FM: SITUATION WITH EXCHANGE OF DETAINEES BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA LESS OPTIMISTIC

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The situation with the exchange of the detainees between Azerbaijan and Armenia is less optimistic, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

Lavrov made the remarks at the press-conference in Moscow following the talks with OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger, Trend reports on Oct. 31.

"I met with the Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers with the participation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs in Moscow in April, he said. There was a very good, informal and frank discussion, which resulted in the prospects for taking a number of humanitarian measures, confidence-building measures along with an analysis of possible promising approaches to a political dialogue to resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The measures of exchanging detainees and the bodies of the dead, and the mutual trip of journalists in order to relieve the tension and promote an atmosphere of trust were discussed, Lavrov added.

Regarding the journalists, there is a dialogue through the mediation of the OSCE Secretariat, there is a hope, the minister said. The situation with the detainees is less optimistic. We should move in this direction."

Lavrov stressed that the ongoing efforts of the co-chairmen are required to bring the positions closer and to achieve a compromise.

The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. As a result of the ensuing war, Armenian armed forces occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts.

The 1994 ceasefire agreement was followed by peace negotiations. Armenia has not yet implemented four UN Security Council resolutions on withdrawal of its armed forces from Nagorno Karabakh and the surrounding districts.

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