

CSI Raises Alarm over Deteriorating Religious Freedom, Human Rights in Armenia

*Message to fellow faith leaders,
particularly Evangelicals and Catholics:
'Silence is not an option'*

YEREVAN, ARMENIA, November 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Christian Solidarity International (CSI), an interconfessional Christian human rights organization, visited Armenia from November 13-17. During their visit, CSI International President Dr. John Eibner and Director of Advocacy Dr. Joel Veldkamp met with religious leaders, human rights lawyers, and political leaders to assess mounting concerns over religious freedom and government interference in church affairs.

Key Findings and Takeaways

During the visit, CSI was not granted permission to visit detained clergy and supporters of the Armenian Apostolic Church by the Ministry of Justice, a development that Veldkamp described in a Saturday [press conference](#) as irregular.

CSI further notes that in the weeks preceding its visit, two relatives of the Armenian Catholicos, two defense lawyers, and the elected mayor of Armenia's second-largest city were detained, and a second mayor



John Eibner (left) and Joel Veldkamp (right) of CSI at the Saturday press conference in Yerevan. photo: csi



John Eibner was received by His Holiness, Karekin II, the Catholicos of all Armenians, at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin. photo: csi

representing the opposition Country for Living party was murdered.

The CSI delegation also bore witness to an escalating government crackdown on free media, including the detention of two podcasters and a journalist by masked internal security officers on the day of their arrival, as well as a call by ruling party lawmakers to confiscate the Union of Journalists' building, which was issued just as Eibner was being hosted for an interview in that very building.

On day one of Armenia's inaugural Prayer Breakfast, CSI observed that Armenia's national church was largely sidelined from the event. The sole senior representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, used the platform he was given to highlight the detention of his fellow clergy members.

Those concerns were echoed on a religious freedom panel by Dr. Asif Mahmood, who serves as Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Speaking in his personal capacity, Mahmood called for the release of these clergy.

At the end of its visit, CSI hosted a press conference, during which Eibner noted the organization's historic attention to and solidarity with the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, dating back to the 1990s.

Those efforts continue today, and he noted the organization's support for the [Swiss Peace Initiative](#) for Nagorno Karabakh, which was created to provide a platform for representatives of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to be represented in talks with the government of Azerbaijan regarding their right of return, protection of spiritual heritage, and security guarantees.

This platform is especially necessary given that the current prime minister of Armenia considers the Nagorno Karabakh issue "closed."

"One of Azerbaijan's key conditions for peace is that the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has historically stood in solidarity with the people of Nagorno Karabakh, should cease to do so," Eibner added.

Asked by the media whether he believed the current U.S.-mediated "peace" process between Azerbaijan and Armenia was genuine, Eibner echoed the prophet Jeremiah: "They say peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Veldkamp briefed reporters on the domestic situation for religious freedom and human rights in Armenia:

"We are profoundly disturbed by what we have witnessed during our visit to Armenia," he said. "We are particularly alarmed by the Pashinyan government's intrusion into the affairs of one of

the world's oldest churches.”

“We see a progression in the state’s campaign against the church,” Veldkamp said, “from verbal attacks on the church from senior government officials, to arrests of prominent supporters of the church, to arrests of clergy, to arrests of the lawyers of the clergy, to the arrests of family members of clergy.”

Veldkamp highlighted the work that local Armenian human rights groups have done to document and bring attention to the government’s weaponization of the judicial system against the church and other domestic opponents. He cited especially an [October 19 statement](#) signed by 17 different Armenian human rights NGOs, and a November 5 report from the Armenian Center for Political Rights.

He concluded with a message to fellow faith leaders seeking to support Armenia: “Foreign Christians, particularly Evangelicals and Catholics, must not allow themselves to be used by the state to undermine Armenia’s historic church.”

“Silence is not an option,” he added.

The full video recording of the press conference can be found in English with Armenian translation here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/uTCz89QITzQ>

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