
Armenian Leader Wants Businessmen Be Barred From Public Posts - Aide

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A top economic adviser to the Armenian president has said that holding top governmental offices by tycoons damages both the overnment interests and the business environment, in addition, it is unconstitutional.

In an interview with Armenian daily Aravot published on 26 February, Vahram Nersisyants says that this poses a serious problem for Armenia. When a rich businessman also holds an office "his loyalty and efforts are shifted from serving the government towards their [own] businesses," Nersisyants said.

But it also damages the business environment as they use their power to set unequal conditions and push out their competitors from the markets, Nersisyants added. He says the Armenian constitution contains three articles barring businessmen from getting to public offices, and because the wording of those articles was too mild in the 1995 constitution, they were toughened by the amendments made in 2005. However, the constitution is not taken heed of it, Nersisyants said.

He explains that this is due to the fact that many state officials hide the fact they are engaged in private businesses by registering their companies under names of their relatives while they, in fact, continue to manage their companies personally. He says this results in a situation where the law enforcers do not have enough proof of an official doing business.

But often state officials go public and speak about their businesses, Nersisyants says, and this is enough evidence of them being engaged in private businesses. Nersisyants also complains that not only the government but also the opposition does not raise the issue seriously. In conclusion, Nersisyants says that Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan is currently trying to initiate new tougher rules so that businessmen get lower changes to get to public offices.
