

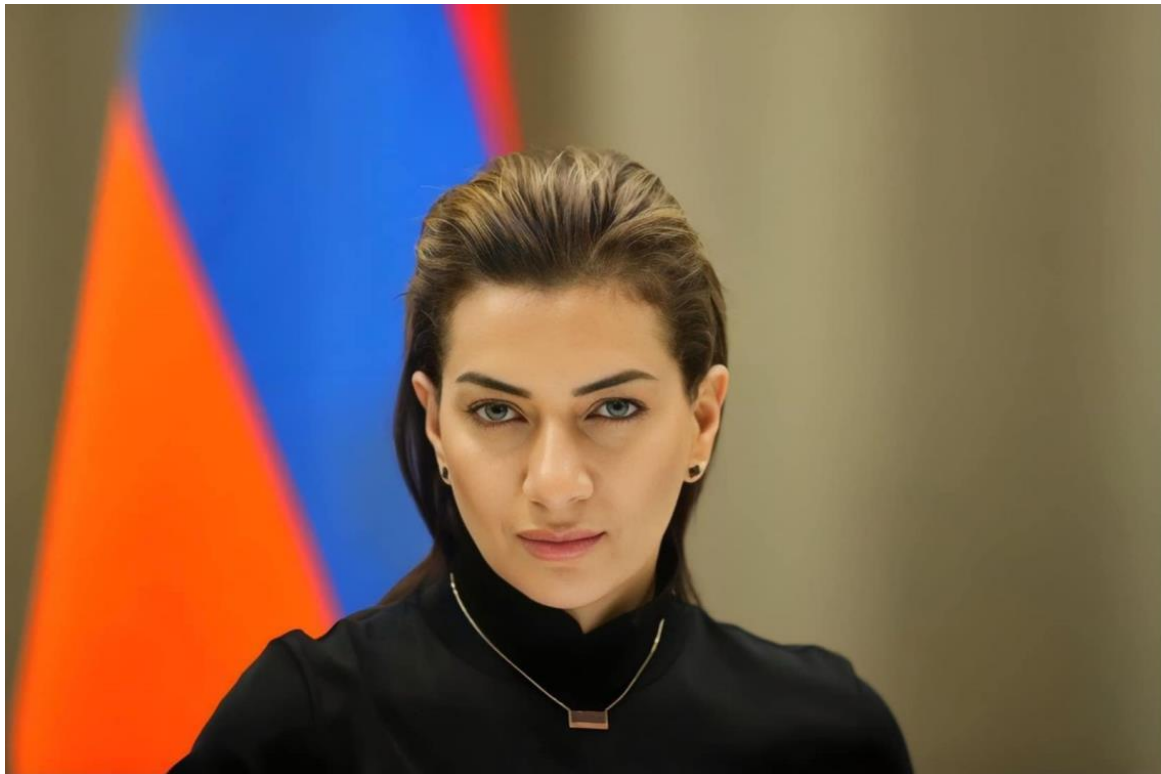


**ANTICORRUPTI
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NATIONAL
INITIATIVE**

**AN INVESTIGATION BY THE ANTI-CORRUPTION
NATIONAL INITIATIVE (ANI)**

ANNA HAKOBYAN: PASHINYAN'S LIGHTNING ROD

Subject: ANNA HAKOBYAN





This ANI investigation looks at the activities of Anna Hakobyan, a woman with no formal state position who has nonetheless held steady, many-layered influence over political, financial and public life in the Republic of Armenia for years.

Anna Hakobyan is the former common-law wife of Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Their relationship was never formalized, and neither was her role in government.

Therein lies the central paradox. With no official status, she remained for several years one of the most visible and divisive figures in the country.

Wherever Hakobyan appeared, a scandal almost always followed. Sharp public statements. Initiatives with plenty of resources and little transparency. Conduct that kept going beyond the limits of any informal role.

During the 44-day war, this pattern showed itself most clearly. As the fighting went on, the Erato detachment appeared, with public talk about the front followed by doubts about its real participation, its conditions and how it was put together. Around the same time, there were reports that she had been present at command posts, episodes that the military themselves considered questionable.

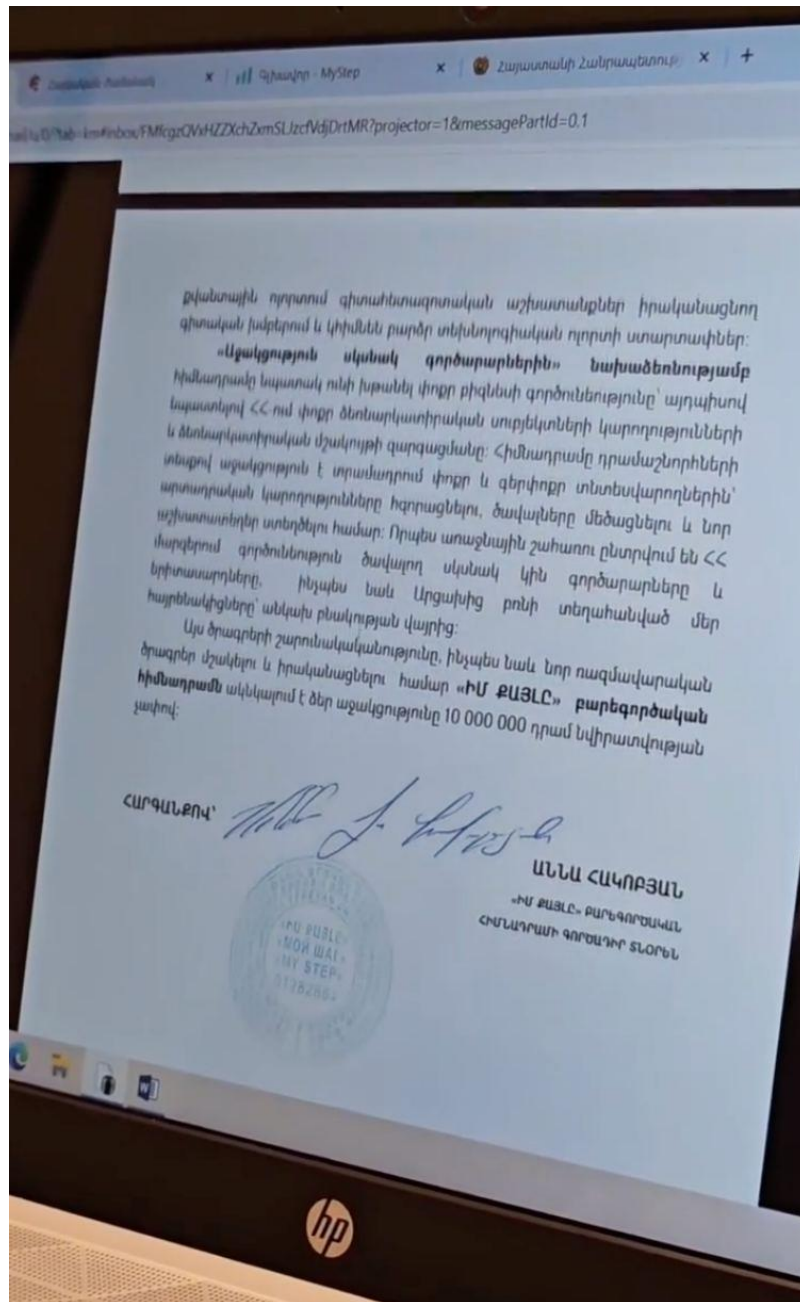
After the war, the episodes turned into a system.

The My Step Foundation, with a turnover in the millions, closed-door dinners and unanswered questions about where the money came from. Stories about "letters of expectation" sent to businesses, which, according to several publications, came with inspections and pressure. https://t.me/srbazan_payqar/1819

Her public statements only made things worse.

In April 2023, Hakobyan spoke of "11,000 deserters" in the Armenian army during the 44-day war, a figure previously voiced by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. Official data from the Prosecutor's Office tell a different story: only a few dozen cases ever reached the courts. Her claim was never backed up and looked all the more doubtful because it echoed Baku's rhetoric. <https://fip.am/ru/37731>





Her remarks about diplomats and opponents caused just as much uproar. She publicly described them as people "with big complexes," "insecure" and "without a clear idea." A few days later the post was deleted, and the Foreign Ministry declined to comment. <https://am.sputniknews.ru/20250225/mid-armenii-otkazalsya-kommentirovat-oskorbitelnye-epitety-anny-akopyan-v-adres-diplomatov-86100899.html>

Even at moments of national tragedy, her actions drew bewilderment instead of sympathy.





In December 2020, she organized New Year events for the children of Artsakh and announced 4,750 gifts from the foundation. The number matched an earlier estimate of the war dead, a coincidence that provoked an angry reaction.

In the summer of 2023, shortly before the exodus of Armenians from Artsakh, Hakobyan posted a photo with a book by Albert Einstein and musings about "the properties of space and time." Her T-shirt read: "A bundle of belongings isn't the only thing a refugee brings with them." Later, the Azerbaijani side published a photo of a captured Armenian reservist, and the same book lay on the table next to him.

These episodes came to symbolize a gap between public gestures and reality that could no longer be ignored.

Then came a trip to Africa on the anniversary of the war, which caused a separate public outcry.

The "Learning Is Trendy" initiative ran on state budget money, with classified spending and little public response.

Meanwhile, another layer was taking shape: an inner circle where personal ties kept crossing paths with institutional decisions.

Taken together, this adds up to a stable model: influence without a post, involvement without accountability, presence without formal status.

Pashinyan's lightning rod: a figure who absorbs public irritation while the real decisions stay out of sight.

This ANI investigation is about that unofficial role, where it came from, how it works and what it has led to. The focus is on her actual influence, whatever her status, in politics, finance, public rhetoric and the military events of recent years.

A divorce changes her formal status. It does not answer the main question of whether she is a chance figure or part of a system of influence built on purpose.





Anna Hakobyan: from media figure to center of informal influence

A journalist by training, Anna Hakobyan is the former wife of Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. She graduated from the journalism department of Yerevan State University (YSU) in 2000 and began working in the media while still a student. She met Pashinyan in those same years, and from the late 1990s they lived together without registering their marriage.

Her professional life is closely tied to the newspaper Haykakan Zhamanak. After the events of March 1, 2008, Hakobyan took charge of the paper, and in 2012 she became its editor-in-chief again. <https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/29228141.html>

Until 2018, she remained a media figure in opposition circles and held no government posts. After the "Velvet Revolution," things changed: without any formal status, Hakobyan took on the de facto duties of first lady and regularly appeared in the public and political spotlight.

After that, the role began to grow. She accompanied the prime minister on foreign trips, took part in meetings and performed ceremonial duties, all while staying outside any institutional framework.

Over time, her media presence turned into informal influence that went well beyond a public or symbolic role.

In February 2026, Hakobyan announced her divorce from Nikol Pashinyan after almost thirty years together and moved out of the government residence.





Family and entourage: ties and doubts

There is almost no public information about Anna Hakobyan's father.

Her mother, Kima Mkrtchyan, plays a far more visible role. She owns 70% of Dareskizb, the publisher of Haykakan Zhamanak. Hakobyan herself transferred this stake to her in 2014. The rest of the shares are split between Hayk Gevorgyan, a friend of Pashinyan and a former MP, and Petros Makeyan, leader of the Democratic Homeland party. <https://armenia.mom-gmr.org/en/owners/individual-owners/owner/kima-mkrtchyan-114751/> <https://hetq.am/en/article/143813>

The Nikan publishing house follows the same pattern: 80% of it is also registered in Mkrtchyan's name, although the company originally belonged to Hakobyan.

After 2018, when her son Hrachya Hakobyan became an MP, Mkrtchyan began filing asset declarations. Yet her declarations for 2019–2020 contain no information about her stakes in Dareskizb and Nikan.

Anna Hakobyan's brother, Hrachya Hakobyan, went from acting to parliament while speaking out against nepotism. During his time in the National Assembly, his property holdings changed noticeably: from one plot of land and two apartments to eight properties.



His name also came up in the scandal over the smuggling of 2,700 boxes of cigarettes with Armenian excise stamps, seized at Krasnodar airport in 2020. Former ambassador Mikayel Minasyan claimed that the cargo had been flown on an Emergency Situations Ministry plane and that Hrachya Hakobyan had coordinated the operation. He and Anna





Hakobyan denied the accusations and filed a defamation lawsuit. <https://a1plus.am/ru/article/370056>

The lawmaker's lifestyle has also drawn comment. After the 44-day war he vacationed on the Greek islands with the owner of a betting company, and in 2022 he was spotted at a luxury hotel in San Diego where a room cost between 220,000 drams (about \$606) and 400,000 drams (about \$1,100) a night. <https://168.am/2023/02/10/1831599.html>

Asset declarations: a sharp financial turn

Anna Hakobyan's declarations for 2018–2024 show an abrupt break in her financial model, with no steady growth in between.

From 2018 to 2023, her income stayed at 3–15 million drams (about \$8,300–41,000) a year and came mainly from salary and rent. By 2022–2023 she had almost no financial cushion: no savings, zero account balances, no cash.

In 2024, the picture changed overnight.

Her annual income reached 105.9 million drams (about \$292,000), more than 30 times the earlier level. The main sources were:

- the sale of an apartment in Shengavit: 45.5 million drams (about \$125,000)
- a mortgage loan from Ameriabank: 44.4 million drams (about \$122,000)
- her salary at the My Step Foundation: 13.2 million drams (about \$36,000)
- an income tax refund

That year, assets appeared that had not been there before: \$40,000 and 10 million drams (about \$28,000) in bank deposits, cash of \$8,500 and 650,000 drams (about \$1,800), and 3.6 million drams (about \$9,900) in account balances.

One deal stands out, with Ijevanatun CJSC: Hakobyan made a loan of 49.3 million drams (about \$136,000) for the purchase of an apartment in a complex under construction. The same amount appears in Nikol Pashinyan's declaration, which points to their joint involvement in the transaction.

Within a single year, she moved from living on current income to actively managing capital, with investments, deposits and large financial operations. <https://factor.am/897871.html>





Anna Hakobyan and the 44-day war: her role and its contradictions

From the first days of the 44-day war, Anna Hakobyan was highly visible in the media, presenting herself as a participant in the events in Artsakh.

As early as October 3, 2020, she said she was in Stepanakert. Material appeared about her visits to bomb shelters, along with emotional posts about being under shelling and about an inevitable "final victory." A video also circulated showing her in rooms where meetings with the country's top leadership were taking place.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuEqC0YBuPE>

In the days that followed, she kept posting from the combat zone, building an image of direct involvement.

This raised the question of where media presence ended and real involvement began.

Media outlets and experts reported that she might have been at command posts and in contact with Samvel Babayan. Babayan himself denied these claims, calling them "fairy tales." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpDoun3d4qg>

There is, however, a directly opposite account. Former Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces Movses Hakobyan said he personally saw Anna Hakobyan at a command post next to Samvel Babayan. In his account, she was watching the course of the fighting, after which he demanded that she leave the room, and soon afterward he himself was recalled to Yerevan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUC0nkUccKQ>

<https://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2020/11/19/%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%81-%D0%90%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%8F%D0%BD-%D0%90%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%90%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%8F%D0%BD/2404500>

The public record therefore holds an outright contradiction: a complete denial that she was ever inside military facilities, and a senior officer's testimony that he saw her there in person.

Even if the second version is true, it means a civilian was inside a restricted area in wartime. That raises the matter of where the line between civilian and military affairs runs, and who crosses it and on what grounds.

Erato: frontline rhetoric and rear-area reality

At the height of the 44-day war, Anna Hakobyan announced the creation of a women's volunteer detachment called Erato and said she intended to go to the line of contact and





take part in the fighting. Volunteers were recruited through a public appeal, and the selection took place at the office of the My Step Foundation.



Dozens of women answered the call, but the detachment's full roster was never disclosed. Known members included MP Meri Galstyan, Arevik Petrosyan, Arsine Minasyan and others.

On October 26, 2020, Hakobyan said: "Starting tomorrow, a women's detachment of 13 people, including me, will begin military training, and in a few days we will go to defend the borders of our homeland."

In its reply, the Defense Ministry said the detachment had been made part of the Armed Forces and was stationed near Hartashen and Kornidzor.
<https://168.am/2023/06/12/1886534.html>

This is where the accounts part ways.

The available video footage and testimony do not confirm that the detachment was ever at the front line. These sources place Erato in the area of Goris and Kornidzor, outside the zone of direct combat. The "frontline" photos were reportedly taken in the basement of an apartment building.





The gap between the declared role and the actual conditions was never clearly explained.

The way the detachment was formed also left people with doubts.

Erato member Arsine Minasyan said on the AntiFake podcast: "...they didn't even check my passport... The same day they gave me a weapon, a helmet and a bulletproof vest." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-y9vOTVGgh0>

She said the group was random and mixed, "a musician, a journalist, an MP and even a woman of low social responsibility," and that some of its members were "illiterate." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hIM7QMGEPY>

Minasyan later added: "We were deceived at the highest level of the state... we lost precious time." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxzAyRITEUk>

Asked directly whether the detachment had been in Artsakh, she answered: "No."

What we see is a mismatch between a combat role announced in public and the real nature of the involvement, with no transparent selection, no clear structure and no confirmed presence at the front.

Who is Gayane: doubts about the members of the detachment

The makeup of the Erato detachment drew scrutiny over the way it was formed and over some of its individual members.

Gayane, a woman who was at Anna Hakobyan's side, was also discussed in public.





A report by 168.am, citing sources in the Armenian community of Abkhazia, said this was a person who, according to those sources, had ties to Turkish businessmen. <https://168.am/2020/11/15/1407105.html>

These contacts were also said to have gone on for a long time.

Even allowing for the unofficial nature of such information, the fact that it surfaced at all caused concern, given that this person was part of a detachment formed in wartime.

No official explanation or confirmation from the competent authorities was ever made public.

The inner circle: friendship as a resource

Anna Hakobyan's ties to a number of public figures come up for discussion again and again. The same motif keeps returning in different cases: closeness to the prime minister's wife is treated both as a personal relationship and as a factor that goes hand in hand with career decisions.





One of the most frequently cited examples is Prosecutor General Anna Vardapetyan, who used to work as Pashinyan's assistant. Her close relationship with Hakobyan, including outside official events, has drawn attention. There is no direct proof of influence, but the regularity of these encounters keeps the doubts alive.

A similar story arose around Court of Cassation judge Naira Hovsepyan. After her son was killed in the 44-day war, disciplinary proceedings against her were dropped, formally because of her severe psychological condition. The decision was discussed in connection with her closeness to Hakobyan. <https://img3.slaq.am/ru/news/podruganny-akopyan-sud-ya-kassacionnogo-suda-naira-ovsepyan-ne-budet-privlechena-k-disciplinarnoj-otvetstvennosti>

Rima Davtyan, director of School No. 189, is also mentioned; the media linked her with a possible appointment as minister. These reports say she grew close to Hakobyan through the structures of the My Step Foundation. <https://armeniatoday.am/politics-ru/1044810/>

The informal circle also includes doctor Gohar Petrosyan, who accompanied Hakobyan on her trip to Africa. Media outlets speculated that she may have helped pay for the trip. <https://www.7or.am/am/news/view/276245/>





Journalist Lusine Barseghyan holds a special place. A former editor-in-chief of Haykakan Zhamanak, she was part of Hakobyan's circle for many years. After 2018, she and her husband Vahagn Tevosyan took up positions in government and close to it. By unofficial accounts, Barseghyan was seen as a link between the media and the country's political leadership.

Across very different fields, from the prosecution service and the courts to education and the media, the same pattern shows up: personal ties crossing paths with institutional processes. It is never formally recorded, yet it keeps repeating itself.

The structure of the My Step Foundation: a formal model and informal ties

Since March 2024, Anna Hakobyan has been executive director of the My Step Foundation, holding day-to-day management and control of its current work in her own hands.

This is the main point of control. To understand how the foundation works, it helps to look at its structure, which is classic on paper but has a few peculiar features.

The highest body is the Board of Trustees, which sets the strategy. It is chaired by former deputy speaker of parliament Lena Nazaryan. Its members include Vahagn Tevosyan, jazz musician Vahagn Hayrapetyan, doctor Vahan Vardapetyan and Araks Simidyan, the sister of former Environment Minister Hakob Simidyan.

At this level, the structure looks standard. The details come further down.

The foundation's presence abroad deserves a closer look. Its US branch is registered at Araks Simidyan's home address in Los Angeles, in the North Hollywood area. Media reports say Simidyan is close to Anna Hakobyan.

Since 2024, a subsidiary of the Public Television of Armenia has also been registered at the same address. Within this company, Araks Simidyan holds several posts at once: executive director, financial director and secretary, despite having no relevant experience.

This setup points to a possible conflict of interest: an entity linked to state television and funded from the budget overlaps with a private address and with the foundation's circle.

Until March 2024, Hakobyan herself chaired the Board of Trustees, after which she moved on to running the foundation directly.





So while the structure is standard on paper, its main functions and control are concentrated in a narrow circle that overlaps with personal ties.

Source: <https://hetq.am/hy/article/168952>

Where the My Step Foundation gets its money

The My Step Foundation's financial reports for 2019–2024 reveal more than a breakdown of income. They show an unstable and dependent funding model.

On paper there are three sources: budget funds and donations from companies and from individuals. The "donations" in the reports, though, are mostly in-kind aid (equipment, clothing) and play a minor part.

State funding appears only once in the whole period, in 2020, in the amount of 94 million drams (about \$259,000). The foundation's report says the money went to support students abroad.

The bulk of the money comes from companies. And here is how the numbers moved:

- 2019: 987 million drams (about \$2.7 million)
- 2020: 2.38 billion drams (about \$6.6 million)
- 2021: 200 million drams (about \$551,000)
- 2022: 72 million drams (about \$198,000)
- 2023: 221 million drams (about \$609,000)
- 2024: 1 billion drams (about \$2.8 million)

After the peak in 2020 came a sharp drop of almost 30 times, then a slow recovery and new growth.

Money from individuals looks smaller in scale and even less stable:

- 2019: 867 million drams (about \$2.4 million)
- 2020: 0
- 2021: 94 million drams (about \$259,000)
- 2022: 203 million drams (about \$559,000)
- 2023: 182 million drams (about \$502,000)
- 2024: 241 million drams (about \$664,000)





A complete zero in 2020 gives way to jumps that follow no clear logic.

Overall, companies are the main source, and the foundation's finances swing sharply: from inflows in the billions to a many-fold drop and back again.

This does not look like a stable charitable base. It looks more like dependence on large but irregular donors.

One dram in three has no name: the hidden side of My Step

An analysis of the My Step Foundation's donor lists for 2018–2025 shows a consistent feature: a large share of the biggest donations comes from anonymous donors.

These are not isolated cases. They form a system. Anonymous transfers regularly range from 10–50 million drams (about \$28,000–138,000), and larger sums also appear, up to 200 million drams (about \$551,000).

In total, over this period the foundation raised 1.93 billion drams (about \$5.3 million), \$3.06 million, 4.7 million rubles, 16,700 euros and 10,000 Canadian dollars. Of this, 52 anonymous donors accounted for 598.3 million drams (about \$1.6 million) and \$1.16 million.

In other words, almost one dram in three at the foundation is anonymous.

The foundation explains this by the donor's right to confidentiality. But at these volumes and with this regularity, anonymity is no longer an exception. It is a large part of the financial model.

The donor lists year by year confirm this trend.

In 2025, alongside companies such as Arsenal, Jermuk Group, JFT, Mobile Center, the Akhtala Mining and Processing Combine and others, anonymous transfers of 10–20 million drams (about \$28,000–55,000) show up regularly.

The picture is the same in 2023–2024: the lists include large companies, among them the Proshyan Brandy Factory, Arsenal, Shinvector, Karolina International, ML Mining, Pharmatech, Ardshinbank, Teghout CJSC and Yerevan Beer, and next to them dozens of anonymous donations ranging from several million drams to \$250,000.

In 2018–2022 the structure stays the same. Alongside well-known donors, Christine Simone (\$1 million), George Pagoumian (up to \$400,000), Ara Abrahamyan (up to \$200,000), Ameriabank, Electric Networks of Armenia and Alex Holding, a large share of the money arrives as anonymous transfers: \$500,000, \$300,000, 200 million drams





(about \$551,000) and numerous contributions of 10–20 million drams (about \$28,000–55,000).

The result is a stable pattern: throughout these years, anonymous donors hold a place comparable to that of the largest corporate and private benefactors.

Combined with the involvement of big business, this means that a large part of the foundation's cash flows remains opaque. <https://old.mystep.foundation/ru/donors/> <https://mystep.foundation/hy/donors/>

Some Armenian media have raised concerns that anonymous donations could be used for opaque financial operations, including possible money laundering. <https://old.mystep.foundation/ru/donors/> <https://mystep.foundation/hy/donors/>

Major donors: connections, courts and shadows of corruption

The My Step Foundation's donors include companies with very different, and in some cases sensitive, lines of business. Besides big business, the list takes in entities caught up in court cases and controversial episodes.

Arsenal LLC, for example, transferred 20 million drams (about \$55,000) to the foundation. In 2019 the company received import privileges for goods for the production of weapons and ammunition. It was founded in 2017, and its beneficial owners include Stanislav Bekov and Karina and Babken Ghazaryan.

JFT LLC, which gave 10 million drams (about \$28,000), is involved in litigation, including an appeal to the Constitutional Court; those proceedings were suspended and then resumed in 2025.

The Sukiasyan Charitable Foundation, linked to the family that owns the SIL Concern, is also among the donors, with 10 million drams (about \$28,000).

Among the large taxpayers are Mobile Center, which gave 10 million drams (about \$28,000) and ranks first by the amount of taxes paid, and the Etchmiadzin Instrument-Making Plant, which gave 250,000 drams (about \$689).

Armswissbank, which gave 1 million drams (about \$2,800), stands apart. Its beneficial owner is businessman Vardan Sirmakes. The media have reported that the investments he promised in Shirak Province were only partly carried out and that there were complaints about working conditions at the Sasstex factory.

The donor list also includes Jermuk Group with 10 million drams (about \$28,000), Significant with 2 million drams (about \$5,500) and Alias 64 LLC, which could not be





found in the State Register of Legal Entities. There is, however, a company with a similar name, Alliance 64, which the media have previously mentioned in connection with controversial episodes.

The Akhtala Mining and Processing Combine CJSC transferred 10 million drams (about \$28,000) to the foundation. In 2025 the company found itself at the center of a corruption scandal: according to the Anti-Corruption Committee, its director paid a bribe to an inspector through an intermediary to have water samples from the Debed River falsified.

So the foundation's donors include some of the largest taxpayers as well as companies involved in court proceedings and corruption cases. This adds to the doubts about the structure and origin of its financial flows.

Millions coming in, questions going out

Despite large inflows in 2024, the My Step Foundation ended the year with a financial loss. Its accounts put the loss at 1.62 million drams (about \$4,200), and the foundation paid about 1.2 million drams (about \$3,300) in profit tax. Its income did not cover its expenses.

In other words, even with regular funding, the foundation has shown poor financial efficiency.

According to the newspaper Hraparak, this happens against a steady stream of charity events, including dinners with tickets costing up to 1 million drams (about \$2,800), which adds to the doubts about how the money is managed.

One example is the program to develop regional cultural centers, launched in 2019–2020.

At first the project included staff training as well as major renovation, upgraded infrastructure and new technical equipment. In 2020, 10 cultural centers were selected, and their staff were taken on visits to modern centers (TUMO, LOFT and others), with an ambitious modernization announced.

In reality, only part of the program was carried out: trainings were held and equipment was handed over. The main element, the major renovation, was frozen or only partly completed.

No public explanation followed. The beneficiaries received no clear answers about what had happened to the project, and in some cases they tried to find funding on their own, without success.





Although the training programs continued until 2022, the project brought no lasting change, which casts doubt on how effectively the foundation's money was used.

"\$4 million": allegations, denials and the legal context

A letter attributed to Zarine Harutyunyan, an assistant to a My Step Foundation project manager, caused a separate stir when it circulated. It claimed that Anna Hakobyan had allegedly taken about \$4 million in donations out of the foundation and that the relevant materials had been sent to the Investigative Committee and Transparency International.

These claims spread through a number of media outlets and Telegram channels. No official confirmation of the allegations was ever presented.

The authorities responded quickly. Armenia's Anti-Corruption Committee said that at the time the information spread, there were no criminal proceedings related to the foundation or to the allegations.

The committee's chairman, Artur Nahapetyan, said that no such materials had reached the agency and that, if they did, a preliminary inquiry could follow, leading to a procedural decision.

As of March 2026, there was no record of criminal cases opened or inquiries carried out into the My Step Foundation by either the Investigative Committee or the Anti-Corruption Committee. Public statements actually denied that any such proceedings existed.

This brings up a legal issue as well. Under election law, once the date of an election is set, charitable activity by participants in the electoral process and by persons and organizations linked to them is prohibited. Which leads to the question of whether this ban could apply to Anna Hakobyan's foundation, since she is still associated with the prime minister in the public eye despite their formal divorce.

So the allegations of embezzling \$4 million remained unconfirmed claims and led to no legal proceedings. Still, the fact that they surfaced, together with the authorities' reaction and the legal restrictions in the run-up to elections, keeps the foundation under close scrutiny. <https://armeniatoday.am/politics-ru/966288/> <https://fip.am/ru/35221>

"Dinner parties" at 1 million drams a seat

Since 2024, the My Step Foundation has been holding charity "dinner parties" with Anna Hakobyan. The events take place twice a year, and a seat costs 1 million drams (about \$2,800).





The first dinner was held on April 14, 2024, at the Armas winery and was billed as support for aspiring women entrepreneurs in the regions. The evening raised 42 million drams (about \$116,000).

The format prompted doubts right away.

The dinner was held behind closed doors, with no media allowed. Information about it appeared only two days later, in a short video with few details about the fundraising.

Media reports put the actual attendance at about 40–45 people. Among them were representatives of big business, their family members and people from the inner circle. Those mentioned included members of Samvel Aleksanyan's family, heads of commercial companies and affiliated persons.



What we have, then, is a closed event with a high entry price, a limited guest list and selective public reporting.

For an event with a declared charitable purpose, this leaves doubts both about how transparent the fundraising was and about how the guest list was drawn up.

Sources: <https://hraparak.am/am/post/bc903574c9a43cd11972d476e9da4369>





The second "dinner party": guests and context

The second charity dinner took place in November 2024 at the Livingston restaurant as part of the "Young Person's Dream" program. In April the money had been presented as support for women entrepreneurs; this time the stated aim was helping start-up entrepreneurs.

According to the foundation, program participants were to receive training in business planning and management, with the prospect of funding to launch or grow a business. Anna Hakobyan also said the amount of support could be increased if good projects came in.

Official figures put attendance at 62 entrepreneurs, who raised 62 million drams (about \$171,000).

Once again, though, the guest list prompted doubts.

Media reports said the guests included people linked to criminal cases and legal disputes.

Among them was Vardan Aleksanyan, director of the Dignisi real estate agency, who had previously been a suspect in a fraud case. Available information shows that a case was opened against him in 2010, he was put on the wanted list, and the damage to 26 victims was estimated at 309,657,000 drams (about \$853,000). The case concerned the sale of land plots near the Musaler memorial without the knowledge of their co-owners.

Also at the event were Dignisi co-founder Karen Anakhasyan and Rafael Khachatryan, deputy director of the Nor Zovk supermarket chain.

As with the first dinner, this was a closed event with a high entry price and a limited guest list. This time, though, the guest list itself stood out, since it included people with a criminal past. <https://www.aravot.am/2024/11/05/1452759/>

The third "dinner party": a closed format and a narrow circle of guests

The third My Step Foundation charity dinner took place on May 28, 2025, at the Ayrik restaurant as part of the program "From the Successful to the Beginner."

From the start, the event was aimed at "established families," with fixed prices: 1 million drams (about \$2,800) for one guest, 1.5 million drams (about \$4,100) for two, 2.5 million drams (about \$6,900) for three and 3.5 million drams (about \$9,600) for four.

Officially, 25 families (53 people) attended. The money was to go to support young families through the "Let's Build Together" project. The foundation did not disclose the





total raised, but judging by the announced prices and the number of guests, it can be estimated at 35–45 million drams (about \$96,000–124,000).



Coverage of the guest list was limited.

The media mentioned several guests, including rapper Super Sako; Nara Kushkyan, the wife of former Health Minister Artem Kushkyan; and Sargis Tarverdyan, owner of the Sarkis Karolina company and brother of politician Yervand Tarverdyan.

One more detail: Sarkis Karolina had previously been fined by the State Revenue Committee, while in the same period its owner was made honorary consul of Sri Lanka.

The third dinner therefore repeated the established model: a closed format, a high entry threshold, no full transparency about the final amount raised and a limited guest list that included people with a mixed business reputation. <http://asekose.am/am/post/anna-hakobyani-hravirac-entriqin-masnakcel-en-nae-qouskyani-kinn-ou-sarkis-karolina-i-sepakanatere>

The fourth "dinner party": secrecy and new doubts about the guests

The fourth My Step Foundation charity dinner took place on November 12, 2025, at the Yasaman restaurant in Sevan. It was attended by 44 representatives of the business community as well as the cultural, social and educational spheres. The price was the same for everyone: 1 million drams (about \$2,800) per person.





The money raised was said to be meant for the "Inspired by Each Other" project, which supports aspiring women entrepreneurs.

Once again, the foundation published neither a full list of guests nor the total amount raised.

Even so, photos from the event spread through the media and social networks, making it possible to identify some of the guests.

Judging by the published material, the guests included the wife and daughter of Arsen Mkrtchyan (they run the "Look, Girls" shop), known publicly as Arsen Yerevansky, whom the media describe as a crime boss.

Some reports also point to the family's informal ties with people close to the current government. Joint photos of Mkrtchyan's family members and the prime minister's daughters circulated publicly and prompted talk about the nature of these contacts.

The fourth dinner therefore followed the same model: a closed format, a fixed high price, no full transparency about the guests or the final amount raised, and a selective guest list that included people with a questionable reputation.

<https://hayastan.news/am/post/52505>





The government's "wallets"? Business, donations and the political context

A number of Armenian media reports discuss so-called "wallets," businessmen and companies that, in the authors' view, may be linked to Anna Hakobyan's circle and help fund the My Step Foundation.

One of the businessmen most often named in this context is Narek Nalbandyan. In the media he appears as the owner of the 88 and Tsiran supermarket chains and several other assets: a hotel in Tsaghkadzor, the Shirak poultry farm and a premium spirits business.

Both Nalbandyan and Anna Hakobyan have publicly denied any connection. Nalbandyan called such claims "ridiculous," and Hakobyan urged people to boycott businesses that are groundlessly linked to her name.

The media also name Samvel Aleksanyan among the possibly affiliated figures. His wife reportedly attends the foundation's events, and a company linked to him transferred 10 million drams (about \$28,000) to the My Step Foundation in 2025.





Reports also mention the Badalyan brothers (the Badalyan Brothers group). According to media claims, money registered as charitable donations may pass through the foundation and then be used to strengthen political influence. As an indirect sign, the reports point to Vahe Badalyan's wife taking part in the foundation's events.

In addition, because of the donations from the Sukiasyan family, representatives of this business group, including an MP and an entrepreneur, are also regularly mentioned among the government's "wallets."

The media keep coming back to the idea of a possible link between big business, charitable money and political influence.

Much of this, however, remains at the level of media reports and interpretations, and the people named have publicly denied it. <https://restmedia.st/british-gambling-money-and-armenias-political-financing-scheme/>

Conclusion: influence outside any status, and without accountability

This story can be broken down into separate episodes: Erato, the loud statements, the foundation and its funding, the closed dinners, a stable circle of connections. Each of them, taken alone, can be explained: emotions in one case, charity in another, a private initiative in a third.

Taken together, though, they stop looking like a string of accidents. The same mechanisms repeat too often: closed formats, a limited circle of participants, opaque funding, and personal ties crossing paths with processes that are supposed to remain institutional.

Over these years, a role has taken shape around Anna Hakobyan that was never tied to any post, or even to an official marriage to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, yet gave her access to resources, people and decisions far beyond private activity.

This leads to a different question: less what exactly happened than what followed from it.

Almost nothing did.

Nothing in the Erato story, where the gap between the declared and the actual role is still there. Nothing in the episodes with public statements that official data never confirmed. Nothing on the questions about the foundation's funding and transparency. Nothing in the cases where personal ties crossed paths with institutional decisions.





A lot has changed now: the divorce, the distancing, the loss of her former status. But none of it answers the main question: if this model already existed and worked for several years, what exactly has changed in it now?

Because systems do not disappear on their own.

In that sense, the main question now sounds different: whether this was a temporary anomaly or an accepted model in which one can take part without a status and wield influence without accountability.

