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**AN INVESTIGATION BY THE ANTI-CORRUPTION
NATIONAL INITIATIVE (AND)
RUBEN RUBINYAN: A RAPID RISE, THE TURKISH
TRACK AND THE PRICE OF
"NORMALIZATION"**

Subject: Ruben Rubinyan





In June 2026, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that the ruling Civil Contract party had nominated 36-year-old Ruben Rubinyan as its candidate for speaker of the ninth National Assembly.

In the eight years since the change of government, Rubinyan has gone from party functionary to one of the leading figures in the country's political leadership. At 28, he was appointed Armenia's deputy foreign minister. He went on to chair the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, was elected deputy speaker of parliament, and at the end of 2021 was named Armenia's special representative for the normalization of relations with Turkey.

Ruben Rubinyan is one of the clearest examples of how fast careers could take off inside Nikol Pashinyan's team. What stands out in his political biography is that, before coming to power, he had almost no professional experience in public administration, in the diplomatic service or in international negotiations.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Yerevan State University, he continued his studies abroad. In 2011 he received a master's degree in Politics and Security from University College London, and in 2012 he completed a master's program in European studies at Jagiellonian University in Poland. By the age of 22 or 23, Rubinyan held two Western degrees.

Back in Armenia, he did his compulsory military service from 2012 to 2014. Once discharged, he did not work in government, in the diplomatic system, in the private sector or at any think tank. His only public activity was his work for the Civil Contract party, where from 2015 he was a board member and press secretary. Up to the 2017 parliamentary elections, his record came down to party work, public speeches and comments to the media.

From November 2017 to May 2018, Rubinyan held fellowships at two Turkish think tanks at once: the Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) at Sabanci University and the Center for International and European Studies (CIES) at Kadir Has University. In May 2018, almost immediately after the program ended, he was appointed Armenia's deputy foreign minister.

A rise this fast drew sharp political controversy. The opposition repeatedly criticized Rubinyan's research program in Turkey. His political opponents publicly called him a "Turkish spy" and an "agent of Turkish influence," and used this chapter of his biography as one of their main arguments against appointing him to senior government posts. <https://news.am/ru/video/656564>





Yet it was Ruben Rubinyan who, at the end of 2021, was entrusted with one of the most sensitive areas of Armenia's foreign policy. For several years he served as special representative for the normalization of relations with Turkey, the lead negotiator on the Armenian side and one of the main public voices of the current government's policy in this area.

This ANI investigation sets out to answer several fundamental questions. How did a 28-year-old party functionary with no diplomatic or negotiating experience end up in one of the top posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? What role did the research program in Turkey play in his later political career? Who was in his circle of professional contacts while he worked at the Turkish think tanks, what research did he carry out, and how might this period have mattered for his later appointment as Armenia's special representative for normalization with Turkey? Why was he, of all people, given one of the most sensitive areas of Armenia's foreign policy? And finally, did the results of the Armenia-Turkey negotiations and the political decisions that followed justify such a fast-track appointment?

The Rubinyan Family's Political Capital

Ruben Rubinyan did not land in government by chance or start from nothing. He grew up in a deeply political family and from an early age lived in a world where politics was part of everyday life rather than something happening in the background.

His father, Karapet Rubinyan, was a prominent figure in Armenian politics in the 1990s and 2000s. He served as deputy speaker of the National Assembly, was a member of the Armenian National Movement and was one of the allies of Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Ruben Rubinyan's mother, Zhenya (Genofia) Martirosyan, was a well-known journalist and editor. So from childhood the future politician grew up where politics and the media met.

Ruben Rubinyan later said that as a 13-year-old he took part in protests during the 2003 presidential election and opposed Robert Kocharyan. After the events of March 1, 2008, politics became personal for him: Karapet Rubinyan was arrested as a member of the opposition movement and spent more than two months in custody. For the Rubinyans, politics stopped being only a matter of public life and became part of the family's own story.

Today, though, Ruben Rubinyan admits that the political force his father belonged to made quite a few mistakes while it was in power.

<https://mediamax.am/am/news/society/28897/>





After the events of 2008, Karapet Rubinyan broke with Levon Ter-Petrosyan and left the Armenian National Congress. He explained his decision by saying he was disillusioned with the ANC leader's political course: after the tragic events of March 1, he said, the struggle had given way to political deals, and the public was no longer being told the whole truth. Karapet Rubinyan later publicly apologized to Levon Ter-Petrosyan, but he never returned to his team. <http://www.news.am/ru/news/25981>

By the time Nikol Pashinyan came to power, then, Karapet Rubinyan was no longer part of the new ruling team and could not be seen as his son's direct political patron. <https://www.1in.am/96114.html>

Still, it is hard to deny Karapet Rubinyan's influence on Ruben Rubinyan's character and political outlook. Rubinyan's father is described as a tough man, and this family political experience was evidently one of the things that shaped Ruben himself.

There is another, more personal detail that shows how closed off this biography is. Karapet Rubinyan and Zhenya Martirosyan divorced when their sons were already fairly grown up. After the divorce, according to published reports, Ruben Rubinyan all but cut off contact with his mother and only reconnected with her shortly before her death. Zhenya Martirosyan and Karapet Rubinyan's elder son sold his apartment to pay for his mother's treatment in Germany, but Zhenya Martirosyan died in October 2013. <https://hetq.am/ru/article/30171>

Yet Zhenya Martirosyan is barely mentioned in either Karapet Rubinyan's public biography or Ruben Rubinyan's own. For a politician whose career was built largely on political continuity and a personal history of struggle, this silence looks less like a chance omission and more like part of a carefully curated public image.





Pictured: Rubinyan with his mother, January 2013.

How Ruben Rubinyan Joined Pashinyan's Team

Despite his family's political past, Ruben Rubinyan did not get onto the future ruling team thanks to his father. The decisive role was played by Arayik Harutyunyan, whose brother had been Rubinyan's friend since their student days.

After his army service, it was through Arayik Harutyunyan's circle that Rubinyan ended up at one of the meetings of the newly forming Civil Contract party, where he met Nikol Pashinyan for the first time. He later said that Pashinyan's ideas and speeches resonated with him, and just two weeks later he was nominated and confirmed as a member of the party board.





So it was Arayik Harutyunyan's circle, and not his family's political ties, that first brought Ruben Rubinyan into the team of the future government. This episode matters because Arayik Harutyunyan would go on to become one of the most influential figures in Nikol Pashinyan's government.

Karapet Rubinyan, for his part, has hardly ever commented in public on his son's rapid climb up the career ladder. He has not publicly weighed in on his appointments and has not criticized the new government. His social media posts, however, show consistent support for the current government's political course.
<https://www.facebook.com/rubinyan>

Like Nikol Pashinyan and Ruben Rubinyan, Karapet Rubinyan publicly refers to Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, as "Ktrich." He also backed the authorities' position on the Strong Armenia party, saying that a political force that "handed out huge electoral bribes" should not end up in parliament.

His views on foreign policy say just as much. Karapet Rubinyan consistently argues for rethinking military and political relations with Russia. He has called for leaving the agreement on a joint air defense system and establishing strict control over the Russian military base in Gyumri and Erebuni Airport. He also wants a ban on Russian Air Force flights over Armenian territory without prior approval from the Ministry of Defense and a faster phased withdrawal of Russian border guards from Armenia's borders with Iran and Turkey.

But even before Ruben Rubinyan was appointed Armenia's special representative for normalization with Turkey, his biography contained an episode that would later become the subject of repeated political disputes: his research program and work in Turkey.

Between Turkey and the Foreign Ministry

As noted above, by the time he was appointed deputy foreign minister, Ruben Rubinyan had no experience in the diplomatic service, in the Foreign Ministry system or in international negotiations. The only international professional episode in his biography was an eight-month research program in Turkey. This period deserves a closer look.

In 2017-2018, Rubinyan took part in the Hrant Dink Foundation's Turkey-Armenia Fellowship Scheme. The organizers say the program gave professionals from the two countries the chance to live in the neighboring country and carry out research at host organizations. It was run by the Hrant Dink Foundation together with the Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre, with funding from the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF).





The CSSF itself has repeatedly drawn criticism in the United Kingdom. British lawmakers and experts have pointed out that, under the banner of development and conflict prevention programs, the fund often carries out projects that serve the United Kingdom's foreign policy interests. Experts regularly describe the CSSF as one of the instruments of British "soft power."

Hrant Dink Foundation data show that Rubinyan's fellowship lasted eight months, from November 2017 to May 2018. During that time, he did research at two Turkish think tanks at once: the Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) at Sabanci University and the Center for International and European Studies (CIES) at Kadir Has University.

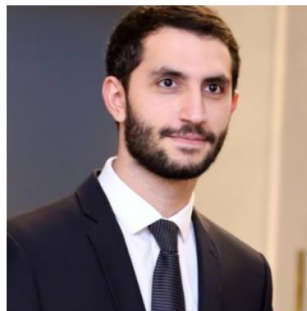
The officially stated topic of his research at the Istanbul Policy Center was the role of non-governmental organizations in Turkey's democratization. At the Center for International and European Studies, Rubinyan studied Armenia-Turkey relations in the context of the Black Sea region.

mtr-beyondborders.org/fellowship-scheme/2017-2018-fellows/



Ruben Rubinyan holds a BA degree in International Relations from the Yerevan State University, Armenia, and MA degree in Politics and Security from University College London, UK and an MA degree in European Studies from the Jagiellonian University, Poland. He has been actively involved in social and political processes in Armenia.

Ruben is currently a fellow at Istanbul Policy Center, Sabanci University as part of the Turkey-Armenia Fellowship Scheme established by Hrant Dink Foundation. His current research is focused on the role of NGO's in the democratization process in Turkey. He will also do a fellowship at the [Center for International and European Studies at Kadir Has University](#), focusing on Turkey-Armenia relations in the context of the Black Sea region.



That, however, is practically all that is known about his research. Despite the officially stated topics, Rubinyan's actual work is nowhere to be found in the public domain. We were unable to find any research papers, analytical publications, reports or other materials that would make it possible to judge the content, conclusions or practical results of this eight-month program. So far, the only public source of information is the brief descriptions of the research topics published by the program's organizers.

This inevitably raises new questions: what professional contacts did he make while working at the Turkish think tanks, what did the program mean for his later political





career, and why was this particular experience enough for him to be put in charge of one of the most sensitive areas of Armenia's foreign policy?

Universities and the Expert Community

What matters here is the professional environment in which Ruben Rubinyan's research program took place, as much as the fact that he took part in it.

The Istanbul Policy Center is considered one of Turkey's most influential expert platforms on international relations, foreign policy and regional security. The center is based at Sabanci University, one of Turkey's leading private universities.

Sabanci University itself has been the subject of public debate for many years. As one media outlet put it: "Sabanci University is far from an ordinary school: it is a platform for 'brainwashing' foreign students and training cadres loyal to Ankara. The university was founded in 1994 by Sabanci Holding, one of Turkey's largest business conglomerates. Its founder is Haci Omer Sabanci, who, according to some accounts, seized the property of the Armenians of Adana, including church property, in the 1930s with the backing of Kemal Ataturk. This is cited as evidence that the university was created to promote nationalist and pro-government ideas. In addition, rumors are widely circulating that the IPC is developing projects to use NGOs to bring about political change in the region."

The expert circle around the Istanbul Policy Center is just as interesting.

One of the center's leading staff members was Bulent Aras, an adviser to former Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, a consultant to Oxford Analytica, Microsoft and Human Rights Watch, and a member of the board of directors of the International Center for Black Sea Studies.

Aras's views on Armenia are revealing. He criticizes the process of international recognition of the genocide, arguing that countries that recognize it are getting in the way of a settlement between Yerevan and Ankara. In his view, lasting peace between Ankara and Yerevan is impossible without a parallel settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Aras has also said that Yerevan's deep economic and military dependence on Moscow (including Russian military bases) keeps Armenia from pursuing a fully independent and flexible foreign policy, which makes dialogue with Ankara harder.

Well-known Turkish professors of international relations work or have worked at the IPC, including Meltem Muftuler-Bac, Senem Aydin-Duzgit and Fuat Keyman, who





often act as advisers or experts for the Turkish Foreign Ministry and government, or take part in their discussions.

Fuat Keyman, who headed the Istanbul Policy Center during Rubinyan's fellowship, was regarded as one of Turkey's most respected specialists on democratization, civil society, European integration and Turkish foreign policy. In 2013 he sat on the Wise Persons Committee set up by the Turkish authorities as part of the peace process on the Kurdish issue. His research includes work on Turkey's national minorities, among them the Armenian community.

The second research center deserves just as close a look.

At Kadir Has University, the central figure was Rector Mustafa Aydin, president of the International Relations Council of Turkey (UIK) and one of Turkey's most influential experts on the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

The concept of an Armenia-Turkey settlement that Aydin promoted largely matches the approaches official Yerevan later began to put into practice. He consistently advocated economic cooperation, the opening of transport links, joint infrastructure projects and gradual normalization through economic interdependence, while pushing the most painful historical issues to the back burner. Aydin also repeatedly stressed that Turkey's strategic alliance with Azerbaijan is a fixed constant and that lasting reconciliation with Armenia is possible only if Baku's interests are taken into account.

Another well-known professor at Kadir Has University was Soli Ozel. Unlike Aydin, he was among the Turkish intellectuals who publicly urged Ankara to acknowledge moral responsibility for the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Even so, Ozel supported opening the Armenia-Turkey border, seeing it as a way to increase Turkey's influence over Armenia.

This is the expert community in which Rubinyan spent eight months shortly before the change of government in Armenia.

In an interview with Mediamax, Rubinyan said he was originally supposed to spend three months in Turkey but came back early because the "Velvet Revolution" had begun.

Yet materials published by the Hrant Dink Foundation show that the program was designed to last eight months, from November 2017 to May 2018.

<https://mediamax.am/am/news/society/28897>

Rubinyan's own public Facebook posts, meanwhile, make it possible to partly reconstruct the timeline of his stay in Istanbul.





As early as December 11, 2017, he posted a photo taken on the shore of the Bosphorus. In the comments, one user addressed him as "Efendi," to which Rubinyan replied: "Pasha."



The next photo from Istanbul appeared on February 8, 2018, roughly two months before mass protests began in Armenia.





The available data are not enough to establish the exact dates of his arrival and departure. But the material Rubinyan himself posted confirms that he was in Turkey at least in December 2017 and February 2018. This sits poorly with his later claim that he spent two months in the country.

Ruben Rubinyan's participation in a research program in Turkey matters both for his biography and for what it says about the intellectual environment in which his professional views took shape. For several months he worked alongside experts who consistently opposed international recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a foreign policy tool, who viewed Armenia-Turkey normalization strictly in connection with Azerbaijan's interests, and who promoted the opening of transport links and greater economic interdependence as a way to increase Turkey's influence over Armenia.

Taking part in this program does not, in itself, prove that Ruben Rubinyan fully shared these views. However, he later became Armenia's chief negotiator on normalization with Turkey, and many of the approaches consistently championed by members of this expert community found their way into the official policy of the Armenian authorities.

<https://armtribunal.com/2025/12/03/sluzhiteli-izmennikov-chast-3-ruben-rubinjan-tureckij-agent/>

<https://hrantdink.org/en/activities/projects/turkey-armenia-relations-programme/turkey-armenia-fellowship-scheme/1035-turkey-armenia-fellowship-scheme-fourth-cycle-results-are-announced>

<https://news.am/ru/video/656564>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06g_R0Ueji0&t=95s

https://www.trtworld.com/article/13114488?_rt=1

<https://www.armtr-beyondborders.org/fellowship-scheme/2017-2018-fellows/>





Appointing a Negotiator

In December 2021, Turkey appointed Serdar Kilic, one of the country's most experienced diplomats, as its special representative for the normalization of relations with Armenia. Armenia, in turn, named Ruben Rubinyan, deputy speaker of the National Assembly, as its special representative.



Pictured: Ruben Rubinyan and Serdar Kilic

The appointment was controversial for two reasons at once. Critics of the government pointed both to Rubinyan's lack of practical diplomatic experience, especially next to his Turkish counterpart Serdar Kilic, who is described as one of the most experienced figures in Turkish diplomacy, and to questions about whether the appointment procedure itself was lawful.

Gegham Manukyan, a member of parliament from the opposition Hayastan (Armenia) faction, said he had been unable to find any decree, order or other legal act that officially appointed Ruben Rubinyan as Armenia's special representative.

"I tried to find the legal documents, the decision, decree or order on the basis of which Ruben Rubinyan was appointed. The National Assembly did not authorize Rubinyan to act on Armenia's behalf as special representative for talks with Turkey, and the issue





was not discussed in the Council of the National Assembly. The Armenian public knows that Ruben Rubinyan is the special representative only from a short announcement by the Foreign Ministry spokesperson," Manukyan said.

The authorities rejected these objections.

Rubinyan himself said that this was not an appointment to a government post but an additional function.

The explanation the authorities gave for choosing Ruben Rubinyan raised just as many questions.

Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan said Rubinyan had experience chairing the parliamentary committee on foreign relations, but the main advantage he named had nothing to do with professional training.

"There is an additional factor that makes Rubinyan a more effective negotiator: a shared connection with the prime minister and a team connection," Grigoryan said.

In his words, the ability to settle issues quickly and directly with the head of government was one of Rubinyan's main strengths.

The Security Council secretary's words implied that one of the main criteria for the choice was not so much professional diplomatic qualifications as a high level of political trust and the ability to stay in constant, direct contact with the prime minister during the negotiations.

Grigoryan himself also questioned traditional ideas about the diplomatic service.

The negotiation process itself also came under harsh criticism from the opposition from the very start.

Artsvik Minasyan, secretary of the Hayastan faction, said Armenia was entering the talks on extremely unfavorable terms, having been left in a much weaker position after the war.

"The Armenian authorities either do not understand what they are getting into or are deliberately leading the country to ruin. Weakened after the war, Armenia cannot defend its own interests in talks with the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem. Its position is extremely vulnerable, and against this backdrop it should not enter a process that is doomed from the start," he said.





From Statements to Results

Over the course of the Armenia-Turkey talks, the special representatives held seven official meetings and hundreds of phone calls and made dozens of public statements. But the main yardstick for any negotiation process is practical results, not declarations. Comparing the agreements reached with what happened next shows that many of the political commitments were never carried out.

"Five Years of Talks: What Was Promised and What Was Delivered"

Statement	Date	What followed	Result
<i>Erdogan: if Armenia takes positive steps, a meeting and diplomatic relations are possible</i>	<i>Sept. 19, 2021</i>	<i>Normalization talks begin, special representatives appointed</i>	<i>No diplomatic relations established</i>
<i>Mirzoyan: Armenia is ready for normalization without preconditions</i>	<i>Nov. 3, 2021</i>	<i>Normalization process launched</i>	<i>Approach repeatedly reaffirmed by Yerevan</i>
<i>Cavusoglu: the process is coordinated with Azerbaijan, special representatives will be appointed</i>	<i>Dec. 13, 2021</i>	<i>Kilic and Rubinyan appointed</i>	<i>Link to the Azerbaijan track confirmed</i>
<i>First meeting of the special representatives: a settlement without preconditions</i>	<i>Jan. 14, 2022</i>	<i>Talks continue</i>	<i>Process officially launched</i>
<i>Talks aimed at a full settlement without preconditions</i>	<i>Jan. 14, 2022</i>	<i>Yerevan-Istanbul flights resume Feb. 2, 2022</i>	<i>First practical result</i>
<i>The ultimate goal is full normalization of relations</i>	<i>Feb. 24, 2022</i>	<i>Vienna meetings continue</i>	<i>Political goal confirmed</i>
<i>The sides are ready to continue the process without preconditions</i>	<i>May 2, 2022</i>	<i>Third meeting in Vienna</i>	<i>No new results</i>
<i>Rubinyan: success depends on Turkey's political will</i>	<i>June 1, 2022</i>	<i>Ahead of the fourth meeting in Vienna</i>	<i>Lack of progress acknowledged</i>
<i>Fourth meeting: open the land border to third-country nationals</i>	<i>July 1, 2022</i>	<i>Margara checkpoint prepared</i>	<i>Not implemented as of mid-2026</i>
<i>Fourth meeting: launch direct air cargo service</i>	<i>July 1, 2022</i>	<i>Turkey lifts restrictions</i>	<i>Implemented since 2023</i>
<i>Normalization without preconditions confirmed by both sides</i>	<i>July 1, 2022</i>	<i>Further contacts between the special representatives;</i>	<i>The principle is declared at every meeting, but the Turkish side keeps tying its steps to an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement</i>





Statement	Date	What followed	Result
<i>Turkish media: about 500 phone contacts between the special representatives</i>	<i>Aug. 2022</i>	<i>New meeting expected</i>	<i>September meeting did not take place</i>
<i>Ankara objects to talks in third countries</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>Demand to hold meetings in Armenia or Turkey</i>	<i>Meetings later moved to the border and to Yerevan</i>
<i>Rubinyan: only some of the agreements have been implemented</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>Border infrastructure upgraded</i>	<i>Progress limited to air cargo</i>
<i>Rubinyan: Armenia is fully ready, the ball is in Turkey's court</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>Renovation of Margara checkpoint completed</i>	<i>Turkey did not open the border</i>
<i>Kilic proposes a meeting in Yerevan</i>	<i>April 2024</i>	<i>Meeting at the checkpoint held in the summer</i>	<i>Proposal partly implemented</i>
<i>Previous agreements reaffirmed, Akhurik/Akyaka checkpoint discussed</i>	<i>July 30, 2024</i>	<i>Technical preparations</i>	<i>Border not opened</i>
<i>Simplify visa rules for diplomatic passport holders</i>	<i>July 30, 2024</i>	<i>Intergovernmental mechanism prepared</i>	<i>Implemented since Jan. 1, 2026</i>
<i>Washington Declaration and the TRIPP project; joint appeal by Armenia and Azerbaijan to the OSCE to close the Minsk Process and related structures.</i>	<i>Aug. 8, 2025</i>	<i>Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement initialed</i>	<i>Turkey's preconditions on the Zangezur corridor and on normalization with Azerbaijan effectively met by fulfilling all of Baku's preconditions</i>
<i>Speed up the border-crossing mechanism</i>	<i>Sept. 12, 2025</i>	<i>Sixth meeting in Yerevan</i>	<i>Mechanism still not launched</i>
<i>Study restoring the Gyumri-Kars railway</i>	<i>Sept. 12, 2025</i>	<i>Working mechanisms set up</i>	<i>Work began in 2026</i>
<i>Develop cultural and academic cooperation</i>	<i>Sept. 12, 2025</i>	<i>Exchange programs discussed</i>	<i>No information available</i>
<i>Expand air links between the two countries</i>	<i>Sept. 12, 2025</i>	<i>New routes prepared</i>	<i>Partly implemented</i>
<i>Visa relief for holders of diplomatic and service passports</i>	<i>Sept. 29, 2025</i>	<i>Takes effect Jan. 1, 2026</i>	<i>Implemented</i>
<i>Erdogan: normalization is coordinated with Azerbaijan, Turkey will take symbolic steps</i>	<i>Late 2025</i>	<i>Symbolic steps prepared</i>	<i>Link between the two tracks publicly confirmed</i>
<i>Bring the Gyumri-Kars railway into service as soon as possible</i>	<i>April 28, 2026</i>	<i>Joint working group meets in Kars</i>	<i>Project moves to the practical stage</i>





<i>Statement</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>What followed</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Kilic: there are no political obstacles to opening the border</i>	<i>May 5, 2026</i>	<i>Seventh meeting of the special representatives</i>	<i>No date set for opening</i>
<i>Launching the railway soon is in both countries' interest</i>	<i>May 5, 2026</i>	<i>Discussed at the Yerevan Dialogue</i>	<i>Decision not implemented</i>
<i>Memorandum signed on restoring the Ani bridge</i>	<i>May 5, 2026</i>	<i>Joint project begins</i>	<i>Under way</i>
<i>Turkey lifts its ban on bilateral trade</i>	<i>May 13, 2026</i>	<i>Statement by the Armenian Foreign Ministry</i>	<i>One of the most tangible results of the process</i>
<i>TRIPP agreement initialed and signed</i>	<i>May 26 and June 4, 2026</i>	<i>Transport corridor developed</i>	<i>Project moves to implementation</i>

As the data show, the negotiations came with many statements that both sides were ready to normalize relations without preconditions. In practice, however, far less was delivered than the stated political goals promised.

The most visible practical results include the resumption of direct flights between Armenia and Turkey in February 2022, the launch of direct air cargo service in 2023 and a simplified visa regime for holders of diplomatic, service and special passports that took effect on January 1, 2026. Turkey also lifted its restrictions on bilateral trade in May 2026. These decisions became the most tangible practical outcomes of the negotiations.

The main political agreements that the two sides announced time and again, however, had not been implemented by mid-2026.

First and foremost, this concerns opening the land border to third-country nationals. Following the agreement reached back in the summer of 2022, Armenia did its part. More than 1 billion drams (about \$2.8 million) was spent on rebuilding and upgrading the Margara border crossing, and the infrastructure was fully ready for use, but the Turkish side never moved to put the agreements into practice.





The Gyumri-Kars rail link is another case in point. Despite years of talks, the project reached the practical stage only in the spring of 2026, when a joint working group was set up. In other words, almost four years after the talks began, the two sides had only started working through the technical side of the issue.





Throughout the negotiation process, it was Ruben Rubinyan who remained the main public face of Armenia-Turkey normalization.

"Ruben Rubinyan's Public Statements and Their Practical Results"





Date	Statement	What followed	Result
Jan. 14, 2022	<i>After his first meeting with Serdar Kilic, said the process was moving forward without preconditions and aimed at full normalization.</i>	<i>Regular meetings between the special representatives began.</i>	<i>A negotiating mechanism was created, but practical results were limited, and Turkey's president kept speaking the language of preconditions.</i>
July 1, 2022	<i>Announced an agreement to open the border to third-country nationals and diplomatic passport holders.</i>	<i>Technical preparations began; the Margara checkpoint was renovated and is ready for use.</i>	<i>The border was not opened, either partly or fully.</i>
2023	<i>Repeatedly said Armenia was ready to establish diplomatic relations without preconditions.</i>	<i>Talks continued.</i>	<i>No diplomatic relations established</i>
2024	<i>Stressed the importance of continuing the process regardless of other issues.</i>	<i>Turkish officials kept linking progress to normalization between Yerevan and Baku, and several Turkish lawmakers threatened Armenia if it did not accept Baku's terms</i>	<i>The process went on without real results.</i>
2025	<i>Said Turkey had not set any preconditions in the talks.</i>	<i>Yet Ankara spoke publicly about the importance of an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement and the opening of the Zangezur corridor</i>	<i>The "no preconditions" formula held in the talks, but the political context remained linked.</i>
2026	<i>Reaffirmed readiness to open the border and establish diplomatic relations.</i>	<i>Contacts continued.</i>	<i>No full normalization as of June 2026.</i>

A comparison of Rubinyan's public statements with what followed shows that throughout the negotiations he consistently spoke of normalizing relations without preconditions and of Armenia's readiness to open the border and establish diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, the Turkish leadership's public statements at almost every stage pointed to a continued direct link between Armenia-Turkey normalization, an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement and the fulfillment of Baku's conditions.

By mid-2026, then, the negotiations had produced a number of practical technical and economic decisions, but their key political goals had not been achieved. Armenia and Turkey have not established diplomatic relations, the land border remains closed, and





Ankara itself consistently confirmed throughout the process that Armenia-Turkey normalization was tied to progress on the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiating track.

These are the results by which Ruben Rubinyan's work as Armenia's special representative should be judged. Despite years of negotiations, hundreds of contacts and dozens of public statements, the main political goals for which normalization was launched had still not been achieved by mid-2026.

<https://am.sputniknews.ru/20240302/armeniya-gotova-k-polnoy-normalizatsii-s-turtsiey-i-otkrytiyu-granitsy-pryamo-seychas---rubinyan-72980851.html>

<https://am.sputniknews.ru/20211218/spetspredstavitelem-armenii-po-protssessu-dialoga-s-turtsiey-stanet-ruben-rubinyan--36659628.html>

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<https://am.sputniknews.ru/20220117/o-chem-shla-rech-v-moskve---rubinyan-otvetil-oppozitsii-ob-armyano-turetskikh-peregovorakh-37601992.html>

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<https://www.radiovan.fm/station/article/36898>

<https://am.sputniknews.ru/20220812/erevan-i-ankara-v-ramkakh-protssessa-po-normalizatsii-proveli-500-telefonnykh-peregovorov---smi-46570221.html>

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<https://armenpress.am/ru/article/1237711>





When the Talks Started Playing by Ankara's Rules

Judging by Ruben Rubinyan's public statements, the Armenian side expected much faster progress at the start of the talks. The normalization process began in late 2021 and early 2022 and soon moved from the Moscow format to Western venues. With relations between the West and Russia sharply deteriorating, Yerevan apparently counted on the United States and the European Union being interested in stabilizing the South Caucasus quickly without Russian mediation, and on their ability to put additional political pressure on Ankara.

Those hopes did not pan out. By the summer of 2022, Rubinyan had to admit publicly that there had been no noticeable progress. The talks then went through a long pause, and Armenian officials increasingly said that further progress depended on Ankara's decisions.

Meanwhile, the structure of the talks was changing too. The first meeting of the special representatives took place in Moscow, and the following ones were held in Vienna. But as early as 2022, the Turkish side began consistently objecting to holding talks in third countries and pushed for moving them to Turkey or Armenia. As a result, the format of the talks slowly turned into a model that suited Ankara's interests better.

Turkey was just as consistent in defending its own political vision of the process. Even before the special representatives were appointed, Mevlut Cavusoglu openly said that Armenia-Turkey normalization would move forward in close connection with an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Hulusi Akar and Serdar Kilic later reaffirmed this position on many occasions.

Against this backdrop, Rubinyan's public line on normalization without preconditions drifted further and further from political reality. The "no preconditions" formula stayed in the joint statements, but Turkey's actual steps were consistently timed to progress in the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks and to the fulfillment of Baku's core demands.

Armenia-Turkey normalization made practical headway only after the Washington Declaration was signed, the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan was initialed and the TRIPP project was launched, and that timing says a lot. Even then, the agreements reached were mostly technical: visa relief for holders of diplomatic and service passports, the lifting of restrictions on bilateral trade, talks on restoring the Gyumri-Kars railway and a memorandum on restoring the Ani bridge. The core political issues, opening the land border and establishing diplomatic relations, were still unresolved as of mid-2026.





The position Serdar Kilic voiced at the Yerevan Dialogue 2026 forum was typical in this respect. While saying there were no political obstacles to opening the border, the Turkish special representative refused to name any timeline, citing technical and bureaucratic issues that still had to be resolved.



Over several years, Rubinyan's own public rhetoric changed as well. At the start of the talks he spoke of the possibility of reaching full normalization quickly, but later his assessments became much more cautious. More and more often he said that public expectations had been "somewhat mythologized" and that the further course of the process depended on decisions made by the Turkish side.

Comparing the timeline of the talks, the public statements and their practical results shows that as the process went on, both its pace and the very structure of the negotiations changed. While at the outset the Armenian side worked from a model of normalization without preconditions, the process later came to follow the logic Ankara had consistently pushed. This showed both in the changed format of the talks and in the tight link between Armenia-Turkey normalization and an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement.

In other words, Turkey managed to keep its own set of political priorities intact and, step by step, to reshape the negotiations so that any practical progress was synchronized with the Turkish-Azerbaijani agenda. It was under these conditions that Ruben





Rubinyan remained, for several years, the main public voice of the Armenian authorities' policy on Turkey.

As one of the closest members of Nikol Pashinyan's team, Ruben Rubinyan is dutifully doing what he was appointed to do: carrying out the agenda of "peace at any cost."

Ruben Rubinyan: Beyond the Armenia-Turkey Track

As the negotiations went on, Ruben Rubinyan's role gradually stopped being limited to Armenia-Turkey normalization.

The first public sign of this came when Nikol Pashinyan decided to include him in Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan's delegation at the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks in Washington, held from April 28 to May 5, 2023.



The decision drew a sharp reaction from the parliamentary opposition. On May 2, 2023, Gegham Manukyan, a member of the Hayastan faction, demanded an explanation of the capacity in which the special representative for Armenia-Turkey normalization was taking part in talks between Yerevan and Baku. In his view, combining the two roles pointed to the existence of closed-door negotiations touching on national security.

Lawmaker Artur Khachatryan directly linked Rubinyan's participation to Turkey's oft-repeated position that Armenia-Turkey normalization is impossible without a settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Arman Yeghoyan and Hakob Arshakyan of the ruling Civil Contract party rejected this interpretation. They explained the deputy speaker's participation by the features of a parliamentary system of government and the need to use the National Assembly's potential in the negotiations.





Later, however, Rubinyan's participation in the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks became routine, which amounted to an expansion of his powers far beyond his original mandate as special representative for Armenia-Turkey normalization.

Rubinyan himself eventually acknowledged in public that the two negotiating tracks were connected. In an interview on September 16, 2025, he said that Armenia-Turkey normalization and the Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement are separate processes but "undoubtedly influence each other."

This effectively confirmed what the Turkish side had been saying openly since the very start of the talks: the Armenia-Turkey track does not exist in isolation and is directly tied to the progress of the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations. As a result, Ruben Rubinyan's role also outgrew the original scope of his official mandate, making him a central player in two interconnected negotiating tracks at once.

<https://armenpress.am/ru/article/1109891>

How Ruben Rubinyan's Political Role Evolved

After Armenia, the United States and Azerbaijan signed a trilateral declaration on August 8, 2025, Ruben Rubinyan became one of the main public representatives of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), a project to create a multimodal transit route through Armenian territory.

In the public sphere, it was Ruben Rubinyan who became one of the main officials explaining the government's position on the TRIPP project.

In his public remarks, he consistently defended the proposed management model for the TRIPP Development Company, under which the United States was to receive 74% of the shares and Armenia 26%. He argued that this split did not affect national sovereignty, because the state's control was guaranteed by legislation, the tax system and a veto right on matters affecting the country's sovereign interests.

Rubinyan was just as consistent in rejecting claims that TRIPP was a way of implementing the so-called "Zangezur corridor." He said the route was to operate solely under Armenian jurisdiction: security would be provided by Armenian law enforcement and security agencies, and border and customs control would remain entirely in the hands of Armenian state bodies. He described the project itself as purely commercial.

Yet it was TRIPP that gave rise to the most serious political disagreements. Rubinyan rejected the possibility of Russia or Turkey taking part in managing the route, calling the project an Armenian-American format of cooperation. However, the Russian side





publicly said it was ready to discuss the terms of possible Russian participation, and in Iran the project was repeatedly criticized as a potential continuation of the "Zangezur corridor" logic and as a factor strengthening Western influence in the region.

The mechanism for implementing the project also sparked debate. Opposition figures pointed to the lack of transparency in decision-making and voiced concern that the infrastructure demands of Azerbaijan and Turkey were in fact being met under the guise of a commercial project.

Rubinyan himself was, by this point, already openly acknowledging the mutual influence of the Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations. So TRIPP did not become a stand-alone initiative. It was a logical continuation of the regional negotiating structure that had been consistently taking shape over the previous several years.

By 2025, then, Ruben Rubinyan's political role had changed a great deal. Having started out as special representative for Armenia-Turkey normalization, he later became one of the leading public voices of the current government's regional policy, which brought the Armenia-Turkey, Armenia-Azerbaijan and infrastructure negotiating tracks together under a single strategy.

The Circle of Trust

Ruben Rubinyan's political career, however, did not develop in isolation but within a narrow circle of Nikol Pashinyan's closest allies. According to Armenian political observers, during Civil Contract's years in power several informal centers of influence have formed inside the party, and one of the most visible is considered to be Arayik Harutyunyan's group.

As noted above, it was through Arayik Harutyunyan's circle that Ruben Rubinyan joined the team of the future government. Their political paths crossed many times after that, and Rubinyan himself became one of the party's fastest-rising members.

This informal circle is usually said to include Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, Defense Minister Suren Papikyan and a number of other members of the country's top leadership.

Rubinyan's relationship with Suren Papikyan says a great deal. Photos of the two taken over the years show that they knew each other long before Civil Contract came to power and stayed in touch throughout the period when the current political team was taking shape.





Pictured: Ruben Rubinyan and Suren Papikyan, 2016



Pictured: Ruben Rubinyan and Suren Papikyan, April 23, 2018

These lasting political ties help explain why Ruben Rubinyan has for several years remained one of the current government's most trusted figures and keeps receiving important political appointments.





The Rubinyan Family's Parliamentary Diplomacy

Ruben Rubinyan's wife, Mariam Haji-Hakobyan, is a chief specialist in the Foreign Relations Department of the National Assembly of Armenia. The couple registered their marriage in 2023.



Pictured: Mariam Haji-Hakobyan

Her duties include the organizational, expert and diplomatic support of parliament's international activities: preparing Armenian lawmakers' trips abroad, working with foreign parliaments and international organizations, and accompanying official parliamentary delegations.





So the husband and wife both work in the same area of the state's foreign policy. While Ruben Rubinyan represents Armenia at the political level, Mariam Haji-Hakobyan provides organizational support for parliament's international work.

One of the areas she covers is the Turkish track. From November 16 to 20, 2025, for example, Mariam Haji-Hakobyan was part of the National Assembly of Armenia's delegation to the autumn session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Istanbul.

The Rubinyan family's foreign policy work, then, is not limited to Ruben Rubinyan himself. His wife's work is also tied to international parliamentary cooperation, including the Turkish track. This fact alone does not point to a conflict of interest, but it does show that foreign policy is central to the professional lives of both spouses.

Rubinyan's Father-in-Law: A Corruption Conviction and a Return to Public Service

The Turkish thread in Ruben Rubinyan's circle runs not only through his own biography and his wife's work. The biography of his father-in-law, Hakob Haji-Hakobyan, former head of the Consular Department of the Armenian Foreign Ministry, is also of some interest.



Pictured: Hakob Haji-Hakobyan





Unlike Ruben Rubinyan and Mariam Haji-Hakobyan, his connection to Turkey was purely a matter of his official duties. It was his work with Armenian citizens returning from Turkey that later led to a criminal case, in which Hakob Haji-Hakobyan was found guilty of bribery in 2013 and sentenced to two years in prison.

The case file shows that the corruption scheme ran for about four years. While serving as Armenia's consul general in Georgia from March 2008 to July 2011, and then as head of the Foreign Ministry's Consular Department from July 2011 to September 2012, Hakob Haji-Hakobyan violated the established procedure for issuing certificates of return to Armenia.

According to investigators, he demanded \$100 from Armenian citizens for the expedited issue of return certificates, without the mandatory clearance from the Foreign Ministry. The people involved were citizens arriving from Turkey who had no documents or had trouble getting them.

Angela Hovhannisyan, an assistant to Armenia's consul general in Georgia, and Nane Gavalbabunts, a resident of Batumi, were also defendants in the case. The court found eleven counts of bribe-taking proven.

According to the indictment, the money was either transferred to Armenia in the name of Hakob Haji-Hakobyan's wife, Lusine Grigoryan, or handed to him in person during his trips to Batumi. During the trial, Hakob Haji-Hakobyan fully admitted his guilt.

<https://armblur.am/49856/>

That, however, was not the end of his career in public service.

After the Civil Contract party came to power, Hakob Haji-Hakobyan was back in public service. From 2019 he headed the visits and receptions unit of the Protocol Department of the National Assembly Staff, and in 2021 he was appointed head of parliament's Protocol Service.

It was not until January 2023 that he was dismissed by order of National Assembly Speaker Alen Simonyan. Shortly before that, the newspaper Zhoghovurd had again drawn attention to his criminal record, asking whether appointing someone previously convicted of a corruption offense was consistent with the government's declared anti-corruption policy.

<https://am.sputniknews.ru/20230116/buduschego-testya-rubena-rubinyana-snyali-s-posta-chem-zanimalsya-rodstvennik-vitse-spikera-53881908.html>

Public sources contain no information on Hakob Haji-Hakobyan's professional activities after he left the National Assembly Staff.





Asset Declarations: From 500,000 Drams in the Bank to Multimillion Incomes

Ruben Rubinyan's asset declarations make it possible to trace how his financial situation changed during his years in power. At the start of his political career he declared no real estate and no car, with only 500,000 drams (about \$1,400) in a bank account. A few years later, his declarations listed an apartment, a parking space, bank deposits, bonds and multimillion incomes.

After being appointed deputy foreign minister in 2018, Rubinyan declared 500,000 drams in a bank account and income of 150,000 drams (about \$415) received before he took office. He owned no real estate or vehicles.

By the end of 2019, his annual income had grown to 7,716,640 drams (about \$21,000), almost all of it from his salary as a member of the National Assembly and chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations. His bank accounts held 3.5 million drams (about \$9,700) and 4,500 euros.

His savings kept growing in the years that followed. By the end of 2022, the balance in his bank accounts had risen to 17,443,000 drams (about \$48,000), and his declaration listed, for the first time, a residential house in Yerevan that he owned.





Դաշնամուսկլային

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Ք.Ն.Լ. Բարձրագույն կրթությունը միաբաժնե ընկերությունում					
Հոն Ը	Անձնական տեղեկություններ, անուն, երգ, պաշտոն, հասցե	Բաժնի անվանումը (% տարաբնույթ դուռն բաժնի բաժնի (ընկերություն))	Բաժնի անվանումը, ընկերությունը (% տարաբնույթ դուռն բաժնի (ընկերություն))	Տվյալ տարվա ընկերությունում անկախ ընկերությունների միջոցով ընկերությունում անկախ	Տվյալ տարվա ընկերությունում անկախ ընկերությունների միջոցով ընկերությունում անկախ
1.	ՀԱՅԿԱՆ, ԴՈՒՐԵՍԻԱՆ, ԼԱՐՍԱ ԴԵՆԻՍ	Հայաստան	Հայաստան	0 2,273,521	0 2,442,897

տն քվ	Կայսրության սահման, արգելափակ, հայտարարել	Բաներ արժեքներ համարժեցող գույք գնահատել (հնազանդ)	Բաներ գնահատել միայն (հնազանդ) գույքի գնահատել բաների գնահատել	Տվյալ տարած արժեքում (հնազանդ) գույքի գնահատել գույքի գնահատել	Տվյալ տարած արժեքում (հնազանդ) գույքի գնահատել գույքի գնահատել	Տվյալ տարած արժեքում (հնազանդ) գույքի գնահատել գույքի գնահատել	Կայսրության սահման, արգելափակ, հայտարարել	Կայսրության սահման, արգելափակ, հայտարարել
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By then the structure of his assets had also changed. Besides real estate, his declaration listed bank deposits, and his total annual income came to 17,373,544 drams (about \$48,000), most of it his salary at the National Assembly.





The family's income rose sharply as well. In 2024, Rubinyan's wife, Mariam Haji-Hakobyan, declared income of 18,214,553 drams (about \$50,000). Most of it consisted of a bank loan, her salary, payments from the National Assembly and other receipts.

<https://news.am/ru/news/706784>

His declaration for 2025 shows that Ruben Rubinyan still owned the apartment and the parking space. As before, he had no car. However, he bought Armeconombank bonds worth more than 10 million drams (about \$28,000), kept a bank deposit of 5 million drams (about \$14,000), and his annual income exceeded 22,847,000 drams (about \$63,000), of which almost 18 million drams (about \$50,000) was his salary at the National Assembly.

<https://iravunk.com/?p=340573&l=am>

Despite the growth in income and assets, the family is still paying off a mortgage. As of the end of 2025, the outstanding principal on the loan for the apartment was about 31.9 million drams (about \$88,000).

In short, the declarations show a marked change in Ruben Rubinyan's financial situation during his years in power. In 2018 he declared only 500,000 drams in a bank account and no property of any kind. By the end of 2025, the family owned an apartment, a parking space, bank deposits and bonds and was declaring a combined annual income in the tens of millions of drams, while still carrying sizable debt.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Trust, Powers and Results

This investigation does not give grounds to claim that the research program in Turkey was what drove Ruben Rubinyan's rapid career rise. It does, however, remain the only international professional experience he gained immediately before being appointed deputy foreign minister. The results of his research are not publicly available, so their content and conclusions cannot be assessed. Still, it cannot be ruled out that months of work in a Turkish expert community, where normalization was seen above all as a process of meeting Ankara's conditions and advancing its regional agenda, may have influenced his professional outlook. At the very least, Ruben Rubinyan's later political activity largely followed these approaches. The material gathered also leads to the conclusion that the decisive factor in his political career was the high level of trust placed in him by the country's leadership rather than diplomatic experience.

The main test of this appointment was the Armenia-Turkey negotiation process. Over the years, it has led to a number of practical decisions on transport, trade and technical cooperation. Yet its key political goals had not been achieved by mid-2026. Armenia





and Turkey have not established diplomatic relations, the land border remains closed, and throughout the talks the Turkish leadership consistently tied normalization to an Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement and to meeting Baku's demands. An analysis of the negotiations shows that it was largely this logic that shaped their structure and the sequence of decisions.

Ruben Rubinyan's own political role, for its part, kept expanding. From the talks with Turkey he gradually moved on to the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiating track and to promoting the TRIPP project. Our analysis leads to the conclusion that these processes developed not as separate tracks but as interconnected parts of a single regional agenda, in which Armenia-Turkey normalization, the Armenia-Azerbaijan settlement and new transport projects were consistently intertwined.

This investigation, then, traces how Ruben Rubinyan rose so quickly in politics and how his role evolved in carrying out the current government's key foreign policy initiatives. Whether this appointment was justified is a question each reader can answer for themselves by weighing the reasons behind it against the results achieved.

