
Armenia invites Turkish president in football diplomacy

By Editor

Published: 07/05/2008 - 01:32

YEREVAN, July 5, 2008 (AFP) - Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian has invited Turkish President Abdullah Gul to watch a football match in Yerevan, a spokesman said Saturday, despite a diplomatic freeze between the two countries.

'The president has invited Turkish President Abdullah Gul to visit Armenia on September 6 to watch the World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey,' Sarkisian's spokesman, Samvel Farmanyan, told AFP.

There are currently no diplomatic ties between Turkey and Armenia because of disputes over the massacre of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in the early 20th century and over Turkey's support for Azerbaijan, Armenia's arch-foe.

Backed by Armenia, ethnic-Armenian forces took control of the Azerbaijani province of Nagorny Karabakh during a war in the early 1990s that killed thousands and forced nearly a million people on both sides to flee their homes.

There have been recent calls to reopen the border between ex-Soviet Armenia and Turkey to help growing trade ties between the two, which are currently conducted through third countries such as Georgia.

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