YEREVAN'S CHANGING RHYTHM

Posted on May 28, 2026 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

Witnessing the Quiet Transformation of a City

By **Melinda Andonyan**, Istanbul, 21 May 2026

There are cities that one does not merely see, but deeply feels. The impression they leave during a visit lingers quietly, so that years later, memory and reality meet in silent comparison upon one's return. My visit to Yerevan this May was exactly such an encounter. It was not simply a return to a city, but an opportunity to witness how a landscape once etched in memory had transformed over time.

Between the Yerevan I visited years ago and the city I encountered today, there was not only a passage of time, but also a clear social and perceptual transformation. As I walked through its streets this time, I felt that the evolution of the country was reflected not only in its buildings and infrastructure, but also in its people and their way of life.

There is something profoundly moving about witnessing a country in the process of transformation. And when one carries a personal connection to that geography, the resonance of change becomes even deeper. What I felt in Yerevan this time was not merely surprise, but a strong sense of hope.

The city now carries a more dynamic, vibrant, and modern rhythm. Technological progress has become firmly embedded in everyday life. The effects of digitalization are visible across many sectors, from transportation to services. Yet what is most striking about Yerevan is its ability to embrace renewal without losing its distinctive character.

Of course, the influence of Russians, Ukrainians, Lebanese, and Syrians who have settled in the country in recent years cannot be overlooked. The cultural richness, professional perspectives, and everyday practices brought by people from these different backgrounds have added new energy to the country's social fabric. This transformation is particularly visible in the growing vitality of the technology, entrepreneurship, and service sectors.

This cultural interaction is perhaps most evident in the culinary scene. While the deeply rooted traditions of Armenian cuisine remain preserved, the influence of Lebanese cuisine in particular has introduced new flavors, creative presentations, and a broader gastronomic diversity. Yerevan is gradually becoming a city known not only for its historical identity but also for its evolving culinary landscape.



The changes I observed in social life were perhaps the most striking of all. I sensed that people have become more open-minded, more at ease, and more naturally accepting of differences. Hearing multiple languages in the streets has become a normal part of daily life. The presence of visitors from around the world shows that Armenia is becoming an increasingly visible destination.

What stood out to me in particular was encountering Turkish-speaking tourists in the city. Even more striking was hearing them express that they felt comfortable, free, and safe there. Their ability to move through the city with ease, interact naturally with locals, and do so without hesitation reflects a changing social atmosphere in Yerevan. While this does not erase the weight of history, it does suggest the possibility of a more hopeful social foundation for the future.

Another detail that caught my attention was the shift in everyday lifestyle choices among women. Armenian women, long associated with elegance and classic sophistication, now appear to prefer more comfortable and practical clothing and footwear. This is not merely a matter of fashion, but also a subtle reflection of the city's accelerating pace and evolving social rhythm.

As I traveled beyond the city, the physical dimension of this transformation became even more visible. The significant improvement of major roads was particularly striking. Routes that once felt worn and neglected have been replaced by more orderly, modern, and safer infrastructure. This development reflects a clear emphasis on planning and long-term investment.

As I left Yerevan, the strongest feeling I carried with me was hope. What I witnessed was not merely renewed roads, modern buildings, or busier streets. It was the quiet yet determined progress of a country striving to move forward without denying its past, yet refusing to remain confined by it.

Sometimes, witnessing the transformation of a city also allows one to recognize change within oneself. Perhaps that is why this visit affected me so deeply. What I saw in Yerevan reminded me once again that change transforms not only structures, but also perspectives. And sometimes, a country's most meaningful progress begins precisely there.

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Comments



Cassandra – 2026-05-29 21:14:42
Much as I would like to agree with the author's assessment that Yerevan is improving for the better, the cosmopolitanism we are witnessing is robbing the city of its unique Armenian character. Progress to one side, the more the country opens its arms to foreign residents and naturalized citizens (non-Armenian outsiders get the most encouragement), the greater the risk that the Armenian culture will dilute and weaken. Don't take this annual visitor's word for it. There are many Yerevantsis who have moved to the suburbs and rural areas because they don't wish to live in a city that has become foreign to them. If we wanted to live in Barcelona, we would visit there. The globalization of small vulnerable nations is an intentional move. Large nations with populations over our own 2.5 million can afford to import multiculturalism. We have to exercise greater caution than they do.