

Jailed archbishop appeals to Vance on visit to Armenia, Azerbaijan

Clergyman calls on VP to fulfill Trump's pledge on hostages

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, February 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the Armenian government seeks to focus discussions with Vice President JD Vance on strengthening bilateral ties, one of Armenia's most high-profile political prisoners, Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, has called on the conservative U.S. leader to tackle deeper concerns about religious freedom, hostages, and the fate of displaced Christians.



Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan embraces human rights lawyer Ruben Melikyan during his trial in a Yerevan court. Photo credit: Narek Aleksanyan

Archbishop Galstanyan, jailed in a ratcheting campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Church, has issued a direct appeal to Vice President Vance from his cell, urging American intervention to secure the release of Armenian captives in Azerbaijan and the safe return of 150,000 Armenian Christians ethnically cleansed from Nagorno Karabakh.

The [letter](#), dated February 2, 2026, was delivered to a delegation from Christian Solidarity International, who [visited](#) the archbishop in prison last week in Yerevan. CSI in turn transmitted it to the Vice President's team, who confirmed receipt of the letter.

The letter is intended to impact the Vice President's agenda as he visits both Armenia and Azerbaijan to bolster the Trump administration's engagement in the South Caucasus region. The appeal takes on added urgency following Azerbaijan's recent sentencing of Armenian statesmen in its captivity to life imprisonment—a dire statement about Baku's hostility to Armenian sovereignty amid its ongoing claims on Armenia as "Western Azerbaijan."

Archbishop Galstanyan describes his imprisonment as politically motivated [retaliation](#) for defending the Church's traditional role in protecting the nation's Christian identity. He accuses

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government of employing "time-honored methods of his communist predecessors," including surveillance, evidence fabrication, and incarceration of religious leaders who speak against government policies.

Central to the archbishop's concerns is what he characterizes as a systematic campaign to assert state control over the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has served as the cornerstone of Armenian national identity for 1,700 years. He warns that Prime Minister Pashinyan is demanding the replacement of the Catholicos, the worldwide head of the Armenian Church, with a government-aligned figure.

In a pointed reference to Vice President Vance's previous statements on European identity, Archbishop Galstanyan warns of "civilizational suicide," arguing that efforts are underway "to strip Armenia of its Christian heritage and integrate it into the Turkic, Islamic world of Turkey and Azerbaijan as an economic and military vassal."

The archbishop appeals to Vice President Vance to make two specific interventions during his regional visit: secure the release of Armenian Christian political prisoners held in both Yerevan and Baku, and obtain guarantees for the safe return of displaced Armenian Christians to Nagorno Karabakh with their fundamental human rights protected.

Quoting the Prophet Isaiah's words spoken by Christ—"to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and to set the oppressed free"—Archbishop Galstanyan frames his appeal in explicitly Christian terms, calling on the Vice President to be "animated by this Spirit" during his diplomatic engagements.

The outreach by Archbishop Galstanyan to Vance is a testament to the Vice President's reputation as a conservative Christian leader committed to the cause of religious freedom. His attention to the files mentioned – specifically the Armenian Christian hostages – will be watched as well by the politically active Armenian-American community as 2026 midterm elections approach.

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