diverse team of professionals; many represent Diaspora communities from around the world. The High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Zareh Sinanyan, and Sara Anjargolian, Chief of Staff, are both repatriates.

BUDGET

The previous Ministry of Diaspora's programming budget (not including staff salaries) in 2018 was 685 million AMD. We increased the budget for programming to 775 million AMD for 2020 and to 890 million AMD for 2021. However, as a result of the detrimental economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Artsakh war on Armenia's state budget, our Office's budget was reduced by approximately 40%. In 2022 our programming budget is currently planned to be 791 million AMD.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT



“When we first started two years ago, we could count on our fingers the number of Diaspora Armenians working in Armenia’s public sector. Since the launch of the iGorts program, there are over 50 Diaspora professionals from across the globe working in the government.”

Zareh Sinanyan, High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs



In 2020, our Office was proud to launch “iGorts” - an unprecedented program that invites Diaspora Armenian professionals to work in Armenia's state institutions. Within the framework of the program, Diaspora Armenian professionals are placed in state agencies in need of their expertise and have the opportunity to lend their experience and knowledge toward improving and developing the state institution and its policies and programs.

iGorts: Diaspora Professionals in Government

The program was launched in March 2020, approximately 800 applications were received from 27 countries, over 100 people were interviewed, and 52 Diaspora professionals moved to Armenia to work in 19 different state institutions. The program is fully funded by the Republic of Armenia.

iGORTS 2021

Inviting Diaspora Armenian Professionals
To Serve In Armenia's Public Sector



346
APPLICANTS

We have received a total of
346 applications



50%

173 of our applicants are female



50%

173 of our applicants are male



Our applicants come from

30
DIFFERENT COUNTRIES



Our applicants come from some of the
highest ranked universities in the world

PRINCETON
UC BERKELEY
COLUMBIA

LAUSANNE
TUFTS
SCIENCESPO/ IEP





Sahag Mahrejian

Sahag has an MBA from Concordia University, with a sub-specialty in Healthcare Management from McGill University. He serves as a strategist in the Prime Minister's Office and is currently working towards creating a long-term strategic plan for the country focusing on several specific sectors. He feels grateful to be in Armenia and to have the opportunity to contribute to building the homeland on such a high level. In addition to his strategy work, he is also engaged in research around decreasing the silo mentality in the country and creating efficient communication systems between government agencies.



Hayk Margarian

Hayk graduated from Far Eastern National University as a Specialist in Economics, and is currently working towards his PhD in Economics from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. His work experience ranges in organizational management, project management and economics. Within five months of taking on his role with the Ministry of Economy and moving to Armenia with his wife and two children, he was offered a permanent job to lead the National Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (an organization within the Ministry of Economy) which focuses on bridging innovation and business. He enjoys working alongside his colleagues, comprised of both native and Diaspora professionals.



Tatevik Zuerker

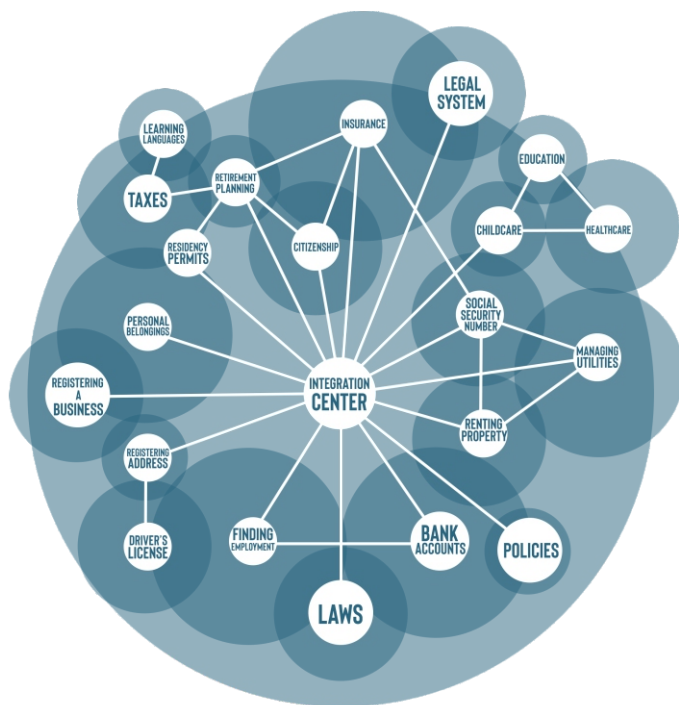
Tatevik has an MA in Sustainable Resource Management from Technical University Munich. Prior to her repatriation and work with the Ministry of Environment, Tatevik spent close to a decade living abroad, including 3 years in Thailand. Although she often visited Armenia, she always hoped to move permanently with her husband (who is from Germany) to help bring him closer to the Armenian culture. iGorts and her work with the government has been life-changing, where she feels a stronger sense of responsibility toward Armenia. Currently, she resides in Yerevan with her husband and daughter, who already attends school and loves living in Armenia.

We successfully launched iGorts for the second year in a row, for 2021-2022, and are in the process of reviewing applications and conducting interviews. iGorts 2021-2022 will commence in the Fall of this year.

[CLICK](#) to view a video about the iGorts Program.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

Repatriation and integration center

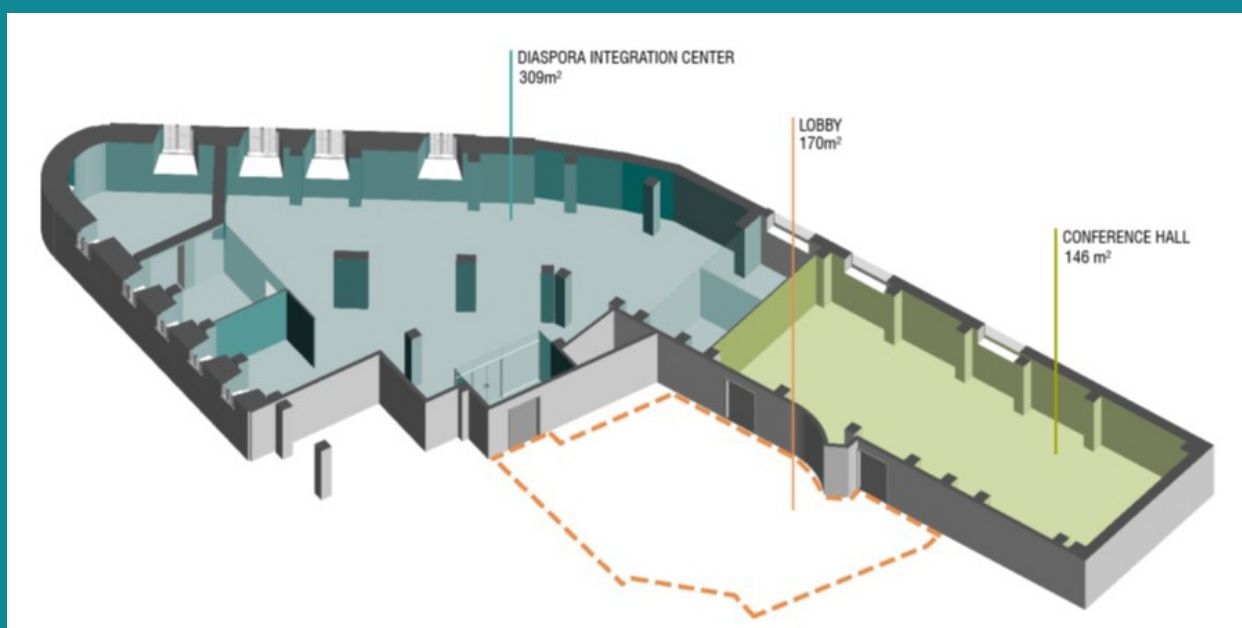


Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of repatriating to Armenia is navigating the bureaucracy and legal requirements involved. From moving one's belongings, to applying for residency or citizenship, to enrolling children in school – the whole process often seems overwhelming and unnecessarily complicated.

To simplify and ease the process of repatriation, our Office will be opening the first Repatriation and Integration center in the history of the Republic of Armenia. The center will be a physical space located in the center of Yerevan where repatriates will be greeted by customer-service oriented professionals who will be able to assist with all of their repatriation and integration needs. Assistance will include supporting repatriates with filling out necessary paperwork and navigating the various government offices, finding housing and suitable employment, enrolling children in school, advising on health care options, and many other services.

The goal of this “one-stop shop” Repatriation & Integration center is to ease the process of repatriation and ensure a smoother integration process for Diaspora Armenian families moving to the homeland.

From 2018-2020, more than 32,000 compatriots received Armenian citizenship and about 5,300 compatriots received permanent and special residence in Armenia.



Assistance to repatriates and future repatriates

Repatriation and ensuring our Diaspora compatriots are fully integrated into Armenian life once they transition to the homeland is a top priority for us.

Our Office houses its own Repatriation Department, staffed with knowledgeable professionals committed to assisting with repatriates questions and needs.



"MY CHILD IS ALREADY GOING TO KINDERGARTEN BECAUSE OF YOUR ASSISTANCE. THANK YOU!"

**FACEBOOK MESSAGE FROM
A REPATRIATE**

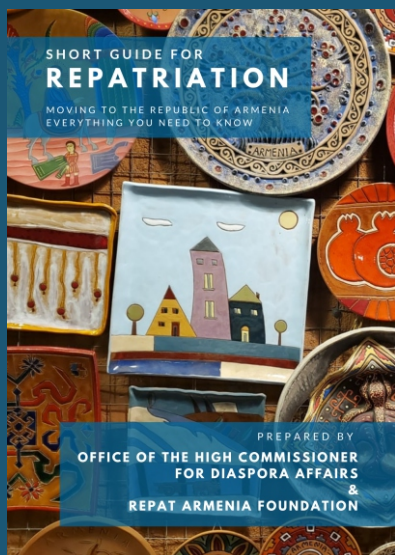
We strive to serve as a vessel through which our Diaspora compatriots can communicate with all levels of Armenia's state system. In this regard, our Office is the main resource for repatriates and future repatriates to ensure a smooth transition to the Homeland.

In addition, we have made an effort to build a user-friendly website which includes information in three languages on all aspects of the repatriation process, including citizenship and residency, military service, healthcare, business, education, employment, and more.

This year, we also commenced a series of online and in-person info sessions for repatriates and potential repatriates, touching upon different topics of interest for those seeking to make the move.



We also held a special info session for our Lebanese Armenian compatriots, particularly those who moved to Armenia after the August 4 Beirut explosion, an event which had a 100+ person turnout.



Interested in repatriating to Armenia, check out our user-friendly repatriation guide [HERE](#).

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

- Despite pandemic-related limitations and difficulties arising from the war and post-war situation, approximately 1000 repatriates have physically visited our Office and approximately 4000 repatriates have engaged with us online or via telephone conversations
- As a result of joint programs between the state and partner organizations, approximately 150 Syrian-Armenian and Lebanese-Armenian students have received scholarship support
- Hundreds of Syrian-Armenians and Lebanese-Armenians have benefitted from free healthcare (examinations, surgeries) as a result of joint efforts between the state and charitable foundations
- We have arranged for dozens of children from repatriated families to find and register at private kindergartens free of charge



PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

Support for Diaspora investors and philanthropists

The global Armenian Diaspora has been undertaking investment and philanthropy projects in Armenia since before independence. Many of Armenia's shining examples of investment and philanthropy projects are Diaspora-led.

In the last two years, our Office has supported countless Diaspora investors and philanthropists to start, implement, and/or solve challenges related to projects at various stages of development.

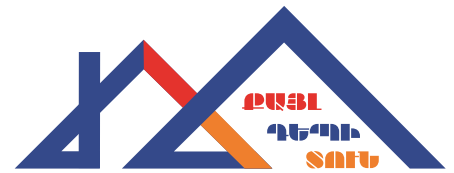


Our work in this area has included:

- 1) Presenting new opportunities for investment and philanthropy to the Diaspora
- 2) Connecting Diaspora investors and philanthropists with each other to foster collaborative projects
- 3) Supporting investors and philanthropists to overcome bureaucratic hurdles, namely navigating customs / tax laws and regulatory requirements
- 4) Moving projects forward through applicable government agencies
- 5) Proposing changes in laws/regulations which pose barriers to ease of investing and philanthropic activities



Youth and young adult programs



Step Toward Home: Developing and Preserving National Identity Among Diaspora Youth



Step Toward Home is an educational and exploratory 2-week camp-style summer program for Diaspora teens 13-18 years of age. The goal of the program is to develop and preserve a connection to the homeland as well as state-centered identity formation among Diaspora youth.

Step Toward Home involves an intensive agenda including daily Armenian language courses, song and dance lessons, excursions to Armenia's different regions and historical sights, and meetings with public figures.

Since the program's launch, the Republic of Armenia has hosted thousands of Diaspora youth and created an important starting point for Diaspora youth to establish a bond with their homeland.

The Republic of Armenia covers all in-country program costs. The participants cover travel to and from Armenia.

“The 'Step Toward Home' program has made me a more patriotic and well-rounded person. I've taken my step, now it's your turn.”

- Izabella Meyroyan, Russia, 2019





“The most important thing is that we strengthened our Armenian language skills during the program, and learned many new stories about Armenian heroes, Armenian holidays and the history of Armenia and Artsakh.”

- Vardan Samsonyan, Iraq, 2019

“Is there any other program out there where hundreds of young people from different countries can come together around the same idea, and that idea is getting better acquainted with the homeland? For me, that program is “Step Toward Home.””

- Nune Gevorgyan, Ukraine, 2019



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

In 2018-2019, we launched the "Step Toward Home" program for Diaspora Armenian youth and received over 900 Diaspora youth between the ages of 13-18 from more than 30 countries. As a result of COVID-19 in 2020, the program was implemented in an online format, which was attended by more than 250 young Diaspora Armenians from 30 countries.

[CLICK](#) to view a video about the Step Toward Home program.



PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS



The “Diaspora Youth Ambassador Program” is a two-week, global diaspora young ambassadors program engaging 25 Diaspora Armenians between the ages 22-35. The program, which evolved from the original program called “School for Young Leaders” is aimed at creating a dynamic network at the intersection of youth, the Diaspora and the Homeland.

The program offers active Armenian community members the opportunity to come to Armenia and participate in a series of lectures, workshops and meetings to increase their knowledge about the most pressing political, social and economic issues in Armenia, as well as to gain a deeper understanding about community engagement, active participation and advocacy.

Following their trip to Armenia, program participants are expected to produce and publish media content in local and international outlets, in addition to planning and implementing community meetings and repatriation talks in the various Armenian Diaspora communities they represent.

The program offers a blend of theoretical and practical work and is conducted in Armenian. It includes excursions to historical, cultural and memorial sites, as well as to educational, scientific and tech institutions. Participants also have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural and volunteering events.

The Republic of Armenia covers all in-country program costs. The participants cover travel to and from Armenia.



Diaspora & tech programs



NERUZH: DIASPORA TECH STARTUP PROGRAM

The NerUzh Diaspora Tech Startup Program, a program our Office implements in partnership with the Ministry of High Tech Industries, aims to attract Diaspora tech and business talent to the homeland.

“Neruzh” (meaning “potential” in Armenian) seeks to promote an inflow of innovative, scalable tech potential from the Diaspora into Armenia. Simultaneously, the program aims to leverage the Diaspora's vast transcontinental networks in order to position Armenia as a gateway for deploying and scaling impactful technologies to global markets.

The NerUzh Program invites Diaspora Armenians from around the world to apply to the competition. Short listed startups are invited to travel to Armenia for a one-week boot camp. At the conclusion of the boot camp, the startups pitch to a jury of experts and the winners of the competition are invited to repatriate to Armenia and awarded between \$15,000 and \$30,000 in seed funding and mentoring to establish their startup in Armenia.



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

In 2019, 80 Diaspora Armenians, representing 47 startups, from 17 countries participated in the boot camp and pitch competition in Armenia. Six winners were chosen and invited to repatriate and establish their startups in Armenia.

**The program was not implemented in 2020 due to limitations on travel imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.*

[CLICK](#) to view a video about the Neruzh Diaspora Startup Program.

PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT



GOVTECH LAUNCHPAD: TECH STARTUP SOLUTIONS FOR REPATRIATION & BEYOND

In collaboration with Impact Hub and GIZ, our Office launched the GovTech Launchpad program to engage tech solutions related to repatriation and bridging Armenia and Diaspora.

GovTech Launchpad welcomed innovative solutions to support Diaspora Armenians on their repatriation journey and/or repatriates currently living in Armenia.



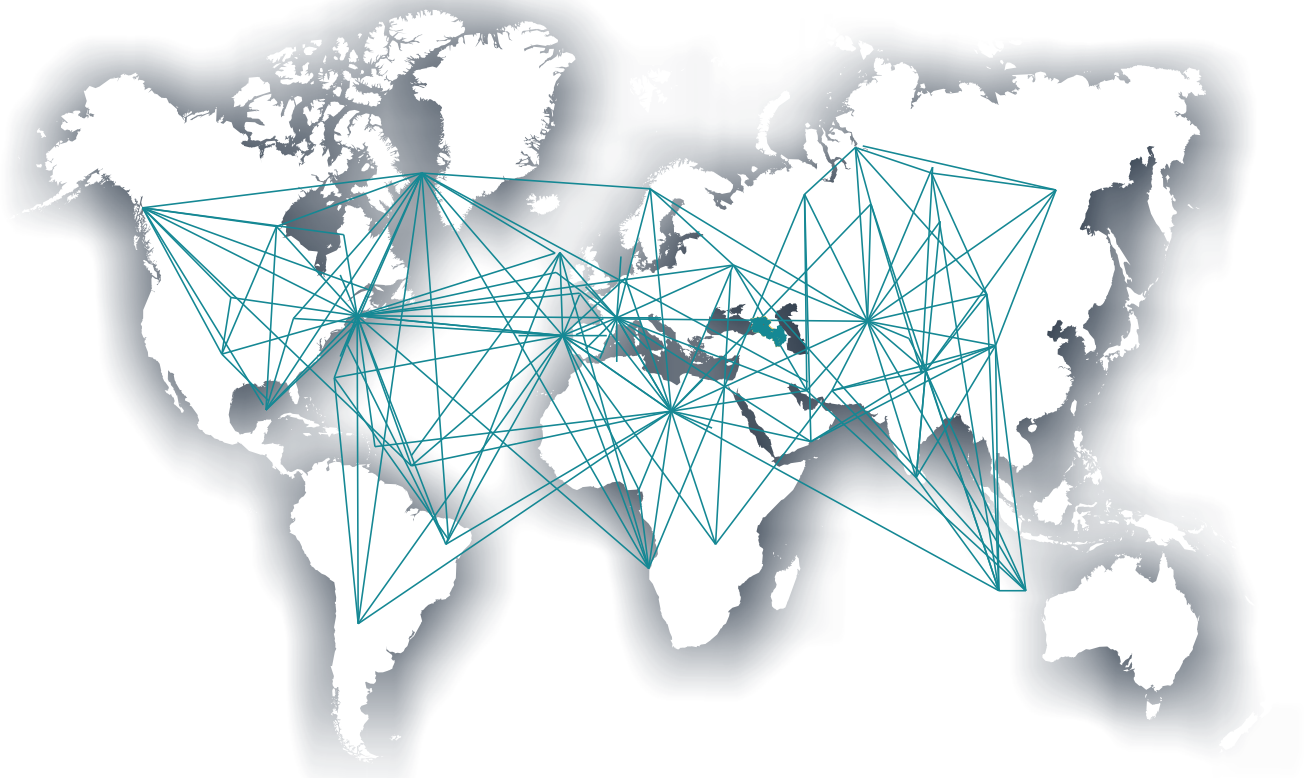
10 startups participated in workshops, panel discussions and mentoring sessions, after which they presented their pitch-decks to jury members.

The winning participants underwent a two-month acceleration program, during which they had training and individual mentoring courses to improve and develop their technological solutions.

The ArmeniaConnect matching platform was chosen by the jury as the winning solution, offering a platform and app focused on connecting Diaspora Armenians with Armenia, specifically to find work, volunteering, educational, and business opportunities, to expand their network in Armenia, and to access a network of repatriates.



MAPPING THE DIASPORA'S PROFESSIONAL POTENTIAL



Though there has been a lot of discussion surrounding the professional, scientific, financial and human potential of the Diaspora, it has yet to be clearly identified and mapped properly in a complete and holistic manner. Specifically, the kind of potential that exists, where it is located, and how it can be leveraged through Diaspora-Homeland partnerships needs to be ascertained.

To this end, our Office has earmarked a portion of our annual budget towards “mapping” the Diaspora - aiming to bridge the gap in Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. Recognized as a strategic imperative, the program will be on-going and constantly updated. All data acquired during the process will be protected through a secure, specially designed platform.

The mapping program will enable the involvement of Diaspora potential in the development process of the Republic of Armenia, the public life of Armenia, the implementation of joint programs, and the strengthening of pan-Armenian professional networks.

CONNECTING & COLLABORATING



To further connect with the Diaspora, understand challenges in the communities, and expand its role in developing the Homeland, our Office prioritizes meetings with Armenian communities from across the globe. Information exchange and ensuring the Diaspora stays abreast of what's going on in the country is crucial to our relationship-building and for national development. In this regard, we regularly host various Diaspora community representatives, ambassadors and international organizations at our Office, as well as travel abroad for meetings and to experience the diverse Diaspora cultural landscape.

Meetings with Diasporans and Internationals in Armenia

We regularly schedule in-Office meetings with Diaspora Armenians and representatives of international organizations to cultivate a wide network and find new avenues for collaboration. Most importantly, our goal is to attract new sectors of growth in Armenia and Diaspora - economically, socially, culturally, etc. and allow our guests the opportunity to become familiar with our Office and work culture.



CONNECTING & COLLABORATING



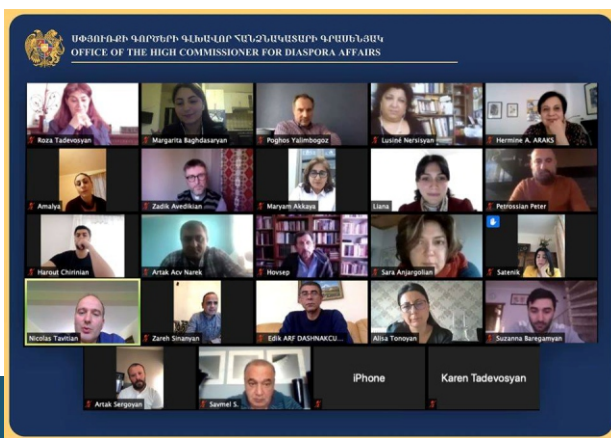
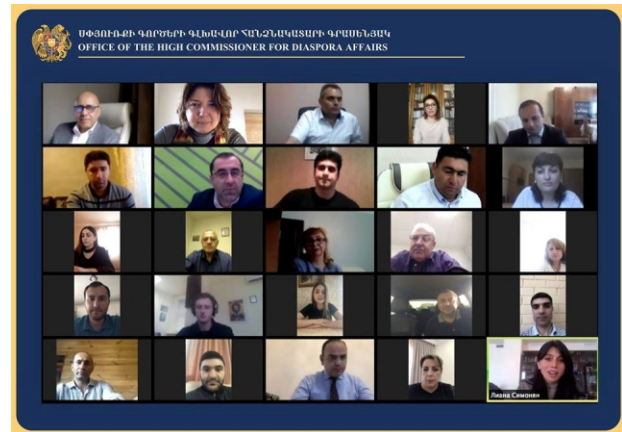
Travels in Diaspora

Alongside holding onsite meetings, the High Commissioner and staff periodically take international working trips to meet with Diaspora Armenian communities and develop symbiotic relationships between Armenia and Diaspora. Oftentimes, these meetings involve visits to Diaspora cultural sites and churches, meetings with community leaders and organizations, media interviews and post-trip follow ups to establish sustainable partnerships.



Armenian Genocide Recognition in the U.S.

In the post war period, a bitter-sweet victory for the Armenian nation came on April 24, 2021 in the form of the U.S. President Joe Biden recognizing the Armenian Genocide in his remarks commemorating the 106th anniversary. High Commissioner Sinanyan and the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs recognized and congratulated the tireless work of the Armenian-American community in making this victory of justice and truth possible.



Diaspora Connected

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the High Commissioner was obliged to cancel physical visits to Armenian Diaspora communities. However, maintaining a connection and working with the Diaspora remains at the top of the High Commissioner's agenda. To this end, the Office launched “Diaspora Connected” a program which connects representatives from Diaspora communities from around the world to our Office through online video conferences - aimed at maintaining connections, identifying and addressing problems, and deepening cooperation. While the world was in lockdown, our Office continued building bridges with communities in Russia, Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, Asia and Australia.



COVID-19



This assistance included:

- 1) Bringing in essential PPEs and equipment through our Diaspora network
- 2) Creating a robust platform for health care knowledge exchange between Armenia and Diaspora doctors and nurses
- 3) Organizing medical missions of COVID-19 teams to Armenia



Bringing in essential PPEs and equipment through our Diaspora network

As borders were being shut down across the globe and supplies and equipment were becoming scarce, our Office, the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health, Hayastan and USA Armenia Funds, Chevy Chase Surgery Center, and the Armenian Relief Society joined forces and quickly assembled and shipped one ton of relevant medical supplies, PPEs and equipment including from the U.S. to Armenia.

“Had that first batch of PPEs not arrived so fast from the Diaspora, Armenia's health care professionals would have been in a more difficult situation. That first shipment by our Diaspora compatriots gave us the needed breathing room to organize our fight against COVID without worrying about a lack of PPEs.”

Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan



Our Office, together with the United Nations World Food Program in Armenia (UNWFP), and organized by the RA Commandant's Office, with the support of the Chinese Government, quickly organized a plane loaded with a large amount of COVID-19 treatment and prevention supplies that arrived in Armenia from China.



This shipment was made possible as a result of the fundraising effort initiated by our Office. Over half a million dollars was raised by our Office through our generous Diaspora partners including Argentinean-Armenian philanthropist and businessman Eduardo Eurnekian's Companies, the Izmirlian Foundation, the Calouste Gulbenkian

Foundation, the Saint Sarkis Charity Trust, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Donations were also made by the UN World Food Program, the My Step Foundation, Chinese benefactors and other donors.

The shipment included more than 87,000 medical gowns, 20,000 KN95 masks, 24,000 medical masks, over 100 non-contact thermometers, biochemical raw materials for coronavirus diagnostic tests, and other medical instruments.

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

Medical supplies

- 1 ton from Los Angeles
- 1 ton from China, for which our Office raised 550,000 USD

Diaspora and international support

- 40 professional webinars and telemedicine sessions
- More than 2 dozen French and French-Armenian doctors arrive in Armenia



[CLICK](#) to view a video about this humanitarian effort.

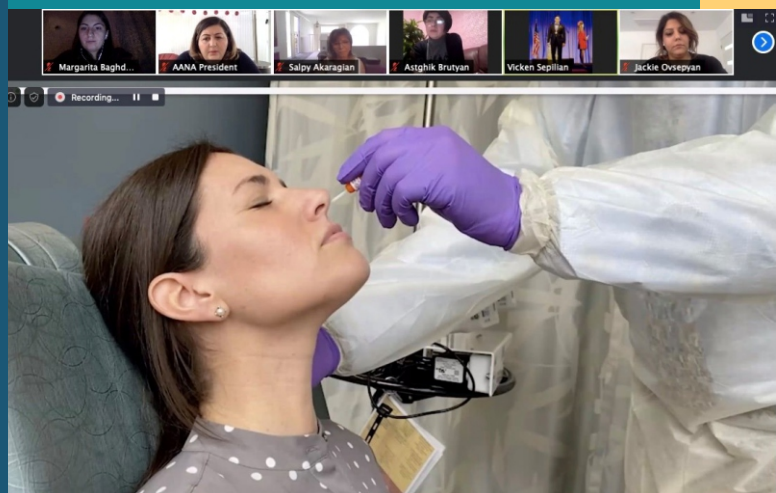
PPE - what
Every patient, either in a hospital or at home, should be treated as if they have COVID-19. This means that personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn in all care settings, as described below:

Standard care of all patients	If significant body fluid/blood/droplet exposure is possible	Care in an area where an aerosol-generating procedure (AGP) is taking place
<p>For all patient encounters within two metres, all staff must wear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposable gloves • Disposable apron • Fluid-repellent face mask • Eye protection (goggles) 	<p>All staff must wear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposable gloves • Disposable long-sleeved gown • Fluid-repellent face mask • Eye protection (goggles or visor) 	<p>All staff must wear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposable gloves • Disposable long-sleeved gown • Fit-checked FFP3 respirator mask • Eye protection (goggles or visor)



Creating a robust platform for health care knowledge exchange between Armenia and Diaspora doctors and nurses

In the months following, our Office spearheaded the launch of a series of medical webinars and telemedicine sessions, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Health, the Armenian International Medical Committee and Armenian Fund. We held over 40 webinars on various topics surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, with the active participation of more than 1,000 Armenian doctors and health workers from all over the world.

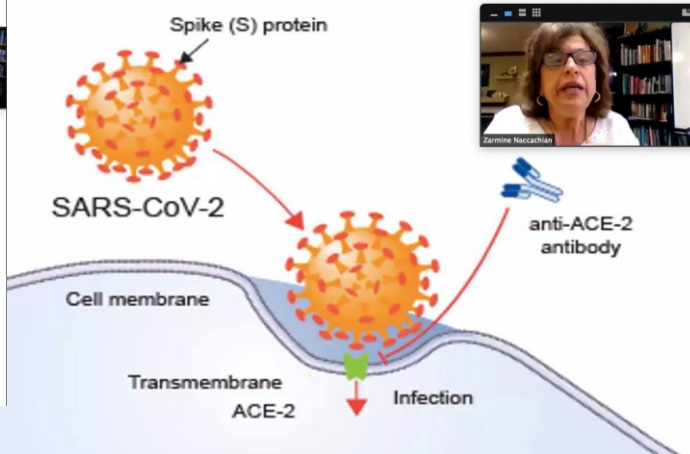


Droplet + Contact Precaution

- ☒ Isolation mask
- ☒ Face shield or goggles
- ☒ Gloves
- ☒ Gown

Scenarios

- Spontaneous or operative vaginal births
- Cesarean Delivery for COVID negative within last 48 hours



ORGANIZING MEDICAL MISSIONS OF COVID-19 TEAM TO ARMENIA

Our Office assisted in the first COVID-19 related international medical mission to Armenia. In response to the request by the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health, French and French Armenian doctors arrived to Armenia in two medical missions. The first group's arrival was made possible through the support of USAID. Ten doctors and nurses arrived in Yerevan on a chartered Marseilles-Yerevan flight and hit the ground running with work at the St. Gregory the Illuminator Medical Center, the Traumatology and Orthopedics Research Center and the Department for Infectious Diseases of the “Surb Astvatsamayr” Medical Center.



A few months later, a second group of French Armenian doctors arrived in Armenia. This mission was organized in cooperation with the RA Ministry of Health and the French Embassy in Armenia. The group was led by Professor Laurent Papazian, a leading medical scientist, the head of the Resuscitation Department at the Medical Center of Marseille-North, who was humbled to be arriving in his ancestral homeland for the first time.



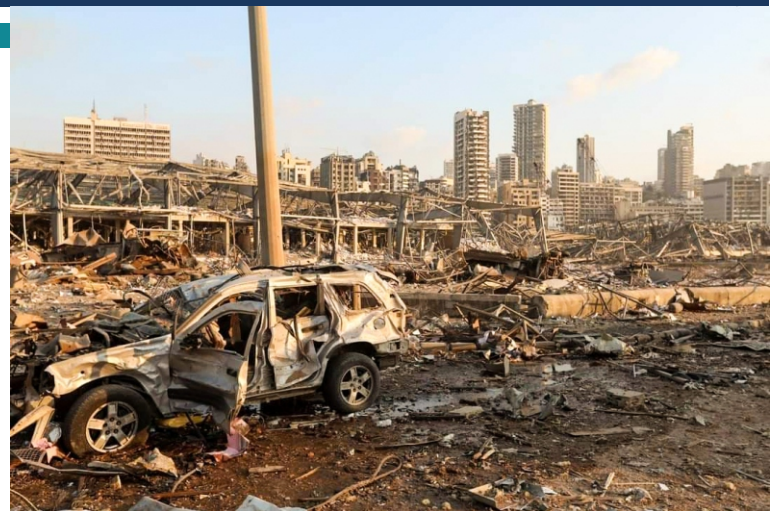
Diaspora Professionals Lead on Vaccine Rollout

Our iGorts Diaspora Professional Araz Chiloyan, a Public Health specialist from the U.S. who is serving inside the Ministry of Health, has been at the forefront of the vaccine procurement process as well as leading on the vaccine rollout strategy in Armenia.





Throughout the economic downturn and the explosion in Lebanon, our Office has been actively supporting and engaging with our Lebanese Armenian compatriots. Over the last two years, our work with the Lebanese Armenian community has included humanitarian assistance, repatriation support for those thinking about moving, and integration support related to employment, housing, health care, education, moving of belongings, etc. for Lebanese Armenians who have chosen to settle in Armenia.



Beirut explosion

The Beirut explosion on August 4, 2020 killed more than 200 people, left thousands injured and homeless, and millions shocked. High Commissioner Sinanyan, together with a delegation from Armenia, was on the ground in Beirut 4 days later. The delegation was part of the first of three Republic of Armenia humanitarian assistance flights from Armenia to Lebanon.



The High Commissioner's working visit to Lebanon included assessing the situation on the ground and providing support to the Armenian community. Meetings were held with various Armenian community representatives, political party representatives, and church leaders in the country, including His Holiness Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I, President of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East Rev. Megerdich Karageozian, Rector of Haigazian University Paul Haidostian, RA Ambassador to Lebanon Vahagn Atabekyan, AGBU representatives, Karagheusian Center representatives and many other church and organizational representatives.

The most urgent needs were assessed as being the need for medication (especially for chronically ill patients), food and water, financial assistance for reconstruction efforts in Armenian populated neighborhoods (residential houses, shops, schools, churches, and community centers), and assistance with and streamlining of the repatriation process for those who would like to move to Armenia. The representatives also highlighted the necessity for psychological support as a secondary need.



The Republic of Armenia successfully arranged three humanitarian deliveries to Lebanon containing food and medicine.

In the months following the explosion, Armenia welcomed thousands of Lebanese Armenian repatriates. Our Office staff greeted each arriving flight from Lebanon at the airport and provided on the spot support and information.



[CLICK](#) to view a video about our humanitarian mission to Lebanon.

Employment support program: offering career support to Lebanese Armenia repatriates



Together with RepatArmenia, our Office established the Employment Support Program for Lebanese Armenians, who have repatriated or are looking to make the move and work in Armenia. The Employment Support Program is an access point between our compatriots and the job market and supports them in finding meaningful careers and job opportunities in Armenia. It plays an important role in job matching, enhancing employability, addressing skill mismatches and linking support directly to employers and workers through the provision of various mentorship and networking opportunities.



Imagine Armenia, Lebanon

Our Office participated in “Imagine Armenia Lebanon,” a 2-day online forum hosted by RepatArmenia. For the first time, the Imagine Armenia virtual forum was designed specifically for Lebanon, bringing together repatriates from around the world and representatives from Armenia's state institutions to discuss repatriation and integration. High Commissioner Sinanyan gave the opening remarks and presented current approaches to repatriation and Armenia-Diaspora relations.

11:00 (GMT+4)
WELCOMING SPEECH

IMAGINE ARMENIA
LEBANON

JUNE
06



Zareh Sinanyan
High Commissioner for
Diaspora Affairs

DAY 1 - PANEL 1 11:00 TO 12:00 (GMT+4)
REPATRIATION CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES

IMAGINE ARMENIA
LEBANON

JUNE
06



Vartan
Marashlyan
Repat Armenia Foundation



Liana
Simonyan
Diaspora High
Commissioner's Office



Jirayr
Beugekian
Hayrenatsarts



Talar
Kazanjian
Executive Director
of AGBU in Armenia

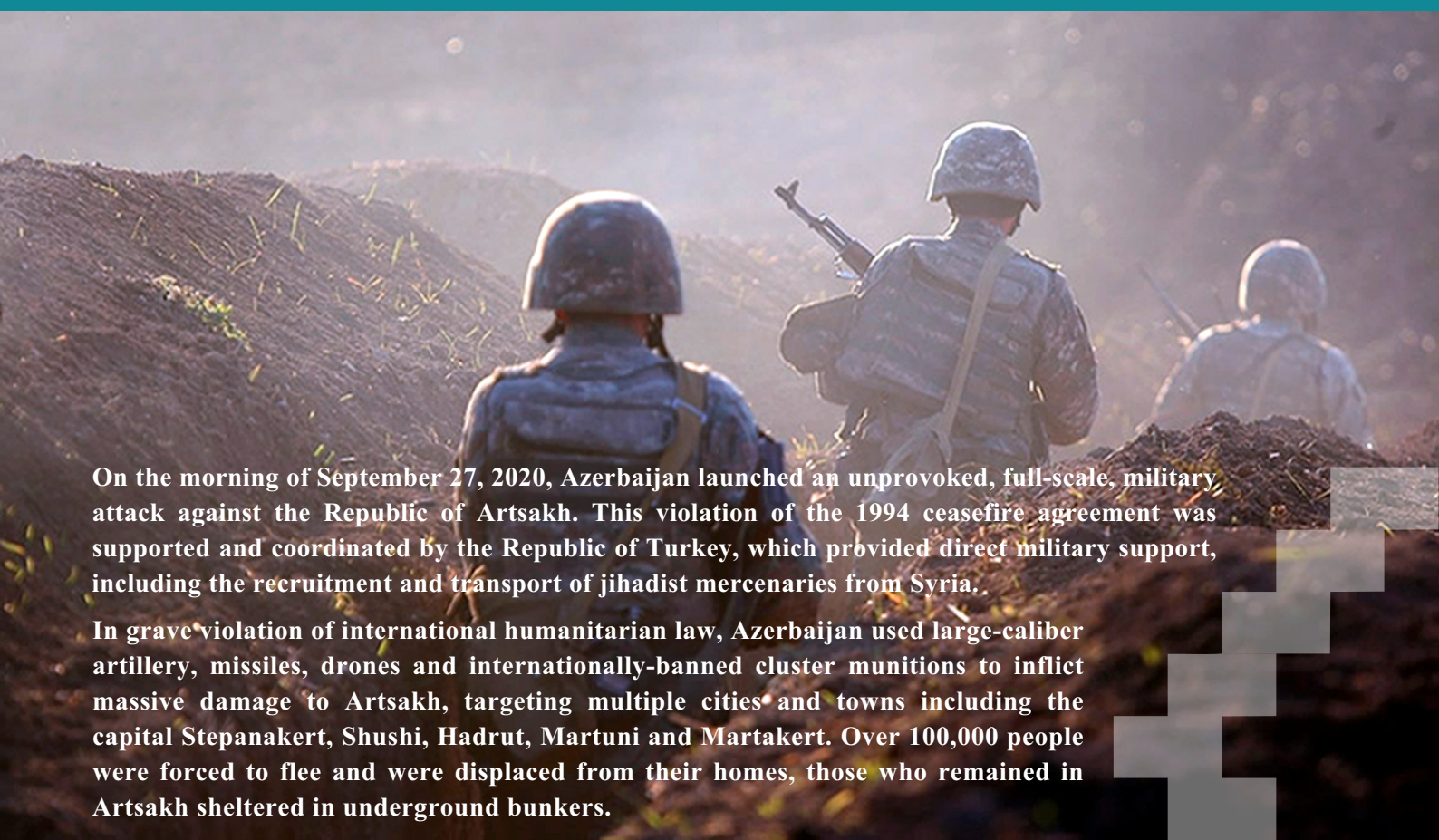


Sevan
Kabakian
Birthright Armenia, AVC



Raffi
Kassarian
Repat Armenia Foundation
Board member, CEO and Principal
Advisor at Sinanyan

SECOND ARTSAKH WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD



On the morning of September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan launched an unprovoked, full-scale, military attack against the Republic of Artsakh. This violation of the 1994 ceasefire agreement was supported and coordinated by the Republic of Turkey, which provided direct military support, including the recruitment and transport of jihadist mercenaries from Syria.

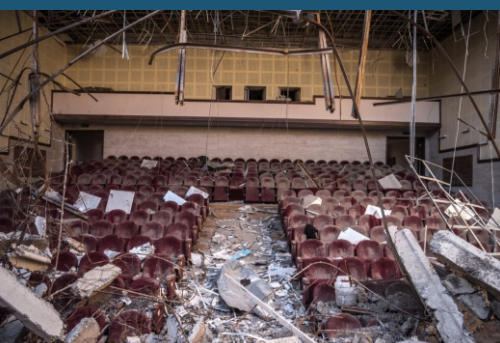
In grave violation of international humanitarian law, Azerbaijan used large-caliber artillery, missiles, drones and internationally-banned cluster munitions to inflict massive damage to Artsakh, targeting multiple cities and towns including the capital Stepanakert, Shushi, Hadrut, Martuni and Martakert. Over 100,000 people were forced to flee and were displaced from their homes, those who remained in Artsakh sheltered in underground bunkers.

Extensive civilian infrastructure including schools, kindergartens, hospitals, residential buildings, churches, and other key infrastructure came under deliberate and indiscriminate attack. Azerbaijan also used banned chemical weapons (white phosphorus) to set fire to forests near civilian communities, causing heinous human injuries from the chemicals and massive ecological damage.

Moreover, in line with its mission to ethnically cleanse and terrorize Artsakh's civilian population, Azerbaijani forces brutally murdered captured civilians and prisoners of war and routinely released gruesome videos of these crimes.

On November 9th, 2020 - Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin signed a joint statement, establishing the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops along the Nagorno Karabakh line of contact and the Lachin corridor.

As of the publication of this report, 3,621 Armenian servicemen and civilians have been confirmed dead, over 11,000 servicemen and civilians have been injured, over 300 servicemen are still missing, and there are over 200 Armenian POWs being illegally held by Azerbaijan.



SECOND ARTSAKH WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD



From the first day of the conflict, the Diaspora stood steadfastly next to the homeland. During the war, our Office's main directions of work included:

- Managing and coordinating the logistics of massive amounts of humanitarian aid and equipment which arrived via air and land from Diaspora communities around the world into Armenia, and disbursement of this aid to the Ministries of Health, Defense, and Emergency Situations
- Coordinating all Diaspora volunteers who arrived to Armenia and Artsakh to provide military, medical and humanitarian assistance
- Raising funds together with Armenia Fund to address the countless humanitarian needs which resulted
- Organizing Diaspora groups to assist with international media coverage and to fight the information war which was critical in keeping global communities informed and counteracting Azerbaijani and Turkish misinformation
- Facilitating political, lobbying and information campaigns among Diaspora communities, including civil disobedience actions, protests, tweetathons and social media campaigns



SECOND ARTSAKH WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD

Post-war period

In the post war period, our Office has been working to address both the humanitarian needs as well as the reconstruction and redevelopment needs in Artsakh by actively engaging our Diaspora compatriots, both philanthropists and investors, to target and coordinate their efforts. High Commissioner Sinanyan travelled to Artsakh and met with the President and other government officials to discuss critical issues and to identify specifically how the Diaspora can play a role in supporting Artsakh now.



After the work visit, we coordinated a meeting between the Artsakh Government and over 30 Diaspora nonprofit organizations, which resulted in the creation of a coordinating council to continue both humanitarian and rebuilding efforts on the ground.

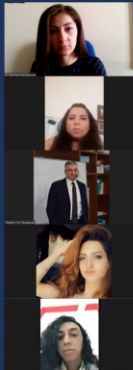
SECOND ARTSAKH WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD



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OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS

Common Sites of Injury Focal Brain Injury from Closed Head Injuries

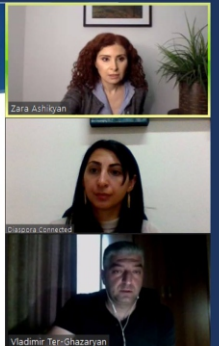
- ▶ Direct forces produce focal "coup" and "contrecoup" injury
- ▶ Sites –
 - Frontal lobes
 - Anterior temporal lobes
 - Occipital lobes
- ▶ Problems with executive functions, drives, mood, and memory



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OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR DIASPORA AFFAIRS

Multifaceted Impact of Traumatic Amputations

- ▶ Psychological Sequela
 - PTSD
 - Poor Body Image and Low Self-Esteem
 - Depression/Grief/Survivor's Guilt
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - Insomnia
 - Addiction
 - Anger- physical violence or self-directed anger
 - Coping and adjustment problems
 - Hopelessness/helplessness and suicidal ideation



Our Office's main directions of work in the post-war period:

- Coordinating Diaspora philanthropy and investment projects in Artsakh
- Created a platform for training of therapists such that Diaspora professionals train local professionals on psychological services for soldiers and their families suffering from acute stress, PTSD and other war-related trauma
- Coordinated and made possible the arrival of Diaspora physical therapists to Armenia to work with wounded soldiers on their rehabilitation
- Engaged Diaspora prosthesis experts to advise and train the Ministry of Social Affairs regarding the processes and latest technologies for the proper use of prosthetics for wounded soldiers
- Hired a full time Diaspora philanthropy coordinator to work with Diaspora organizations and individual philanthropists focused on the reconstruction and redevelopment of Artsakh
- Expanded the iGorts program into Artsakh to offer Diaspora professionals the opportunity to work within the Artsakh government



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

- 7 Diaspora mental health specialists hosted 7 webinars for approximately 240 registered local psychologists focused on treating acute stress disorders, post traumatic stress disorder and other war-related trauma
- 14 Diaspora physiotherapists travelled to Armenia and worked in various hospitals with our soldiers
- 4 Diaspora prosthesis specialists trained the interdisciplinary team created by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Armenia focused on working with amputees



LOOKING AHEAD

Among the many hurdles we have faced as a nation since independence, the COVID-19 pandemic and especially the Second Artsakh War have left devastating scars not only on our State institutions but also on our collective identity. As we continue to navigate the aftermath of both, we remain hopeful and determined to keep moving forward.

And as we reflect on the trauma we have experienced as a nation and begin to heal from it, we remain steadfast in our belief that it is only through the collaborative effort of the global Armenian people that we will rebuild, recover, and thrive again.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs will continue to work towards harnessing the vast potential of the Armenian Diaspora, and engaging Diaspora Armenians around the world in the process of nation-building, while at the same time supporting Armenian communities to sustain and cultivate their Armenian identity.

We will always remain open to working with all organizations and individuals which continue to build the Armenia of the future, and continue to strengthen Armenian communities across the globe ... because after all, it is the courage to continue that counts.

In service,

The Staff at the Office of the
High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs



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