

Armenia: Inspiring "Crane's Nest" Educational Retreat and Peace Hike

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July 1, 2026



DILIJAN, ARMENIA - In a powerful demonstration of international solidarity, youth leadership, and spiritual resilience, Armenia recently played host to the "Crane's Nest" initiative. Spanning from June 25 to July 1, the consecutive programs seamlessly blended deep educational insights with a grueling yet transformative peace hike through the breathtaking wilderness of Dilijan National Park.

Organized in close cooperation with the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) and High Noon, the week-long gathering brought together young leaders from 10 different countries, charting a shared course toward personal growth and a global culture of peace.

Part I: Cultivating Connections at the Educational Retreat (June 25 - 27)

The week commenced with a vibrant, three-day educational retreat designed to challenge minds and connect hearts. Far from a conventional academic conference, the "Crane's Nest" seminar established a warm, family-like atmosphere where participants from diverse cultural backgrounds quickly found common ground.

The educational framework was anchored by a series of thought-provoking and inspiring presentations:

Andrei Eşanu, Vice Regional Director for the Northeast Region, and Polina Makarenko delivered powerful live sessions on-site, guiding participants through interactive discussions on leadership, character development, and emotional intelligence.

Andranik Karagezian joined the retreat digitally, delivering an impactful online address that bridged the physical distance and added a profound layer of global context to the lectures.

Beyond the formal curriculum, the true magic of the retreat unfolded during late-night conversations, shared meals, and collaborative workshops. Participants discovered that despite their geographical

differences, they shared identical hopes for a unified, peaceful future, forging international bonds of friendship destined to last a lifetime.



Part II: The Peace Road Hike - Conquering Peaks, Building Unity (June 28 - July 1)

Immediately following the classroom sessions, the program shifted from intellectual exploration to physical and spiritual endurance. In conjunction with the global Peace Road initiative, 29 courageous participants set out into the emerald slopes and rugged terrain of Dilijan National Park for a four-day hiking challenge.

The mountains of Armenia served as both a stunning backdrop and a demanding teacher. As the hikers navigated steep ascents and unpredictable trail conditions, they were called to put the retreat's lessons of synergy and resilience into immediate practice.

"The trail mirrored life itself. When the climbs became steep and exhaustion set in, it was the collective spirit of the group - the helping hands and shared laughter - that carried us forward." - Event Participant

Overcoming physical obstacles together catalyzed a profound inner transformation among the hikers. Every conquered peak became a victory of collective will over individual limitation, embodying a living model of cooperation.

A Shared Vision for a Better World

Ultimately, the "Crane's Nest" initiative proved to be far more than a summer excursion; it was a tangible manifestation of True Parents' vision for peace. By fostering a culture of mutual respect, self-discipline, and cross-border harmony, the project demonstrated how the rising generation can actively dismantle historical barriers.

As the 29 participants descended from the heights of Dilijan to return to their respective homelands, they carried with them renewed spirits, strengthened bodies, and a shared blueprint for building peace - one step, and one heart, at a time.