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## **17th Century St. Stephanos Church Re-Opens in Hochants Village after Renovation**



Tufenkian Charitable Foundation, Artsakh's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Tourism and Armenian Apostolic Church recently completed the restoration of Saint Stepanos church in the village of Hochants in liberated Kashatagh region.

Today, during the official opening ceremony of the church, Pargev Archbishop Martirosyan, the leader of Artsakh Diocese of Armenian Apostolic Church has re-consecrated the 17th-century basilica, making it a functioning church again. The representatives of the local government were also present.

The church is one of the renovated spiritual and cultural sites among many that Tufenkian Foundation included in the resettlement and development program of Kashatagh region. The small church will now be open for visitors, tourists, and explorers as it is a unique piece of the rich Armenian cultural and spiritual heritage

of the liberated territories.

“We always try to focus on developing communities and invest in the local economy. However the cultural heritage is the treasure of Artsakh and sites like St. Stepanos are proving the fact of Armenians being the true ancestors and owners of this wonderful place”, – Says the development director of Tufenkian Foundation, Antranig Kasbarian.

The Foundation has always supported the preservation of cultural heritage in Artsakh. Unfortunately, the state does not possess enough funds to work on several rehabilitation and restoration projects simultaneously. The Tufenkian Foundation completed the renovation of the St. Stepanos church through generous donations from friends in the U.S. In the past two years, the Tufenkian Foundation completed repair and restoration works in St. Minas church in Hak village of Kashatagh district and Dadivank monastery complex.

“This region is famous for its churches and monasteries. Many of them are masterpieces, and sadly, we cannot pay much attention to all the sites. Thankfully, small steps like this can encourage more Armenians to join the renovation and preservation projects around Artsakh.” – Said Pargev Archbishop Martirosyan.

St. Stepanos church dates back to the 17th century. It was a great community church before the Armenian population left some of the territories in the Kashatagh region.

The Tufenkian foundation has conducted several projects in Hochants village, including the renovation of the local school.

Founded in 1999 by entrepreneur James Tufenkian, the Tufenkian Foundation has worked in Artsakh for over 15 years. Its on-the-ground efforts feature the promotion of resettlement, infrastructure, healthcare, and other development programs.





– Source: OCP & [Serbian Orthodox Church](#)