

Journalist: Hello. Citizens are protesting against tree cutting. What do you think — some say “the city authorities are wrong to cut down, for example, 80 lindens on Tumanyan Street.”

Khachatryan: Thank you for emphasizing the word citizens at the beginning of your question. How many RA citizens do you see here? Who are the Russians to come to my, your, and everyone else's city and hold any kind of environmental protest? I understand where the wind is blowing from. Honestly, I thought it would be a Czech wind, but apparently, it's coming in a Russified form. I'm talking about the organizers — the instructions were supposed to come from the Czech Republic, but they're arriving Russified. Here's the thing: some Russians, so-called environmentalists, who are idle in our city, along with a few council members with personal agendas, are behind these kinds of actions. Yes, the trees are being replaced — replaced with much better ones. I also understand the commotion, especially this part about the Russians — it's because, just like in their own country, their rotten trees are being replaced by more successful European ones. The trees are being replaced with better ones, and in a few years, citizens will see the result. You said "lousy", right? I've been a city council member for 8 years, and every season I receive complaints from 90% of Yerevan's courtyards and streets about pests and insects. We treated the trees, but it didn't help. We are replacing the trees with better ones — this is a project aimed at making the city richer and greener in the future.

Journalist: Ms. Khachatryan, but why are you speaking so harshly? Concerned people, even if they're Russian citizens, are raising an issue.

Khachatryan: I'll say it again — let them try doing something on the streets of Moscow, in Russia... Let them go and protest there. In my city, in the city of RA citizens — Yerevan — they have no right to hold protests. At least for me. And even if they do — I don't care about the issues they raise. Again, let them do that in their own country. And this organized part of the protest — it's not there now, but a council member came, gave orders, and left. Once more: what was Czech has now turned Russian.

Journalist: I take it you're referring to Hayk Marutyan. Okay, even if you don't want to listen to Russians, then at least listen to, for example...

Khachatryan: The purpose of this protest — and this issue has been raised at council sessions continuously for the past 2–3 years — is one: a personal issue that a particular council member has against a specific individual. And he is simply organizing Russified protests by Czech order. This has nothing to do with environmentalism or anything else. As for Yerevan residents, Armenian citizens — I can assure you, there are more people in my office right now than here at the protest. Thank you. So again — I have nothing to say to citizens representing another country. What we're doing — we're doing right.

Journalist: But there are Armenians too. Don't you have anything to say to them?

Khachatryan: Everything that had to be said to Armenians has been said. Again — if the issues we are addressing...

Journalist: But specifically about the trees — what have you solved, Ms. Khachatryan?

Khachatryan: The old trees are being replaced with much more expensive, much better ones, and the goal is a greener Yerevan in the future.

Journalist: Can you show us pictures, please? For example, we don't see a Green Yerevan right now.

Khachatryan: You will see it, because everything is being done anew. Yes, you don't see it now. We've lived 30–40 years among rotten Russian trees. Now we're getting trees from more advanced countries...

Journalist: So if it came from Russia, it's rotten?

Khachatryan: In fact, everything Russian is rotten — just like them. Thank you.