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## **RUSSIA'S INTELLIGENCE SERVICE WARNS OF 'DEEP ECONOMIC CRISIS' IN ARMENIA**

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The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Tuesday warned of a deep economic crisis in Armenia if Yerevan opts out of the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union and joins the European Union, aspirations for which were approved by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government last year.

In an announcement issued on Tuesday, the SVR also signaled that neither the EU nor Armenia should anticipate that the EEU and its members states would rescue Armenia from the economic downfall it predicts will take place if Armenia continues its EU aspirations.

The SVR statement came a day after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan initiated a phone conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, who called on the Armenian leader to schedule a referendum on Armenia's membership in the EU as soon as possible. Pashinyan was reported to have reiterated that such a vote cannot take place before the Armenian government makes a formal EU membership bid. The government remains in no rush to do that despite enacting last year a law declaring the start of a process of Armenia's accession to the European Union.

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