

# CSI to visit Armenia during International Religious Freedom Summit

*Religious freedom organization will undertake fact-finding mission about the persecution of the Armenian Apostolic Church and livestream a briefing in Yerevan.*

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, February 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A delegation from [Christian Solidarity International](#) (CSI) will visit Armenia in the first week of February in order to carry out a fact-finding mission regarding the Armenian government's crackdown on the Armenian Apostolic Church.



CSI is undertaking a fact-finding mission in Armenia during the IRF summit.

The visit will conclude with a joint press conference in Yerevan with the Armenian Center for Political Rights (ACPR), a Yerevan-based human rights NGO which has produced a comprehensive [legal report](#) on the government's anti-church campaign. Erich Vontobel, a member of the Swiss parliament, will also participate in the visit and the press conference.

The press conference will be [livestreamed](#) on February 3 starting at 5 pm Yerevan time (8 am Washington DC time).

CSI's fact-finding mission comes as religious freedom experts and NGOs are gathering in Washington DC for the International Religious Freedom Summit, and ahead of a planned visit by U.S. Vice President JD Vance to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February.

"Religious freedom conditions have deteriorated sharply in Armenia since this summer," said Joel Veldkamp, CSI's director of advocacy. "We hope to use this visit to put a spotlight on the escalating persecution of the Armenian Apostolic Church for Summit attendees."

Since June 2025, the Armenian government has imprisoned four bishops and one priest. Dozens

of others have also been detained, including church workers, lawyers for the detained clergy, family members of the clergy, and public supporters of the church. The prime minister has publicly pledged to remove the head of the worldwide Armenian church, Catholicos Karekin II, from his position, and replace him with a figure chosen by a state-appointed committee.

Due to the unsafe situation in Armenia, the Armenian Apostolic Church recently announced its plans to hold its Episcopal Assembly on February 16-19 in Austria, rather than Armenia.

On a previous visit to Armenia in November, in conjunction with the inaugural Republic of Armenia Prayer Breakfast, a CSI delegation met with local civil society leaders, as well as family members and lawyers of the detained.

“The persecution of the Armenian Apostolic Church by the Armenian government is a grievous sign of things to come, not only for the Armenian people but for all in the international community who value religious freedom,” commented Dr. John Eibner, the president of Christian Solidarity International. “If a U.S.-allied government can so blatantly try to seize control over one of the world’s oldest churches with no international pushback, it will set a grim precedent for authoritarian governments the world over.”

“We urge participants in the IRF Summit in Washington DC, as well as Vice President Vance, to intervene with the Armenian authorities to put an end to their campaign against the Armenian church, and to free the people they have detained as part of that campaign,” he concluded.

## About CSI

Christian Solidarity International is an international human rights group campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity.

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