

New report details repression of Christians in Armenia

A new detailed report produced by international legal firm, Amsterdam & Partners, exposes the repression and attacks on the Armenian Apostolic Church and its supporters by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who is attempting to suppress any criticism of his policies.

Pashinyan has jailed the Church's leading clerics and dozens of church leaders in recent months. He has also imprisoned businessman Samvel Karapetyan for speaking out in defense of the Church – and seized his assets, which include the country's electricity supply company, in flagrant breach of the law.

Reports overnight indicate Pashinyan is about to arrest His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of all Armenia, equivalent to the Pope for Catholics.

“To explicitly target high ranking members of a national church, and its supporters, with vexatious, ill-founded and politically motivated prosecutions to silence criticism and exert control, is an act of an unpopular and politically inept regime, clinging to power through whatever means necessary,” says the report.

Please see the link to the report here: <https://freekarapetyan.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Armenia-EN-Apostolic-A4-v1a.pdf>

The release of the report corresponds with an ad campaign “In God’s name, what is going on in Armenia?” that appeared in the *Financial Times* last week. The ad is attached.

The clash between Church and State in Armenia has its origins in Armenia’s defeat in 2023 in the war with Azerbaijan over the Armenian Christian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. This led to great suffering and the ethnic cleansing of the region with over 100,000 Armenians being forced to flee to safety.

“The Church has fulfilled its exclusive mission by vigorously defending the rights of Armenians forced out of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the preservation of their national identity. This has put the AAHC on a collision course with the Prime Minister, who has been widely criticised at home and abroad for his role in failing to defend Nagorno-Karabakh,” the report concludes.

International bodies such as the World Council of Churches and Christian Solidarity International have spoken out against Pashinyan’s crackdown on the Church.

The report says: “Having failed to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno- Karabakh in 2023, Nikol Pashinyan, Armenia’s Prime Minister since 2018, is persecuting those who criticize his leadership and rule.”

For more information or to schedule an interview with an Armenia expert, please contact Diana Banister, 703-282-7320 or respond to this e-mail.

This material is distributed by Sovereign Global Solutions on behalf of the National Democratic Alliance of Armenia. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Attack on the Armenian Apostolic Church May - November 2025

Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has unleashed an unholy attack on the Armenian Apostolic Church, the country's oldest institution, with roots going back to 301 A.D. This unprecedented assault by the government on the country's moral foundation and stabilizing institution is a calculated attempt to undermine the very foundation of Armenian heritage and unity. To the Armenians, *it is eerily reminiscent of Soviet Era repression.*

PM Pashinyan's war is vastly widening the gap between his government and the Armenian people, resulting in an 8.2% approval rating. These attacks started on Friday, May 30, 2025, when he posted a series of abusive and vulgar Facebook statements against Catholicos of All Armenians, Karekin II, calling for his forced removal. Catholicos Karekin II is the titular head of the Armenian Apostolic Church located at the Mother See in Etchmiadzin.

Following his public verbal attacks, PM Pashinyan dramatically escalated his crackdown, arresting, detaining and imprisoning high ranking archbishops and numerous clergy.

On June 18, 2025, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government arrested Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, owner of the Electric Networks of Armenia "ENA", moments after Karapetyan publicly condemned the government's escalating attacks on the Armenian Apostolic Church. Shortly after the arrest, Pashinyan called to nationalize the country's Electrical Network Grids. This act is viewed as a politically motivated attack rather than an economic reform. On July 23, 2025, Karapetyan won an international arbitration case on behalf of ENA, which only temporarily stymied Pashinyan's nationalization plans, yet he still remains imprisoned without release. The case of Samvel Karapetyan has become a telling story of Armenia's recent persecution campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Church and internal democratic struggles — all by one man's decision to simply stand for his faith and Church.

On June 25, 2025, Prime Minister Pashinyan had Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan arrested alongside 13 others over an alleged coup plot. This act is seen as retaliation against the Armenian Apostolic Church as the Church has been largely outspoken against Pashinyan's concessions of land and lack of demanding justice for the Armenian people. Galstanyan is responsible for organizing and leading protests calling for Pashinyan's resignation in 2023 after 4 border towns had been conceded to Azerbaijan.

On June 28, 2025, Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan was arrested also over the alleged coup plot. He is now being held in pre-trial detention for two months and his lawyer Ara Zohrabyan calls the decision "obviously illegal and unfounded."

On July 20, 2025, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called for the resignation of the Catholicos on Facebook, claiming it is time to free Veharan, referring to the Catholicos by his lay name in an attempt to demoralize the leader of the Church and his followers. Pashinyan planned and executed a gathering in Etchmiadzin, the Mother See of the Armenian Apostolic Church, to place pressure on the Catholicos, saying “Be ready.”

The same day, The Armenian Apostolic Church released a statement condemning Pashinyan’s actions against the Catholicos. They affirm they will not waver in their mission and emphasize the failure of Pashinyan as leader of the country, leaving them vulnerable to external political forces.

On July 23, 2025, Prime Minister Pashinyan posted on Facebook the need for the purification of the Church and outlined the standards the new leader should meet. To accomplish this, Pashinyan created the "Veharan is great" movement which he leads himself, asserting he meets the very criteria he established.

On October 3, 2025, Archbishop Mikayel Ajapahyan was sentenced to two years in prison over an alleged coup plot. His lawyer calls the arrest “obviously illegal and unfounded.”

On October 15, 2025, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took another bold step in cracking down on the Church which he sees as political opponents. His government arrested and jailed Bishop Mkritich Poshyan, the third Bishop in the campaign of arrests of high level clergy and detained 12 priests in his diocese and are held in pre-trial detention along with 50% of Armenia’s prison population.

On October 26, 2025, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attended a liturgy at the ancient Hovhannavank Monastery led by a priest who had been formally defrocked by the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin just days before the Prime Minister's attendance. Many perceive this as a shameless act of state interference in church affairs as Pashinyan announced on the day of Father Aram's defrocking he would attend his liturgy. The event was attended by top government officials, strong police presence, and Pashinyan supporters. This gathering was denounced by clergy as a “soul destroying initiative” and a direct challenge to the Armenian Apostolic Church's independence. Pashinyan’s attendance at such a service has become a symbol of his growing intolerance toward the clergy.

These frightening developments are understood by Armenian experts to be the calculated destruction of the last bastions of resistance to Pashinyan and the Turkification and eventual Islamization of Armenia, given the population dynamics and Pashinyan’s declared interest in bringing 300,000 Azeri Muslims to Armenia, which has an actual population of under 2 million. They further believe that Armenia and its foundation, which is the church, are on the brink of extinction – an outcome they view as nothing short of catastrophic.

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