

Armenia Says 'Froze' Participation in Russia-Led Security Bloc

By [AFP](#)

February 23, 2024



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Vladimir Putin. **Vladimir Smirnov, TASS / kremlin.ru**

Armenia has suspended its participation in a Russia-led security bloc, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in an interview published on Friday, Yerevan's latest step in distancing itself from Moscow.

Russia and Armenia have traditionally been allies but relations soured last year when Russian peacekeepers failed to intervene when Azerbaijan took control of the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, where Armenian separatists were in control.

"In practice, we have frozen our participation in this organization," Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told the France 24 channel, referring to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

The bloc, a defence pact, is led by Russia and comprises several former Soviet republics.

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Yerevan boycotted a CSTO summit at the end of last year, and in the interview published Friday, Pashinyan said his country "believes that the CSTO did not fulfill its objectives vis-a-vis Armenia in 2021 and 2022."

He also accused Moscow of leading a "coordinated propaganda campaign" against him and his government.

The Kremlin said Friday it had not received official confirmation that Armenia was leaving the CSTO.

"We intend to contact our Armenian colleagues to clarify its statements on CSTO," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian news agencies.

In September, Azerbaijani forces retook control of Nagorno-Karabakh in a lightning offensive that ended three decades of Armenian separatist rule over the enclave.

In a sign of its ambition for new security guarantees, Yerevan is seeking to rely more on its Western partners — mainly on France and the United States — than on Russia.

Moscow has for decades been the key mediator of disputes over Nagorno-Karabakh, but it has been bogged down in its war against Ukraine over the past two years.

Armenia formally joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the start of February, despite Moscow warning the small Caucasus country against the move.

It is now obliged to arrest Russian President Vladimir Putin if he sets foot on Armenian territory under an ICC arrest warrant issued for the Russian leader in March 2023.

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