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- [Classifieds](#)
- [Vacation](#)

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  - [Classifieds](#)
  - [Vacation & Travel](#)

in Armenia. At that time, Armenia was part of the Soviet Union and Mr. Akopian says opportunities for a career in diplomacy were limited. But that changed when the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia became independent in 1991.

But still, Mr. Akopian says he didn't give any thought to following in his father's footsteps in the Foreign Service, and continued teaching at the university. Then he was invited to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a desk officer in the Middle East Department. In 1992, he was posted to Egypt as Second Secretary in the political, economical and cultural affairs section of the Armenian mission in Cairo.

"It took me two months to get used to it," says Mr. Akopian, 42. After his Egypt posting ended in 1995, Mr. Akopian was promoted to the position of Second Secretary in the Middle East Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Later he became First Secretary and a member of Armenia's foreign policy planning group.

Towards the late 1990s, Mr. Akopian became Director of the Middle East Department. In 1999 he was posted to New York as Counsellor at Armenia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations. In 2002, he became Director of the Department of Arms Control and International Security at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Akopian arrived in Ottawa two weeks ago. He replaces Ambassador **Ara Papian**, who left for Armenia early this year. But even though he became a diplomat, Mr. Akopian continues to teach at the university whenever he is working in Yerevan. He admits that he is still deeply attached to academia and relishes every chance he gets to teach.

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"Teaching young people is refreshing, it keeps you away from being bureaucratic," he says. Mr. Akopian says he chose to come to Canada because of interactions with Canadians in multilateral forums like NATO and the UN.

"I already had a very good knowledge about Canada even before coming here," he says, adding that he hopes to add to the cordial relations between Armenia and Canada. Mr. Akopian is married and has two daughters. In his free time he likes fencing, studying and playing classical guitar and reading. In addition he also likes studying languages and spending time with his family. Mr. Akopian speaks Armenian, English, French, Russian, Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic and Latin and is the author of two books on modern Hebrew and classical Syriac, an eastern Aramaic language.

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