

REPORT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM · MAY 2026

# A Church Under Siege

State Persecution of the Armenian Apostolic Church  
and What the West Must Do

Dr. Peter Flew · International Lawyer and Historian

## Foreword 3

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Dr. John Eibner 3  
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## Report on Religious Freedom 6

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Background 8

International Legal Framework 9

Claims that the AAHC is a National Security Threat 10

The Civil Contract Election Manifesto 11

Continued Attacks on the Catholicos 12

Interference in Church Affairs 13

Treatment of Parishioners 15

Conclusion 17

CSI Recommendations 18

Notes & References 19

Political Prisoners in Armenia 22

Contact 24

**Dr. John Eibner**

President, Christian Solidarity International



Christian Solidarity International is pleased to present this new report on the dire state of religious freedom in Armenia. This report, authored by Peter Flew, an international lawyer and historian, shows how the government of Nikol Pashinyan is using the coercive power of the state – indictments, arrests, imprisonments, wiretapping, show trials, restrictions on travel, and character assassination through official channels – to try to impose political control over the Armenian Apostolic Church.

This report is especially timely, as it is being released in conjunction with the first-ever EU-Armenia summit and the 8th European Political Community Summit, both of which will take place in Yerevan during the first week of May 2026.

These high-level European meetings follow hard on the heels of U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance’s highly publicized visit to Armenia, where he promoted the “Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity” (TRIPP), a proposed transit route that would run through southern Armenia and improve connectivity between Europe and Central Asia.

European and American leaders seeking to build ties with the Pashinyan government should judiciously consider the contents of this disturbing report.

At first glance, the Armenian state’s persecution of the Armenian Apostolic Church may appear to be a small storm in a faraway Caucasian teacup. In reality, it is a tempest threatening to overturn the geopolitical designs of Turkey and Azerbaijan, the United States, the European Union, and Russia.

All these powers aggressively stake a claim of one sort or another on Armenia. While this tiny post-Soviet republic is economically poor, without an abundance of natural resources, it is seen by all as an asset worth grabbing as the post-Cold War global order collapses.

Armenia sits at a historic crossroads of empires. It is a strategically valuable gateway connecting Europe with Central Asia and the Persian Gulf with Russia.

Despite the chorus of Western statesmen proclaiming that peace has come to the Caucasus, Christian Armenia continues to be threatened with a resumption of war. This danger comes from its more powerful Muslim Turkic neighbors, Turkey and Azerbaijan, whose alliance operates under the slogan, “One nation, two states.”

A new war could erupt as early as September, Pashinyan has warned. If it does, he prophesies, Armenia will lose its statehood.

Pashinyan’s fear is not unfounded. Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey and Turkish-sponsored jihadists from Syria, defeated Armenia in the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War.

Three years later, Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno Karabakh/ Artsakh again and expelled all 120,000 Armenian Christians living there.

Today, Azerbaijani armed forces occupy swathes of Armenia’s borderland territory. These aggressions are motivated by a larger strategy. Turkey seeks both to retake the leadership role it enjoyed in the region in the days of the Ottoman Empire, and to extend its influence to the Turkish-speaking states of Central Asia.

This drive to unite the Turkish world is what motivated the Turkish invasion of the Caucasus in 1918. For this vision to be realized, Armenia – located directly between Turkey and Azerbaijan – must be taken out of the picture, one way or another.

Azerbaijan’s president Ilham Aliyev does not conceal Turkey and Azerbaijan’s ultimate goal when he publicly calls Armenia “West Azerbaijan” and pledges to settle Azerbaijanis there.

Armenia thus faces a choice. It must either accept incorporation into the growing Turkish-Azerbaijani sphere of influence, or risk outright invasion.

Today, Azerbaijan and Turkey are imposing conditions for “peace” that are designed to weaken the Armenian nation and diminish its ability to resist submission and integration into the emerging Turkish-led order in the region.

Appeasement is a price the Armenian prime minister is willing to pay.

This deal is especially difficult for Pashinyan to resist since it has the strong backing of the United States and the European Union, with the implicit promise of a massive influx of Western funding.

Chief among Turkey and Azerbaijan’s demands is the removal of the head of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, the Catholicos Karekin II, and the revision of canon law to enable the Prime Minister to control the Church.

More than any other Armenian institution today, the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church poses an obstacle to Turkey and Azerbaijan’s plans. The Church has existed as the sturdiest bulwark of the Armenian nation since its founding 1,700 years ago.

This national church kept the Armenian nation united for centuries when it was stateless. It sustained the Armenian nation throughout the great Armenian Genocide and the chain of anti-Armenian massacres, pogroms, ethno-religious cleansings that proceeded and followed it.

Today, the Armenian Apostolic Church continues to defy the genocide deniers in Ankara and Baku by calling for remembrance of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. It also appeals for justice for the victims of the recent ethno-religious cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh, including the Armenian hostages currently incarcerated in Baku.

In May 2025, the Catholicos traveled to Bern, Switzerland, where he spoke at a conference about the Christian heritage of Nagorno Karabakh, organized by the World Council of Churches. There, he boldly called for “the secure return of the Armenians of Artsakh to their native homeland.”

In doing so, he was pinching a raw geopolitical nerve. Within days of the Catholicos’ speech, the government’s campaign against the Church began in earnest.

Turkey’s involvement in the effort to oust the Catholicos and the great significance it has for Turkish foreign policy is reflected in a recent editorial in the pro-Erdogan newspaper *Aydinlik*<sup>1</sup>:

**Turkey is poised to achieve its greatest foreign policy victory since the Atatürk era. President Tayyip Erdoğan is about to remove the final obstacle to Armenia’s direct rapprochement with Turkey... The final obstacle [is] Catholicos Karekin II, head of the Armenian Orthodox Church. He represents the cornerstone of fervent Armenian nationalism. His removal would transform Armenia into a friend of Turkey. The secular government in Yerevan [will] not resist Ankara’s demands. – Pro-Erdogan newspaper *Aydinlik* 2025.**

As for Azerbaijan, its highest state-appointed religious official, the Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, traveled to Washington DC in October 2025 with a message for top US officials: the “leadership of the Armenian church,” he said, is “trying to hinder the peace process and calling for new confrontation and revanchism.”<sup>2</sup>

Pashinyan himself speaks about the church in much the same way. In his address to the European Parliament in March 2026, he charged that Armenian clergy “have assumed the leadership of the war party in the Republic of Armenia.”<sup>3</sup> Pashinyan, Azerbaijan and Turkey all agree – the Armenian

Church’s advocacy for the people of Nagorno Karabakh is a threat to peace. This can only be true if Turkey and Azerbaijan have made the subjugation of the church a precondition for peace.

Pashinyan’s decision to address the issue at the European Parliament shows that he is sensitive to potential criticism from Europe over his persecution of the church.

Yet on this issue, silence has reigned in Western capitals. In response to the Armenian government’s prima facie violations of freedom of religion or belief, the numerous institutions and foreign ministry offices Western states have set up in recent years to promote religious freedom have said nothing.

In the case of Armenia, geopolitical and economic interests have apparently trumped internationally sanctioned norms of religious freedom and other fundamental human rights in the calculations of Western statesmen.

No doubt, many policymakers in Europe and the United States have found it convenient to provide tacit support for Pashinyan’s repressive anti-church measures on account of Pashinyan’s wild, unsubstantiated, “Russia-gate”-style accusations that the Church is mysteriously being used as an instrument of Moscow’s influence.

Dr. Flew’s report ably dispatches what feeble evidence the government has presented for these dangerous charges.

For the West’s strategic planners, however, it is a question of interests. When JD Vance – a politician who in other contexts is quite outspoken about religious freedom and defending national culture – openly campaigned for Pashinyan’s re-election during his state visit to Yerevan in February 2026, he did so because the United States has decided that it can best counter Russian influence in the Caucasus by outsourcing the management of the region’s security to Turkey. President Trump’s Middle East envoy, Ambassador Tom Barrack, has made it clear that, from Lebanon to Armenia, the U.S. trusts Turkey to solve the numerous conflicts between the region’s “tribes with flags.”

The EU has followed suit, banking on Turkey, a candidate for EU membership and a NATO military partner, to manage Armenian affairs according to its geopolitical and economic interests.

To a Western world locked in a new battle with Russia, Turkey offers itself as the indispensable regional broker, the one power that can assure that, while the superpowers battle each other across Eurasia, energy continues to flow to Europe, and the refugee masses displaced by these wars do not.

What Turkey and Azerbaijan ask for in return is for the West to facilitate Armenia's submission – including the forced submission of its church.

Viewed through the lens of human rights norms and European values, such a bargain is reprehensible. But on strategic grounds as well, it is short-sighted. Today, European and American leaders trumpet the opening of Armenia and the South Caucasus to their influence. But things will look differently as Turkey, buoyed by its twin anti-western and anti-Christian ideologies of neo-Ottomanism and pan-Turkism, increasingly flexes its muscles in a rapidly changing Europe.

The United States and the European Union have an opportunity: to encourage the Armenian authorities to respect the rule of law, to assure Armenia of its support against any future aggression, and in so doing, to lay the groundwork for a long and valuable friendship with an Armenia that is secure, free, and able to act in its people's interests.

This future is still possible, but there is no time to lose. As European leaders arrive in Yerevan and American statesmen continue to press for completion of the TRIPP project, they would do well to consider the weight of this moment.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John Eibner'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Dr. John Eibner**

President, Christian Solidarity  
International

# Dr. Peter Flew

International Lawyer and Historian



The Government of Armenia is systematically violating the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in its ongoing campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church (AAHC). Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan seeks to neuter this ancient Church. He has used inflammatory and derogatory public rhetoric to delegitimise its authority. Bishops and parishioners have been arrested and detained; church leaders have been subjected to travel bans; and the Government has fostered divisions within the Church. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is spearheading efforts to remove its head, His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians—the spiritual leader of Armenia and of Armenians worldwide. With a national election on the horizon, Civil Contract—the ruling party led by Pashinyan—has issued a manifesto that sets out its policy of subordinating the Church to state control. This is unconscionable, just as it would be for the leader of a Catholic country to campaign and attempt to overthrow the Pope in Rome. Not since the worst excesses of Soviet rule has the AAHC faced state-sponsored persecution of such depth and intensity.

This report provides an update on recent developments in the campaign against the AAHC. It is based on my own research, including information gathered during a recent fact-finding mission to Armenia. During this visit, I met leading civil society experts, local academics, and church leaders. I also visited Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, who remains incarcerated in Yerevan-Kentron Prison, the former KGB detention facility. This report sets out key recent developments identified in these discussions—issues that were raised repeatedly by multiple sources.

The report proceeds as follows. It provides a brief background on the AAHC, and sets out key domestic and international standards concerning FoRB. It considers the unfounded claims that the AAHC is a national security threat, which the Armenian government is using as a justification for its attacks. It then examines Civil Contract's election manifesto and takes a closer look at recent actions against the Catholicos. The next two sections document, respectively, the continued detention of Archbishop Bagrat and the impact of the government's actions against the Church on the laity. Readers seeking further detailed background information and evidence of earlier FoRB violations are encouraged to consult the extensive reports published by the Armenian Center for Political Rights,<sup>4</sup> an independent civil society organisation that has become a key source of information on the deterioration of religious freedom in Armenia.

Pashinyan's campaign against the AAHC should be understood as a cynical attempt at curtailing the influence of the Church as an independent source of public criticism—a constitutionally

mandated role that has a long historical precedent. Simply put, the AAHC—alongside many Armenians at home and abroad—believe the very future of their country as an independent state is at stake. The loss of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan's threatening posture has placed them on heightened alert. This is hardly surprising, given Armenia's long history of falling prey to imperial subjugation and genocide.

The prime minister's actions are provoking widespread shock and consternation in Armenia. In December 2025, several leading Armenian civil society organisations joined forces with human rights activists, academics, and cultural figures to publish a joint statement<sup>5</sup> denouncing the government's gross violations of human rights, including FoRB. The signatories expressed their "deep concern regarding the alarming developments that have recently taken place in Armenia," including "violations of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, the principle of the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, and the independence of the judiciary, as well as a gross breach of the autonomy of the [AAHC], a right protected by the Constitution and international conventions."

International awareness is growing too. The World Council of Churches,<sup>6</sup> Christian Solidarity International,<sup>7</sup> Forum 18,<sup>8</sup> European Centre for Law and Justice,<sup>9</sup> and Forum for Religious Freedom Europe<sup>10</sup> have published their own reports or statements criticising the Armenian government's suppression of religious freedom.

In November, the UK Government issued the following statement<sup>11</sup> in response to a question tabled by the Scottish National Party:

**"The UK is monitoring the situation between the Armenian Government and the Armenian Apostolic Church. We expect all actions to comply with Armenia's constitutional and legal framework, allowing due process to take its course and ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly under the law, with judicial proceedings remaining transparent and impartial. The UK Government remains firmly committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide."**

Behind this carefully worded statement, couched in diplomatic terms, lay a clear expression of UK Government concern. Meanwhile, in January 2026, the British parliamentarian Sir Edward Leigh MP addressed the issue during a session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>12</sup> In a question directed at Armenia's foreign minister, Sir Edward observed:

“[Pashinyan] stated that he wants to take over the Armenian Apostolic Church and replace it with, quote, “a state-centred church”, one that is banned from dissenting from the state. And to this end he has arrested a third of the bishops of Armenia. How is this anything other than a violation of the democratic rights of religious freedom and freedom of speech that every member of the Council of Europe is supposed to uphold?”

Suffice it to say, the foreign minister did not provide an adequate response.

At the same time, human rights experts at the independent and non-partisan International Observatory for Democracy in Armenia (IODA)—whose executive team includes Kenneth Roth, former Executive Director of Human Rights Watch—issued a major intervention,<sup>13</sup> raising concerns about broader democratic backsliding in Armenia. In a statement published on its website, they noted that there is “evidence of the [Armenian] government’s interference in the independence of the judiciary and religious establishment, as well as politicized prosecutions of perceived political opponents, including political leaders, media figures, lawyers, and members of the clergy.” Meanwhile, the 2026 Human Rights Watch report on Armenia<sup>14</sup> noted growing concerns about “ineffective investigations into police abuse, lack of judicial independence, and excessive use of pre-trial detention in criminal proceedings.”

Prior to Armenia’s national elections on 7 June, the European Political Community will meet in Yerevan on 4 May, followed by the first ever EU–Armenia Summit on 5–6 May. While these high-level engagements provide an opportunity for the Armenian government to present international partners with a Potemkin village, visiting delegates and officials must remain clear-eyed about Pashinyan’s record. Armenia finds itself at the centre of a wider geopolitical struggle. However, support for Armenia and efforts to deepen bilateral ties must not come at the expense of human rights and the rule of law. I call on those travelling to Yerevan to meet with the leadership of the AAHC and to discuss the true situation on the ground with those local experts bravely fighting for a democratic Armenia free from state-sponsored persecution.

# Background

The AAHC has a continuing and unbroken existence of over 1,700 years. It claims full apostolic succession and is one of six non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox churches. It is therefore neither in communion nor has any form of canonical or administrative relationship with the Roman Catholic Church or Eastern Orthodox Church.

The AAHC is by far the largest religious organisation in Armenia and has a significant international presence serving the needs of the Armenian diaspora. This global aspect is reflected in the official title of the spiritual leader of the Church: the Catholicos of All Armenians. Thus, Nikol Pashinyan’s attacks against the Church and its leadership impact not just the domestic operation and religious life of the AAHC, but its international dimension too.

Across its long and storied history, the AAHC has acted as a receptacle of Armenian nationhood and memory, especially during those periods when imperial rule circumscribed secular authority or rendered it non-existent. For this reason, the AAHC occupies a unique position in Armenian society, a position that has constitutional recognition and protection. The Armenian Constitution<sup>15</sup> guarantees freedom of religion, as well as the separation of church and state (Article 17 and Article 41). Meanwhile, Article 18.1 sets out the unique role of the AAHC in Armenian society:

**The Republic of Armenia shall recognise the exclusive mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, as a national church, in the spiritual life of the Armenian people, in the development of their national culture and preservation of their national identity.**

At the same time, the Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organisations<sup>16</sup>

provides further safeguards on the separation of church and state, including a prohibition on government “interference with the law-abiding activities and internal life of the Church and religious organisations.”

Notwithstanding these constitutional protections, the AAHC has found itself under mounting pressure in recent years. Although signs of state antipathy towards the AAHC appeared soon after the 2018 revolution that brought Pashinyan to power, the government’s efforts to restrict FoRB intensified after His Holiness Karekin II’s address at a conference of the World Council of Churches in May 2025. This conference<sup>17</sup> was devoted to the protection of the religious and cultural heritage of Nagorno Karabakh and the rights of its people. In his address<sup>18</sup>, the Catholicos declared that the “protection of cultural values is not only a sacred duty, but an imperative for preserving the history, faith, and identity of all peoples and nations.” This statement was consistent with the AAHC’s broader efforts to defend the rights of Armenians displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and to safeguard the religious and cultural heritage of the region. In doing so, the Church has sought to fulfil its “exclusive mission” as set out under Article 18 of the constitution.

Indignant that the AAHC has exercised its free speech rights to criticise government policy, Pashinyan has launched a series of extraordinary attacks on the leadership of the AAHC as well as its parishioners. Several of the experts I met in Yerevan likened the AAHC’s interventions to Pope Leo’s criticisms concerning contested moral issues such as war, which have likewise produced a political backlash. Critically, Pashinyan claims<sup>19</sup> to be seeking to “free” the AAHC and to “return the Church to the people.” As discussed below, this includes a state-led effort to replace the Catholicos—an initiative that has since become a core element of the election manifesto of Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party.



<https://www.armenianchurch.org/en/mother-see>



The human rights of Armenians citizens are protected by key international treaties. Armenia is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), both of which protect FoRB and related rights to freedom of association and expression. In the present situation, the ECHR and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) is particularly instructive as to the standards with which Armenia must comply.

Article 9.1 of the ECHR<sup>20</sup> provides:

**Everyone has the right freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.**

It should be noted, however, that the “freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs” can be limited in circumstances. Article 9.2 of the ECHR provides that limitations must be (i) prescribed by law, (ii) necessary in a democratic society, and (iii) in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Notably, national security is not specified as a ground for limiting the freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs. The ECtHR explains<sup>21</sup> that:

**far from being an accidental omission, the non-inclusion of that particular ground for limitations in Article 9 reflects the primordial importance of religious pluralism as one of the foundations of a democratic society within the meaning of the Convention’ and the fact that a State cannot dictate what a person believes or take coercive steps to make him change his beliefs.**

The ECtHR has established certain principles in its judgments that are directly applicable to Armenia’s attack on the AAHC. In particular, the Court has set a very high bar for member states to intervene in the internal affairs of a religious organisation.

Several judgments interpret Article 9 in the light of Article 11 of the ECHR, which safeguards associative life against unjustified state interference. In *Hasan & Chaush v. Bulgaria*<sup>22</sup>, the ECtHR ruled that:

**believers’ right to freedom of religion encompasses the expectation that the community will be allowed to function peacefully, free from arbitrary State intervention. Indeed, the autonomous existence of religious communities is indispensable for pluralism in a democratic society and is thus an issue at the very heart of the protection which Article 9 affords. It directly concerns not only the organisation of the community as such but also the effective enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion by all its active members. Were the organisational life of the community not protected by Article 9 of the Convention, all other aspects of the individual’s freedom of religion would become vulnerable.**

The ECtHR further ruled in this case that “facts demonstrating a failure by the authorities to remain neutral in the exercise of their powers in this domain must lead to the conclusion that the State interfered with the believers’ freedom to manifest their religion within the meaning of Article 9 of the Convention.” The principles set out in this case have been restated in several judgments in recent years, further emphasising the central importance of the autonomy of religious organisations.

Separately, the ECtHR has ruled<sup>23</sup> that:

**the right to freedom of religion for the purposes of the Convention excludes assessment by the State of the legitimacy of religious beliefs or the ways in which those beliefs are expressed. State measures favouring a particular leader or specific organs of a divided religious community or seeking to compel the community or part of it to place itself, against its will, under a single leadership, would also constitute an infringement of the freedom of religion. In democratic societies the State does not need to take measures to ensure that religious communities remain or are brought under a unified leadership.**

This is a clear statement that government authorities must avoid sponsoring or undermining certain personalities within a religious organisation or seeking to create or encourage schisms and splits.

As the remainder of this report shows, the Armenian government’s campaign against the AAHC breaches these well-established principles of international law.

# Claims that the AAHC is a National Security Threat



The experts and church leaders I met in Yerevan were uniformly outraged by the Armenian government's efforts to spread false claims that the AAHC is acting on behalf of foreign powers against Armenia's interests. Pashinyan made such accusations in a speech<sup>24</sup> delivered to the European Parliament on 11 March 2026, while the Civil Contract party has included similar claims in the manifesto<sup>25</sup> it published on 3 April 2026.

Although Pashinyan's speech and the manifesto refer obliquely to the source of this security threat, there can be no doubt about the party implicated: the Russian Federation. These accusations imply that the AAHC is a threat to national security, thus providing the government a pretext for its actions against the Church, notwithstanding the fact that national security is not a legitimate ground to restrict FoRB. With European summits and an election on the horizon, we can expect that the Armenian government will continue to make claims about the AAHC's alleged threat to national security as a means of securing Western support.

These accusations—especially claims that the AAHC is working with foreign secret services—must be approached with extreme caution. Indeed, as Isabella Sargsyan<sup>26</sup>—an internationally recognised human rights expert and a past member of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of Experts on FoRB—has observed, “to date, the Armenian government has not produced concrete evidence demonstrating that the Catholicos or other members of the clergy have engaged in activities that would constitute offences under the Republic of Armenia's criminal code.” Instead, Pashinyan is cynically appropriating legitimate concerns relating to Russia's war on Ukraine, as well as taking advantage of a relative lack of religious literacy among foreign officials, in order to paper over his FoRB violations.

Some in the West appear to be working under the apprehension that the AAHC is a part of Eastern Orthodoxy and is therefore being used as a tool of the Russian Orthodox Church. But as noted above, the AAHC belongs to Oriental Orthodoxy. It is not in communion with, and has no canonical or administrative ties to, the Russian Orthodox Church. The fact the AAHC has bishops and priests serving in Russia is also a cause for alarm for some. However, these Armenian clerics are there to serve

the roughly two million Armenians living in the Russian Federation, just as the Catholic Church and the Church of England maintain clergy and structures in Moscow and elsewhere to serve local believers, albeit on a much smaller scale.

One of the key claims made against the AAHC is that its clergy were recruited by the Soviet-era KGB. Indeed, Archbishop Yezras—the younger brother of Catholicos Karekin II—has found himself subject to such accusations<sup>27</sup>. This case has provoked considerable alarm among civil society activists in Yerevan, not least with respect to the evidence published by the National Security Service (NSS) of Armenia to substantiate the claim. The NSS claim<sup>28</sup> to possess a KGB record card, which it argues is proof that the archbishop served in the Soviet secret service. All the civil society activists interviewed for this report cast doubt on the veracity of this document. Indeed, according to Felix Corley<sup>29</sup>, a respected historian of the Soviet-era Church, “although the format of the card matches KGB record cards from the 1980s, the image the NSS handed to the website is in Armenian. KGB documentation of its agents was always in Russian.”

Critically, the NSS has failed to provide any evidence to substantiate its claim that Archbishop Yezras is currently acting for a foreign secret service. Instead, it relies on what appears to be fabricated evidence related to the Soviet era to besmirch his reputation, and by extension, the reputation of the AAHC, while deliberately overlooking the depth to which the KGB penetrated Armenian society under Soviet rule, efforts which extended to teachers, police officers and politicians.

It should also be noted that the Armenian government's claims against the AAHC take place in the context of a broader geopolitical struggle over Armenia's future, which pits Western interests against Russia's, often to the detriment of what the Armenian people themselves desire. Indeed, according to Philippe Kalfayan<sup>30</sup>—the director of IODA—“the international community has unfortunately misfocused its attention on securing a partisan outcome [in Armenia], whether ‘pro-West’ or ‘pro-Russian’, rather than on preserving what's most important of all: a thriving democracy.”

This does not mean that the West should not engage and develop bilateral relations with Armenia—indeed, there are many in Armenia who seek such an outcome. However, this should not come at the cost of democracy and human rights. It is therefore essential that Western officials and policymakers engage with local civil society organisations and church leaders in Armenia to understand that these accusations against the AAHC are without merit.

# The Civil Contract Election Manifesto

The publication of Civil Contract’s election manifesto<sup>31</sup> has provoked widespread outrage across Armenian civil society. The party has made “reform” of the AAHC a central plank of its election strategy. The manifesto claims that Civil Contract “respects the freedom of religion and religious belief of all citizens and reaffirms that the Republic of Armenia is a secular state where, according to the Constitution, religious organisations are separate from the state.” However, there is a consensus among experts that the “reform” policy set out in the manifesto is nothing short of a gross violation of FoRB. In its preamble, the manifesto states that the guiding ideology of Civil Contract is the doctrine of “Real Armenia.” This doctrine, which was first set out in January 2025, is a strategic attempt at minimising criticism against the government for the ethnic cleansing and loss of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. To do this, Pashinyan<sup>32</sup> seeks to differentiate between what he terms “real” and “historic” Armenia. “Real Armenia” is understood to be the present post-war geographical boundaries of the republic, which thereby downplays the importance of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian people, as well as the voice of the diaspora. At the same time, the “Real Armenia” project seeks to undermine other symbols of national identity that lie beyond the present-day republic, including the highly potent image of Mount Ararat. The Civil Contract manifesto builds on this initial statement of the government’s ideological doctrine by making clear that the AAHC will be neutralised as a source of legitimate opposition and criticism of Pashinyan’s policies.

What Civil Contract means by “reform” in its manifesto is little more than the subjugation of the Church to government diktat. The document states that “spiritual life” is an “essential factor in ensuring the happiness of the believing public,” before asserting that “the renovation of the Armenian Apostolic Church is a vital necessity.” It then gives two key reasons for the necessity of reform. Firstly, the manifesto claims that “as a result of the activities of the actual leadership of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the believing public has been alienated and continues to be alienated from the Armenian Apostolic Church.” One need only look at the large numbers



attending parish churches across Armenia and the continued public support for the Catholicos to challenge the veracity of this claim. Secondly, the manifesto claims that the AAHC is involved in a “hybrid struggle against the independence and sovereignty of Armenia.” As noted above, this claim is spurious and unsubstantiated.

The manifesto then sets out the following “roadmap” for the “renovation” of the Church:

- (a) Removal of the de facto head of the Armenian Apostolic Church (retirement);
- (b) Election of a locum tenens as Catholicos in accordance with the established procedure;
- (c) Adoption of a statute of the Armenian Apostolic Church: the statute shall establish mechanisms for safeguarding enshrined principles, ensuing financial transparency, and upholding the integrity of the clergy;
- (d) Election of Catholicos of All Armenians in accordance with the established procedure.

These action points clearly contravene both domestic and international law. The decision to invoke a process for removing and replacing the Catholicos violates provisions concerning the separation of church and state and FoRB under the Armenian Constitution, as well as protections against interference in the internal affairs of religious organisations under the Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organisations. Likewise, the “roadmap” breaches Article 9 of the ECHR and the related case law of the ECtHR concerning the autonomy of religious organisations. Indeed, as Siranush Sahakyan<sup>33</sup>—the internationally respected director of the International and Comparative Law Center in Yerevan—has rightly observed:

**The removal of religious leaders by public authorities raises serious concerns under international human rights law, particularly in light of Armenia’s binding obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). These instruments enshrine the principle of religious autonomy, affirming the right of religious communities to govern their internal affairs—especially the selection and retention of their leaders—free from state interference. Any attempt by public authorities to intervene in such matters constitutes an infringement of this fundamental guarantee.**

That such infringements of FoRB have been proposed as part of Civil Contract’s electoral offer is deserving of further international scrutiny and criticism.

# Continued Attacks on the Catholicos

Ever since the conflict against the AAHC first erupted, the government's campaign has centred on the legitimacy of the Catholicos. Quite simply, by removing the Catholicos, the government hopes to delegitimise the Church and to make it easier to bring it under state control.

During interviews conducted for this report in Armenia, Church leaders emphasised the systematic nature of this campaign to undermine the Catholicos. A defining feature has been the continued use of incendiary and insulting rhetoric, which has served to create a widespread atmosphere of distrust, as members of the AAHC become ever more demoralised by the government's actions against the Church. Indeed, as the World Council of Churches<sup>34</sup> observed, "language that may be perceived as hostile or dismissive toward religious communities risks deepening societal divisions at a time when unity and mutual understanding are most needed."

The campaign to undermine the authority of the Catholicos consists of several elements that are united by a complete disregard for the separation of the Church from the state, and the autonomous existence of religious organisations, free from arbitrary interference. The following incidents and points were raised by several church leaders and civil society activists as defining the campaign against the AAHC and the Catholicos in recent months.

In a Facebook post of 7 December 2025, Pashinyan declared<sup>35</sup> that as the AAHC had been established by the state in 301, he believed it would be "appropriate for choirs in all churches to perform the national anthem of the Republic of Armenia before Sunday liturgy." While this online post might appear trivial, it has provoked further disquiet among the clergy and laity of the AAHC. It indicates an attempt to interfere with the running of the liturgy and order of service—religious matters that are wholly within the competence of the Church.

Meanwhile, on 4 December 2025, Pashinyan<sup>36</sup> publicly stated that he had ordered the NSS to censor the divine liturgy of the Church by pressuring clerics to omit the part in which the Catholicos is commemorated—further proof of state interference in the sacred religious rites of the Church, which can in no way be justified under domestic or international law. Shortly after, the prime minister opined on the legitimacy of the Catholicos at a rally in Yerevan on Christmas eve. Pashinyan asserted<sup>37</sup> that Armenians "must acknowledge that the Church's de facto leader and his elite, the narrow circle he has formed, are within a sectarian logic, in a schism." He then went on to claim that the Church needs to be freed and "returned" to the people." That same day, the prime minister announced<sup>38</sup> the creation of the coordinating council to replace

the Catholicos and reform the AAHC. Pashinyan revealed that he would participate in the counsel, alongside ten bishops of the Church, who signed a joint statement on the "need" for church reform. These renegade bishops had earlier signalled their willingness to work with the prime minister on 17 December 2025, when they called<sup>39</sup> on believers to join them in demanding the resignation of the Catholicos, which they claimed was a "nationwide mission" and a "long-held dream and desire of clergy and believers."

The Christmas Eve statement<sup>40</sup> issued by the bishops to accompany the announcement of the coordinating council asserted the need to remove the Catholicos, elect a locum tenens, hold elections for a new Catholicos, and adopt a new charter to ensure the moral conduct of the clergy and transparency of financial operations. These steps are the same ones published in the election manifesto of the Civil Contract party, which suggests close cooperation between these bishops and the government.

It is particularly concerning that the Armenian government is fostering or encouraging what amounts to a schism within the AAHC. Yet, there is a historical precedent to such practice, as seen in the Soviet era renovationist movement for reform. Renovationists sought to "renovate" the Russian Orthodox Church from within. At least initially, they were supported in these endeavours by the Soviet authorities, who saw considerable advantage in using these renegade clerics to divide and rule the Orthodox Church. As John Eibner of Christian Solidarity International has rightly observed,<sup>41</sup> the authorities created a similar structure—called the "Free Church"—to create divisions within the AAHC. We now see the same thing occurring today, albeit in the service of different ideological goals. As the ECtHR has ruled, the state should not be favouring or promoting one group over another in a divided religious community.



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# Interference in Church Affairs

The state has also taken steps to interfere with the internal administration of the Church. On 10 January 2026, Bishop Gevorg Saroyan—one of the bishops who had signed the statement against the Catholicos—was relieved<sup>42</sup> of his duties by the Mother See of Etchmiadzin on the basis of “abuse of office, failure to fulfil the duties incumbent upon the Primate, as well as instances of coercion and pressure exercised against the clergy of the diocese.” Subsequently, the former bishop filed a lawsuit in a civil court to secure his reinstatement. This was an unusual step, not least since canon law usually takes precedence in such disputes. On 17 January 2026, the court ordered the reinstatement<sup>43</sup> of Saroyan to his episcopal office, pending final adjudication. The court also prohibited any actions that could interfere with his exercise of episcopal authority. This judicial decision marked an unlawful encroachment on the AAHC’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

On 27 January, the Catholicos defrocked<sup>44</sup> Gevorg Saroyan on the grounds that he had violated canonical discipline and his vow of obedience. Consequently, the former bishop was classified as a lay member of the AAHC. This decision was well within the competence of the Catholicos as a matter of canon law. Two days after Saroyan was defrocked, six bishops were charged<sup>45</sup> with “obstructing” the exercise of the office of Diocesan Primate (i.e. by defrocking the bishop). On 14 February 2026, criminal charges<sup>46</sup> were brought against the Catholicos on the same grounds. As a result of these charges, the Catholicos

and these bishops have been banned from leaving the country. These travel bans have had immediate and serious implications for the Church. The Mother See of Etchmiadzin had already decided to convene an episcopal assembly<sup>47</sup> in St. Pölten, Austria, to be held between 16 and 19 February 2026. The Catholicos and those bishops subject to travel bans were unable to attend this conference, which was forced to continue in their absence. Indeed, one can reasonably assume that the travel bans were expressly intended to prevent the normal functioning of this episcopal conference.

It is especially concerning that the Catholicos—as the leader of the AAHC—was also prevented<sup>48</sup> from travelling to Tbilisi to attend the funeral of Ilia II—the long-serving and respected patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Ilia’s memorial was an ecclesiastical event of global significance in Christianity. It was therefore wholly inappropriate that the spiritual leader of the AAHC was prevented from attending.

All these recent developments indicate that the Armenian government is persisting in its campaign against the Catholicos to secure his resignation. It is vital to note that the leadership of the Church maintains the innocence of its clergy against all of the government’s accusations, and there are no plans for the Catholicos to stand down. Instead, he seeks to continue to act as a voice of conscience and to defend the rights of Armenians.



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# Continued Detention of Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan

The continued detention of Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan remains a source of deep concern in Armenian civil society and the Church. There are signs that his treatment amounts to targeted political persecution, not least because of well-founded claims that he has been arrested and detained on the basis of faulty evidence.

Archbishop Bagrat's treatment takes place in the context of broader efforts to silence or intimidate the episcopate of the AAHC. Within months of the World Council of Churches conference of May 2025, a third<sup>49</sup> of all archbishops based in Armenia, and nearly a quarter of all diocesan heads, had been imprisoned, including Archbishop Bagrat, Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan, Bishop Mkrtich Proshyan, and Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan.

These clerics were charged under different provisions of the criminal law. For example, Archbishop Mikael was charged with making public calls for the overthrow of power by force, while Archbishop Arshak was arrested for allegedly orchestrating the planting of drugs in a backpack of a protestor in 2018. Lawyers acting for these clerics have denounced the various charges as absurd and have raised legitimate concerns that the arrests are merely part of Pashinyan's broader campaign against the AAHC. Indeed, these do not appear to be isolated prosecutions, but rather a coordinated campaign to further undermine the Church.

In recent weeks and months, Archbishop Mikayel, Bishop Mkrtich, and Archbishop Arshak, have all been released. However, Archbishop Bagrat remains in jail. His arrest and detention in June 2025 stem from his involvement in the Sacred Struggle<sup>50</sup>, a peaceful protest movement opposing the state-imposed demarcation and delimitation process in Tavush region. In a statement<sup>51</sup> issued by Archbishop Bagrat from jail, he asserted that "the Prime Minister stood before residents of border villages, blackmailed and terrorized them by telling that if they resisted his decisions, they would be responsible for war within days. He shifted the burden of national security onto ordinary citizens and used fear as a tool."

Prosecutors claim that Archbishop Bagrat planned acts of terrorism and actions aimed at seizing power, accusations that he completely rejects. His lawyers<sup>52</sup> argue the evidence relied upon by prosecutors is defective, and undermines the legality of the case, a point supported by the Armenian Center for Political Rights in its own detailed report<sup>53</sup> on the case. Archbishop Bagrat's detention has been repeatedly extended, and in

a dramatic turn of events, Alexander Kochubaev—Archbishop Bagrat's legal counsel—was arrested and detained for allegedly making defamatory statements about a judicial official in the course of the ongoing criminal case. The International Commission of Jurists<sup>54</sup> condemned this highly unusual development, observing that "the detention of a lawyer apparently for statements solely related to his professional work is a serious interference with the independence of the legal profession."

Civil society experts agree that Archbishop Bagrat has fallen afoul of Pashinyan's government by exercising his right to freedom of expression. He has now been in jail for nine months and refuses to leave the facility until the charges against him are dropped. When I visited him in Yerevan-Kentron Prison in April, he continued to assert his innocence and explained to me the vital role played by the Church in defending the interests of the Armenian people:

**We have been living in one of the most tragic periods of our history, because we have lost part of our motherland—Artsakh. There was ethnic cleansing, almost genocide. How could the Church have stayed on the sidelines and said it was not a church issue. Our church has for centuries been the moral conscience of our people.**

Activists from Christian Solidarity International<sup>55</sup> have likewise met with Archbishop Bagrat and helped to publicise his case. I echo their message to the international religious freedom movement to raise awareness about Archbishop Bagrat's detention and to call for the release of this renowned advocate of Armenia's national interests.



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# Treatment of Parishioners

All the experts and church leaders I met with in Yerevan raised concerns about the impact of the government's attacks on church parishioners. The continued detention of Samvel Karapetyan—a major benefactor of the AAHC—was identified as a particularly troubling case. Karapetyan was arrested and detained in June 2025 because of the following brief comments<sup>56</sup> he made to a journalist in defence of the Church: “since I have always stood by the Armenian Church and the Armenian people, I will become directly involved. If the politicians fail, then we will participate in our own way.” On the basis of this statement, Karapetyan was arrested for making public calls for the seizure of state power. He was held in a detention facility for six months, before being placed under house arrest, where he remains today.

Karapetyan's treatment fits a broader pattern of an excessive use of pre-trial detention, a point raised in the most recent country report published by Human Rights Watch<sup>57</sup>, as well as US State Department<sup>58</sup> reports on human rights in Armenia. Quite simply, pre-trial detention has been weaponised as a punishment in and of itself—a means to intimidate those willing to speak against authority. Significantly, it has been used against those with less influence than Karapetyan, and indeed, bishops of the Church.

One especially concerning case relates to the events that took place at St Anna's Church in Yerevan on Palm Sunday (29 March), which has been documented by the Armenian Center for Political Rights<sup>59</sup>. As elsewhere in the Christian world, Palm Sunday in Armenia is a significant religious feast that marks the beginning of Holy Week. Large numbers of parishioners attend church, bringing with them willow branches for consecration. Like churches elsewhere in Armenia, St Anna's was packed with believers, and video and photographic images show there was barely any room to move inside the building.

During the service, the prime minister made an unannounced visit to the church, accompanied by his security detail—something he has reportedly done at other churches across Armenia. Such visits are highly disruptive, and in the context of the ongoing campaign against the AAHC and its leadership, his presence was always likely to heighten tensions. On that Palm Sunday, Pashinyan was accompanied by several bodyguards, and the visit was broadcast in a Facebook livestream by one of his aides.

The livestream showed that Pashinyan was surprised at how busy the church was. However, despite there being very little room to move, Pashinyan and his guards pushed their way into

the middle of the densely packed crowd of worshippers, where they remained for around twenty minutes. The bodyguards then began to clear a path for the prime minister to leave before the end of the liturgy. During this process, the bodyguards pushed Davit and Mikael Minasyan, 18-year-old twin brothers. Davit can be heard saying in the footage, “I want to stand in the middle, don't look at me like that... they're pulling me.” The footage then shows how Davit made an open-handed motion in the direction of where the prime minister was passing. In the ensuing melee, one of Pashinyan's bodyguards punched Davit, as shown in the footage. As the Armenian Center for Political Rights<sup>60</sup> has observed, there are reports that this bodyguard has been involved<sup>61</sup> in previous incidents of rough handling parishioners during sacred liturgies.

Of the incident, Arman Tatoyan, the former human rights ombudsman of Armenia, said<sup>62</sup> the following:

**The two 18-year-old school students are told to show respect by those who did not show respect for dozens of believers in the church at their most sacred moment [...]. The self-proclaimed believer [Pashinyan] pushed people aside in the middle of the service and broke through their ranks with his bodyguards and entourage, forgetting that a humble believer does not behave in this way in a church.**

Davit was arrested and lost consciousness on the way to the detention centre. His brother Mikael and Gevorg Gevorgyan, an opposition activist critical of the government, were also arrested, although both were released on police bail.

On the basis of the hand movement he made, Davit was charged with “hooliganism” and “use of violence against an official [...] with the purpose of interfering with the lawful service or political activity of the official.” However, an analysis of the video footage suggests that Davit's action fell far below the thresholds for these crimes, as set out in Armenia's Criminal Code. Davit did not strike any official. In particular, Article 16.2 of the Criminal Code<sup>63</sup> makes clear that an act that is “low risk,” and which has “not caused and may not have caused any essential harm to a legal or natural person, the public or the State, shall not be deemed to be a criminal offense.” Notwithstanding this provision, Davit was sentenced to two months of pre-trial detention, yet another example of the abuse of this preventative measure. His lawyers argued that his detention was disproportionate and arbitrary, not least since his actions were clearly not pre-meditated and caused no harm to state officials.

Mikael Minasyan, as well as Gevorg Gevorgyan, were charged with, respectively, organising and assisting the alleged hooliganism. Investigators searched the home of the Minasyan brothers, although it is unclear what they were looking for. There were suggestions that the Minasyans were connected with Gevorgyan and had somehow staged the incident, although defence lawyers<sup>64</sup> have made clear that neither brother is involved in politics or connected to any politician. For his part, Gevorgyan has made clear that he did not know either young man, and he has stated that his involvement in the fracas was only intended to protect Davit from being hit by the bodyguard.

Davit spent 16 days in detention, and he required hospitalisation due to the injuries that had been inflicted on him. Following widespread public outcry, he was released<sup>65</sup> on 14 April 2026. While his release is welcome, the ordeal suffered by Davit should never have come to pass. By attending church on one of its holiest days, he became yet another victim of a political leader who acts thuggishly and brooks no form of dissent.



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# Conclusion

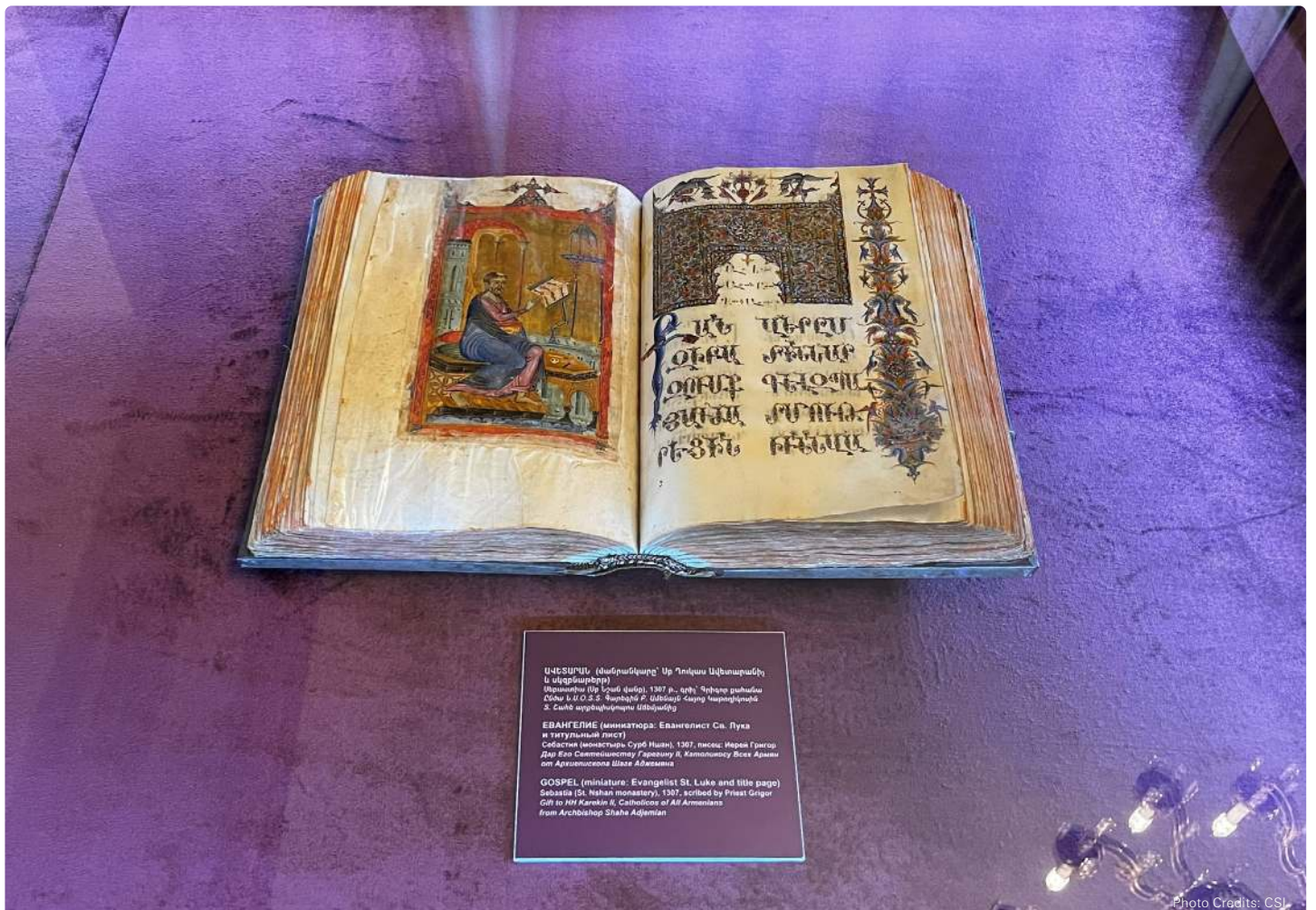
This report has documented just a snapshot of the actions taken by the state to weaken the AAHC and bring it under political control. The measures described—arrests and prolonged pre-trial detention, travel bans, judicial interference in ecclesiastical discipline, the encouragement of internal schism, and unfounded claims of foreign influence—are not isolated incidents. Taken together, they constitute a coordinated campaign that undermines the separation of church and state, and violate the autonomy of a religious community in a manner incompatible with Armenia’s constitutional order and its international obligations.

Civil Contract’s election manifesto is particularly troubling because it seeks to normalise—even mandate—direct state involvement in the removal and replacement of the Catholicos. Under the ECHR and the settled case law of the ECtHR, a democratic state cannot lawfully dictate religious leadership, sponsor rival factions, or compel a religious community to submit to a preferred leader.

The human cost of this campaign is already apparent: clergy and lay people have been subjected to intimidation, arbitrary detention, and the weaponisation of criminal justice to punish

dissent. The continued incarceration of Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, alongside cases involving parishioners, exemplifies a broader climate in which basic safeguards of due process and proportionality are being eroded. This is why concerns about FoRB cannot be separated from wider warnings—raised by Armenian civil society and international observers—about democratic backsliding and the weakening of the rule of law.

Now is the moment for principled and coordinated action. The Armenian authorities should end political attacks on the AAHC, cease interference in its internal affairs, lift unjustified restrictions on Church leaders, and ensure that all criminal proceedings involving clergy and parishioners meet the highest standards of legality, transparency, and due process. International partners should engage directly with the AAHC, Armenia’s civil society, and affected communities. Any plans by the United States, the European Union, or other Western states to enhance relations with Armenia must be made subject to basic standards of FoRB, democracy and rule of law. Armenia’s security and prosperity will not be strengthened by subordinating the AAHC. Instead, they depend on safeguarding the fundamental rights of all Armenians, as well as its national church.



ՉԻՏՏՄԻՆ (ճիւղնիկեացի) Սր Լուկայ Աւետիշտի  
 և Վարդապետի  
 Արամայան (Սր Տրոսի ճիւղ), 1307 թ., 491ի Գրիգոր Երեմիայի  
 ձեռքով և Ս.Տ.Տ. Գրիգորի Բ. Արևիկայի ճիւղի արտադրութեամբ  
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ЕВАНГЕЛИЕ (миниатюра: Евангелист Св. Лука  
 и титульный лист)  
 Сербский монастырь Сурб Ншан, 1307, писец: Иерем Грегор  
 Дар Ево Сатемпаштэву Гарамбу и, Каполюосу Воле Арамы  
 от Архиепископа Шаха Аджеман

GOSPEL (miniature: Evangelist St. Luke and title page)  
 Sebastia (S). Nahapetovatsny, 1307, scribed by Priest Geiger  
 Gift to His Majesty B. Catholicos of All Armenians  
 from Archbishop Shaha Adjemian

Photo Credits: CSI

# CSI Recommendations

Christian Solidarity International makes the following recommendations to the United States, the European Union (EU), and EU member states:

**Publicly affirm the right of the Armenian Apostolic Church to choose its own leadership**, without interference or pressure from government bodies.

**Engage with the government of Nikol Pashinyan** to bring an end to his campaign against the Church.

**Publicly call for the release of all political prisoners in Armenia**, especially Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan and Samvel Karapetyan, the Strong Armenia party's candidate for prime minister in next month's elections.

**Dispatch observers to court hearings** in Armenia involving persons who may have been detained for political reasons.

**Engage with independent human rights groups in Armenia** to promote efforts to protect the rule of law.

**Support the implementation of the Swiss parliament's Motion 24.4259**, which calls for an international peace forum between Azerbaijan and the representatives of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, with a view to ensuring their safe return to their homeland.



Photo Credits: Narek Aleksanyan

Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan greets supporters in court at a hearing during his ongoing detention. Narek Aleksanyan

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# Political Prisoners in Armenia

The following individuals have been detained, placed under travel bans, or subjected to administrative supervision in connection with the Armenian government's campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church and related political and civil society activity. List current as of April 11 2026. It was compiled with support from the Armenian Center for Political Rights.

NAME	OCCUPATION / ROLE	DETAINED	STATUS
<b>Samvel Karapetyan</b>	Church benefactor	18 Jun 2025	House arrest
<b>Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan</b>	Primate of the Diocese of Tavush	25 Jun 2025	Pre-trial detention
<b>Garo Okumushyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	House arrest
<b>Lydia Mantashyan</b>	Church Worker	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Tigran Topalyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Tigran Galstyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Arsen Ghazaryan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Davit Galstyan</b>	Artsakh MP in exile	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Mihran Makhsudyan</b>	Colonel	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Aghvan Arshakyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Igor Sargsyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	House arrest
<b>Ara Rostomyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Armen Aleksanyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Movses Sharbatyan</b>	Activist	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Deacon Hrayr Hakobyan</b>	Clergy	25 Jun 2025	Administrative supervision
<b>Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan</b>	Clergy	27 Jun 2025	House arrest (serving suspended 2 year prison sentence)
<b>Vahagn Chakhalyan</b>	Activist	5 Jul 2025	House arrest
<b>Artur Sargsyan</b>	MP (stripped of immunity)	9 Jul 2025	House arrest
<b>Andranik Chamichyan</b>	ARF youth activist	11 Jul 2025	Administrative supervision, travel ban
<b>Ruben Hakobyan</b>	Public figure, political commentator	18 Jul 2025	Travel ban
<b>Arsen Ghukasyan</b>	Uncle of missing soldier	7 Oct 2025	Travel ban
<b>Bishop Mkrtych Proshyan</b>	Primate of the Diocese of Aragatsotn	16 Oct 2025	Administrative supervision, travel ban
<b>Rev. Fr. Garegin Arsenyan</b>	Diocese of Aragatsotn	16 Oct 2025	Administrative supervision, travel ban
<b>Vardan Ghukasyan</b>	Mayor of Gyumri	20 Oct 2025	Pre-trial detention

<b>Davit Hambardzumyan</b>	Mayor of Masis (resigned due to detention)	28 Oct 2025	House arrest (released from prison pending appeal)
<b>Gevorg Nersisyan</b>	Brother of Catholicos	3 Nov 2025	House arrest
<b>Hambardzum Nersisyan</b>	Nephew of Catholicos	3 Nov 2025	House arrest
<b>Vazgen Saghatelyan</b>	Podcaster	13 Nov 2025	House arrest
<b>Narek Samsonyan</b>	Podcaster	13 Nov 2025	House arrest, gag order
<b>Archbishop Arshak Khachatryan</b>	Chancellor of the Mother See	5 Dec 2025	Administrative supervision, restricted to Vagharshapat community
<b>Ashot Minasyan</b>	Sisian Squad commander, Syunik Diocese chairman	23 Dec 2025	Prison
<b>Davit Minasyan</b>	High school student	29 Mar 2026	Released due to health reasons, under travel ban
<b>His Holiness Karekin II</b>	Catholicos of All Armenians	N/A	Travel ban – ordered lifted
<b>Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisian</b>	Director of External Relations, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Archbishop Haigazun Najarian</b>	Former Primate of Armenian Diocese of Australia and New Zealand	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Bishop Vahan Hovhannesian</b>	Supreme Spiritual Council, Director of Garegin I Educational Center	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Bishop Moushegh Babayan</b>	Supreme Spiritual Council, Chairman of Administrative and Economic Department	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Bishop Makar Hakobyan</b>	Supreme Spiritual Council, Primate of Diocese of Syunik	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Bishop Hovnan Hakobyan</b>	Supreme Spiritual Council, Primate of Diocese of Gougark	N/A	Travel ban
<b>Rev. Fr. Movses Sahakyan</b>	Director of Office of Ecclesiastical Structures	N/A	Travel ban

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