

POINTLESS ARMENIAN EMBASSY IN ISRAEL

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Photo: *Vandalized Armenian Genocide commemoration poster, Jerusalem, Armenian Quarter, Armenian Patriarchate street, 2015.*

By **Jirair Tutunjian**, Toronto, 2 July 2020

Armenia has announced it will open an embassy in Israel.

Why?

Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian believes Armenia can benefit from Israel's technical know-how and from joint scientific research projects. The presence of the embassy would also be good for Armenians living in Israel, Sarkissian maintains.

Sarkissian is a good PR man for Armenia. He knows all the comforting words, comes across avuncular, and has superb interpersonal skills but his reasons for opening the embassy are smoke-and-mirror or wishful thinking.

Opening an embassy in Israel is a bad idea.

1. To believe Israel would be interested in joint scientific projects with Armenia—or help the country that is at war with Israel's number-one weapons' buyer—is a non-starter. Besides, why would Israel—one of the scientifically most advanced countries in the world—need scientific assistance from Armenia?
2. The Haredim have a history of insulting Jerusalem Armenians. These “religious” hooligans have also ripped Armenian Genocide posters from the Armenian Quarter's walls. What will the Armenian ambassador do when he hears a Haredim student has yet again spat at an Armenian priest or torn a Genocide poster? The fundamentalist Haredim, with 1.8 million members, is one of the biggest “minorities” in Israel. They are also notoriously unlawful: the authorities treat them with kid gloves because of the Haredim voting clout. Should a developing country like Armenia invest millions for an embassy when the returns are so meager?
3. In the past decade, Azerbaijan has, on the average, bought \$1.2 to \$1.3 billion worth of weapons from Israel every year. In 2016, President Ilham Aliyev said: “We have bought almost \$5 billion worth of Israel military goods.” Israel buys more than \$1-billion of oil from Azerbaijan (Baku is Israel's top energy provider). Soon it will also buy natural gas from Azerbaijan. What will Armenia buy from Israel or sell to it?
4. Despite President Recep Erdogan's theatrical fulminations against the Israeli treatment of Palestinians, Turkey and Israel cooperate in many ways, including in intelligence gathering. Israeli and Turkish friendship goes back to the early months of Israel when Turkey sold much-needed food to Tel Aviv. Israel exports annually more than \$1.1 billion worth of goods to Turkey and imports about \$1.6 billion in goods and services. Why would Israel compromise—even slightly—its lucrative trade and important strategic relations with the Turkbeijan pair for the sake of Armenia?

5. Despite U.S. and Western European support, Israel is ostracized by my countries (the UN has passed more resolutions against Israel than it has against the combined 185 UN states.) Recently, Israel annexed Syria's Golan Heights and is planning further annexation of the West Bank.
6. Not only it doesn't recognize the Armenian Genocide, but through its lobby in the U.S., Israel has made sure the Genocide is not recognized by Washington. It has extended the "favor" to Turkey to keep Ankara on its side. Now the Israeli media—with few exceptions—is going after Armenia to demonstrate to Baku the advantages of being friendly with Israel. As well, many Jewish Diaspora "journalists" have found the Israeli media eager to publish anti-Armenian propaganda. The attacks on Armenia are so pervasive that one suspects it's a concerted campaign.
7. Although Armenian prime ministers, presidents, foreign ministers, and Catholicos have visited Israel, the only prominent Israeli who has been to Yerevan is its chief rabbi.
8. The opening of the embassy would hurt Armenia's vital relations with Iran. Iranian leaders have already expressed their dismay while Iranian university students have demonstrated at the Armenian Embassy in Tehran.
9. The embassy's existence would hurt the dwindling Armenian communities of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt. Egypt has hinted it might recognize the Genocide. If it does, other Arab states might follow. Twice in the past year, the Tobruk-based Libyan government, which is headed by Marshal Khalifa Haftar, recognized the Armenian Genocide.
10. When Armenia announced its intention to open an embassy, there was no sign from Israel that it would even consider opening a consulate in Armenia. It was like sending a love letter and not receiving a reply. Not reciprocating, nay, not even considering opening a consulate in Armenia is an Israeli slap that only Armenia's leadership seems to have not heard. In North American parlance, someone should translate the Israeli message and ask Armenia's Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan: "What part of 'No' don't you understand?"
11. Some might believe having an embassy in Tel Aviv might endear us to Washington. That's not likely: we are not on Washington's radar these days. Even petrodollar-rich Azerbaijan gets more U.S. aid than does the impoverished, blockaded and embattled Armenia.
12. There are scores of more worthy countries where Armenia should have diplomatic representation. In next-door Jordan, whose King Abdullah II recently visited Armenia, there's an honorary consul. Uruguay, which is the first country to recognize (April 20, 1965) the Armenian Genocide, Armenia is represented by an honorary consul. Meanwhile, Israel has embassies/consulates in such international heavyweights as Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic...
13. Did you know Armenia has diplomatic representation in Andorra and Liechtenstein? The main 'industries' of these two-stamp-sized jurisdictions are banking, money-laundering, and secret bank accounts. Their importance to Armenia's elite can't be overstated: how would politicians, diplomats, and oligarch in Armenia function without these outlets which facilitate their under-

the-table transactions?

Comments



Houry Ellezian – 2020-07-28 22:05:08

It is interesting to know certain facts or ask questions to know the facts, if any one of you can answer: 1. Was it the president's decision alone to have the embassy? Since we know he does not enjoy powers like before. This is a national matter, not a personal one! We have the foreign affairs department for that. 2. I really don't know how much the embassy did cost, but I hear it is already functioning. 3. The president's role in Amulsar, in introducing it to the Brits and Prince Charles is repeated everywhere, so clearly, I am not defending him. Even though I am not familiar with the details. 4. Did you know that there are mountain Jews living in Azerbaijan and apparently they are seeking for power, to have all of Azerbaijan? 5. During our last battle with Azerbaijan, Ukraine allegedly said that they were on the Azeri side, they didn't recognize Artsakh (Karabagh) and Armenians were the aggressors. Armenia called the Ukrainian ambassador for explanation. It was clarified that; this was not the official position of Ukraine. It was a third party (Azeris that live in Ukraine) who made those statements. 6. When Neshan Der Haroutiounian, the famous TV presenter, "insulted" Erdogan, the Turkish ambassador in Lebanon made an official complaint, and now Neshan faces the Lebanese courts. Imagine that. In points 5 and 6, I am emphasizing the role of an embassy, being the official outlet to make statements and complaints. You can shout in newspapers as much as you want. Officially nobody will hear you. A 90-year-old Jewish doctor in Montreal didn't know much about the Armenian genocide. And he asked why? Why indeed? I also want to emphasize to Mr. Shahe's point, that destroying the ecology started long before this government, to the point of no return in some instances. I am getting this general impression that nothing has changed! To be fair much has changed. And as much as I am anxious with certain issues like Amulsar, doesn't mean I don't appreciate the good.



shahe boghossian – 2020-07-26 09:23:54

Dear Ms. Ellezian Back in the time when Armen Sarkissian was an ambassador to the UK, he was invited to Manchester where the largest community of Armenians outside London lived. He was invited once a month for 2 years. He did not even bother. He was BUSY..... Obviously busy with money laundering and forging deals with Charles.... and the rest of the Royal Junta. Now Baron Sarkissian is planning to open an embassy... well he was never an appropriate ambassador in the first place. Let alone the recent escalations with the Azeris and the Russians, the Armenian nation at the moment has NO sense of direction....proper nil. Shame on them and shame on the leadership of the country, the current leaders do NOT see beyond their fingers. Just as they are destroying forests and destroying the ecology of Armenia which you properly quoted as " this is the heart, oh yes but I need it now...." these people need to be kept away from any form of power and as a diaspora we should have a voice, not just be cash cows.



E. A. Haroian – 2020-07-22 11:49:37

Mr. Kostantian: Congratulations for having "travell[ed] to many countries around the 5 continents", but be advised that there are 7 (SEVEN) continents. I think it is a shame you feel that Armenians are not known for making many contributions to the world or that we do not have any "original food dishes!". As an Armenian, I think it is shameful that you think Armenians are "hard working people" merely because of having been "ruled by many different powers". Armenians preceded most of those "different powers" which ultimately ruled over them; as such Armenians had long before established their own rich culture, and that was accomplished because they were "hard working people". In closing, there is a well known saying that, if you want someone to respect & like you, you need to respect & like yourself; I respectfully suggest you contemplate that concept and take it to heart.



Taniel – 2020-07-21 20:20:21

Dear "John": Or is it Attila, Ilham, etc.? I suspect you are a [...]. If so, nice try. If not, your remarks are too ignorant to bother responding to.



Jirair Tutunjian – 2020-07-21 11:00:10

Ms. Ellezian, You asked, "But are we giving up?" Last week's victory and the global Armenian reaction indicates we are not. You say "many Arab states made deals with Israel..." Of the 22 Arab states only two (Saudi Arabia and one of the Gulf states) have made deals with Israel. Since they have the same bodyguard (U.S.) and the same foe (Iran), they are cooperating. I am not counting Morocco because it has never been hostile to Israel. Jordan had no choice. Egypt "made a deal" with Israel so as to get back Sinai. Their relations have been described as "cold peace." You say, "we are trying to help ourselves for a change." Opening the embassy is not the way to go about helping ourselves. It reeks of desperation. It will not help Armenia's strategy, economy, and security. At best, it will earn our ambassador entry into the Tel Aviv diplomatic cocktail circuit and to chit-chat. Economically-booming Israel doesn't deem Armenia important enough to install a tiny consulate in Yerevan while impoverished Armenia wants to open an embassy in Tel Aviv. Armenia's behavior seems suspiciously like that of a stalker. Pointing out the shortcomings of Armenia is not waiting for Doomsday. Believing in obstreperous clippings (our exaggerated scientific advances) will hold us back. Pointing out the notorious reputation of some of our diplomats is not destructive. Nowhere did the article hint that we are powerless or insignificant.



Vatché P. – 2020-07-21 07:57:23

This is very bad news for Armenia and the Armenians in general. Why are we lowering ourselves to go as far as opening an Embassy in Israel? What good will it do to us? Israel is as bad as Turkey and Azerbaijan put together and we are going to appease that government by spending millions of Dollars (which we could use elsewhere) by opening an Embassy in Israel? Our only Moslem 'ally' nearest to Armenia is Iran, whether we are still trading with them or not, I am not sure (Trump and his Iranian boycott). I have great respect for our President, Armen Sarkissian, but I feel he is being naive in his ideas of establishing scientific cooperation with Israel by way of an Armenian Embassy in Israel. I suggest Keghart start gathering signatures expressing its readers' dissent on this idea.



Houry Ellezian – 2020-07-21 01:36:02

Thank you for the response Mr. Tutunjian. The reason I didn't want to say anything was precisely because of this strong sentiment, and because I have seen a lot of Armenians getting upset over this. I know perfectly well what Israel does and what it wants, and I have firsthand experience - impact, in Lebanon, from Israeli bombing of electrical power stations, the airport as well as extensive damage to infrastructure in 1982; terrorist acts, with no regard to international condemnation. I share Lebanon's and the Arab world's strong sentiments against anything Israeli. Add to that their supply of arms and drones to Azerbaijan. But are we giving up? Many Arab states made deals with Israel against the Palestinian people. We are not doing that; we are trying to help ourselves for a change. But you are painting a sad image of Armenia, a corrupt state that will never change, and will succumb to the will of bullies. Well then, we have no hope for a better future and nothing to do except wait for doomsday! If we are so powerless, and insignificant, why would the rest of the world care and get upset over it?



Kegham Papazian – 2020-07-20 18:44:08

Concerning comments No 5 by Hourly Ellezian that Iran and Arab states (totalling 23 countries) will benefit from Armenia having an Embassy in Israel is wholly and completely the opposite. I lived in Egypt and I know the feelings of Arab World, Egyptians in particular and their strong opposition to any such move. We don't need new enemies. The Egyptian TV channels almost daily talk against Turkey and its leadership. They broadcast documentaries about the Armenian Genocide more than any country in the world. They invite Arab historians and Armenian community leaders and discuss the Armenian Genocide and condemn Turkish atrocities. They praise the Armenian people and some Egyptian friends have changed their Facebook photo with Armenian Flag and 24 April 1915 inscription. They will get really upset.



Anon - 2020-07-20 15:06:09

There is ignorance of history and the absence of logic in what Kostanian writes. We are not a very smart nation, he says. Perhaps that's the reason we have managed to be around for more than 4,250 years. He says we are very hard-working because we have been ruled by many different powers. The majority of Armenians live in diaspora (no Shabuh or Sultan Abdul Hamid II ruling us) and yet we have been singularly successful wherever we have immigrated. He says we boast (he is right) that we are the first Christian nation but have given nothing to the world. Mr. Kostanian, forget about ancient or medieval times and look at the past century for what we have given to the world. I hope you will not need an MRI because it was invented by some stupid Armenian. Kostanian says we very "short-sighted" and have no visionaries to steer us in the right direction by trying to make peace with our enemies. Making peace with our enemies is easy, Mr. Kostanian. All we have to do is forget Western Armenia, Cilicia, the Genocide, and give Artsakh to Azerbaijan...and then count the days to our certain disappearance. "With peace comes prosperity," reveals Kostanian in his original pensee. Why didn't any of the ten million Armenians think that original thought? He says "I am very sorry to be blunt...." I am also sorry to be blunt and say "Mr. Kostanian, when you have a bad day, don't put your 'thoughts' into words and embarrass yourself. I am glad you've traveled to the five continents. They say that travel broadens the mind. Perhaps not everyone's.



H - 2020-07-20 14:44:43

Well said Nishan



H - 2020-07-20 14:24:41

You may have some good points in your criticism. However, if everything Armenia has given the world in science, art, architecture, war generals, etal, is nothing in your estimation, what are you recommending?



Jirair Tutunjian – 2020-07-20 09:30:55

Thank you for enumerating your comments. It makes it easier to reply. It also makes it easier for readers to follow the conversation. You wrote that you had decided not to say anything but changed your mind because of the comments. Can you say why you didn't want to participate in the conversation? 1. Explaining the functions of an embassy/consulate is redundant. You believe the presence of an Armenian embassy in Israel would benefit the 1,000 Armenians who live in the Old City of Jerusalem. Since it occupied the city in 1967, Israel has ignored all criticism of its governance of the city and has done what it wanted to do. Since Israel has made no secret of its plan to "Judaize" the city, there is little an ambassador can do. Israel. Thanks to the U.S. it is impervious to pressure...let alone from an embattled small country such as Armenia which happens to be the foe of Israel's darling Azerbaijan. Recently, Israeli settlers grabbed from the Greek Patriarchate two historic hotels in the heart of the city. While the Greek and other Churches, including the Armenian, protested the illegal acquisition, the Israeli real estate grab will go ahead. Greece, a friend of Israel, has remained silent. It knows it's futile to pressure Israel. Through experience, Athens has learned Israel will do what it wants. How effective do you think the ambassador of mighty Armenia could be in a state which ignores even its godfather Uncle Sam? 2. The archives of the Armenian Patriarchate have been studied by a number of scholars. Taner Akcam, who is no friend of the Turkish denialists of the Armenian Genocide, is just one of many scholars who have studied some of the archives. Akcam is in no way linked to Turkey or to Ankara's so-called designs on Jerusalem. The Turkish "attempt" to acquire properties in Jerusalem is highly exaggerated. For one thing, Israel wouldn't allow it because it wants every inch of Jerusalem and sees Palestinians as allies of the Turks. If you are referring to the Armenian Patriarchate shop which is now operated by an Arab, I would like to point out that it was the lease that was transferred to the Arab. The land and the store remain Armenian Patriarchate property. The patriarchate has hundreds of shops and offices leased to non-Armenians. Gossip claims the "key money" for the lease was provided by an unknown Turk. 3. You say Armenians should be players and not just observers. How will the embassy of a small country become a player in Israel when Israel and Azerbaijan are as tight as thieves? Can you cite examples of Armenian diplomats making an impression anywhere in the world since independence? If anything, they've made an impression as smugglers of watches, etc. 4. Armenia's technical savvy: it's better not to take the word of the understandably rah-rah Armenian media about Armenia--the New Silicon Valley. 5. You say having an embassy in Israel would be good for "Iran and other Arab countries..." Iran is not an Arab country. Please explain how Iran and Arab countries would benefit from the opening of an Armenian embassy in Israel. Turkey is friendly with Iran. Has the presence of a Turkish embassy in Israel helped Iran? Armenia has marginal relations with several Arab countries. How would our Israel embassy be of any use to Arab countries? 6. You proved my point about the pointlessness of an Armenian embassy in Israel when you wrote about corruption in Armenia's diplomatic corps. Do we need a costly embassy (not a consulate) in a country ripe with opportunities for similar deplorable behavior not to mention a reputation of being the home of the super-efficient Mossad intelligence services which will improve its Armenia file.



Hrad Potadian - 2020-07-20 03:37:55

Thank you Mr. Tutunjian for such a well written article. Yes, why an Armenian Embassy in Jerusalem? Mr. President Sarkissian, let Israel first recognize the Armenian Genocide, then think about opening an Armenian Embassy in Jerusalem. Oh Mr. President you should go one step further and open an Armenian Embassy in Ankara.



Houry Ellezian - 2020-07-20 03:15:03

I had decided not to say anything, but after reading all these comments, I had to: 1. First, we must define what an embassy stands for. My understanding is that it establishes diplomatic presence and relations, keeps a closer eye on its community, and looks after its own interests. It is not for making love or any other emotional reasons. 2. Our interests include our church properties and Patriarchate, which belong to the Armenian nation and not Karekin II. In fact, Patriarch Nourhan of Jerusalem had harsh words for Karekin II. Secondly and more importantly, our library and archives, which were studied by the Turkish historian Taner Akcam and therefore under the lens of Turkey. There was news recently that Turkey is attempting to acquire properties there. 3. Precisely for the reasons mentioned above in the article, Armenians must be players and not just observers. We are so used to pleasing everybody else that we are afraid to protect our own interests. We have no friends or allies, just interests that may change with time. 4. Do not underestimate Armenia's scientific knowledge and IT capabilities. 5. Iran and other Arab states must benefit from this move, not the opposite. 6. If you are following recent Armenian diplomatic news closely, they haven't been able to change much of the ambassadors abroad after the "Velvet Revolution", probably for lack of prepared diplomats to take over. And unfortunately, oligarchs of the past are largely benefiting from the situation. One example is Mikael Minasyan of Italy, known as "Mishig", Serj Sargsyan's son in law, who was until recently directing the fake opposition from his kitchen in Italy. In time, they will all be replaced to represent today's Armenia.



Neshan Balian - 2020-07-19 18:05:46

Very well written. At this stage Israel has absolutely no interest in Armenian diplomatic relations for fear of alienating Azerbaijan and Turkey. On the other hand we should be extremely careful to not jeopardize our good relationships with Iran. They are far more important to us than any Israeli relationship.



Telo - 2020-07-19 15:54:22

To add to the reasons enumerated by Mr. Tutunjian, I would add: 1) Not one Armenian embassy abroad does the work that embassies are supposed to do, such as: coalition building, strategic missions, goodwill ambassadorship with other nations, political and cultural programs for the public, etc. One must ask what the appointed ambassadors will be doing in Israel. Scoping out Patriarchate property for Karekin II to buy and sell to the Israelis? Fatten their bank accounts? Vacation at the Dead Sea? Conduct shopping junkets in Paris? 2) Israel does not deserve an Armenian embassy for all the reasons mentioned in the above article. Israel benefits more than Armenia does! Moreover, it would make bugging and wiretapping even easier for them. 3) This is a direct slap in the face to the Palestinians, who, like the Armenians, are an indigenous occupied people with the world's elites against them. 4) Anyone following the news knows that heavy damage could have been imposed on Armenia proper these past few weeks, compliments of Israeli-made weapons sold to Azerbaijan. This alone, aside from all the compelling points made in the above article, should compel every Armenian and right thinking person to reconsider such an ill-conceived move.



Armen Baghdoyan - 2020-07-19 00:56:47

This action by the Armenian government is the most disturbing blunder I have ever seen in international relations. The article renders an inestimable service to Armenia and Armenians by providing ironclad arguments against the asinine initiative. One is inclined to have the sneaky suspicion that this act must have been taken under irresistible pressure from outside sources not necessarily friendly to Armenia. As the article vastly demonstrates, Armenia has nothing to gain from this unconscionable initiative but lose immeasurable respect and reputation with countries most important in her international relations. Armenia's historical friends will not view this insanity with equanimity, but a feeling of absolute distrust and repugnance.



Taniel - 2020-07-19 00:55:45

Thanks to the author for listing so many excellent and essential points. Armenia will, hopefully, be very careful in dealing with Israel. Israel is not just an ally of Azerbaijan. Israel is still hoping that its relations with Turkey will improve once the deranged Erdogan leaves the scene. Let's not be fooled. A Jewish American organization that is very overtly supportive of Azerbaijan is the American Jewish Committee (AJC), headed by David Harris. Then again, all the leading Jewish organizations support Azerbaijan, but they're just a bit more subtle about it than the AJC.



Levon - 2020-07-19 00:16:13

How true and well said! I don't know what are our leaders thinking. You must be crazy and very ill informed to think that anything, I mean anything good could come from these arrogant, extremely racist people! We should stop dreaming that anything good can come up from that apartheid criminal government. Stop now! Before we make fool of ourselves and alienate our friends!



John kostanian - 2020-07-18 23:12:42

After travelling to many countries around the 5 continents, I always felt sorry for our homeland called Armenia. I am ashamed to say that we Armenian's are not a very smart nation, we are just a very hard working people and that's because we have been ruled by many different powers. Yet we proudly boast that we are the 1st Christian nation but we have given the world nothing such as olympics originated in Greece Arab medicine Kurdish backgammon etc. For god sake we do not even have 1 original Armenian food dish. We seem to be very short sighted, no visionaries in our government to steer us in the right direction by trying to make peace with our enemies, I've done the April 24 walk a few times and it is not getting us anywhere, it's about time to think differently. With peace comes prosperity for the mostly needy Armenian in Armenia. I am very sorry to be so blunt, yes truth hurts and we should start a different political course for the future young Armenian's.