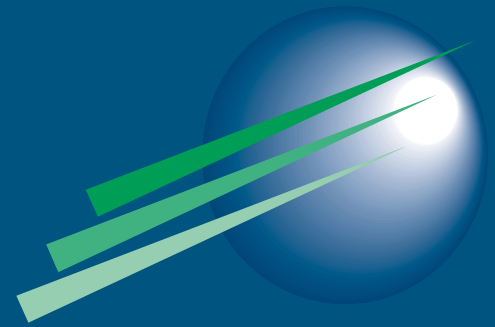


# ACNIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

May 2011



The Armenian Center for National and International Studies

## ACNIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

In the past year, the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS) launched the publication of a regular series of monthly newsletters. This is the next issue of our new “ACNIS Monthly Newsletter,” a publication that provides a brief summary of our work, activities and projects for the month of May 2011.

## ACNIS PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

### ACNIS Participates in A Citizens' Assembly



On May 21 at the Armenian Government Hall of Sessions, Center staff attended the Citizens' Assembly which was called by ACNIS founder Raffi K. Hovannisian to openly and freely discuss matters of public concern.

During the event Center analyst Edgar Vardanian presented his views with respect to the establishment of civil society in Armenia.

As per Vardanian, the main problem in Armenia today is the question of human rights protection, and, to resolve this matter, “citizens who are endowed with the awareness of civil rights should come to an agreement on the question of rights, and they must create, on a contractual basis, an environment of change and establishment of legal and civic preconditions.”

### Center Senior Analyst Attends Second International Regional Conference



As part of a six-person Armenian delegation, ACNIS Senior Analyst Hovsep Khurshudian took part in Vladikavkaz, capital of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Russian Federation, in the second international regional conference entitled “The Great Victory Achieved Thanks to Unity: The Caucasus During the Years of the Great Patriotic War.” At the event, Khurshudian also delivered a report on the “Prospects of Caucasus Unity: How We Wish to Perceive the Caucasus.” The meeting was an initiative of the Institute for Eurasian Studies and the Center for Humanitarian Cooperation, and it was organized also by the Armenia chapter of the Institute for Eurasian Studies.

Following the international regional conference, the Armenian delegation paid a visit to St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church of Vladikavkaz and met with representatives of the local Armenian community. In line with official data, the number of Armenians living in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania is 32,000 and approximately half of them live in Vladikavkaz.

## ACNIS Looks at National Popular Calls and Political Demands in Armenia



On May 5, the Center held a roundtable discussion entitled “Armenia: Public Demands and Domestic Political Proposals.” The meeting brought together representatives from international organizations and the diplomatic community in Yerevan, leading analysts, policy specialists, and members of the press.

ACNIS Director of Research Manvel Sargsian welcomed the audience with opening remarks. “Our objective today is to make an attempt at understanding the extent in which the processes taking place in Armenia correspond to societal expectations and the logic of present debates,” Sargsian stated.

During the event historian and ethnographer Aghasi Tadevosyan analyzed the key elements of present-day discussions among different social strata of Armenia, and pointed to the essence of post-Soviet stereotypes and challenges of independence. “The main challenge for the body politic is promoting the process of stratification, that is, the imperative of transitioning from a homogenous nationalistic culture to a stratified society,” Tadevosyan maintained.

In his turn, Manvel Sargsian looked at the current political developments in Armenia. “The most regressive phenomenon which is observed amongst the opposition circles is their accusing of one another of serving the authorities. Unfortunately, the authoritarian perceptions for all types of occurrences have started to become paramount amid the opposition,” ACNIS Director of Research argued.

The presentations were followed by a series of questions and answers, and featured a lively exchange with the audience.



## ACNIS Attends Public Discussion on Armenian-Turkish Dialogue



From May 16 to 18, Center analyst Saro Saroyan partook in a public conference, entitled “Armenia-Turkey: Politics and the Media,” which was devoted to Armenian-Turkish discourse and the avenues for promoting collaboration between both societies.

The event’s participants, including the public (NGOs and the mass media) and business representatives from Armenia and Turkey, examined the political, legal, and socioeconomic domains which contribute to, and also get in the way of, dialogue between civil societies of the two neighboring countries.

The discussants noted that even though the absence of diplomatic relations and the existing political problems between Armenia and Turkey adversely affect the formation of public discourse, the utilization of new and undiscovered prospects is extremely important in terms of effectively motivating for future cooperation between both peoples.

## Center is Represented at “Caucasus 2010” International Conference



On May 17, ACNIS analysts Edgar Vardanian and Saro Saroyan attended the “Caucasus 2010” annual international conference organized by the Caucasus Institute. During the event policy specialists from Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan presented reports on the political, social, and economic situation in the countries of the region in the year past. The reports drew a special attention to ethno-political conflicts, regional security issues, and external factors.



## ACNIS Explores the Karabagh Issue



On May 19, the Center convened a policy roundtable to examine the imperative of discussing the Artsakh problem in a wholly new way both in Armenia and within international circles.

ACNIS analyst Edgar Vardanian welcomed the audience with opening remarks at this discussion which was entitled “The Karabagh Question in Armenia and International Arena: New Circumstances, Old Approaches.”

In his intervention, international law expert Andrias Ghukasyan examined the possible outcomes of, and existing concerns regarding, the recognition of the Mountainous Karabagh Republic (MKR), and underscored the need to “adopt new and bold attitudes and to dispose of old and used up stereotypes” in this regard.

In his turn, Center Director of Research Manvel Sargsian looked at the entrenched stereotypes and also stressed that “in the Armenian scene, and as a rule, virtually all phenomena have begun to be conditioned on the Karabagh factor, and this is extremely perilous.” Sargsian also underscored the need for Karabagh to attain a clear status.

## Center Analyst Attends Meeting With the EU Commissioner

ACNIS analyst Edgar Vardanian was invited to, and participated in, a meeting between Armenia’s civil society representatives and Štefan Füle, the European Union (EU) Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. During the event, which was held at Yerevan Office of the EU Delegation, Mr. Füle presented the main benchmarks of the Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy and noted that the primary objective of their activities is to assist—by way providing technical and financial support—in the strengthening of democracy and rule of rights and to focus on the development of civil society in the countries, together with Armenia, which are included in this policy.

“Considering the recent events in Arab countries, Europe has changed its approach toward authoritarian states,” the European official stated.

## Free of Charge Courses for Promising Youth

As of September 2011, ACNIS plans on carrying out a seminar-course program entitled “Establishment of Civil Society and Formation of Constitutional State in Armenia: Key Issues and New Challenges.” This curriculum is intended for the youth, until the age of thirty-five, who have a keen interest in social sciences. This program foresees the holding of twelve weekly seminar-courses, which will be held at no cost for the applicants, and Center analysts as well as other leading policy specialists will lecture at these events. At the end of this program, the participants will receive certificates.

To note, several electronic news media already have posted announcements in this regard.



## ACNIS Contributes to A Komitas Concert



On May 25, ACNIS and “Kantegh” Armenian classical music ensemble jointly presented, at Aram

Khachaturian House-Museum, a concert-lecture devoted to the renowned Armenian composer and musicologist Komitas.

During the concert violinist Lusine Harutiunyan and pianist Arpine Kalinina performed many of Komitas’ best works; separately, Kalinina also improvised on Komitas melodies.

The founder and artistic director of the “Kantegh” Ensemble is Arpine Kalinina, a composer and recipient of the Triumph Award of the Russian Federation, and the objective of this group is to make the Armenian classical music treasures—from Komitas and until contemporary composers—accessible to a large cross-section of the public, specifically the youth.

## MEDIA OUTREACH



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### May 4

ACNIS Director of Research Manvel Sargsian gave an interview to *Capital* daily and analyzed the recent cease-fire violations at the Karabagh-Azerbaijan border and their consequences. According to Sargsian, these incidents are an attempt to affect the peace talks, and the Armenian side needs to respond to these attempts by changing the philosophy of these talks. "That is, the Armenian side must present the current situation at the line of contact as priority precondition, stating that unless Azerbaijan reviews its conduct, the continuation of these talks will be meaningless," the political scientist noted.

### May 7

Center analyst Edgar Vardanian likewise was interviewed by *Capital* daily. In his talk, Vardanian examined the argument that the Armenian society is being disregarded and subsequently removed from the upcoming discourse process between the authorities and the Armenian National Congress (ANC). "The authorities are not choosing the path toward self-destruction and they might not have resorted to concessions in other circumstances, but the changed situation itself demands from the authorities to take those steps," Vardanian argued. "Now they are speaking about a 'third power' which, in my view, also is a speculation, and it is based on the authoritarian method of finding a 'savior' to be able to come out of this situation and uniting around him."

# Lragir.am

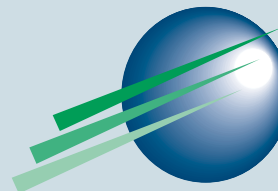
And on May 24, Manvel Sargsian responded to the questions of

*Lragir.am* news agency and looked at the invisible layers of government-opposition relations. Sargsian explained that, just like in the past, Armenia continues to lead a criminal-oligarchic life, together with its "benefits," and irrespective of the factor of any political player. "With the intention of resolving their internal problems, the authorities merely have complicated the game and included, or wished to include, the ANC in this game," ACNIS Director of Research maintained. In his view, public awareness of the need for a constitutional order is apparent today, and this perception is very important.

### Center's Website Has a New Part: ACNIS Editor's Corner

The Publications section of Center's website now has a new part entitled "ACNIS Editor's Corner." Thus the visitors of our website now can read editorials which explore pressing issues of public interest.

## MORE ABOUT US



**The Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS)** is a leading independent strategic research center located in Yerevan, Armenia. As an independent, objective institution committed to conducting professional policy research and analysis, ACNIS strives to raise the level of public debate and seeks to broaden public engagement in the public policy process, as well as fostering greater and more inclusive public knowledge. Founded in 1994, ACNIS is the institutional initiative of Raffi K. Hovannisian, Armenia's first Minister of Foreign Affairs. Over the past seventeen years, ACNIS has acquired a prominent reputation as a primary source of professional independent research and analysis covering a wide range of policy issues.

For more information on ACNIS, our work and activities, please contact us at: [root@acnis.am](mailto:root@acnis.am) or visit our website at: [www.acnis.am](http://www.acnis.am).