

Britain's Prince Charles Makes Landmark Visit to Armenia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Prince Charles, the 64-year-old heir to the British throne, arrived in Armenia this week for the first visit by a member of the British royal family to the former Soviet republic, the News Armenia agency said.

The private three-day visit will end Thursday, the British Embassy in Yerevan said.

The trip was organized following an invitation from the charity Yerevan, My Love, whose activities are directed at preserving landmark historic sites in Armenia's ancient capital.

During a visit to Matenadaran, an ancient manuscript repository and research center in Yerevan, Prince Charles was greeted by a group of environmentalists protesting against the opening of the Amulsar gold mine, which is being operated 170 kilometers south of Yerevan by British-based company Lydian International.

Prince Charles was also to meet with President Serzh Sargsyan and the leader of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Catholicos Karekin II.

Public organizations representing Armenia's neighbor and rival, Azerbaijan, urged Prince Charles to visit their country as well. The European Azerbaijan Society, a British-registered organization dedicated to raising awareness of Azeri issues, invited him to "find the opportunity to cross the border into neighboring Azerbaijan," according to a statement carried by independent Azeri news agency APA.

"Of course, Prince Charles will have some difficulty in crossing the border, as some 20 percent of Azerbaijan's lands are still under Armenian occupation," the statement said.

Relations between the two countries have been strained for more than two decades, since a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly ethnic Armenian region, first erupted in 1988. The region then claimed independence from Azerbaijan to join Armenia and has since remained in Armenian control.

The Moscow Times contributed to this report.

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