

THE ANDZNAGIR

News for the American citizen community in Armenia



Volume 2, ISSUE 1

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Andznagir*. We'd like to say thanks for playing a part as a member of our American community abroad. We strive to give you the most up to date information coming out of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, Armenia. If you know an American citizen who is not receiving this newsletter, but would like to, please encourage them to register online at step.state.gov

In this edition of the *Andznagir* you'll find news about the changes to the way emergency information reaches you from our Embassy, ways to vote and pay taxes while abroad, changes to Armenian laws regarding the citizenship of children, and some cautionary tales about fraud. You'll also find ideas about creating your own contingency plan while you're living or travelling abroad.

And while you're here, we'd like to introduce you to the members of our team who staff the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan:

Frank Lavoie serves as our American Citizen Services Chief. Frank has been in the Foreign Service since 2011 and served his first tour in Kingston, Jamaica, before transferring to Brasilia, Brazil. Frank speaks Armenian and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Armenia from 1995 to 1997.

Anahit Movsesyan is an Armenian native and has worked at the U.S. Embassy for 11 years. She previously served as Protocol Assistant to the Ambassador. She speaks fluent Armenian and Russian.



Murwarid Abdiani previously served in Kyiv, Ukraine where she worked in Consular Service, and now joins the team in Armenia. Murwarid previously worked in the Los Angeles film and television industry.

We hope you enjoy this issue, now on to the informative stuff!

Passport Execution Fee Increase

Effective April 2, 2018 the new passport execution fee will be \$35. The previous execution fee was \$25. This will result in an increase to USD 145 or the equivalent in Armenian dram for first-time adult applicants (16 years of age or older), as well as for cases in which the passport has been lost or stolen; USD 115 or the equivalent in Armenian dram for children under 16 years of age; no change for renewal of an adult passport, which will remain USD 110 or the equivalent in Armenian dram.

Updates to Armenian Citizenship Laws for CHILDREN

The U.S. Embassy cannot provide legal advice about this or any other Armenian law. You can read more about Armenian Citizenship Laws here:

<http://parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1731&lang=eng>

Under Chapter 2, Article 11 of Citizenship Laws of the Republic of Armenia : A child, whose parents hold the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia at the moment of his/her birth, acquires the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia regardless of the place of the birth.

The child, whose one parent holds the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia at the moment of his/her birth, while the other parent is unknown or is a stateless person, acquires the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia.

In a case when one of the parents holds the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia at

the moment of child's birth, and the other parent is a foreign citizen, the determination of the child's citizenship is based on the written consent of both parents.

In the cases of the absence of such consent the child acquires the citizenship of the Republic of Armenia, if he/she was born on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, or if he/she should become a stateless person unless he/she acquires citizenship of the Republic of Armenia, or if the parents permanently reside on the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Should you require legal assistance, our List of Attorneys can be found on the [U.S. Embassy website HERE](#).

Fraud and Scam Reporting

The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan has warned Syrian refugees in Armenia about a scam promising them travel documents to the United States. We've put out a message on our Facebook page which reads:

“The U.S. Embassy Yerevan wishes to alert Syrian refugees in Armenia of an ongoing attempted immigration fraud. Several Syrian families seeking to relocate to the United States from Armenia have fallen victim to a scam which consists of an individual promising relocation and refugee travel document services from U.S. Embassy Yerevan in return for a fee paid to this U.S.-based individual...The perpetrators of this fraud may provide official-looking documentation, but it is fraudulent. We urge anyone interested in relocating to the United States to be vigilant for such immigration scams.”

Recently we have also received reports of Debit and Credit Card fraud and theft. Should you lose your wallet or should your personal items be stolen, cancel all credit and debit cards immediately and monitor your accounts for any suspicious activity.

If you are a victim of this kind of fraud, or if you know someone who is, please report your case to the U.S. Embassy at YerevanFraud@state.gov

If you have suffered a major monetary loss, please report the crime to:

**General Department on Combating Organized Crime
Police of the Republic of Armenia
130 Nalbandyan Street, Yerevan 0025, Armenia
Email: Dimum@police.am or Cybercrime@police.am
*Dial “1-02” anywhere in Armenia to reach the police department**

Consular Safety and Security Messages

U.S. Embassies around the world are changing the way they communicate with citizens living and travelling abroad. *Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts* will now be replaced by a **Travel Advisory** for each country around the world. U.S. embassies and consulates have also replaced *Emergency and Security Messages* with **Alerts**. Every country page on travel.state.gov will now include the Travel Advisory, and any Alerts issued for that country, and an interactive map

Travel Advisories help U.S. citizens find and use important security information. Every country will now be assigned a Travel Advisory of Level One to Four. An interactive map on travel.state.gov will also show the level of Travel Advisory for each country (or area within that country).

Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time. (Color: Blue)
Yerevan, for example, is at a level one.

Level 2 - Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. (Color: Yellow)

Level 3 - Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. (Color: Orange)

Level 4 - Do Not Travel: This is the highest advisory level due to life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so. (Color: Red) *the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Armenia for example, reads:*

Nagorno-Karabakh

Casualties continue to occur in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Intermittent gunfire and occasional use of artillery systems, including land mines and mortars, result in deaths and injuries each year. Avoid roads near the 'line of contact' and roads near the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The U.S. government is unable to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens in Nagorno-Karabakh as U.S. government employees are restricted from traveling there.



Alerts follow an easy-to-understand format that permits quicker release of the information to the public. Alerts will inform U.S. citizens of specific safety and security concerns in a country, such as demonstrations and weather events.

To receive Travel Advisories and Alerts while traveling or living abroad, please sign up at <https://step.state.gov>

The STEP Program: What it is and Why You Should Register



STEP is short for *The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program*. It's a way for U.S. Citizen and nationals living and travelling abroad to register with the U.S. Embassy in any given country, and a way for the embassy to contact its citizens and nationals in the event of a political crisis or natural disaster, a mass evacuation, or even a family emergency. STEP is a way for family and friends to contact you during such events. STEP is also the way the U.S. Embassy in Armenia communicates important Travel Advisories and Alerts via text and SMS, as well conveying information through newsletters and emails. Though visitors and those living in Armenia and elsewhere are not required to register for STEP, we highly encourage it. Have your passport and itinerary handy when you register: <https://step.state.gov>

VOTE! Primary Elections Begin This Month, Register for Your Absentee Ballot!



This year the entire House of Representatives and a third of the U.S. Senate are up for election. Don't miss your opportunity to vote in your state's primary election as it will determine who is on the November 2018 general election ballot. To register and request your absentee ballot, visit FVAP.gov and complete a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).

***States no longer require voting materials to be notarized for absent military service members, their families and overseas citizens. Some states still require a witness.**

Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad

Tax Info



APRIL 15TH IS SOON APPROACHING!!! All U.S. Citizens or resident aliens must report and pay tax on their worldwide income, even if they live abroad. If you live OVERSEAS, you are given an automatic two month extension to file. Any tax due though, must be paid by April 15th to avoid paying interest and, possibly, penalties.

For International Tax Assistance visit: www.irs.gov

Click on “Individuals”

Click on “International Taxpayers”

Click on “Help with Tax Questions—International Tax Payers”

If you don’t find the information you’re looking for, you can email your question from the bottom of the “Help with Tax Questions—International Taxpayers” web page.

Know an Armenian Citizen Interested in a Fulbright Scholarship?



Do you know an **Armenian citizen** who is interested in applying to the Fulbright program, for Master’s level study in the U.S.? Applications are now being accepted for the Fulbright Student Scholarships and the Fulbright Hovnanian grant, focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) and entrepreneurship, for the 2019-2020 academic years.

Fulbright Student Scholarship for study in: Economic development, education administration, international relations, journalism and communications, law, public policy analysis and public administration, environmental studies, public health policy and management. Applicants must have Armenian citizenship, Armenian residency, a Bachelor’s Degree, and good English. *The Fulbright Foreign Student Program awards grants to students to conduct Master’s Degree studies at U.S. universities. These studies will be funded for one year, pending: a successful application for a J-1 visa; receipt of medical clearance; successful academic placement at a U.S. institution of higher education by the Institute for International Education (IIE); and availability of funds.*

Fulbright Hovnanian Scholarship for study in: STEM fields and/or entrepreneurship in the U.S. Applicants must have Armenian citizenship, Armenian residency, a Bachelor’s Degree, and good English. *The Fulbright-Hovnanian Grant, sponsored by the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation, awards grants to Armenian students with a vision for contributing to Armenia’s future through a Master’s Degree in STEM fields and/or entrepreneurship.*

For more information go to: <https://www.usa.am/cms/announcements.php#Fulbright>

For questions please email: YerevanFulbright@state.gov

What's Your Plan in a Crisis Abroad?

*From <https://worldview.stratfor.com> and <https://travel.state.gov>

A Contingency Plan is important if you're living abroad. A contingency plan is a course of action that responds effectively to a significant future event or situation—one that may or may not happen. Having a plan in place before a crisis hits affords you the opportunity to develop, test, practice and refine the plan before the chaos of a crisis, whether it be a natural disaster or political strife. Below are a few elements for creating your own contingency plan:

Information Gathering: Foreign embassies often will assist evacuation efforts and disseminate information. One way they do this is through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, another is through the use of Local Wardens: American citizens who live abroad and volunteer to help other citizens during times of crisis. When you enroll in [STEP \(Smart Traveler Enrollment Program\)](#) you receive information, security messages, and alerts while traveling or living abroad. Anything the U.S. Embassy publishes needs to be approved, and therefore information tends to be more accurate than other social media sources. The U.S. Embassy and other embassies normally provide advice on when to shelter in place, when to evacuate, and where to meet.

Local Wardens are responsible for gathering information on the ground, as well as helping to organize efforts and disseminate information if communication lines go down. Both methods help the U.S. Embassy account for you should a crisis occur.

Keep in mind however, that once a government pulls its embassy and consular staff out of a country, it can no longer do much to help its citizens who stay behind. If people decide to disregard government warnings, they may very well find themselves on their own. So Sign up for programs like [STEP](#). Follow your embassy's twitter feed or Facebook page, get to know your local wardens or volunteer to become one, and don't disregard any warnings or Alerts to evacuate.

The To-Go Bag: The idea behind the To-Go bag is to have important items pre-assembled in a bag or suitcase in case the need for an abrupt departure arises. Things to include in your bag are identification papers for you and your family, money and credit cards (which should be kept in sealable plastic bags to keep them dry) and a cell phone or other means of communication. It should also include a change of clothes, toiletries, a jacket or something warm to wear, prescriptions or other medications, a first aid kit, drinking water, and some non-perishable food. Make sure your travel documents are not expired and that they have the appropriate visas if your plan requires traveling to an adjacent country.

Pre-planned Departure and evacuation routes: Although embassy alerts may give you information on where to go and what to do, cell towers do fail and the internet is not always accessible during a time of crisis, so it's important to have your own plan in place. Make sure your departure and evacuation routes are well thought out and flexible. Evacuation plans should include several routes and alternative modes of transportation. In some cases, transportation hubs — the international airport, for example — may be closed, or an earthquake may have destroyed the bridge on an escape route. Such scenarios require an alternative plan. In addition, be aware of your surrounding countries and if visas are required for entry. Alternately, think smaller, have a meeting place planned ahead of time, or ask your local warden where the meeting spot is, so everyone in your family knows where to meet up in the event of an emergency—a school or neighbor's house, for example, is common in these situations.

Crisis and natural disasters happen when living and traveling abroad. The more prepared you are, the better equipped you'll be to get yourself and your family to safety.

For more information on STEP and what else you can do while caught in a crisis abroad, visit:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/what-can-you-do-crisis-abroad.html>

To volunteer to become a Local Warden contact: ACSYerevan@state.gov

Congrats to the Peace Corps Video Finalists!



Congratulations to Peace Corps Armenia Volunteers, Elizabeth Barron, Jim Daly, and Thong Do who are individual finalists in the Peace Corps video competition. 2018's Peace Corps Week theme was "Highlighting Home." To celebrate the event the Peace Corps held a video competition inviting volunteers to teach Americans about their host cultures. Through 2-minute videos participants captured their host families, faces, and places. Check out all the videos at [2018 Peace Corps Week video challenge finalists!](#)

As always, we welcome your comments, questions and feedback. Please write to us at acsyerevan@state.gov

