

STATEMENT

The Government of the Republic of Armenia has initiated the process of removing the old terminal building of Zvartnots International Airport from the State List of Immovable Monuments of History and Culture of the City of Yerevan.

It should be recalled that this outstanding and internationally renowned masterpiece of Armenian Modernism was included in the State List as a monument of national significance only about one year ago—on August 14, 2025—by decision of the current Government, following years of persistent advocacy by the public and the professional community (Government of the Republic of Armenia Decision No. 1151-N of August 14, 2025, Clause 1.7.12).

Unfortunately, in the Republic of Armenia, the "protection" of monuments—particularly modern heritage—is not a matter of state policy, but rather an instrument serving short-term political and economic interests. Even under such circumstances, however, it remains entirely unclear on what cultural and legal grounds a monument can be stripped of its protected status. How can a monument lose its designation if it remains in the same location and in the same condition as when that designation was granted? It is unacceptable to deprive a monument of national significance of its status on the grounds of its infrastructural or other functional importance. Would the same logic be applied to a medieval monastery, fortress, or bridge? If not, then what distinguishes Modernist heritage from medieval heritage? Both possess equal cultural value and enjoy the same legal status.

This draft Government decision—and even the mere fact that the Government is considering it—could establish a dangerous precedent for similar interventions against protected monuments in the future, affecting not only modern heritage but all monuments, regardless of their functional purpose or historical significance. We find it necessary to recall the fate of those landmarks that helped shape the architectural identity of Armenia after they were removed from the list of protected heritage sites: the Sevan Hotel (demolished between 2005 and 2016), the historic canal in Kanaker-Zeytun (destroyed), and the Moscow Cinema Summer Hall, which was ultimately saved through public pressure but whose future remains uncertain despite pre-election promises of its reconstruction and reopening.

We, the members of Docomomo Armenia, condemn the attitude and approach adopted by state authorities and their leadership toward the monuments of Armenian Modernism. Heritage—and in particular Modernist monuments, as an integral part of the heritage representing the contemporary identity of our country—must remain free from political and economic processes driven by short-term interests. It constitutes an inseparable part of the collective heritage of the Armenian people, regardless of the date of its construction.

Through this statement, we call upon the Government of the Republic of Armenia and its institutions to abandon the decision to remove, either wholly or partially, the old terminal building of Zvartnots Airport from the State List of Immovable Monuments of History and Culture. At the same time, we urge the company responsible for the management of Zvartnots International Airport to reconsider the proposed expansion of the passenger terminal while ensuring the complete preservation of this Modernist building of outstanding global significance.

The members of Docomomo Armenia stand ready, within the limits of their professional expertise, to provide expert assistance in the conservation of the historic Zvartnots terminal building.

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Photo: Arsen
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