



INVESTIGATION BY THE ANTI-CORRUPTION NATIONAL INITIATIVE (ANI)

THE MAN BEHIND THE DISMANTLING: ARAYIK HARUTYUNYAN - IDENTITY DESTROYER AND THE STATE'S EVENT MANAGER

Key figure in the dossier:

Arayik Harutyunyan





During his tenure as Minister of Education, Arayik Harutyunyan became one of the most heavily criticized figures in the new government. His initiatives sparked protests from teachers, representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the scientific community, and public organizations. In the political folklore surrounding him, he became known by the nickname “Ddum” (“Pumpkin”), which his opponents used to highlight what they saw as the unprofessionalism and superficiality of his reforms.

At first glance, such an assessment seemed quite understandable. Many of the ministry’s decisions sparked high-profile scandals, while Harutyunyan himself often found himself at the center of public controversies.

However, subsequent events cast this story in a different light.

After leaving the Ministry of Education, Harutyunyan did not disappear from political life or find himself pushed to the margins of power. On the contrary, within just a few months, he became an adviser to the Prime Minister and later headed the Prime Minister’s Office, becoming one of the country’s most influential officials.

The analysis shows that behind the public image of the controversial minister lies a far more influential political figure than is commonly assumed.

Over the past two decades, he has risen from teaching at the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Yerevan State University to becoming one of the most influential figures in the current government.

Over the years, Harutyunyan worked at the Helsinki Association for Human Rights and took part in Armenian-Turkish reconciliation programs (the published biographical materials do not specify the particular projects or organizations involved - Author’s note), was a member of the Transparency International non-governmental organization and was involved in public initiatives “Now,” “We Are Against Foreign-Language Schools,” and “The Army in Reality.” He served on the board of the Civil Contract party and later chaired it, served as Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and, following the 2020 war, headed the Prime Minister’s Office.

Today, the Prime Minister’s Office is one of the key centers of state governance. Personnel appointments, coordination of government agencies, the organizational support of the government’s work, and a significant part of domestic political processes all go through him.

This ANI investigation focuses on analyzing Arayik Harutyunyan’s political biography, his activities in the public sector, his work in the media, reforms in education, personnel policy, public procurement, and changes in his financial status after coming to power.

However, the main question of this investigation is not whether Arayik Harutyunyan was a successful or unsuccessful minister. It is much more important to understand how a former teacher, social activist, and journalist came to be among the most influential representatives of the current government and how he built his own vertical of influence.





The Making of A New Elite: How Transparency International Became A Training Ground for The Next Generation of Leaders

According to his official biography, Arayik Harutyunyan has been a member of the public organization Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center since 2014.

The organization traces its origins to the Regional Development Center, established in 2000 and accredited in 2001 as the national chapter of the international Transparency International movement. In 2008, the organization was re-registered under the name Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center.

According to published reports, the organization received grant funding totaling approximately \$5.66 million between 2001 and 2016. The Soros Foundation's entities were among the largest donors. According to published data, in 2002–2018, the organization received over \$840,000 from the Open Society Foundation in Armenia and more than \$1.2 million from the Open Society Foundation – Budapest office.

For many years, the center has been engaged in election monitoring, anti-corruption research, human rights advocacy, and socio-political initiatives, remaining one of the most prominent representatives of Armenia's non-governmental sector.

Notably, following the change of government in 2018, many representatives of the organization moved from the non-governmental sector into the state administration. Among them were Lena Nazaryan, Armen Grigoryan, Sarhat Petrosyan, Heriqnaz Tigranyan, Artak Manukyan, and others.

The ties between representatives of the new government and the grant-funded sector have repeatedly been the subject of political debate, including after Arayik Harutyunyan was appointed Minister of Education. Opposition representatives pointed to his years-long activity in non-governmental organizations and his involvement in structures that received funding from international donors, including the Open Society Foundation.

<https://eadaaily.com/ru/news/2019/02/04/messedzh-sorosa-pashinyanu-armeniya-prishla-beda-otvoryay-vorota>

<https://www.hayeli.am/?p=155058&l=am>

Media Launchpad: 1in.am, Araratnews, and The Future Ruling Team

There is another significant chapter in Arayik Harutyunyan's biography without which his political career after 2018 would be incomplete. Before coming to power, he worked in several media outlets that became platforms for forming his future political team.

In 2010–2011, Harutyunyan was responsible for the international section of the 1in.am news website, and from 2013 to 2015 he was responsible for the international section of Araratnews.am. This experience became one of the launchpads for his political career: from journalism and civic activism, he gradually moved into party politics and then into government positions.





The period of work at Araratnews.am was particularly significant. In effect, the publication's editorial office became one of the hubs where young opposition activists converged. In the office of this media outlet, Harutyunyan worked alongside Alen Simonyan and other future representatives of the Civil Contract Party. The resource itself actually served as an information platform for this political group.

The 1in.am website was founded by Arman Babajanyan through the company "Skizb Media Center." The outlet has been characterized as a platform supported by Western foundations and promoting anti-Russian rhetoric. Funding for such media outlets was provided through organizations like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Soros Foundation, the European Endowment for Democracy, and the British Sigrid Rausing Trust.



Photo: Arman Babajanyan

Araratnews.am was part of Ararat Media Group, founded by Alen Simonyan. Financial support for this outlet was provided by businessman Khachatur Sukiasyan, who has been described as a "businessman at the heart of power" and a mentor to Nikol Pashinyan.



Photo: Khachatur Sukiasyan and Alen Simonyan

The expert and public circles associated with these media outlets included representatives of Western-oriented NGOs and think tanks, such as Daniel Ioannisyan, Stepan Grigoryan, Artur Sakunts, and Levon Barseghyan. Later, in his capacity as Chief of the Prime Minister's Office, Harutyunyan began officially engaging with USAID delegations — a U.S. agency whose programs had previously supported a significant part of the civic and media environment in which he developed as a political figure.

Thus, well before 2018, an environment had begun to take shape around Arayik Harutyunyan where media, civic activism, opposition politics, and future government personnel intersected. This circle included Alen Simonyan, Arman Babajanyan, and other figures from Armenia's social and political life who would later take up prominent positions within the country's political system.

As a result, Arayik Harutyunyan's media career proved to be far more than just a line in his biography. It became part of a broader chain: Western NGOs, grant programs, opposition media, youth movements, the Civil Contract Party, and the subsequent transition of this environment into state power.

Arayik Harutyunyan: How Armenia's Education and National Agenda Were Transformed

After the Velvet Revolution of 2018, Arayik Harutyunyan's career began to develop rapidly.

Based on media reports and expert commentary, his career trajectory after 2018 can be broadly divided into three stages: “the reformer,” “retreating into the shadows,” and “the gray eminence.”





Immediately after the change of power in May 2018, Arayik Harutyunyan was entrusted with one of the most responsible positions – the post of Minister of Education and Science of Armenia. Shortly after his appointment, a law on government restructuring was passed, resulting in the merger of the Ministry of Education and Science with the Ministry of Culture, as well as the youth and sports sector. Thus, several strategically important areas of government policy were placed under the authority of a single ministry.

All these sectors came under the leadership of a person who, prior to his appointment, had no experience managing large state institutions and had never held a position in the executive branch.

Having taken the helm of the new super-ministry, Harutyunyan launched a series of large-scale reforms, primarily in the education sector. Almost from the outset, they sparked intense controversy and widespread public debate.

Rewriting History

One of the first high-profile decisions was the decision not to print new textbooks on the history of Armenia due to disagreements over the interpretation of the events of March 1, 2008, and other political processes in the country's recent history.

As early as the beginning of 2019, public discussions on the content of future history textbooks began in Armenia.

"The discussions are very complex; the commission cannot reach a conclusion, and some experts are writing diametrically opposed things in these materials... This is related to the events of March 1, 2008, the elections, and political assessments," Harutyunyan stated.

Asked whether there was a task to revise the way these events were presented in textbooks and portray them in a new light, the Minister replied:

"There is such a problem. I have not yet allowed the textbooks to be printed because the commission has not yet reached a definitive conclusion."

Thus, within the first few months after the change of government, the country's new leadership raised the question of reconsidering the assessments of a number of key political events in Armenia's modern history.

Subsequently, the Ministry initiated a comprehensive revision of school curricula, educational standards, and textbooks, primarily focusing on Armenian history and literature.

The Dispute Over the Church

One of the most contentious aspects of the reform was the status of the subject "History of the Armenian Church." It was proposed that the subject be integrated into the "History of Armenia" and "Social Studies" courses.





Formally, the subject was not canceled under Arayik Harutyunyan. However, it was during his tenure as minister that the process of reevaluating the discipline's status began, which subsequently culminated in its de facto removal from the list of independent compulsory subjects.

Armenian Language: From Social Activist to Minister

The initiative to remove "Armenian Language," "History of Armenia," and "Armenian Literature" from the list of compulsory university subjects also sparked a strong reaction.

This discussion was particularly symbolic because, before coming to power, Harutyunyan was one of the co-founders of the "We Are Against Foreign-Language Schools" movement, which advocated for the protection of the Armenian language and the national educational environment.

However, already in the position of Minister of Education, he was the initiator of a reform that provided for the abolition of the compulsory study of a number of national disciplines for certain university programs.

Conflict with The Academic Community

During Harutyunyan's tenure as minister, a large-scale reform process in higher education and the scientific sphere was also initiated. One of the key initiatives was the drafting of a new law "On Higher Education and Science." Although the law was passed after he left his position as minister, the main work on the document was carried out under his leadership and by his team.

The National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and Yerevan State University opposed the bill, citing contradictions with certain provisions of the Constitution.

The most heated debates were sparked by issues concerning changes to the status of the National Academy of Sciences, reductions in its autonomy, the transfer of some scientific institutions to a new management system, and modifications to the mechanisms for funding science.

<https://www.radiovan.fm/station/article/12462>

<https://newsarmenia.am/news/society/arutyunyan-soobshchil-kogda-v-armenii-polnostyu-izmenyatsya-shkolnye-uchebniki/>

<https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/62203>

[https://arka.am/news/politics/pravitelstvo_armenii_utverdilo_novuyu_strukturu /](https://arka.am/news/politics/pravitelstvo_armenii_utverdilo_novuyu_strukturu/)

[https://arka.am/news/society/pashinyan_prokommentiroval_skandalnyy_proekt_reformy_sistemy_education_armenia /](https://arka.am/news/society/pashinyan_prokommentiroval_skandalnyy_proekt_reformy_sistemy_education_armenia/)

<https://auroranews.am/news/2020-07-03-hayots-ekeghetsu-patmutyun-dasavandogh-usutsichnery-dimum-en-arayik-harutyunyanin>

<https://www.ysu.am/ru/node/10566>





<https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2021/04/05/%D4%B3%D4%B1%D4%B1-%D4%B5%D5%8A%D5%80/2480886>

Literature Without Armenian: Arayik Harutyunyan's Cultural Reforms

One of the most debated decisions by Arayik Harutyunyan's team concerned changes in approaches to teaching literature and promoting Armenian cultural heritage.

During his tenure as minister, the word "Armenian" was removed from the name of the school subject, after which the subject was simply called "Literature." Explaining this decision, Harutyunyan stated that students study not only Armenian but also foreign authors, so the previous name did not fully reflect the course content.

Critics of the reform viewed this move as part of a broader trend toward reassessing the role of the national component in the education system.

Another controversial decision was the suspension in 2020 of the "Armenian Literature in Translation" grant program, which funded the translation and publication of works by Armenian authors abroad. According to published data, 14 million drams were planned to be allocated for the implementation of the program, but subsequently, the funds were transferred to the government's reserve fund.

The decision drew criticism from members of the literary community, who pointed to the program's importance in promoting Armenian literature abroad and raising the international profile of Armenian authors.

<https://azg.am/analytics/գրականություն-օկուպացումը-արայիկ-հար/>

The decision to provide state support for the documentary film "Mel," which focuses on the story of transgender weightlifter Meline Daluzyan, sparked further public discussion.

In 2019, the project received funding through a competition held by the National Cinema Center of Armenia. According to the Ministry of Culture, the amount of state support was about 20 million drams, which corresponded to approximately 14 percent of the film's total budget.

<https://168.am/2019/10/31/1197091.html>

The decision sparked mixed reactions in society. Critics have pointed out that the state finds funds to finance such projects, while a number of programs aimed at promoting Armenian cultural heritage have subsequently been cut or suspended.

Collectively, these initiatives were perceived by a significant part of society as an attempt to reassess the role of the national-state component in the education system.

Almost all the reforms initiated by Harutyunyan and his team faced stiff resistance from the Armenian Apostolic Church, the National Academy of Sciences, the academic community, youth organizations, and representatives of patriotic circles. For many months, protests were held demanding his resignation.





However, mass protests, public pressure, and sharp criticism did not lead to a reconsideration of most key initiatives. On the contrary, a significant portion of the processes initiated during Arayik Harutyunyan's tenure as minister continued to develop even after he left office.

The fact that many of these transformations continued under other heads of the department allows us to view them not only as personal initiatives of the minister but also as part of a broader policy pursued by the current government.

Plagiarism, Resignations, and "University Wars"

One of the most contentious areas of Arayik Harutyunyan's tenure was personnel policy in the higher education system, where virtually every high-profile appointment was accompanied by new scandals and public controversy.

In December 2018, the Minister appointed Ruben Hayrapetyan as the Acting Rector of the Armenian State University of Economics. The appointment immediately sparked widespread public outcry due to allegations of plagiarism in the new university rector's doctoral dissertation.

<https://www.armtimes.com/ru/article/167736>

The scandal lasted for several months. In August 2019, after a meeting with the minister, Hayrapetyan resigned.

Commenting on the situation, Arayik Harutyunyan said that the parties had reached a mutual agreement to terminate the appointment, and that the case should serve as confirmation of their commitment to the principles of the rule of law and academic ethics.

However, the very next day, the duties of the Rector were assigned to Professor Diana Galoyan. Some time later, her name was also at the center of a similar scandal. Students and members of the academic community have reported signs of plagiarism in Galoyan's doctoral dissertation and several other academic works.

<https://www.armtimes.com/ru/article/172173>

An equally heated conflict unfolded around Yerevan State University. In February 2019, Arayik Harutyunyan stated that YSU Rector Aram Simonyan was associated with numerous negative phenomena in the higher education system and should, in fact, step down from his position.

Almost simultaneously, law enforcement agencies began investigating the university's activities. Public statements emerged alleging abuses involving approximately 800 million drams. At the same time, the stated amount was mentioned even before the completion of the audit procedures.





In May 2019, Aram Simonyan resigned.

<https://golosarmenii.am/министр-тиражирует-произвол/>

As a result, during Arayik Harutyunyan's first year as minister, several of the country's largest universities were immediately embroiled in high-profile conflicts involving allegations of plagiarism, financial irregularities, and leadership changes.

The scandals surrounding the Armenian State University of Economics and Yerevan State University have become among the most notable episodes in the large-scale transformation of the higher education system initiated after the 2018 change of power.

From Reformist Minister to the Government's "Grey Eminence"

Following Armenia's defeat in the 2020 war, Nikol Pashinyan's government faced a severe crisis of confidence. Against the backdrop of widespread public discontent, the authorities were forced to make personnel changes intended to demonstrate their readiness to renew the team and take political responsibility for what had happened.



Under these circumstances, Arayik Harutyunyan stepped down from his position as Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports. His departure from the ministerial post was linked by many observers not only to the mounting criticism of the reforms he had pursued, but also to the authorities' desire to remove the government's most unpopular figures from the front line ahead of the snap parliamentary elections.

In November 2020, Harutyunyan was appointed as an adviser to the Prime Minister. Formally, it looked like a demotion. Moreover, in Armenian political practice, the position of adviser to the Prime





Minister or President has traditionally been perceived as an honorary one, but not necessarily an influential position, often becoming the final stage in a particular official's political career.

However, in Harutyunyan's case, this period turned out to be only a temporary respite. He served as an advisor for less than a year – from November 2020 to July 2021.

Following the Civil Contract Party's victory in the snap parliamentary elections, his political clout not only failed to diminish but, on the contrary, grew significantly. As early as July 2021, Arayik Harutyunyan was appointed Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

Formally, the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister is the highest-ranking civil servant responsible for the organizational work of the government office. However, in Armenia's political system, this position traditionally offers significantly broader opportunities for influence, as personnel decisions, coordination of government agencies, interaction with regional authorities, and a substantial part of domestic political processes pass through the office.

According to political observers and opposition representatives, many mid- and senior-level appointments within the state system are made through the Prime Minister's Office. In addition, the Prime Minister's Office is involved in coordinating the activities of inspection bodies and facilitates interaction between various government agencies.

<https://armeniatoday.am/politics-ru/811811/>

At the same time, Harutyunyan significantly strengthened his position within the Civil Contract Party. He regularly participates in organizing major party events, coordinating election campaigns, and internal party work.

A number of Armenian media outlets and political commentators also point to the existence within the ruling party of a group of lawmakers and party officials who are commonly regarded as part of Arayik Harutyunyan's political circle. Among the individuals whom various media outlets associate with his immediate political circle are MPs Sarkis Khandanyan, Vahe Gevorgyan, and several other representatives of the ruling team.

Over the years in this position, Harutyunyan has become one of the most influential officials in the country. In expert and political circles, he is often referred to as the chief administrator of the government system and one of Nikol Pashinyan's most trusted officials.

Thus, Arayik Harutyunyan's political transformation after 2020 turned out to be the exact opposite of what many of his critics expected.

His resignation as minister, which initially appeared to be the removal of one of the government's most controversial members from the public political arena, ultimately turned into a transition to a more influential level of state administration.





Thus, while Arayik Harutyunyan, as minister, was the main advocate for controversial reforms in education and science, after 2021, he gradually became one of the key architects of the personnel and administrative hierarchy of the current government.

<https://www.euromedia24.com/index.php/ru/post/58358>

Someone Else's Office, His Own Power: Who Surrounds Arayik Harutyunyan

An analysis of Arayik Harutyunyan's immediate administrative circle leads to an unexpected conclusion. Despite many years of work in the Ministry of Education and having his own political team, after moving to the Prime Minister's Office, he did not form a leadership consisting mainly of former colleagues, party members, or participants in educational reforms.

On the contrary, most leadership positions are held by officials who began their careers long before Nikol Pashinyan's team came to power and retained their positions under various political configurations.

Only a few people from Harutyunyan's immediate circle are directly affiliated with the Civil Contract Party - Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister Lilith Makunts, Press Secretary Nazeli Baghdasaryan, Deputy Chief of Staff Taron Chakhoyan, Head of the Protocol Service Esther Sahakyan, and Assistant to the Prime Minister David Gevorkyan.

Only a few staff members have connections to Harutyunyan's previous activities. The person considered closest to him is Artur Hovsepyan, Deputy Head of the Prime Minister's Office, who studied at YSU's Department of Arabic Studies around the same time as Harutyunyan. After many years of working in the customs system, he became an adviser to the Minister of Education and then Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister.

Former representatives of the education sector also include Prime Minister's Adviser Angela Kzhdryan, who previously worked at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports, as well as Vahram Dumanyan, who, after Harutyunyan's departure, took over the Ministry of Education and was later appointed as Prime Minister's Adviser.

<https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%94%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%8F%D0%BD,%D0%92%D0%B0%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC>

However, these examples are more the exception than the rule. Most of Harutyunyan's deputies are career civil servants. Armenak Khachatryan has been working in the government office since 2015, Zaruhi Matevosyan has been in the public administration system since 2009, and Sarkis Torosyan has held various government positions since 2006.

The only politically active deputy of Harutyunyan is the well-known Taron Chakhoyan, who is often credited with creating a "fake news factory." Unlike the other deputies, he is officially a member of the Civil Contract Party.





Before coming to power, he worked in the IT sector and then became one of the public figures in Pashinyan's political team. Since 2021, he has held the position of Deputy Chief of Staff. It is often through him that the government's political messages are conveyed.

What stands out, however, is not so much the presence of personal ties to Arayik Harutyunyan as the similar educational and professional backgrounds of a significant portion of those around him.

Among the heads of the government office, there is a notable high concentration of graduates from Western educational programs, specialists in international cooperation, and participants in foreign internships. For example, Arthur Hovsepiyan and Zaruhi Matevosyan are graduates of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and Matevosyan also received training through programs of the U.S. Department of State. Sarkis Torosyan underwent professional training in the United States, Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Angela Kzhdryan was educated in the UK and has worked for international foundations and in the non-governmental sector.

Thus, an analysis of the personnel composition of the Prime Minister's Office does not support the widespread view that Arayik Harutyunyan has built an extensive network of appointments based solely on personal loyalty or ties from his time at the Ministry of Education.

However, this does not mean there is no influence.

On the contrary, the collected data suggest a different, significantly more stable model of power.

Having taken over the Prime Minister's Office, Harutyunyan did not undertake a large-scale staff reshuffle. Instead, he relied on the existing government office, retaining a significant number of experienced officials and incorporating only a limited number of people close to him into the system.

This is probably one of the distinctive features of his political style. Unlike many representatives of the new government who sought to replace the government staff with their own appointees, Harutyunyan focused on controlling the existing governance system.

Harutyunyan's activities provide grounds for assessing the role of external actors in personnel decision-making. Put bluntly, U.S. handlers use their agent, Arayik Harutyunyan, to shape the pool of potential appointees and set national priorities.

As a result, he came to command not merely his own political team, but the entire administrative apparatus of the government.

The Western Hand in the Prime Minister's Office





An analysis of the heads of departments within the Prime Minister's Office helps refine the conclusions drawn from an examination of Arayik Harutyunyan's inner circle. While his deputies and advisers are predominantly drawn from the traditional state bureaucracy, a new managerial "stratum" is visibly emerging at the level of individual departments.

Out of the 24 structural units within the Prime Minister's Office, 20 key positions are held by officials who began their careers in the state administration system long before the change of power in 2018. Many have been working in government agencies since the early 2000s, and some since the mid-1990s. This indicates that the Prime Minister's Office has largely maintained personnel continuity, regardless of political changes.

However, alongside the "old guard," representatives of a new generation of managers have also emerged in the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office. Their professional backgrounds are linked less to traditional civil service than to international organizations, think tanks, the non-governmental sector, and communications structures.

One of the most striking examples is Anahit Shirinyan, the Chief of Staff of the Security Council. Before joining the government system, she worked at World Vision Armenia, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), and the British think tank Chatham House. Since 2019, Shirinyan has served as an adviser to the Secretary of the Security Council, and in 2023, she became the head of the Security Council's staff.

A similar professional trajectory can be observed in the career of Manvel Kesishyan, the Head of the Strategic Communications Department in the Prime Minister's Office. Prior to his appointment in 2025, he worked as a Communications Specialist at USAID Armenia and previously had ties to the media sector, collaborating with the TV channels "Shant" and Public Television, as well as with the Chai Khana international multimedia project.

<https://manvelkeshishyan.wordpress.com/>

Gegham Tovmasyan, Head of the Regulatory Impact Assessment Department, warrants particular attention. After working at the Ministry of Economy, he moved to the private sector and the the IDEa Foundation structures, returning to the state system only after the change of government. Notably, Tovmasyan is a graduate of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and has also participated in the European University Institute's Policy Leaders Fellowship program in Florence.

The most unusual career path is that of Sergey Tashchyan, Head of the Social Affairs Department. Before joining the Prime Minister's Office, his professional experience was primarily in the service and telecommunications sectors. However, as early as 2019, he was appointed advisor to the Department of Social Affairs, and within less than five years, he rose to head of the Department.





At the same time, the same pattern emerges here as was previously identified in the analysis of Arayik Harutyunyan's inner circle. Among the heads of departments, there is a notably high concentration of individuals associated with international organizations, Western educational programs, foreign internships, and entities involved in public administration, communications, and public policy.

While the previous section argued that Arayik Harutyunyan had not built a closed network of his own personnel, an examination of department heads reveals a different trend.

A cohort of managers with similar educational and professional backgrounds is gradually taking shape around the Prime Minister's Office, many of whom have ties to international organizations, Western training programs, and public administration projects.

This is not a system of personal loyalty to a particular official, but rather the emergence of a new managerial environment whose members are assuming increasingly prominent positions within the state apparatus.

This personnel transformation appears to be one of the most distinctive features of the executive branch that took shape after 2018.

<https://www.gov.am/ru/staff-structure/>

Media, NGOs, and the Government

Another distinctive feature of Arayik Harutyunyan's entourage is the high concentration of individuals from the media sector, communication structures, and international non-governmental organizations.

While the previous sections highlighted a significant number of graduates from Western educational programs and participants in international projects, a further pattern emerges when examining the heads of individual departments and staff members of the Prime Minister's Office: many of them have experience in journalism, public relations, international foundations, and civil society organizations.

For example, Armen Khachatryan, Head of the Information and Public Relations Department of the Prime Minister's Office, worked as a journalist for the Armenpress news agency for four years before entering public service. After that, he moved to the government administration, where he steadily advanced through the ranks and, in 2020, became the head of a department.

The Prime Minister's Press Secretary, Nazeli Baghdasaryan, also has a media background. Before entering politics, she worked as a TV presenter for the "Tsayg" Television Company and managed "Radio Hay Gyumri" Radio Station, was the founder of Style Media Company, and also actively participated in public initiatives in Gyumri.

Karine Davoyan, Assistant to the Prime Minister, worked at "Alik Media Armenia" from 2019 to 2023 as translator of international news. Previously, her professional activities were associated with several international organizations and programs, including the U.S. Foundation for Democracy and





Development and TACIS.

A combination of media and non-governmental sector experience is also characteristic of Karen Andreasyan, Armenia's Representative on International Legal Matters. Over the years, he has worked for the Yerkir Media and Armenia television channels, implemented projects in journalism and access to information, and collaborated with international organizations such as Article 19, the Open Society Justice Initiative, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as with a number of European programs focused on freedom of information and investigative journalism.

The aforementioned adviser to the Prime Minister, Angela Kzhdryan, also combines experience in the media and the non-governmental sector. Before joining the government system, she worked at the Mediamax media outlet, the IDeA Foundation, and participated in various international programs in the communications and public administration sectors.

A similar professional background can be seen in Lilit Makunts, the Prime Minister's Chief Adviser. Before engaging in active political activities, she worked at the Yerevan Offices of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the U.S. Peace Corps. Like several other members of the Prime Minister's Office, Makunts received her education at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D4%BC%D5%AB%D5%AC%D5%AB%D5%A9_%D5%84%D5%A1%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B6%D6%81





Photo: Lilith Makunts

An examination of the personnel at the Prime Minister's Office reveals another persistent trend. Alongside career civil servants and graduates of international educational programs, individuals with backgrounds in the media, communications, and non-governmental sectors play a prominent role in the administrative system.

As a result, an environment has emerged within the public administration system in which civil service is closely intertwined with experience in the media, the grant-funded sector, international programs, and expert and analytical organizations.

The State as An Event Agency

When assessing the influence of the head of the Prime Minister's Office, it is important to consider not only personnel policy and decision-making processes, but also the financial flows channeled through the government administration.

The Prime Minister's Office is not only a coordinating center for the executive branch but also a major administrator of public funds. Each year, it oversees dozens of procurement procedures related both to the government's day-to-day operations and to the organization of state events,



international forums, official ceremonies, and public campaigns.

An examination of procurement contracts reveals another aspect of how the system built around the Prime Minister's Office operates: a circle of contractors that regularly receive large government contracts.

Some of these contracts have clear and technically justifiable grounds, involving, for example, procurement from natural or de facto monopolies, including Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA), Gazprom Armenia, and Haypost.

At the same time, a number of large procurement contracts were identified in sectors where genuine competition exists and a wide range of potential suppliers are available. This applies in particular to event management, production, stage design, set construction, technical support, and public events.

Following Arayik Harutyunyan's appointment as Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister, Background Productions became one of the notable contractors working with the Prime Minister's Office. Since his appointment, the Office has signed contracts with the company worth a total of **AMD 415.3 million**. Three contracts were awarded through single-source procurement, while another was awarded through an expedited open tender.

Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the value of these contracts. In 2022, the total value of contracts between the Office and the company amounted to **AMD 145.8 million**. By 2023, a single contract had already exceeded the entire previous year's total, reaching **AMD 150 million**.

Background Productions also works with other government bodies, not just the Prime Minister's Office. Between 2022 and 2024, the company was awarded 11 public contracts worth more than **AMD 4 billion**. Its largest contracts were associated with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Finance. In 2023, the company received approximately **AMD 1.16 billion** for organizing and servicing the European Weightlifting Championships in Yerevan, while in 2024 it received approximately **AMD 1.8 billion** in connection with the annual meeting of the EBRD Board of Governors.





АНТИКОРРУПЦИОННАЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИНИЦИАТИВА

Պատվիրատու	Պայմանագրի ծածկագիրը	Ընտրված մասնակից	ՀՀՀՀ կոդ կամ համարժեք	Պայմանագրի կնքման ամսաթիվ	Գնման ընթացակարգ	Գնման առարկայի անվանում	Պայմանագրի ընդհանուր գումարը	Պայմանագրի գումարը առկա ֆինանսական միջոցներով	Հաշվարկային տնտեսում
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀՎԱ-ԶՕՄ- ՀՄԱԾԶԲ-19/1-1	Սկի ընդ Սկի Փրոդյաքշն ՍՊԸ	02676654	10/05/2019	ՀՄԱ	Մշակութային միջոցառումների կազմակերպման և սպասարկման ծառայություններ	10998700	10998700	0
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀՎԱ-ՄԱ- ԾԶԲ-22/134	«Բեգրաունդ Փրոդյաքշն» ՍՊԸ	02676654	07/09/2022	ՄԱ	Միջոցառումների հետ կապված ծառայություններ	80183250	21530250	0
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀՎԱ-ՄԱ- ԾԶԲ-22/195	«Բեգրաունդ փրոդյաքշն» ՍՊԸ	02676654	27/12/2022	ՄԱ	Միջոցառումների կազմակերպման ծառայություններ	65616000	65616000	0
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀՎԱ- ՀԲՄԽԾԶԲ-23/3- 1	«Բեգրաունդ Փրոդյաքշն» ՍՊԸ	02676654	30/08/2023	ՀԲՄ	Միջոցառումների կազմակերպման ծառայություններ	150000000	73332125	0
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀՎԱ- ՄԱԾԶԲ-23/152	«Բեգրաունդ Փրոդյաքշն» ՍՊԸ	02676654	20/12/2023	ՄԱ	Մշակութային միջոցառումների կազմակերպման ծառայություններ	119530000	119530000	0

The founder and director of the company is producer Vazgen Poghosyan.

<https://anma.am/academy/%D5%A1%D5%BE%D5%A5%D5%AC%D5%AB%D5%B6/%D5%BE%D5%A1%D5%A2%D5%A3%D5%A5%D5%B6-%D5%BA%D5%B8%D5%B2%D5%B8%D5%BD%D5%B5%D5%A1%D5%B6>

His biography reveals a consistent involvement in the organization of major state and social events. Over the years, he worked at Armenia's Public Television, served as executive producer for Eurovision and Junior Eurovision, and took part in organizing major events, including commemorations marking the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, Pope Francis's visit to Armenia, the Francophonie Summit, the Armenian Summit of Minds, and other high-profile occasions. From December 2021 to February 2022, Poghosyan served as Assistant to the President of Armenia for Presidential Initiatives and Activities.

<https://hayeli.am/?p=713430&l=am>





According to state registry records, however, the majority stake in the company - 81% - **belongs** not to Poghosyan, but to an individual named Marine Stepanyan.

ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ

ՀՀ կադաստրային

Դրական շահառուների վերաբերյալ հայտարարագիր

Կադաստրային հաշվառման տվյալներ / 14.04.2023

ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ	Հայտարարագրող
Սեփականատեր	ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ
Սեփականատերի անուն	ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ
Սեփականատերի հասցե	ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ
Սեփականատերի փոփոխություն	ՀԱՅԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԲՈՒՄԵՆԱԿԱՆ ՍՊԵՐԿՈՄՊԱՆԻ

Դրական շահառուներ	Դրական շահառուներ
ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ	ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ
Սեփականատեր	ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ
Սեփականատերի անուն	ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ
Սեփականատերի հասցե	ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ
Սեփականատերի փոփոխություն	ՍԵՓԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՐ

Another major contract awarded by the Prime Minister's Office through single-source procurement was signed with Bridge, for approximately **AMD 35 million**. Although this was a one-off contract for the Prime Minister's Office, the company has been actively securing contracts from government entities since 2022. A total of 31 agreements have been concluded with the company. Bridge's closest working relationship is with Yerevan Municipality: of the 12 contracts signed with the municipality, only one was awarded through an open tender, while the rest were awarded predominantly through single-source procurement. The company also works extensively with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, although competitive tendering is more commonly used there.





The Prime Minister's Office has also worked with Stage Style on event organization. During Harutyunyan's years as Chief of Staff, two contracts were signed with it, totaling **52.1 million drams**. The company has been an active participant in public procurement since 2019, and in most cases, contracts were awarded through single-source procurement or urgent single-source procurement.

Among Stage Style's most notable contracts were the New Year's decorations for Republic Square, commissioned by Yerevan Municipality in 2019 for **AMD 66.7 million**; the decoration of the square's fountain area in 2023 for **AMD 56.4 million**; and the staging and decoration of the Erebuni-Yerevan celebrations in 2024 and 2025, worth AMD **40.1 million** and **AMD 53 million**, respectively.

<https://168.am/2025/11/08/2309305.html>



Bagrat Divanyan, the director and owner of a 56% stake in the company, was previously awarded a certificate by the Prime Minister for his work in organizing and hosting the 7th Pan-Armenian Summer Games. The organizing committee for these games included, among others, Tigran Avinyan and Arayik Harutyunyan, who at that time held the position of head of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure.

Another major player in the state events sector is Factory Production, headed by Rudik Ter-Galstyan. He, too, has links to the media and production industries: he previously served as general producer of Armenia's Public Television and worked at Sharm Holding.

The company began actively participating in public procurement in 2018, securing contracts with Yerevan Municipality, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other government agencies. Of particular note is a grant of approximately **AMD 750.2 million** awarded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport for audiovisual content production. By the time the grant was awarded, Araik Harutyunyan was no longer heading the ministry. It was then led by Vahram Dumanyan, who was subsequently appointed an adviser to the Prime Minister.





Factory Production secured a particularly substantial contract for organizing the opening ceremony of the 8th Summit of the European Political Community, amounting to **1.656 billion drams**. Moreover, it was this company that organized the Citizen Day in 2019 through an urgent single-source procurement.

Following Arayik Harutyunyan's appointment as Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister, the cooperation between the Prime Minister's Office and Factory Production became noticeably more active. During this period, five contracts were concluded with the company, three of which were single-source procurements and two were through open tenders. The total amount of these contracts exceeded **AMD 2.1 billion**.

armeps.am/ppcm/public/contracts

Պայմանագրի կնքման ամսաթիվ:

2007-09-02

2025-06-15

Պայմանագրի մուտքագրման ամսաթիվ:

Լրացրեք, բնութիւն հասկա

Լրացրեք, բնութիւն հասկա

Q

Որոնել

Պատվարկաւոր II	Պայմանագրի ծածկագիր II	Շնորհման մասնակից II	ՀՀՀՀ կողմ համաժողով II	Պայմանագրի կնքման ամսաթիվ II	Մասնակցի ընդհանուր անվանում II	Պայմանագրի գնումը գումար II	Պայմանագրի գումարը անվանում II	Հաշվարկային անվանում II	Պայմանագիր	Հանձնարարչության արժեքը	Ապրանքների մատակարարման հարկային հաշիվ	Եզրակացություն
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ԲԱՅԾԲ-261-1	«Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	23/02/2026	ԲՍ	Միջոցաւորման լաւանքները հետ կապուած ծախսերը կնքման	1656295200	1656295200	0	Բնութեղ (2)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ՅԱՅԾԲ-221-1	«Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	21/10/2022	ՀԱՍ	Միջոցաւորման լաւանքները հետ կապուած ծախսերը կնքման	308904900	308904900	0	Բնութեղ (1)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ԲԱՅԾԲ-243-1	«Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	01/07/2024	ԲՍ	Միջոցաւորման լաւանքները հետ կապուած ծախսերը կնքման	150000000	150000000	0	Բնութեղ (1)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ԲԱՅԾԲ-191-3	<<Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	10/05/2019	ՀԱՍ	Միջոցաւորման լաւանքները հետ կապուած ծախսերը կնքման	275200000	275200000	0	Բնութեղ (1)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ԱՍ-ԾԲ-211/134	«Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	07/12/2021	ԱՍ	Ներկայացուցական ծախսեր	137500000	137500000	0	Բնութեղ (1)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատանքային	ՀՀ-Ա-ԱՍ-ԾԲ-211/106	«Ֆալկոնի Բորոյաճէ» ՍՊԸ	00167818	26/10/2021	ԱՍ	Միջոցաւորման լաւանքները հետ կապուած ծախսերը կնքման	32000000	32000000	0	Բնութեղ (1)	Բնութեղ (0)	Բնութեղ (0)

An analysis of major procurements by the Prime Minister's Office reveals a persistent concentration of public contracts among companies operating in event management, television and stage production, event decoration, and the organization of public events. This is not about a single contractor, but about a group of companies that regularly receive large government contracts from the Prime Minister's Office, the Yerevan Municipality, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Finance, and other agencies. Thus, Harutyunyan has turned the production of “bread and circuses” for the people into a well-oiled operation, while simultaneously depriving them of their national identity, historical memory, and future in the interests of the United States.

At this stage, no direct evidence of these contractors' personal connection to Arayik Harutyunyan has been identified. However, another pattern emerges: a significant portion of major contracts goes to companies from the event, media, and production sectors – essentially, from the same public communication ecosystem that was already evident when analyzing the staff composition of the administration.

In other words, the personnel and procurement patterns within the Prime Minister's Office partially overlap: the same center of power attracts not only managers with experience in international





programs and communications, but also contractors responsible for the state’s public-facing image—events, summits, celebrations, ceremonies, and television content.

Hospitality Providers

While the previous section examined contractors responsible for organizing state events, forums, and public ceremonies, an analysis of the Prime Minister’s Office’s hospitality and representation expenses reveals another group of regular suppliers.

This concerns the organization of meals, catering services for official events, and other hospitality services for which the Prime Minister's Office annually allocates budget funds.

One such supplier is BLIZZARD, a company specializing in catering services and event management. From the end of September 2020 to the present, the Prime Minister's Office has entered into 10 contracts with the company for a total amount of **17.45 million drams**.

The most interesting aspect is the dynamics of cooperation. Initially, the focus was primarily on catering, and the contract amounts were relatively small. However, starting in 2022, the company began to be regularly engaged to provide representation services, and the value of the contracts started to steadily increase. The largest contracts were signed in 2022 and 2024.

Պատվիրատու II	Պայմանագրի թվագրում II	Ընդգրկված մատակարար II	ՀՀՀՀ կոդ II	Պայմանագրի վճարման ամսաթիվ II	Մեկնա ընթացակարգ II	Մեկնա ամսաթիվ II	Պայմանագրի գնումային գումար II	Պայմանագրի գումարը ամբողջությամբ II	Նախնական անձամբ II	Պայմանագիր	Հանձնարարության արժեքը (հազար դրամ)	Ապրանքների մատակարարման հարկերի հաշիվ	Եզրակացություն
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀ վ.ա.վ.ա. 050-24/47	«Բլիզարդ» ՍՊԸ	02577644	29/03/2024	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	8344750	8344750	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	ՀՀ վ.ա.վ.ա. 050-22/124	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	17/08/2022	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	6706000	6706000	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	B8421333180	«Բլիզարդ» ՍՊԸ	02577644	19/05/2026	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	649400	649400	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	B3448821117	«Բլիզարդ» ՍՊԸ	02577644	24/02/2026	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	606750	606750	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	B8634595678	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	01/10/2024	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	383000	383000	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	B1252835566	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	31/03/2026	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	249400	249400	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	B5175469210	«Բլիզարդ» ՍՊԸ	02577644	12/09/2024	ՍՍ	Ներկայացվածքային ծառայություններ	169600	169600	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	C2096510236	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	21/01/2021	ՍՍ	Սենյիկի սպասարկման ծառայություններ	155400	155400	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	C9685863082	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	18/05/2021	ՍՍ	Սենյիկի սպասարկման ծառայություններ	110900	110900	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾
ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմ	C7294866682	Բլիզարդ ՍՊԸ	02577644	25/09/2020	ՊՍՍ	Միջոցառումների հետ կապված ծառայություններ	75000	75000	0	Բնակ (1) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾	Բնակ (0) ▾

Another regular contractor for the Prime Minister’s Office is Father and Son Yeremyans, a company headed by David Yeremyan, whom the Armenian media have dubbed “a favoured oligarch,” meaning one of the restaurant industry figures considered closest to the current authorities in Armenia.

While in the initial years following the change of power, the collaboration between the Prime Minister's Office and the company was sporadic, its intensity notably increased after Arayik Harutyunyan was appointed as the head of the Office.





In total, **25 contracts** for the provision of representation services have been concluded with the company, amounting to over **10.1 million drams**. In 2026 alone, the Prime Minister's Office has already signed six contracts with her, totaling over **2.17 million drams**.

For comparison, before Harutyunyan's appointment, the scope of cooperation was significantly more modest: in 2018, one contract was concluded for approximately **1.75 million drams**, in 2019 – one contract for up to **1.7 million drams**, and in 2020 – one contract for a token amount of about **17,000 drams**.

Contracts for catering and hospitality services are not, in themselves, unusual for the Prime Minister's Office. However, a notable trend is the consistent concentration of orders among a limited group of contractors, with collaboration with them significantly intensifying precisely after Arayik Harutyunyan assumed the role of Chief of Staff.

Foreign Lawyers Representing the State at a Cost of Millions of Dollars

While previous procurements were related to event organization, representation expenses, and supporting the government's public activities, contracts for legal support in international litigation constitute a separate category.

These are no longer contracts worth millions of drams, but multimillion-dollar commitments in foreign currency related to the defence of the Republic of Armenia's interests before international courts and arbitral tribunals.

One of the firms engaged by the Armenian government was the international law firm Eversheds Sutherland LLP, which was retained to represent Armenia before Spanish courts. The contract, valued at AMD 18.45 million, relates to a dispute arising from the construction of the North–South Highway and concerns proceedings between Armenia's Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and the Spanish company Corsán-Corviam Construcción S.A.

Why do Harutyunyan and his bosses need the North–South project if they are promoting the West–East corridor in the interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan?

Considerably larger expenses, however, are associated with the cooperation of Prime Minister's Office with the US-based international law firm Foley Hoag LLP, which specialises in investment arbitration.

Since 2021, the firm has represented the Republic of Armenia in several major international disputes. In June 2021, Foley Hoag was retained to handle the case of Sanitek S.à r.l. and Others v. Republic of Armenia before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). The fixed fee amounted to USD 1.15 million.

In 2025, a new contract was concluded with Foley Hoag LLP to represent Armenia in Liormand Holdings Limited, Samvel Karapetyan and Others v. Republic of Armenia, a case before the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (SCC).

The proceedings concern claims brought under the Energy Charter Treaty and relate to the dispute





surrounding Electric Networks of Armenia. The maximum value of the legal services contract may reach USD 3.25 million, depending on the duration and stage of the arbitration proceedings.

Thus, the known contracts between the Prime Minister's Office and Foley Hoag LLP already total more than USD 4.4 million, and the final amount could be higher once potential additional costs are taken into account.

No direct evidence has been identified of any affiliations between the international law firms and representatives of the Armenian authorities. Nevertheless, another trend is noteworthy: the Prime Minister's Office is gradually becoming a center for managing not only domestic administrative processes but also costly international legal disputes, with legal representation fees now running into millions of dollars rather than millions of drams.

Power and Money: What Happened to Arayik Harutyunyan's Finances After 2018

An analysis of personnel policy, procurement, and the network of contractors provides insight into the extent of the influence Arayik Harutyunyan has acquired since moving to the Prime Minister's Office.

However, any examination of a public official's career raises another important question: how has their personal financial position changed over the years in office?

To answer this question, Arayik Harutyunyan's asset and income declarations were examined for the entire period he held public office.

In 2018, following his appointment as Armenia's Minister of Education and Science, his total income amounted to AMD 7.7 million. The main sources of income were his salary and loan proceeds. At the end of the year, his monetary assets amounted to approximately AMD 1.4 million in bank accounts and AMD 230,000 in cash.

In the following years, the official's income continued to grow. In 2019, it reached 17 million drams, and in 2020, it increased to 20.9 million drams. At the same time, savings also grew: if at the end of 2018 there were 1.43 million drams in the accounts, by the end of 2020 this figure had reached 11.4 million drams.

Significant changes were recorded in 2021. According to the declaration, Harutyunyan obtained a mortgage loan of 28.1 million drams from Armeconombank OJSC to purchase an apartment. As of the end of the year, the outstanding loan balance stood at AMD 27.99 million. That same year, his asset declaration also recorded financial dealings with Jermuk Group CJSC amounting to AMD 7.22 million. The nature of this transaction is not disclosed in the documents.





Particular attention should be paid to changes in the official's financial position over time. According to the declarations, in the first years after coming to power, Arayik Harutyunyan did not declare any real estate or vehicles. The main result of this period was the accumulation of cash.

The first real estate acquisition was recorded on August 10, 2022, when Harutyunyan purchased a plot of land in the Nairi community of the Kotayk region, valued at 8.32 million drams.

In 2024, the property portfolio continued to expand. In March, a land plot was acquired in the Ijevan community of Tavush Region for AMD 1.21 million, and on December 3, 2024, an apartment in Yerevan was purchased from Jermuk Group CJSC for AMD 36.32 million.

Thus, by the end of 2024, Arayik Harutyunyan was the sole owner of three properties with a total value exceeding 45 million drams.

By the end of 2024, the official's total income amounted to 26.77 million drams. The main source of income remained the salary of the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister, which amounted to 23.8 million drams. An additional 2.96 million drams were received from the Ministry of Finance as part of the mortgage income tax refund program.

At the end of 2024, Harutyunyan's bank accounts held 11.51 million drams, with cash amounting to 90,000 drams. The outstanding mortgage debt amounted to AMD 27.42 million. During the year, approximately AMD 3.7 million was allocated to repay loan obligations.

Of particular interest is the connection between the financial dealings with Jermuk Group CJSC, first disclosed in the 2021 declaration at AMD 7.22 million, and the subsequent purchase of an apartment from the same company in 2024 for more than AMD 36 million. This obligation is no longer present in the 2024 declaration.

Additionally, the 2024 declaration shows a one-time expense of AMD 5.46 million, the purpose of which is not disclosed in the published documents.

Thus, during his time in public office, Arayik Harutyunyan progressed from being an official who did not declare his own real estate to becoming the owner of several properties. At the same time, there was a steady increase in his official income, monetary savings, and property assets.

<https://168.am/2019/04/06/1105261.html>

<https://armlur.am/1179317/>

<https://oragir.news/hy/material/2025/07/23/164109>

<https://168.am/2025/06/11/2228434.html>





Television Advertising, the State, and the Harutyunyan Family

The growth of Arayik Harutyunyan's political influence after 2021 was accompanied not only by changes in his own financial position. As his standing within the state system strengthened, questions concerning the activities of his inner circle and relatives increasingly surfaced in the public domain.

The most prominent case in this context concerned the television advertising market, where the Harutyunyan name became linked to one of the key entities established with state involvement.



Photo: Arman and Arayik Harutyunyans

Public attention was drawn to the activities of Media House Armenia, a company established in 2020 amid a major restructuring of the television advertising market.

It was during this period that Public Television was granted the right to carry commercial advertising and simultaneously became a co-owner of a new entity established to centralize the sale of television advertising time. According to publicly available sources, 50% of the company is owned by Public Television, while the remaining 50% belongs to a private market participant.

Particular attention was drawn to the fact that Armen Harutyunyan, the brother of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, has served as the company's chief financial officer since its establishment.

Arman Harutyunyan himself insists that he joined the company only after it had been established and had no involvement in decisions concerning its creation, ownership structure, or the allocation of shares between its owners.





Nevertheless, this arrangement inevitably raised questions within professional and media circles. The company effectively became one of the key operators in the television advertising market, while one of its senior positions was held by a close relative of one of the country's most influential officials.

According to data provided by Public Television to Media.am, over three years, the TV channel received 1.361 billion drams from commercial advertising, including VAT:

- 2020 - AMD 154.2 million;
- 2021 – AMD 517.8 million;
- 2022 – AMD 689 million.

At the same time, Arman Harutyunyan was actively involved in social and political life. Since 2018, he has been a member of the My Step Faction in the Yerevan Council of Elders and headed the Outdoor Advertising Council public organization.

According to the declaration submitted to the Corruption Prevention Commission, his primary place of employment is Media House Armenia LLC, from which he reported an annual income of more than AMD 9 million.

The family's social circle is of additional interest. Arman Harutyunyan's wife, Nina Shahbazyan, works at ArmEconobank, which is owned by the family of Khachatur Sukiasyan, a parliamentarian from the ruling Civil Contract Party, where she holds a leadership position.

Formally, none of the listed facts indicate a violation of the law. However, the combination of several circumstances – the state's involvement in the advertising operator, the employment of the brother of one of the country's most influential officials in the company's management, and the presence of representatives from the ruling team in related entities – created a situation that inevitably attracted the attention of journalists and became the subject of discussions about a possible conflict of interest.

The Armenian political context makes this case particularly sensitive. Before 2018, the television advertising market was traditionally associated with PanArmenian Media Group, which public opinion linked to the family of former President Serzh Sargsyan through his son-in-law, Mikael Minasyan. Following the change of power, the previous system of influence was dismantled, but questions about the relationship between politics, the media, and the advertising market persisted under the new government.

<https://civilnet.am/hy/news/746498>

In Lieu of a Conclusion

This investigation is about power as much as it is about corruption.





The analysis does not support the portrayal of Arayik Harutyunyan as an incidental political figure or a public official who rose to power by chance. On the contrary, it depicts a man who has steadily worked his way towards the center of decision-making over many years and who now occupies one of the key positions in the country's governing system.

Perhaps the greatest mistake his critics made was underestimating Arayik Harutyunyan.

He is not merely part of the system, but one of those who have helped shape Armenia's current model of governance, its personnel policies, and its political agenda.

And if the story of Arayik Harutyunyan teaches us anything, it is above all that real power is not always exercised in plain sight.





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