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Ter-Petrosian Again Slams Armenia's Failed Foreign Policy

YEREVAN -- Opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosian stepped up his harsh criticism of Armenia's "failed" rapprochement with Turkey as he again rallied thousands of supporters in Yerevan on Friday.

Ter-Petrosian derided President Serzh Sarkisian for failing to secure

steps in response to Ankara's renewed linkage between Karabakh peace and a Turkish-Armenian normalization.

He said: "Sarkisian feels cheated by America and Turkey like a child. They told him, 'Give up [recognition of] the genocide, that is, agree to the creation of a commission of Armenian



Opposition supporters waving national flags

the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border "even in exchange for a repudiation of the Armenian genocide." He said Sarkisian has toughened Yerevan's position in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks and is taking other desperate

and Turkish historians, and we will open the border.' They got the genocide [concession] but didn't open the border."

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Calls for Clean Vote in Yerevan Municipal Elections

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has urged President Serzh Sarkisian to ensure that the upcoming municipal elections in Yerevan are democratic and assured him of continued U.S. support for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations.

She made the call in a letter reported by the Sarkisian's office on Friday. "Secretary of State Clinton emphasized that a free and fair conduct of the upcoming elections of Yerevan's Council of Elders is an opportunity [for the Armenian authorities] to renew a commitment to democratic principles," the presidential press service said in a statement.

According to the statement, Clinton also addressed U.S.-Armenian relations and, in particular, the provision of additional U.S. economic assistance to Armenia under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program.

Washington froze about 30 percent of the \$236.5 million aid package, approved in 2006, following last year's disputed Armenian presidential election. A U.S. government agency handling the scheme said in March that the authorities in Yerevan have still not



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

addressed U.S. concerns about the "status of democratic governance" in the country.

Sarkisian's press service did not say if Clinton linked the unblocking of the MCA funds with the proper conduct of the May 31 polls in Yerevan. The U.S. State Department declined to give details of her letter.

The presidential statement also cited Clinton as saying that the United States will continue to "consistently support" efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and improve Armenia's relations with Turkey. Washington was reportedly instrumental in the April 22 announcement by Ankara and Yerevan that they have agreed on a "roadmap" to normalizing bilateral ties.

4 Killed in Armenian Chemical Plant Blast



Memorial for the victims of Nairit explosion

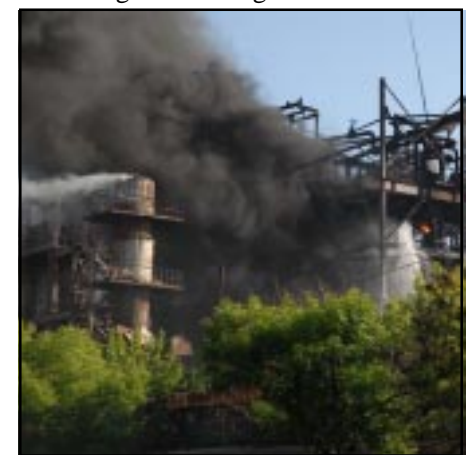
YEREVAN -- Four people were killed and about two dozen others injured in two powerful explosions at Armenia's largest chemical company on Thursday.

The first explosion rocked the Yerevan-based Nairit plant late in the afternoon, sending plumes of black smoke billowing skywards. Company officials said it occurred at one of the plant's facilities used for storing a chemical substance that produces synthetic rubber, the company's main product.

Firefighters and ambulances were rushed to the scene shortly afterwards. Police blocked adjacent streets on the southern outskirts of Yerevan by the time a second blast occurred later in the day.

All of the victims, aged between 50 and 38, were factory employees. A Nairit spokeswoman said the blasts, which sent thick black smoke rising

into the sky for several hours, also seriously injured eight other people, including four firefighters. Armenia's



Nairit chemical plant after an explosion

Rescue Service said late Wednesday that 17 emergency workers were treated for burns and intoxication.

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U.S. Armenian Businessman Found Dead in Yerevan

YEREVAN -- A U.S. businessman of Armenian descent has been found dead in Armenia three weeks after disappearing in unclear circumstances.

Nazareth Berberian, 57, reportedly went missing after leaving his apartment in downtown Yerevan late on April 25. His car was found abandoned in the parking lot of the Zvartnots international airport, 10 kilometers south of the capital, several days later. Earlier this month, Berberian's California-based wife and children promised a \$250,000 reward for information about his whereabouts.

The Armenian police said at the weekend that they have found the businessman's body bearing "traces of violence" in a ravine near a section of a highway 25 kilometers north of Yerevan.

In a written statement, the police indicated that they have already identified suspects in Berberian's kidnapping and subsequent murder. A source



Nazareth Berberian

familiar with the investigation told RFE/RL that the police have already made at least one arrest.

A native of Armenia, Berberian moved back to the country in 1999 and engaged in a range of business activities there. His assets included a carpet factory in a village in the southern Ararat region. His Linareh company was also building a hotel in a prime location in central Yerevan.