

# Armenia, Azerbaijan Urged to Restart Peace Talks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – US, Russian and French mediators have urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to gear up for “serious substantive negotiations” on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after recent deadly clashes on their border.

In a weekend statement, the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group also welcomed the current “relative stability” along a section of the border where heavy fighting broke out on July 12 and left at least 17 soldiers from both sides dead.

The hostilities largely stopped on July 16. The conflicting parties have since reported sporadic ceasefire violations mainly involving small arms.

An Armenian army soldier, Ashot Mikaelyan, was shot dead at the volatile border section early on Monday in what the Defense Ministry in Yerevan described as Azerbaijani sniper fire.

“The Co-Chairs appeal to the sides to take advantage of the current reduction in active hostilities to prepare for serious substantive negotiations to find a comprehensive solution to the conflict,” read the statement. “The Co-Chairs stress once more that refraining from provocative statements and actions, including threats or perceived threats to civilians or to critical infrastructure, is essential during this delicate period.”

“The Co-Chairs note that recent public statements criticizing the joint efforts of the co-chairing countries, and/or seeking unilaterally to establish new “conditions” or changes to the settlement process format are not conducive to resuming a constructive dialogue,” it said.

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev lambasted the mediators and threatened to withdraw from further peace talks just days before the flare-up on the border between Armenia’s northern Tavush province and Azerbaijan’s Tovuz district. Aliyev specifically blasted their regular assertions that the Karabakh conflict cannot be solved militarily.

For his part, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said last Thursday that Karabakh must become a “full-fledged party to negotiations” mediated by the Minsk Group co-chairs.

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Armenians at the Federal Building protest in Boston July 22 (photo Vrej Ashjian)

## Azerbaijanis Attempt to Counter Two Boston Demonstrations

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON – Two successive Armenian public events to raise awareness of the recent attacks on the Armenian border by Azerbaijan were disrupted in the Boston area by Azerbaijanis or their supporters last week.

On July 22, the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) Greater Boston Nejdeh Chapter organized a “die-in” protest at the Thomas P. O’Neill, Jr. Federal Building in Boston. According to Meghri Dervartanian, a member of the chapter, it took place from 4:30 to 7 p.m. She said, “Most of us lay on the ground or sidewalk with signs stating ‘Stop Azeri aggression,’ ‘Armenia pro-peace, Azerbaijan wants war,’ and ‘Armenia wants peace.’ It is not something you see every day, so that got a lot of attention.” Armenians standing around would explain to passersby what was going on in more detail.

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Azerbaijani at Harvard Square Armenian dance flash mob (photo Vrej Ashjian)

## Azerbaijanis Vandalize KZV Armenian School

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

SAN FRANCISCO – Some Azerbaijanis around the world are targeting Armenians, possibly responding to jingoistic messages issued by the country’s government, in the wake of that country’s sudden act of aggression against Armenia.

In the wake of the defeat, the governments of both Azerbaijan and Turkey have issued incendiary messages aimed at their own diasporas, as well as Armenians both in Armenia and abroad.

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## First Phase 3 Clinical Trial of Coronavirus Vaccine in US Begins

By Elizabeth Cohen, John Bonifield and Jamie Gumbrecht

SAVANNAH, Ga. (CNN) – The first Phase 3 clinical trial of a coronavirus vaccine in the United States began Monday, July 27.

The investigational vaccine was developed by the biotechnology company

Moderna and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health. The trial is to be conducted at nearly 100 US research sites, according to Moderna. The first patient was dosed at a site in

Savannah, Georgia.

The trial is expected to enroll about 30,000 adult volunteers and evaluates the safety of the Moderna/NIH vaccine and whether it can prevent symptomatic Covid-19 after two doses, among other outcomes. Volunteers will receive either two 100 microgram injections of the vaccine or a placebo about 28 days apart.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mkhitarian Gifts Armenia Team Jerseys To Soldiers

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On July 27, Armenian national football team captain Henrikh Mkhitaryan gifted Armenian national team jerseys to the soldiers, wounded during the military operations in the north-eastern part of Armenian-Azerbaijani state border in July, the Football Federation of Armenia reported.

Mkhitaryan promised to meet the soldiers and sign the jerseys when he returns to Armenia.

“I thank you for standing firmly and defending the borders of our homeland,” Mkhitaryan wrote in his letter to the soldiers.

### US House Approves More Funding For Mine Clearance In Karabakh

WASHINGTON – The US House of Representatives approved on Thursday, July 23, \$1.4 million in fresh US funding for humanitarian demining operations in Nagorno-Karabakh carried out by a British charity.

The HALO Trust has cleared tens of thousands of anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines, mostly left over from the 1991-1994 Armenian-Azerbaijani war, since it began its work in Karabakh in 2001. The US Congress has financed the effort as part of its direct humanitarian assistance to the Armenian-populated territory allocated over strong Azerbaijani objections.

The current US administration has sought to end that assistance. An amendment to a House bill on US foreign aid in the fiscal year 2021 requires it continue funding the demining program in Karabakh.

The amendment was drafted by three members of the House, one of whom, Jackie Speier, argued that Karabakh has one of the highest per capita mine accident rates in the world. More than 400 of its residents have been killed there by landmines since 1994.

The measure was also co-sponsored by more than 30 other lawmakers. Armenian-American advocacy groups lobbied hard for its passage.

“Today’s vote represents a powerful rebuke to the Azerbaijani government-driven, State Department-supported effort to end Artsakh’s demining program despite its remarkable record of having removed tens of thousands of landmines and saving countless lives,” said the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

“For a relatively small investment, the United States can make a significant difference for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, especially for the children,” it said in a statement.

The aid allocation also needs to be backed by the US Senate.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenia Reports 239 New Coronavirus Cases

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia confirmed 239 new coronavirus infections in a 24-hour period, bringing the national tally to 37,629 as of 11 a.m. Tuesday, July 28, the Ministry of Health reports.

A total of 692 more patients have recovered from COVID-19 with the total number of recoveries now standing at 27,357.

The coronavirus death toll has increased by 8 to 719.

The latest victims were 89 (female), 54 (female), 63 (male), 85 (male), 64 (male), 74 (male), 62 (male) and 89 (male) years old. All had underlying chronic health conditions.

In addition, according to the ministry, 2 cases of death were recorded in the past 24 hours when the patients tested positive for COVID-19, but the cause of death was another disease. The total of such cases is 223.

The number of active cases is 9,330.

As many as 158,527 tests have been performed in the country since the outbreak of the pandemic.

## Solar Panel Production Up by 36 Percent in Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — A total of 5,779 units of solar panels have been manufactured in Armenia in January-May 2020, according to the data released by the National Statistical Service (NSS).

As the data suggest, the production volume grew by 35.6 percent to compare with the same period the previous year. According to the source, 837 units out of the total number were produced in May.

NSS data next indicate that in January-May 2020, a total of 6.8 million kilowatt-hours of electricity were produced in Armenia's solar power plants, increasing by 41.7 percent compared with the same period of 2019.

## Defense Minister Meets With Russian Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Defense Minister of Armenia Davit Tonoyan met with Ambassador of Russia to Armenia Sergey Kopirkin on July 28. Russian embassy's military attaché Andrey Grischuk was also present at the meeting.

The two sides discussed issues related to military and military-technical cooperation between the two countries, as well as the military-political situation in the region.

Tonoyan presented a report to Kopirkin about recent events on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the Artsakh-Azerbaijani contact line, emphasizing the constructive and stabilizing role of Russia.

Presenting his evaluations of the political and military steps of Azerbaijan and Turkey aimed at destabilizing the situation in the region, Tonoyan noted that the Armenian Armed Forces, as well as the Armenian-Russian joint unit continue following the developments, analyzing them and are ready to any development.

Kopirkin reaffirmed Russia's position over the establishment of stability in the region and said Russia will take all necessary measures to that end.

## My Step Members to Meet New Constitutional Court Nominee

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The ruling My Step faction of the Armenian Parliament will most likely hold a meeting with Vahram Avetisyan, who has been nominated for the position of the Constitutional Court judge by the government, in the coming days, faction MP Sisak Gabrielyan said at a press conference on July 28.

"I think that the other political forces will also meet with him. There will be meetings with the factions, and maybe, our positions will be more understandable," he said.

# Pashinyan Explains Why Azerbaijan Attacked Armenia and not Karabakh

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net, Panorama.am) — In a recent interview with RBC, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has weighed in on the recent escalation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, and explained why Azerbaijan attacked the territory of Armenia, and not Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to Pashinyan, the bellicose rhetoric of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has been growing in recent months, and literally a week before the escalation, Aliyev threatened to withdraw from negotiations on a peaceful settlement.

"There is a nuance as to why they attacked not in the direction of Nagorno-Karabakh, but in the direction of Armenia's Tavush province. The Azerbaijani leader has promised his people that he would solve the Nagorno-Karabakh issue through an armed attack. The problem is that over the past 10 years, the Azerbaijani government has spent several billion dollars under the pretext of developing the Azerbaijani Armed Forces," Pashinyan explained.

"And a week before that [the escalation] they said that 'now we cannot attack in the direction of Nagorno-Karabakh, because the armed forces of Nagorno-Karabakh have installed video surveillance systems on the line of contact, and any movement of Azerbaijani troops will be visible to the Karabakh Armed Forces'."

He also cited a second factor which

made Azerbaijan choose Armenia for the attack and revealed that there are many Azerbaijani settlements near the contact line of Nagorno-Karabakh, and it is now quite difficult for Azerbaijan to launch an attack in that direction.

"They attacked in a spot where not so many video surveillance systems have been installed. There is only one Azerbaijani village in this direction, and a lot of Armenian ones," he added.

In addition, at a cabinet meeting on July 23, the Government decided to allocate 25 million drams to the regional administration in Tavush. At least 150 million drams will be required to compensate for the property damage caused to the residents of border communities in the Tavush region of Armenia due to the shelling that began on July 12, 25 million of which are proposed to be allocated urgently. A task force to take stock of damage has been set up. The program features local construction opportunities, including citizens who have not gone to work abroad. Part of the funds will be provided in the form of a prepayment to start work as soon as possible.

Pashinyan noted: "At this stage, we

just intend to allocate funds very quickly so that work could begin for further larger-scale efforts. I would like to inform our society that during the previous meeting we discussed this issue behind closed doors. Without going into the details of the content of that discussion, I will simply note that we have come to the conclusion that conceptual policy changes need to be made with regard to border villages. In general,



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

these villages are still under direct fire and, therefore, reconstruction work was implemented with a slightly different logic. We must change the logic, and the border villages must not only be simply restored, but we must also have a clear policy, a clear strategy for the development of these villages and settlements.

# EPIC and Dartmouth Create Plan for Crowdfunding for Armenian Startups

YEREVAN — The Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC) of the American University of Armenia (AUA) recently concluded a project with faculty and students from the Tuck School of Business of Dartmouth College. Tuck is ranked as one of the top business schools in the world. For five months, a team of MBA students from Tuck together with a team of AUA undergraduate students worked to assess the feasibility of creating a crowdfunding platform in Armenia. The project concluded that it is feasible to create an investment vehicle for early-stage Armenian startups to secure pre-seed equity-based financing from the Armenian diaspora and beyond. Similar crowdfunding financing approaches have been successfully used in developing countries to target individuals from prosperous diasporas for financing startups.

For over 20 weeks, the teams conducted market research with dozens of stakeholders including startup founders, diaspora representatives and investors, crowdfunding experts, and legal advisors. The teams analyzed the local conditions for establishing and deploying a platform. Though the visit of the Tuck team to Armenia was called off because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all planned interviews were held remotely. "Despite the challenges, the work was first-rate, providing EPIC with an actionable business plan that we will begin to implement this summer. I am proud of our AUA students who were repeatedly praised by the Tuck professors for the quality of their work. No doubt, there was considerable learning by our enthusiastic students," commented Professor Michael Kouchakdjian, Director of EPIC.

Entrepreneurial endeavors and new business startups continue to grow in Armenia and are expected to play a sig-

nificant role in Armenia's economic success. Currently, early-stage venture investment and financing options in Armenia include bank debt, angel funds, and venture capital. However, there is a gap in the ecosystem for small-dollar, pre-seed financing (less than \$50,000). Through this project, EPIC aims to establish a vehicle to complement existing financing options and to fill the demand gap while providing an opportunity for diaspora investors to participate in Armenia's startup landscape and channel their engagement by way of investment in lieu of donations. Thus, crowdfunding provides the means to address the need and also provide opportunity.

"In the scope of this project, I have worked with incredible people from Tuck with great experience and working style, who were willing to share their knowledge with us. Not only have I learned a lot about the benefits of crowdfunding and the significant impact that it will have on Armenia, but also I had the chance to get valuable insights about Armenia's startup culture and learn about the existing gaps in the startup ecosystem. It made me think about how I could fill those gaps in the future and contribute to the improvement of Armenia's overall business environment," shared Elen Gevorgyan (BAB '21) from the AUA team.

During the research, students had multiple opportunities to talk with key players in the Armenian entrepreneurial ecosystem and other stakeholders whose expertise and advice would be essential for the project's successful implementation. Meetings with financial and investment leaders, marketing experts, and various other professionals from the diaspora kept the students engaged throughout the project. "It gave me a closer look at the microeco-

nomics of the small business market in Armenia and the funding channels from the Armenian diaspora to the homeland, the existing challenges and possibilities," noted Georges Ohannessian (BAB '21).

Working with a team that has global experience while focusing on real-life and practical issues and challenges in a developing country such as Armenia led to a valuable collaboration for everyone involved. For the participating AUA students, in particular, the project realized the learning objective to observe best practices and teamwork exemplified by the Tuck MBA students. Gohar Avsharyan (EC '21) noted that "Each person brought their individual outlook and skills to the team. Through the in-depth interviews jointly conducted with the Tuck students, I understood the significance and power of teamwork. Their willingness to bring each other's skills to the fore was an essential component of the research and something I would always apply in the future."

The teams delivered their final presentation on May 22 to the faculty of both universities, EPIC's staff, and other invited guests. "Working on this crowdfunding project with AUA has been a great learning experience for us. Coming from an investment background, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to interview so many different stakeholders in the Armenian entrepreneurship ecosystem, from startup founders to VC/angel investors, as well as legislators and advisors. I can't wait to see this platform come to life," says Anh N.H. Nguyen (Tuck MBA '21).

The Tuck team plans to visit Armenia as soon as travel opens up in the future, and will maintain active ties with the AUA students and EPIC. The crowdfunding platform is scheduled to go live in early 2021.



## ARMENIA

## European Court Seeks Information About Armenian Captive in Azerbaijan

STRASBOURGH (RFE/RL) — The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ordered Azerbaijan to provide information about the whereabouts and condition of an Armenian man who was detained in its Nakhichevan exclave earlier this month.

Authorities in Nakhichevan reported the arrest of the 30-year-old man, Narek Sardaryan, on July 15 one week after he went missing while grazing cattle in a border village in Armenia's southeastern Syunik region.

Sardaryan was shown on local television saying that he fled Armenia and wants to live in Azerbaijan or a third country. His family believes that he crossed the Armenian-Azerbaijani border by accident and was forced by the Azerbaijani security services to give a different reason for entering Nakhichevan.

A lawyer representing the family, Artak Zeynalyan, asked the ECHR last week to help ensure that Sardaryan is safe and sound and can communicate with his wife, sister and parents.

The Strasbourg-based court agreed to

and can receive or send letters.

Baku must provide this and other information before the end of this month, Zeynalian told RFE/RL's Armenian service.



Manvel Saribekyan

Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, discussed Sardaryan's disappearance at a July 14 meeting with Claire Meytraud, the head of the Yerevan office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It is not clear whether officials from the ICRC office in Baku have since been allowed to visit Sardaryan.

Zeynalian, who served as Armenia's justice minister from 2018-2019, suggested that the ECHR took into account the tragic fate of other Armenian civilians who had strayed into Azerbaijani territory in similar circumstances.

In September 2010, a 20-year-old resident of a border village in Armenia's Gegharkunik province, Manvel Saribekyan, crossed into Azerbaijan and was immediately accused by Baku of planning to carry out terrorist attacks.

Saribekyan was found hanged in an Azerbaijani detention center one month later. Azerbaijani officials claimed that he committed suicide. But in a January 2020 ruling, the ECHR backed Armenian forensic experts' conclusion that young man was tortured to death.

Another Armenian villager, Karen Petrosyan, was pronounced dead in August 2014 one day after being detained in an Azerbaijani village across the border. The Azerbaijani military claimed that he died of "acute heart failure." The Armenian authorities believe, however, that Petrosyan was murdered or beaten to death.



Narek Sardaryan

issue such an injunction on Thursday. According to Zeynalian, it specifically ordered the Azerbaijani authorities to reveal the place and conditions of Sardaryan's detention and report whether he is facing any criminal charges, has access to a lawyer



Family of Sos Elbakyan speak to the president.

## President Sarkissian Visits Family of Soldier Killed by Azerbaijan

YEREVAN — President Armen Sarkissian visited on July 24 the Elbakyan family in Marmashen, Shirak province. Their son, Army Captain Sos Elbaktan, had been killed on the Tavush segment of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border as a result of the military actions unleashed by Azerbaijan.

Sarkissian expressed his deep condolences to the parents of Elbakyan and noted that their son had sacrificed his young life defending devotedly the border of the Fatherland, our peace and security.

The president also expressed gratitude to the parents of Elbakyan for raising such a courageous and patriotic son. "I bow to his eternal memory. His heroism is immortal," President Sarkissian said and noted that we all take pride in our Army and its brave servicemen.

At the Marmashen monastery, President Armen Sarkissian lit a candle in the memory of the young soldiers and the troops.



President Sarkissian pays his respects to the late Sos Elbakyan and his family.

## Armenian Lawmaker Fined Over Lake Sevan Beach Party

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian authorities have fined a pro-government parliamentarian and shut down a lakeside resort where he partied over the weekend in breach of coronavirus safety rules set by the government.

The late-night party featuring live music took place at a beach club located on the northern shore of Lake Sevan. Photographs and videos posted on social media showed Hayk Sargsyan, a 27-year-old lawmaker affiliated with Armenia's ruling My Step bloc, and dozens of other young people wearing no face masks and not observing social distancing there.

This caused a media uproar in the country

which has had one of the highest coronavirus infection rates in the world. The Armenian government has for months been trying to curb the spread of the disease by enforcing strict anti-epidemic rules. Sargsyan himself urged Armenians earlier this summer to comply with the rules requiring them wear masks in all public spaces.

The lawmaker, who is no stranger to controversy, said on Monday that police have fined him and the other revelers. He also apologized to the government for causing such a big and unnecessary rumpus.

Sargsyan claimed that he only briefly failed to put on a mask. However, the widely publicized images suggest that he was not masked

throughout the beach party.

A pop singer who performed at the event said he was told that it was allowed by Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, who coordinates the government's response to the coronavirus outbreak. A spokesman for Avinyan insisted, however, that his office did not issue such permission.

The office shut down the Spitak Shorzha beach club for two weeks on Tuesday, saying that it violated a government ban on live performances and mass gatherings and failed to enforce other coronavirus safety rules.

The club manager, Vartan Simonyan, denounced the measure as disproportionate,

saying that he will appeal against it. He said that the controversial party was organized by another private firm.

Some media outlets claimed that Spitak Shorzha is owned by Sargsyan. They seized upon a Facebook photo of the young lawmaker sitting behind the club bar and using what looked like a computer cash register.

Sargsyan, whose twin brother Nairi is an aide to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, denies fully or partly owning the resort.

The chief of the Armenian police, Vahe Ghazaryan, has also faced media accusations of breaking the government rules. The Hraparak daily reported that Ghazaryan and dozens of other police officers dined late last week at a restaurant outside Yerevan.

"It was a protocol event, not a restaurant party," a police spokesman insisted on Tuesday.

Ghazaryan's predecessor was sacked by Pashinyan less than two months ago for failing to properly enforce the coronavirus-related state of emergency in the country.

Thousands of Armenians have since been fined by the police for not wearing face masks. The authorities have also temporarily shut down scores of restaurants, manufacturing firms and other businesses not following the anti-epidemic rules.

In early June, Pashinyan also fired Armenia's top army general, Artak Davtyan, one day after the latter hosted his son's wedding party attended by dozens of guests.

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The remark led Azerbaijan to claim that Armenia is seeking to change the format of peace talks. Baku has long refused to directly negotiate with the disputed territory's ethnic Armenian leadership.

In their latest statement, the mediators — Andrew Schofer, Igor Popov and Stephane Visconti — expressed readiness to meet soon with Aliyev and Pashinyan "or their designees." Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, they have not visited the conflict zone or met Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders elsewhere, organizing instead two video conferences with the foreign ministers of the

two warring nations.

The American, Russian and French envoys also emphasized that they continue to stand for a Karabakh settlement the key elements of which they had laid out in a March 2019 statement.

In that statement they said that "any fair and lasting settlement" must involve "return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will."



## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Putin, Erdogan Discuss Armenian-Azeri Tensions

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russian President Vladimir Putin warned against attempts to further heighten tensions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone when he spoke with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan by telephone on Monday, July 27.

The two men discussed the recent deadly clashes on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan during the phone conversation which the Kremlin said took place “at the initiative of the Turkish side.”

“Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of preventing any steps that could cause an escalation in tensions,” the Kremlin reported in a statement.

“Both presidents spoke in favor of resolving the conflict through peaceful means, through talks. They expressed their readiness to coordinate efforts to stabilize the region,” it said.

Erdogan’s office also said the two leaders talked about the “Armenia-Azerbaijan tension” but gave no details.

Meeting with senior Azerbaijani military officials on July 16, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar vowed that Armenia will be “brought to account” and “will be drowned under this plot.” Erdogan’s National Security Council said afterwards that Ankara “will support any decision by Azerbaijan.”

Armenia has condemned these unusually strongly-worded statements that raised the possibility of Turkish intervention in the Karabakh conflict. It has branded Turkey a “security threat to Armenia and the region.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Ankara to exercise restraint in its reaction to the Armenian-Azerbaijani skirmishes in a July 23 phone call with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu.

## MP Introduces Motion in NSW Parliament Condemning Azerbaijan

SYDNEY (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Australian state lawmaker Dr. Hugh McDermott has introduced a motion in the Parliament of Australia’s largest state of New South Wales, condemning Azerbaijan’s provocative attacks against Armenia’s border and calling on the Federal Government of Australia to do the same, reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU).

The Member for Prospect, who is a high-profile member of the NSW Armenia-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group, requested the NSW Legislative Assembly resolves that Azerbaijan’s actions against Armenia proves “their blatant disregard of international law by breaking their ceasefire agreement.”

McDermott, who visited the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh as part of ANC-AU’s Federal-led delegation in 2019, noted Armenian-Australian community concerns of Azerbaijan’s “attacks on Armenia’s border town of Tavush and threatened attacks on the nuclear power plant at Metsamor,” adding condemnation of “the actions of President Erdogan of Turkey and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan in their pursuit of a policy of Pan-Turkish nationalism which has previously led to genocide.”

McDermott’s motion concluded with a call “on the Federal Government to condemn these attacks and advocate their support for the safety and security of Armenia.”

## 15 Detained in Iran After Anti-Armenian Demo

TEHRAN (Panorama.am) – A number of anti-Armenian demonstrations organized by Azerbaijanis last week were suppressed by Iranian authorities, Ermenihaber reports.

Protests were staged in front of the Armenian Embassy in Tehran and the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Tabriz. The Police and the officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps dispersed the demonstrations that were accompanied with anti-Armenian slogans and chants. At least 15 Azeris were detained, the source said.

# Azerbaijan, Turkey to Hold Joint War Games

By Emil Danielyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The armed forces of Azerbaijan and Turkey started joint exercises on Wednesday, July 29, two weeks after deadly hostilities on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border which led Ankara to promise more military assistance to Baku.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry announced on Monday that the “large-scale” exercises will involve warplanes and artillery and air-defense systems. It did not specify the number of soldiers that will take part in them.

A ministry statement cited by Azerbaijani news agencies said ground forces of the two states will simulate joint operations in Baku and Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave from August 1-5. It said separate drills involving the Turkish and Azerbaijani air forces will be held in these and three other locations from July 29 through August 10.

The ministry also said that the war games will take place in accordance with a Turkish-Azerbaijani defense treaty and an annual plan of bilateral military cooperation. It did not link them with the July 12 outbreak of heavy fighting at a western section of Azerbaijan’s border with Armenia which

lasted for several days and left at least 17 soldiers dead.

Turkey has blamed Armenia for the flare-up and reaffirmed its full support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Yerevan has decried the Turkish reaction, accusing Ankara of trying to destabilize the region, undercutting international efforts to resolve the conflict and posing a serious security threat to Armenia.

Immediately after the border clashes, a high-level Azerbaijani army delegation flew to Ankara for talks with Turkey’s top military and defense industry officials. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told it that the Armenians “will certainly pay for what they have done” to his country’s main regional ally. Another Turkish official expressed readiness to supply Turkish-made military drones and missiles to the Azerbaijani army.

Such statements fuelled speculation about a direct Turkish intervention in the Karabakh conflict. Successive Armenian governments have relied on a military alliance with Russia and, in particular, the presence of a Russian military base in Armenia to prevent such a scenario. The base has up to 5,000 soldiers mostly deployed along the closed Armenian-Turkish border.

Analysts believe Moscow would strongly oppose Turkish military pres-

ence in a region regarded by it as a zone of Russian geopolitical influence. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Ankara to exercise restraint in its reaction to the upsurge in Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions when he spoke with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu by phone on July 23. (See related story in this section.)

The Turkish and Azerbaijani militaries have held joint exercises on an annual basis for the last several years. They will apparently combine ground troop maneuvers with air force drills for the first time.

Russian-Armenian exercises are also held regularly. A military official in Yerevan said last week that an Armenian army regiment and the Russian troops in Armenia will take part in Russia’s Caucasus-2020 war games scheduled for September.

In preparation for these drills, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered on July 17 a snap “combat readiness check” of some 150,000 troops deployed in Russia’s southern and western military districts bordering Azerbaijan. Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov telephoned his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu the following day to discuss the military event. Shoigu reportedly assured him that it is not connected with the latest escalation in the Karabakh conflict zone.

## Teen Environmental Activist Greta Thunberg Receives Inaugural Gulbenkian Prize

LISBON – The first Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity has been awarded to Greta Thunberg, the Gulbenkian Foundation announced on July 20. The young Swedish environmental activist was selected from among 136 nominees from 46 countries.

Thunberg’s foundation will donate the award money of 1 million euros to charitable projects combating the climate and ecological crisis and to support people facing the worst impacts, particularly in the Global South. Starting with giving 100,000 euros to the SOS Amazonia campaign, led by Fridays For Future Brazil to tackle Covid-19 in the Amazon, and 100,000 euros to the Stop Ecocide Foundation to support their work to make ecocide an international crime.

Jorge Sampaio, Chair of the Grand Jury of the Prize, emphasized the broad consensus of this choice and pointed out “the way Greta Thunberg has been



Greta Thunberg

able to mobilize younger generations for the cause of climate change and her tenacious struggle to alter a status quo that persists, makes her one of the most remarkable figures of our days.”

Sampaio has also stressed Thunberg’s enormous responsibility in consolidating her role and leadership in the fight against climate change, as a condition for sustainable development, towards which the attribution of this Prize aims to contribute.

The Grand Jury, composed of internationally renowned personalities from

the fields of science, technology, politics and culture, highlighted Thunberg’s charismatic and inspiring personality, but also the force of her singular and distressing message capable of arousing disparate feelings, and her capacity to make a difference in the fight against climate change.

The President of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Isabel Mota, emphasized that “By awarding this Prize, the Foundation highlights its commitment to urgent climate action, fostering communities that are more resilient and better prepared for future global changes, while also protecting, in particular, the most vulnerable”.

Greta Thunberg said: “I’m extremely honored to receive the Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity. We’re in a climate emergency, and my foundation will as quickly as possible donate all the prize money of 1 million Euros to support organizations and projects that are fighting for a sustainable world, defending nature and supporting people already facing the worst impacts of the climate and ecological crisis – particularly those living in the Global South.”

## Protests in Geneva while German Ambassador Urges Calm

GENEVA (Armenpress, Panarmenian.net) – A peaceful protest took place in front of the United Nations Office in Geneva against the recent military offensive unleashed by Azerbaijan against Armenia on July 28. The purpose of the demonstration, initiated by a number of Armenian community organizations, was to draw the attention of the Swiss public and the international community to the shelling of Armenia’s civilian population and infrastructure by Azerbaijan, accompanied by anti-Armenian hatred and xenophobia, as well as Turkey’s actions towards the promotion of regional tensions. The main slogans were aimed at stopping the aggression against Armenia, condemning the destructive actions of Azerbaijan and Turkey, and urging to establish a peaceful and secure environment.

A number of public and political fig-

ures delivered speeches. Among them were Lisa Mazzone, States Councilor and Co-Chair of the Switzerland-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group, Alain de Kalbermatten, head of the fraction of Christian-Democratic Party at the Geneva Municipal Council, Arnaud Moreillon, member of the Geneva Municipal Council from the Socialist Party, Sarkis Shahinian, honorary president of the Switzerland-Armenia Association and Secretary General of the Switzerland-Armenia Friendship Group.

A number of Armenian community organizations in Switzerland issued a joint press release that strongly condemned the military offensive of Azerbaijan against Armenia, and provided its detailed account. The Swiss-Armenians condemned the unequivocal support of Turkey to the aggression and its irresponsible and hostile attempts to jeopardize the fragile regional stability.

They emphasized that threats to launch a missile strike at the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant is an act of state sponsored terrorism.

In a related story, Armenian ambassador to Berlin Ashot Smbatyan has urged Armenians living in Germany against participating in initiatives or protests not authorized by the authorities.

Smbatyan said Armenians should not contribute to the escalation of tensions, amid clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the various parts of the world.

The ambassador said there has been damage or destruction of property belonging to Armenian embassies, and cases of violence against the members of Armenian communities throughout the world.

Smbatyan called for vigilance and urged social media users to not spread aggressive footage and comments.



## INTERNATIONAL

# ‘Only Going to Get Worse’: After Hagia Sophia Ruling, Many Fear What’s Next From Erdogan

By Kristina Jovanovski

ISTANBUL (NBC News) — The conversion of Istanbul’s symbolic, shape-shifting Hagia Sophia edifice back into a mosque is being described as a victory for the conservative religious agenda of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Hagia Sophia was once a cathedral, and then it was a mosque. And then, in 1934, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk— the founder of modern Turkey, who aspired to build a secular state — declared it a museum.

After a Turkish court annulled Atatürk’s decision one week ago, Erdogan swiftly declared the Hagia Sophia to be — once again — a mosque.

Analysts said the decision showed how desperate the president is to maintain his popularity among his religious and nationalist conservative base, which has kept him in power for years — but which is now seen to be waning.

Erdogan was once celebrated for overseeing Turkey’s rapid development and booming economy. But praise has long since given way to deep concern over the country’s shaky finances and imperfect democracy, intensified by the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, the fears led to his greatest political defeat since he came to power, as his Justice and Development Party lost control of Turkey’s two biggest cities in municipal elections.

Erdogan now governs with the stinging public rejection of having had the voters choose the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party, to lead both the capital, Ankara, where he lives, and Istanbul, his hometown, where he was once mayor.

The government, which is disinclined to brook criticism, has launched investigations into opposition figures, removed elected mayors and imprisoned journalists during the coron-

avirus pandemic while passing a bill to release tens of thousands of inmates, lest they contract COVID-19 because of crowding.

“Turkey wanted to be a member of the democratic world, but that story has ended,” said Garo Paylan, 48, an Armenian who is one of the founders of Turkey’s pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party.

Erdogan “can’t give bread to the people, and he’s giving more radicalism to the Muslim majority,” Paylan said over the phone.

While the Hagia Sophia decision was a major symbolic win for the country’s Islamists, Paylan argued that it shut the door to the future for minorities in the country and took away a symbol of respect for the country’s diversity. He has stopped telling his fellow Armenians to stay in the country.

Last year, the US Senate declared that the mass killing of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during the early 1900s was genocide, a label Turkey strongly rejects.

In any event, minority rights were not well supported after the Ottoman Empire ended, either.

With the founding of modern Turkey, Atatürk established a nationalist approach to Turkish identity that often ran counter to the struggles for greater minority rights.

Kurds, who are almost 20 percent of the population, have found themselves at odds with both secular and Islamist nationalists, many of whom fear the country could slide into a civil war if there were to be a push for self-governance.

The calculus has driven many of Erdogan’s nationalist policies, but, analysts say, so have the threats to his power from the Peoples’ Democratic Party.

In 2015, the party entered the Grand National Assembly, Turkey’s parliament, for the first time, stopping Erdogan’s party from getting a majority. That led him to partner with the

ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party, further cementing his need to push a conservative agenda.

Erdogan’s supporters counter that he has increased language rights and living standards for Kurds, many of whom vote for his party.

Paylan said he will likely go to prison when he is no longer a member of parliament with immunity.

Other Peoples’ Democratic Party members are already there, accused of being connected to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, a Turkish militant group designated a terrorist organization by Ankara and Washington.

Paylan rejected the allegation. However, it has led the government to remove his party’s members from mayoral posts they won in last year’s municipal elections.

Elmira Bayrasli, a Turkish American who is director of Bard College’s globalization and international affairs program, said the Hagia Sophia decision represented Erdogan’s going on “the offense” in the face of increasing challenges, some of them from new splinter parties from his Justice and Development Party.

“My guess is it’s only going to get worse,” Bayrasli said. “He’s desperate to hold onto power.”

Feminist activists blame the government’s conservatism for what they say is a steady rise in gender-based violence.

The deputy chairman of the Justice and Development Party suggested this month that Turkey might exit the Istanbul Convention, a treaty to protect women from violence.

In a telephone interview, Neslihan Duran, 24, a student at Gaza University in Ankara, said that “with such policies, women are designated as an inferior gender.”

Duran helped set up a Twitter campaign to call for justice for fellow university student Sule Çet, who was raped and killed in 2018. Duran argued that the government’s promotion of

conservative religious values led to Çet’s being criticized during the trial for not being a virgin.

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For Yusuf Erim, 40, a Muslim Turk, Erdogan’s conservatism is a reminder to the country’s Muslims that they are part of a larger Islamic community.

Erim, an editor-at-large for the Turkish state broadcaster, TRT, said turning the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque was another way to do that. He said he believed Muslims around the world would flock to pray at the historic building.

“Let’s call it an Islamic bucket list,” he said over the phone.

The almost 1,500-year-old monument is significant both for Christians, because it was built as a cathedral during the Byzantine Empire, and Muslims, because it was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman Turks conquered Istanbul in 1453.

Erim said that under Erdogan, Turkey has been transformed into a regional power because of its major infrastructure projects and military campaigns.

“How can you not be proud?” he asked. “I can say, ‘Wow, my country has come a long way.’”

Others were less excited about the Hagia Sophia’s being converted into a mosque. The U.S. State Department said it was “disappointed.”

Asked for comment, the Turkish government pointed to Erdogan’s speech last week in which he said the building would be open to “locals and foreigners, Muslims and non-Muslims.”

Paylan, the member of parliament with the Peoples’ Democratic Party, feared that the decision would lead to a backlash against Muslims while Christians in Turkey have a sacred symbol of their history taken away.

“This is going to make the tension bigger between the Muslims and the Christians,” he said.

## Iraqi Kurds Fear Turkey’s Military Campaign Aims beyond PKK

By Fehim Tastekin

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) — The scope of Turkey’s ongoing military operations against Turkish Kurdish militants based in Iraqi Kurdistan is stoking fears in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) that its own future might be at stake as part of broader Turkish designs in the region.

For years, the KRG has acquiesced to Turkish cross-border operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has entrenched itself in Iraqi Kurdistan, using mountainous bases to sustain its armed campaign against Ankara. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominant political force in Iraqi Kurdistan, has had an uneasy relationship with the PKK and sought to stay on good terms with Turkey, while the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the other major party in the region, has been more flexible toward the PKK.

While cautious not to anger Ankara, the KDP maintains that the Kurdish problem in Turkey should be resolved politically and that the PKK is not welcome in the region. Beyond the official rhetoric, however, Turkey’s expansive military campaign since June has fueled apprehension in KDP ranks over its ultimate objectives. Fears are on the rise that Turkey could seek a lasting military presence to weaken the KRG, cut its land connection to Kurdish areas in Syria and even push for downgrading the KRG’s federal status in Iraq.

Turkey has notably reduced PKK activity inside its own borders in recent years. In the cross-border campaign, its first objective has been to paralyze the PKK’s movement ability in the group’s camp areas, which stretch from the Qandil Mountains on the Iraqi-Iranian border, where the PKK has its headquarters, all the way to the Syrian border to west, including Hakurk, Avashin, Gare, Zap, Metina and

Haftanin.

After creating a partial buffer zone in Hakurk last year, Turkey now appears to be seeking a second buffer zone from Haftanin and Metina to the Kurazaro Mountains that would disconnect Zap and Gare. Two other areas, away from the border, have been in Turkey’s crosshairs: the Yazidi-populated Sinjar, known also as Shingal, where the PKK has helped create the Shingal Defense Units, alarming Ankara that “another Qandil” is in the making, and the Makhmour refugee camp near Kirkuk, which is home to thousands of Kurds who fled Turkey in the 1990s.

In Syria, Turkey makes no secret of its intention to turn the enclaves it has seized through four military operations into a contagious buffer zone of up to 35 kilometers (22 miles) in depth, extending all the way to the Tigris River, which forms a short stretch of the Turkish-Syrian border before flowing into Iraq. And on the eastern bank of the Tigris, Ankara plans a second border crossing with Iraq to bypass the existing one, which opens into Iraqi Kurdistan, and secure a route to Tal Afar and Mosul under some form of Turkish military control. Wary of its delicate ties with Kurdistan, Baghdad has dragged its feet on the project, but as soon as Mustafa al-Kadhimi became Iraq’s new prime minister in May, Ankara put the issue back on the table.

In sum, all those plans and moves are stoking Kurdish fears that Turkey’s objectives in Operation Claw, unfolding phase by phase since last year, go beyond the PKK.

The fourth and fifth phases, codenamed Claw-Eagle and Claw-Tiger, respectively, began in mid-June, with Turkish troops advancing to a depth of up to 30 kilometers (19 miles) and setting up 24 new bases and checkpoints, which bring the number of their deployment sites to more than 50.

Irked by the scope of the operation, Hoshyar

Zebari, a KDP member and former foreign minister of Iraq, tweeted, “The recent Turkish military incursion into Iraqi Kurdistan ... is a very serious geopolitical development. The intensity of the attack is alarming. Calls by Turkish leaders to revive historical claims [over] Mosul province [are] even far more disturbing.”

Writer and political analyst Mustafa Shefik, a veteran of Kurdish movements, is among those who believe that Turkey’s objective is not limited to pursuing the PKK. “There is concern that Turkey will entrench itself permanently. Such an extensive military deployment cannot be explained away with the PKK’s presence in the region. Turkey’s intention is to narrow the Kurds’ space as much as possible,” he told Al-Monitor, adding that Kurdish politicians are closely watching Turkey’s moves.

Shefik believes that both Turkey and Iran cannot stomach the KRG’s current status, even though it is enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution, and will use any opportunity and all means to undermine it.

Turkey may succeed in curbing PKK movement in mountainous areas to some extent, he said, but “the guerrillas could move to other mountains. Turkey cannot control all that.”

According to Shefik, Turkey’s military ventures, from Iraqi Kurdistan to Syria and Libya, have drawn on Washington’s dwindling profile in the region. “Whether Turkey’s presence could become permanent in the long run will depend on how world politics develop,” he said. “Russia and Turkey are filling the vacuum resulting from uncertainty in US policies, which began under Barack Obama and continued under Donald Trump. Trump’s indifference allows Turkey to play as it likes. Things might change after the US elections.”

The analyst believes that Turkey’s plan for a new border crossing at Ovako is aimed at disconnecting Kurdish-populated regions as part of a broader strategy to encircle the Kurds. “The Ovako plan has military, strategic and

security aspects, beyond the economic one. It is not a well-meaning project,” he said. According to Shefik, the plan is aimed at disconnecting Iraq’s and Syria’s Kurds and could face objections beyond the KRG. “Not only Baghdad’s attitude but also that of the United States will bear on this issue. Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan are the rear front in the US strategy to stay in Syria. Likewise, Kadhimi could hardly make a move by looking from the prism of Iraq only,” he said.

Shefik blames both Ankara and the PKK for the growing ramifications of Turkey’s Kurdish problem. “For years, both Turkey and the PKK have insisted on a military solution, which has done no good to Turks and Kurds alike. Had Turkey managed to produce a solution observing the interests of both sides, it would have been in a much different position on the international stage today. And the PKK’s policy, which gives Turkey pretexts [for military action], has been at least as dangerous and erroneous as that of Turkey,” he said. The PKK “has done harm” to Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq, he added.

Turkey’s actions in Syria have only fed hostility with the Kurds, Shefik said. “Where is this going to end? They can weaken the Kurds but cannot eradicate them. The Kurds today are in a position to sway balances in the Middle East. They may not have a state, but their role is more influential than that of a state. Turkey’s policy will cause it serious troubles both at home and in the international arena,” he said.

Turkey’s military pressure is forcing the KRG to move closer to Baghdad. Yet Kadhimi is on good terms with the Kurds and needs Kurdistan’s support domestically to rehabilitate the Iraqi state, which keeps him from playing the game that Turkey offers. And the Kurds believe that regional and international conditions will help them preserve their influence.



## INTERNATIONAL

# Violent Clashes Take Place in Russia between Armenians, Azerbaijanis

MOSCOW/YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan has drawn the attention of the international organizations to the recent attacks and actions of Azerbaijanis against Armenians abroad on the grounds of ethnic affiliation.

“These days Azerbaijanis are attacking Armenians in different countries on the grounds of ethnic affiliation. The reports (video, posts, etc.) which the Ombudsman’s Office is receiving through alarm calls, as well as through the observation of public materials prove this. The observation shows that the attacks on Armenians are taking place with the motive of hatred (armenophobia) on the grounds of ethnic affiliation and are accompanied by chants containing hatred and degrading dignity”, the Ombudsman said on Facebook on July 24.

He also reported that these attacks are also of provocative nature and are taking place with groups on civilian people.

He drew the attention of the international organizations to these facts and stated that it is necessary to immediately prevent them in order to avoid further escalation and dangerous developments.

He spoke in the aftermath of least 25 arrests in Moscow on Friday following overnight violent attacks involving local Armenians and Azerbaijanis which resulted from last week’s deadly fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

The violence erupted late on Thursday, with various groups of men reportedly attacking other people and businesses on ethnic grounds.

An amateur video posted on the Internet showed several men smashing a car with Armenian license plates and beating up its driver. Another footage showed other violent youths assaulting an elderly man and demanding that he name the country which they believe should control Nagorno-Karabakh.

A Russian-Armenian activist, David Tonoyan, reported at least five attacks on Armenians which he said mostly occurred in Moscow’s southern suburbs. One Armenian was stabbed and hospitalized as a result, he said, adding that the Russian police beefed up security in those areas.

“According to our information, only Azerbaijanis have been arrested so far,” Tonoyan said.

The “Moskovsky Komsomolets” daily reported that an Azerbaijani man was badly beaten by a group of Armenians in one of those suburbs, Maryino. The Union of Azerbaijanis of Russia alleged an Armenian attack on an Azerbaijani-owned restaurant in the Russian capital.

The Moscow police department reported, meanwhile, that it arrested more than 25 people on suspicion of involvement in what it described as “a number of conflict situations between citizens” in Maryino. It was careful not to mention their nationality or ethnicity.

In a statement, the department said it is continuing to investigate the incidents and warned of tough action against more “manifestations of collective violation of the public order.”

Russia’s human rights ombudsperson, Tatyana Moskalkova, expressed serious concern over the “disturbances between representatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples.” She said ethnically motivated violence is “unacceptable in any civilized society.”

The violent incidents came hours after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met with leaders of Russia’s sizable Armenian and Azerbaijani communities to discuss ways of maintaining what his press office called “interethnic peace and accord” in the country. Ara Abramian, the pro-Kremlin chairman of the Union of Armenians of Russia, said Lavrov’s meeting with him and Azerbaijani-born businessman God Nisanov took place at his initiative.

Nisanov is the main owner of Moscow’s largest wholesale food market which refused to sell apricots imported from Armenia following the July 12 outbreak of the hostilities on the Armenian-

Azerbaijani border. The move sparked an outcry from many Moscow Armenians who queued up to buy those apricots in a show of support for Armenia.

It emerged that another hypermarket located just outside of Moscow has also stopped selling Armenian agricultural products, beverages and prepared foodstuffs. The Tvoe Dom trading center is owned by Aras Agalarov, an Azerbaijani billionaire whose son Emin used to be married to one of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s daughters.

Violent clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijanis have also been reported in several major European capitals. In what may have been a related development, a car belonging to the Armenian Embassy in Germany was set on fire and burned down on July 23.

The Armenian Embassy in Russia issued a statement on the Azerbaijani provocations, which reads:

“In recent days, we have continued to record attempts of the Azerbaijani side to take the tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border to Russia and instigate a conflict between the two ethnic groups.

Armenians in Russia and other structures, as well as contact the law enforcement agencies.”

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the following day that some of its diplomats working abroad have received threats. It did not elaborate.

In a statement, the ministry accused the Azerbaijani authorities of inciting the violence. It also urged Armenian nationals living abroad and Diaspora Armenians not to “succumb to any provocation.”

The Foreign Ministry of Armenia on Friday condemned the recent provocation of violence against Armenians abroad.

“Recently, we have witnessed the cases and attempts of violence against Armenian citizens and members of Armenian communities in different countries of the world. There have been cases of obstruction of the normal work of the Armenian diplomatic service abroad and the Armenian communities, as well as a deliberate destruction of their personal and working property, which in some cases have threatened the security of the diplomatic staff as well. Discriminatory steps are being taken to disrupt Armenia’s trade and economic relations with different coun-



Police in Moscow after the melee (Panorama.am photo)

In particular, these are taking place in the trade and economic platforms of Moscow and other Russian cities, which are somehow linked with the Azerbaijani authorities.

We believe that measures should be taken immediately to resolve the situation in order to avoid further developments. Business entities operating in Russia, regardless of nationality or citizenship, must comply with the laws of Russia.

At the same time, given the current situation and attempts to involve the Armenian community in various provocative actions, we urge our compatriots to be vigilant, show restraint, not to succumb to provocations and not to take part in various actions or initiatives organized in response to provocations by the Azerbaijani side.

We continue to work on resolving the issues that have arisen, adhering to the principle of maintaining interethnic peace.

In case of facing any provocations, please immediately report them to the hotlines of the Armenian Embassy, the Union of

tries,” the ministry said in a statement.

“The expanding geography of these actions and the facts of the involvement of Azerbaijani officials in the actions against the diplomatic missions of Armenia prove that the mentioned actions are coordinated by the Azerbaijani official structures.

“We strongly condemn the practice of inciting ethnic clashes in different countries, which is another manifestation of Baku’s irresponsibility and is fully in line with the policy and rhetoric of the Azerbaijani leadership provoking hostilities between the two peoples without geographical restrictions.

We call on our compatriots to be vigilant, not to give in to any provocation, and in case of such situations to immediately contact the local law enforcement bodies, Armenian community structures, diplomatic representatives of Armenia,” the statement read.

(Stories from RFE/RL and Panorama.am were used to compile this report.)

## Jeanne Barseghian Elected Strasbourg Mayor

STRASBOURG, France (franceblue.fr, ecolocitoyenne.eu, etc.) – Jeanne Barseghian was elected as mayor of Strasbourg for a six-year term on June 28 during the French municipal elections, postponed three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 39-year-old Barseghian won on the list of a European green or Ecological party, Europe Écologie les Verts (EELV).

Only a few months ago, her name was barely known to the public at large. She joined EELV and began her first political campaign in the 2014 municipal elections on the list of Alain Jund, which joined in the second round with the list of Roland Ries. Winning, she became a municipal councilor, as well as an advisor at the Eurométropole of Strasbourg, an intercommunal region including 33 municipalities.

She was particularly involved in the battle against waste. In 2016, she signed a platform demanding the removal of plastic trays in

school cafeterias. Two years later, she and her fellow ecologists quit the executive of the Eurométropole in opposition to the highway bypass project to the west of Strasbourg (GCO).

Barseghian, a vegetarian, was born in Suresnes, in the Hauts-de-Seine Department (something akin to a state or county) near Paris. She came to Strasbourg in 2002 after her studies of law in Paris and Germany to specialize in environmental law at the Robert Schumann University. She demonstrated her commitment to the environment at the time by volunteering at the Alsace Mammal Studies and Protection Group, and at the National Office for Hunting and Wildlife.

She worked on sustainable development and scenarios to succeed the nuclear power plant of Fessenheim, in the Alsace region.

Barseghian on her father’s side is the great-granddaughter of Sarkis and Berdjouhi Barseghian, while her mother is of Breton ori-

gin. Sarkis was killed during the Armenian Genocide in Constantinople, whereas Berdjouhi moved to the Caucasus and eventually became one of the first three women elected to the Armenian parliament during the first Republic of Armenia in July 1919. She later wrote short stories and memoirs in France.

Jeanne Barseghian worked on projects of cooperation with Armenia on sustainable tourism, sociocultural exchanges, and combating waste in 2010. She created in Strasbourg a branch of the Sevak Association, named after the Armenian poet Paruyr Sevak, and worked two years for it. During this period, she learned the Armenian language and became immersed in its culture. In 2016, she also participated in the filming of a European Arte channel documentary, “Voyage en Anatolie” [Voyage to Anatolia], in which seven Armenians return to the homes of their ancestors, now controlled by Turkey.



# Community News

## Abp. Hovnan Derderian Scholarship Fund on a Continuous Mission

LOS ANGELES – The Archbishop Hovnan Derderian Scholarship Fund (The Fund) board is on a mission to not leave any child behind in education. As the new semester begins, and even with the challenges of COVID-19, children and youth attending Armenian Schools in the greater Los Angeles area will be given the monetary support needed to reduce the financial burden from the institutions and the students alike.

At the insistence of Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, a total of \$92,500 is being distributed among the students of outstanding Armenian schools in Los Angeles and an additional \$5,000 will go toward the American University of Armenia. “This is not a time to cut back on our assistance,” insisted the Archbishop. “There is an immense need for continuity that has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the lives of our children. It is our duty, especially in these trying times, to maintain the environment that develops the Armenian spirit among the future generations of our youth.”

Indeed the need for funds to help Armenian youth retain enrollment in Armenian schools has never been greater than it is now when institutions are witnessing a scarcity of funds due to an increase in families requesting financial assistance. “These are tough times for all,” said Eileen Keusseyan, Esq., chair of The Fund. “Every effort must be made to help retain students in these institutions that prepare them to be rooted in the history of our ancestors. We cannot deny families, their commitment to language and culture, by denying the students an opportunity to reach their full potential and hopefully contribute to life in our communities.”

The distribution of assistance came after a request from applicants from various Armenian schools and at the urging of Archbishop Derderian. “The committee spent hours processing the applications and reviewing each case with an open mind,” said Mrs. Keusseyan. “Great care and sensitivity toward each applicant was used in the selection process. We have many bright students and we are pleased that the Fund will have a positive effect on the institutions and the youth of Armenians schooled in Armenian establishments.”

None of this would be possible without the many benefactors and donors who have contributed over the years to the mission and cause since its inception in 2012. “Because of their generosity, we are able to provide students with the support they need to succeed at each stage of their education,” continued Keusseyan.

The Fund has distributed \$378,250 from 2013 to the present.

Current recipients of the Archbishop Hovnan Derderian Scholarship Fund include students from: AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School (Canoga Park, CA) with a sum of \$50,000; the Armenian Sisters Academy (La Crescenta, CA) with a sum of \$5,000; the C&E Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School (Sherman Oaks, CA) with a sum of \$2,500; St. Gregory A. & M. Hovsepien School (Pasadena, CA) with a sum of \$30,000; the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America Saturday Schools (Burbank, CA) with a sum of \$5,000; and the American University of Armenia (pillar) with a sum of \$5,000. Additionally, three students from three different schools have received graduation gifts in the amount of \$250 each.

The success of The Fund demonstrates the faith and trust of donors in the Armenian schools and in the devotion of the teachers who maintain a rigorous curriculum. “We are grateful to all those who have shown their trust in our schools through their contributions,” said Derderian. “And we are equally grateful to the teachers who spend hours devoting their time to guiding and instructing our children in a healthy environment, whether online or in person.”

For further information and how to support the Fund, visit [www.abpderderianscholarship-fund.com](http://www.abpderderianscholarship-fund.com).



From left, Tigran Sahakyan, Hrant Gulian, Elie Berberian, Arman Izmirlian at the annual Times Square Genocide Commemoration 2018

## Knights of Vartan Mamigonian Lodge Soldiers On Amid COVID-19

NEW YORK – How did Armenians survive as a culture over the centuries despite almost constant warfare and persecution? One answer lies in being able to organize and show solidarity through various charities and organizations

**By Christopher Atamian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

created to help further Armenian culture and raise funds for everything from Armenian schools, to building religious structures and helping Armenia financially in times of urgent need. One of the oldest such organizations still in existence, the Knights of Vartan was founded in 1916 after the Armenian Genocide in order to help revive and further Armenian culture in the diaspora. The organization and its various lodges around the country have been instrumental in countless educational, civic and religious projects in the past, including the construction of St. Vartan's Cathedral in New York City, the home of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

To some, the concept of lodges and all-male organizations may perhaps seem old-fashioned but the organization is in fact thriving with more than a thousand members across the United States. In conjunction with its sister organization, the Daughters of Vartan, the Knights of Vartan are as active as ever. The New York Mamigonian chapter, led by Commander Tigran Sahakyan, currently has over 50 members and is a vibrant example of how Armenian institutions can thrive when run honestly and with passion. Among other projects, he has most notably co-chairs the Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee which has become an important annual tradition in the Armenian community. Outside of the organization's purview, he has also established the Brooklyn Armenian Sunday School, the St. Gregory Parish Mission of Brooklyn and its Sunday School, as well as the Armenians basketball team and the Aronian Chess Team. I spoke to Tigran recently in order to learn more about his background and the activities of his Knights of Vartan chapter.

Sahakyan arrived in New York from Armenia in 2000 and demonstrating the work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit that Armenians are known for, quickly established himself as an expert in the title insurance and closing business. He most recently founded Big Apple Title (real estate) Agency, which thanks to his expertise has quickly established itself as a leader in the field in the tri-State area. Sahakyan joined the Knights of Vartan in 2008 after helping out for a few years at the annual Times Square Genocide Commemoration: “I realized then

see KNIGHTS, page 9

## Tips From A Local CFA on How to Make a Budget During This Recession

**By Meagan McGinnes**

BOSTON (WBUR) – I'm a planner. Knowing what's coming next and having a strategy to deal with it gives me a sense of security. Goals and game plans help me function. That's why I love having a budget: it gives me rules for my saving and spending.

But I didn't plan for a pandemic, and I'm guessing you didn't either.

Unemployment is at a record high; businesses and individuals are unable to make rent; families are struggling to put food on the table. And what we have known (and experienced) as true for months was made official earlier this week: We're in a recession.

There are a lot of unknowns. Until we get a treatment or vaccine, we'll likely continue to operate in this new normal – and that makes financial planning hard.

“Not having financial independence and having financial insecurity is a huge source of stress,” said Alice Avanian, founder and co-chair of the CFA Society Boston Financial Literacy Initiative. “The skills are not difficult: looking a little bit in detail at your credit card, thinking about paying off your student loans, generally being careful about fees and interest expenses. But they are as important as going to the gym, in terms of your personal health.”

Not everyone is going to be able to get through the tough times with a little belt tightening.

If you're looking to create or restructure your personal budget in these unprecedented times, here are some tips from Avanian.

### Calculate your monthly expenses in your new normal

We have been in this “new normal” for almost three months now, which will give you enough data to see what you're spending on average per month. While you're spending less on gas or social events, you're likely spending more on things like groceries or your electric bill. You need to take all of this into account.

“Once you have a baseline of the minimum, then you can start layering on more activities and expenses,” Avanian said.

### Use the 50/30/20 rule as a “rule of thumb” for your new budget

This isn't a new concept. The 50/30/20 rule divides your take-home income into three categories: 50% for needs, 30% for wants and 20% for savings and debt repayment. Avanian said these ratios can change in times of financial strain.

For example, if your salary was cut or you've lost your job, you're likely spending more than 50% of the money you're bringing in on needs. But during this pandemic you may be spending less on things like a morning coffee or a gym membership.

Avanian suggests adjusting for wants first before cutting into your debt-repayment or savings allotments.

### Figure out what you need vs. what you want

If quarantine has taught us anything, it's what we can and can't live without. Your morning Starbucks was maybe not as essential as you previously thought.

“I've talked about budgeting at the high school level for many different kids of all backgrounds,” she said. “I'm always amazed by the things that they must put in their monthly budget. I mean, the guys put in video games and bicycles, and the girls put trips to the nail salon. So there are definitely things that people are

see RECESSION, page 9



## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

## Ashod 'Mr. Ash' Baboorian

### Magician, Musician

CHICAGO — Ashod ("Mr. Ash") Baboorian, 80, passed away on July 3, 2020.

He was born on July 26, 1939 in Iraq to Armenian parents, Nerses and Zaroohi Baboorian.

Ash is survived by his wife, Bonnie, and his two sons, David (married to Michelle) and Edward, as well as grandson, Adrian.

Ash is also survived by two sisters, Seza Greco (married to Frank Greco with their two sons, Joseph and Cary) and Nora Checkosky (with her daughter, Nairi and Nora's two sons, Thomas and Steven, and Ash's brother, Razmik Baboorian (married to Sandy with their two sons, Bret and Eric). He has many great-nieces and great-nephews.

Upon immigrating to the US in 1960 he became entranced by the performance of stage and close up magic and country music, all of which he mastered and then performed for children and adults at every opportunity with the greatest pleasure.

Since 1985 he had operated Ash's Magic Shop at 4955 North Western Ave in Chicago around the corner from the New York Lounge where he performed close up magic and ad lib comedy for many decades.

Baboorian as Country Ash Ryan released and performed singles. His last single, Give Me Back My Taxes, features backing by Jon Langford and The Waco Brothers of Chicago.

For decades he has endlessly entertained with his unique brand of magic and comedy at Chicago area community events, street fairs, youth organizations, private parties, on WGN TV Bozo's Circus and for every notable Illinois pub-



lic servant.

Mr. Ash was proclaimed "Chicago's Greatest Magician" by the Chicago City Council in 2015 and was named Honorary Cook County Treasurer by Treasurer Maria Pappas in 2018.

He was a Past Master of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and shared his talents to raise money for their Ronald McDonald House and for many other charitable efforts.

Baboorian has often traveled to Armenia to perform in and raise money for schools, hospitals and orphanages as Good Will Ambassador for the Knights of Vartan whom he led as Commander.

The funeral was held on July 11.

## Albert Ordoubeigian

### Playwright, Teacher, Engineer, Brother

WATERTOWN — Albert Ordoubeigian, beloved brother of Lily, passed away on July 12, 2020 within one month of his diagnosis of stage 4 pancreatic cancer. He was 58.

Even though he received his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, his main passion was writing plays.

He staged a couple of his plays in the 1980s. He also taught English as a second language, and wrote short plays to be performed by the students at the end of the semester. In recent years, while substitute teaching, he accomplished "SAN' SERIF, Collected Plays," a unique and very different body of work from his past conventional plays. His website for the plays, [www.invisiblestage.com](http://www.invisiblestage.com), will keep Albert's memory alive.

In his own words explaining his plays, "I look



made to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

He was predeceased by his parents, Qnarik and Arratoun Ordoubeigian.

for alignments. Many things must align in the language for them to be a San' Serif play. They are plays because all of them align with a clear dramatic arc."

There will be no wake or funeral. In lieu of flowers donations may be

## Naomi Getsoyan Topalian

### Mother, Nurse, Writer, Volunteer

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Naomi (Getsoyan) Topalian passed away on July 19, 2020. She was 92 years old.

She was the wife of the late Paul G. Topalian; mother of Janet Topalian-Moffatt and her husband Stephen Eric Moffatt of Burlington and the late Andrew Paul Topalian; grandmother of Jessica Obleschuk and her husband Nick of Wilmington, Alexander Stephen Moffatt and his fiancé Kristina of Billerica and Drew Topalian; sister of Merzia Cronin of Belmont and the late Sarkis Getsoyan, Parouhi Jacobsen and Habib Getsoyan. She is also survived by three generations of nieces and nephews.

Naomi graduated from the American University in Beirut, Lebanon and Boston University School of Nursing.

She had a long career as a registered nurse working at numerous hospitals. She also taught nursing.

She wrote several books, including *Breaking the Rock of Tradition: An Autobiography* and *Dust to Destiny*, published by Baikar Publishing, and received many awards for her work including being inducted into the Hall of Fame at American Biographical Institute (ABI) in North Carolina.

She was active in the Armenian community, serving on committees and teaching the youth.

Due to the ongoing pandemic and public safety measures, funeral services are private. A public celebration of life will be planned at a later date and will be announced.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

## Donation

David and Judy Adishian of Rolling Hills Estate, Calif., donated \$200 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator in memory of Mary Adishian Vosgerichian.

## Marion 'Mary' (Norigian) Der Vartanian

### Dedicated to Church and Family

CRANSTON, R.I. — Marion 'Mary' (Norigian) Der Vartanian, 89, of Cranston, passed away peacefully on April 28, three days before her 90th birthday. She was the wife of the late Harry C. Der Vartanian.

Born in Providence, RI, she was the daughter of the late Satenig and Bedros ("Peter") Norigian. She was the sister of Zaven Norigian



(Rosie) and Gerald Norigian (Lillian) and the sister-in-law of D o l o r e s Norigian. She was also the sister of the late Deacon Avedis Edward and R. Carol Norigian.

Mary worked several years for her family's business, the former Broad Street Cleaners in Providence, before retiring and dedicating her time in the service of her church and community.

She loved to be active and as such was a devoted member of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, where she served as chairperson of the choir, numerous committees including the Bazaar Committee, Picnic Committee, Hokejash Committee, and other festival committees. A milestone for Mary was serving on the Pontifical Committee for the visitation of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I to Providence. She also served on the Cultural Committee since its inception and as the Chairperson of the Women's Guild for several years. Notably, Mary was Chairperson when that Committee won the award for Best Chapter in the Eastern Diocese. Additionally,

she served on the Fashion Show, a role she was perfectly suited for as Mary was a stylish and elegant woman, always impeccably dressed. Finally, Mary served on the Strawberry Festival Committees for the Women's Guild. And for 60 years, she was a member of the Daughters of Vartan.

Her dearest and most rewarding project was her important work associated with her church's Social Services Committee which was devoted to helping immigrant families from Baku adjust to life in our community by helping to find them shelter, food, jobs and whatever else they needed to assimilate. As part of the committee she also visited elderly Armenians in nursing homes once a month. This work best exemplified and showcased Mary's greatest talent -which wasn't a talent at all. It was her genuine love for people and her mission to make everyone feel special. This warmth and affection came from a place deep inside her. Her perpetual smile would light up every room and her extraordinary compassion was always available for whoever was in need.

She was a communicant of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence and St. David's Armenian Church in Boca Raton, Fla.

Family and friends meant everything to Mary and the void will be incalculable. Mary leaves her two children, Lisa Lombardo and her husband Anthony of Cranston, and H. Chris Der Vartanian of North Kingstown. She also leaves one grandchild, Alexandra Marion ("Ali") Lombardo as well as several nieces and nephews.

Her funeral and burial were private. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Arrangements were made by the Nardolillo Funeral Home.

## Angel Levonian Parseghian

### Volunteer, Loved to Cook

BELMONT, Mass. — Angel Levonian Parseghian passed peacefully on July 21, 2020 surrounded by her family. She was 98.

Angel was born June 14, 1922 to Victoria (Haleblian) and Levon Levonian in Aleppo, Syria and came to the U.S. at the age of 12.

Angel selflessly and lovingly took care of her family, always making sure that she kept everyone well-fed, whether it be at her home or at her cherished cottage at Crystal Lake, NH. Cooking was her joy and her favorite pastime, next to her incredible love and support of her family. Her warmth, consummate dedication and organizational skills were far reaching into every aspect of her life. She was a long standing member and tireless worker for her beloved Armenian Memorial Church, a 40+ year volunteer for Mt. Auburn Hospital, Belmont Garden Club, Belmont Women's Club, Armenian Women's Educational Club and Order of The Eastern Star.

Angel was predeceased by her husband of 61 years, Richard, and is survived by her children, Arnold Parseghian of Wayland, MA, Eileen Hertel of Dover, NH and Wayne Parseghian and his wife, Susan, of Arlington, MA; grandchildren, Holly Hertel Forsyth and her husband, Todd of Cape Elizabeth, ME, Scott Parseghian and his wife, Michelle of Framingham, MA, Jeffrey Hertel of Alton, NH, Michael Parseghian and his wife, Stacia



of Los Angeles, CA, Ani and Arpi Parseghian of Arlington, MA; great-grandchildren Dante, Damien, Jack, Avery, Penn and Leigh and many nieces, nephews and extended family.

In addition, the family is grateful to Angel's wonderful caregivers for all their love and devotion to her.

There will be a private family interment and a celebration of life will be planned at a future date.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

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# Tips From a Local CFA on How to Make a Budget During This Recession

RECESSION from page 7

not doing now that you might realize you don't actually need.”

**Look out for recurring payments**

Taking a hard look at your bank statements is a good place to start if you're trying to figure out what you don't need right now.

“If you're not going to the gym anyway, for example, that could be a monthly recurring charge on your credit card that you might not have even paid attention to,” Avanian said.

Another area to reassess is your phone bill.

“Sometimes people pay a lot of money for their cell phone and internet, and they may not be using as much data as they think,” she added.

**Boost your emergency savings**

The general rule of thumb is to try to have at least a month's worth of expenses in your savings account as a safety net. But it can be hard to make the conscious effort to move money over to your savings, especially if funds are tight.

The more you can automate saving, the easier it is, according to Avanian.

“There are many ways you can sweep money into a mutual fund or even just a savings account at a bank. But you want to check the dates,” she said. “If you get paid – it might be bi-weekly or bi-monthly – you should know what that day is. And if you're getting unemployment, it's weekly, but on a particular day. You want to make sure you're comfortable with both the [amount] and the timing [of your automated savings deduction].”

**Have a long-term goal**

It's really hard to save without working toward something. Some long-term goals, like planning a family vacation, seem irrelevant in the current environment. But there are still some really important long-term goals you can set.

“Depending on your age group, you may still really want to pay off your student loans. You may want to pay off your credit card debt. Those are the sort of drags on people's finances at any time, especially now if they're unemployed,” Avanian said. “Then there are some long term goals that don't go away. Like, maybe you were planning a wedding. If the wedding is not this year, it could be next year and two years from now, and you may still want a honeymoon.”

“The other thing that is more important now is people may want to buy a car because they may not feel comfortable taking public transportation,” she added.

**Don't forget to sprinkle in some short-term goals, too**

“If you don't have any fun, everyone goes crazy,” Avanian said. “If you're doing more baking, maybe you buy flour or the utensils that you need. Maybe people feel good by donating. The range of what people might want to do to make themselves feel better is kind of beyond my imagination.”

If you are in a position to give back or donate to people in need, here are some ways you can help.

**Don't always be afraid of credit cards**

This is a tricky one. Credit cards can be

helpful but also dangerous, especially now, when people may not have the cash to fully pay them off. First and foremost, Avanian said, you should avoid fees at all costs. You always want to try to pay off as much debt as possible.

“There may still be offers for no interest credit cards,” she said. “Depending on your credit score and your work history, you may or may not be eligible. But it is actually a money management tool to have a credit card that doesn't charge interest for six months. Could you use a new credit card to pay off an old credit card? Yes.”

Avanian also suggested that you review how your credit card charges interest. Sometimes, they charge the entire balance at the end of the month; other times, they charge it on a daily average basis. This means even if you don't use your card often, you still may end up paying interest.

In the end, the less you can put on your card (if you're paying interest) the better. The more you can pay off, the better. If you have a question, your bank is a great place to start, as it's an essential service that's definitely open.

“If you've been paying [your card] off well, it may be possible that your own bank may give you a new card that gives you double points or double cash back,” Avanian said. “There are so many deals and types of credit cards that if you have time to do a bit of research you can save fees, interest and expenses.”

**Invest in yourself**

Avanian believes that, as the economy adjusts, new industries and jobs will pop up that didn't exist a few months ago, similar to

contact tracing. She suggested using your time off (whether forced from layoffs or when you're off the clock) to take free online classes or webinars.

“Change is unsettling, and we are in dramatic change. We've never seen the economy in the world go off a cliff simultaneously. Every recession is usually a slow burn, as with the Great Depression. So we just went off a cliff,” Avanian said. “But that doesn't mean that there won't be opportunities.”

## Knights of Vartan Mamigonian Lodge Soldiers On

KNIGHTS, from page 7

there are many Armenians that do good for the Armenian Cause specifically and Armenian causes in general without necessarily asking for any special recognition. This appealed to me greatly.” Under his leadership, the Knights of Vartan has been able to appeal to a new, younger generation of Armenians by emphasizing the organization's uniqueness: “It's all about service to the community and the Church. As a member you learn real leadership skills. You develop a strong sense of belonging and integrity.”

Sahakyan encourages all young Armenians to join the Knights. “This is a difficult period now with COVID-19 and self-isolation, but all young Armenians should consider participating when things return to normal,” says Sahakyan: To join prospective members need to be nominated by two sponsors: “If someone participates in one of our projects, they will make those contacts.” Sahakyan adds “so it may seem secretive from the outside but it's really open to anyone who is interested and wants to make the effort to become a member.”

Sahakyan points out that high educational and professional level of the current membership. For example, the new crop of members includes a judge, three lawyers, and two dentists. Members come from all over the world: while most are American-born, some now hail from the Middle East, with an increasing number of Armenians from the Republic of Armenia and Istanbul also joining. Everyone has unfortunately been forced to deal recently with the limitations and constraints imposed on society by COVID-19, so the organization has switched to holding Zoom meetings, and some projects have been put on hold out of practical necessity. Others continue as always, including scholarships established for students at the American University in Armenia, Bryusov University, the National Polytechnic and Yerevan State University, for example, as well as aid to Tavush and Artsakh. Monthly meetings are held and once a year a grand convention with all lodges in order to discuss old and new projects: “We discuss what we feel needs to get done to help move Armenians forward in the diaspora and Armenia.”

Sahakyan's passion is evident: “We are already preparing already for another April 24th commemoration in Times Square in 2021. The Knights of Vartan began these annual gatherings that have become a tradition and are important in reminding the public and politicians—and Turkey—of what happened in 1915, and that we will not forget about the Genocide and the importance of its recognition by all. Other projects, including the Fuller Housing project, where we help to build homes for those in need in Armenia, are geared towards helping the new generations and their families.” The Knights of Vartan seems to be a dynamic organization indeed, and one that every interested and woke Armenian should consider joining, as the COVID-19 crisis hopefully winds down and life returns to an albeit new normal.

While other Armenian organizations have perennially struggled to attract young members, or have been divided along party and tribal lines, the Knights of Vartan has a truly mixed membership. This is partly attributable to the belief that Armenians must stick together and help each other out. Sahakyan declared: “None of these divisions mean anything anymore. An Armenian is an Armenian. When you meet one, extend a hand and try to help them any way you can.”

### Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

#### Dr. Nubar Berberian Annual 2020 Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years, passed away at the age of 94 on November 23, 2016. In his will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

#### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com). Paper submissions will be accepted by the deadline at:

Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.  
Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund  
755 Mt. Auburn Street  
Watertown, MA 02472  
(Electronic application is preferred.)

- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 15, 2020**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October 2020** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2020**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 15, 2020



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Azerbaijanis Attempt to Counter Two Boston Demonstrations

BOSTON, from page 1

Azerbaijanis drove by and threw water bottles from their cars, she said. She guessed that they found out about the event accidentally. Then, Dervartanian added, some parked their cars and came out. They were yelling in Azerbaijani so that the Armenians could only roughly guess at what they were saying. Dervartanian thought it meant that Karabakh is Azerbaijan. When the Armenians chanted “Azeri youth learn the truth,” the newcomers yelled back “Armenians learn the truth,” and they flipped around all of the other slogans of the Armenians too.

There were around 50 Armenians participating in this protest, while around 20 Azerbaijanis had come. Dervartanian said they seemed older than the Armenians, with the exception of a few who might be in their 20s.

A second event was held at Harvard Square in Cambridge on Saturday, July 25 from 6:30 p.m. to 7. It was a dance flash mob organized by the Armenian General Athletic Union and Scouts Boston chapter (otherwise known as Homenetmen by the names of its Armenian initials), a sports affiliated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The event was supposed to take place Thursday, July 23, but was postponed to Saturday because of rain.

Dervartanian is also a leader of the Homenetmen chapter. She said that the second event was advertised as open to the entire Armenian community. They had decided on several dances before the event and prepared a big sign stating “Azerbaijan wants war, Armenia wants peace.” The goal through dancing, a universal language, she said, was to show Americans that Armenians are in favor of peace.

Among the dances, however, was the traditional Yarkhusta. Dervartanian explained its symbolism as follows: “It definitely is a war dance, but with the recent attacks of Azerbaijan, not only on Artsakh but now on Tavush and various villages in Armenia, our soldiers in Armenia can’t just lay back. They have to prepare themselves and defend our people. It comes to a point where, yes, Armenians do want peace, but when our country is under attack,

and our people are under attack, we must be ready to fight back and defend ourselves...by performing a dance like the Yarkhusta, we are showing that we are with our men in Armenia.”

Nayiri Krafian, a participant in this second event, and an AYPF member, said that the goal was to raise awareness as to what was happening in Armenia in a positive way, through Armenian dance. There were some 25 Armenian participants, and a small number of non-Armenians present in the square joined in the dancing at one point.

Even before the Armenians had arrived at Harvard Square, there was a group of Azerbaijani counter-protestors present, Dervartanian said, who roughly were the same number as the Armenians. Krafian estimated that there were around 30 Azerbaijanis, somewhat outnumbering the Armenians, and they were mostly in their 30s or middle aged, while the Armenians, except for one parent, were all under 30.

Dervartanian said, “Many of the Azerbaijanis at Harvard Square were the same ones as were there at the Federal Building a couple of days before. It seems they were much more prepared this time. They came with their flags and their group was a big-



July 22 “die-in” (photo Vrej Ashjian)

ger one.”

Krafian noted that while the Armenians were dancing, the Azerbaijanis, with Azerbaijani flags, “were just walking around us, staring and holding up the Grey Wolf [Turkish extreme nationalist] symbol. Most of the boys were not dancing. They were trying to stay between the

At the new spot, exhausted from the dancing, Krafian elected to walk around to explain to people watching the dancers what the Armenians were doing. She concluded, “We knew that they were there to push our buttons, and we know that any retaliation on our part is ammunition for them to say we are the aggressors, so I am proud of our group that stayed calm and taught some people about our culture.”

Dervartanian remarked, “When we have had protests for the Armenian Genocide or other protests in the past, we never have had a group of Turks [or Azerbaijanis] show up and protest against us. We had been seeing it on the news, happening in different states and different countries, but did not think something like this would happen in Boston. The first time around, we were caught off guard a bit, but then we were prepared. We did not want to start a fight, but only wanted to get our point across and spread awareness.”

She felt they indeed succeeded, with many passersby asking questions and taking videos of the dancing.

Afterwards, according to some hitherto unsubstantiated social media reports, a small group of Armenians who arrived late, after the event was over, was attacked by Azerbaijanis while returning to their cars, and one Armenian



girls that were dancing and the Azerbaijani men to make sure nothing happened.”

The Armenians all had masks on, Krafian said, while the Azerbaijanis did not, which was a concern. The Azerbaijanis did not seem to know much English and did not talk much, she added.

As the Armenians danced the Azerbaijanis, she related, were going to the speaker and pulling out the cord to stop the music. Eventually the Armenians decided to walk around 100 feet away to another open area and stayed there. Krafian said, “They just kept coming closer to us. We didn’t want a confrontation, so we said, let’s just go.”

The Azerbaijanis stayed in their original spot until after they left and did not follow the Armenians. The Armenian group decided to only dance and except for a couple of chants of “Armenia,” were quiet.

ended up having to get stitches in a local hospital. Homenetmen stated that those said to be attacked were not members of its organization.



Azerbaijanis at the Harvard Square Armenian dance flash mob. Above photo, as well as above center and right by Vrej Ashjian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Vandals Target KZV School in Wake of Border Aggression

KZV SCHOOL from page 1

It is not surprising then that these words are being translated into acts of violence and destruction of property and vandalism across the world. (See Boston story on the same page.)

## San Francisco

On July 23, the Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan (KZV) Armenian School in San Francisco, as well as its adjacent community center, were vandalized, an act that has been categorized as a hate crime by police.

The walls were covered with profanity, the

KZV Principal Grace Andonian said shock and anger have given way to momentum. "It has absolutely energized me. I feel empowered. We are forced to fight this and come out of this. And I want to relay my strength to my community and my students," she said.

She added that as the Armenian saying goes, the incident felt like cold water had been poured on her.

"No one thinks this will happen to them. Things like this don't happen here. [But now] nobody is safe," Andonian added. "I felt unsafe and threatened."

act of vandalism and manifestation of hatred directed at the Armenian educational institution and the entire Armenian Community of the Bay Area. The Consulate General of Armenia expresses hope that law enforcement will duly investigate, reveal and punish its perpetrators. The Consulate General of Armenia takes note of the rapid reaction of San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin through Twitter expressing his outrage about the incident.

"Someone vandalized the Armenian school/community center. I'm outraged. This is totally inconsistent with San Francisco values.

After the larger group clashed with the counterprotesters, small pockets of violence erupted, and at least four people were injured, including an LAPD officer, authorities said.

Erik Hakobyan, an 18-year-old protester, was arrested on suspicion of battery on a police officer after authorities said he punched an LAPD detective in the face.

Alex Galitsky, communications director for the Western Region of the Armenian National Committee of America, said the Brentwood protest was part of a larger global movement that aims to condemn the Azerbaijani government's "incitement of anti-Armenian hatred and racism."

According to a news release from the LAPD, a much smaller group of Azerbaijani counterprotesters was present at the Consulate when the Armenian group arrived. But after the two groups became increasingly "agitated and verbal toward each other," more police were called to escort the Azerbaijani protesters out of the area.

"At that time, an altercation occurred between the Azerbaijani protesters and a vehicle carrying Armenian protesters. As a result of the altercation, multiple fights broke out between the two groups," the LAPD said.

According to the LAPD news release, three people were punched or kicked during the encounters. They were hospitalized with injuries that did not appear to be life threatening, authorities said.

When a detective tried to pull away Hakobyan, who police say was joined by others in assaulting a counter protester who was on the ground, he punched the detective in the face, according to the LAPD news release.

Galitsky said none of the violence stemmed from his group or the Armenian Youth Federation.



The vandalism at the KZV School in San Francisco

Azeri flag colors and insults to Armenians.

Siran Tutelian-Nahabedian, who has taught at the school for 33 years, expressed her shock.

A groundskeeper had noticed the vandalism in the early morning on Friday, and he notified the school board, whose members in turn contacted the police, she said.

"The police are considering this a hate crime," Tutelian-Nahabedian added.

Nothing like this has ever happened at the school.

"Everybody's initial reaction was shock. But as time went on, we were saddened, appalled and angry that something like this happened in a school. It is unacceptable to target schools," she added. "Schools are the backbone of the Armenian community."

The school sent out a message to alumni and parents and asked for their support. "We wanted a show of solidarity. We had hundreds of people gathering at the school on the same day," she added.

According to Tutelian-Nahabedian, the offenders most probably just jumped over the fence to reach the school. Security cameras were operational but because the offenders wore hoodies and masks and it was night, their faces were not captured.

The footage has been turned over to the police.

It is a bad feeling, she added, knowing that "people have been watching us and maybe preparing for it."

She praised the community, students and city officials for their reaction to the incident.

"We have received support from non-Armenians and beyond in the Bay Area," she said. "People call and ask 'what can we do to help,'" she noted.

Andonian said she has received calls from a neighborhood watch group offering to keep an eye on the school.

Such messages and outreach, she noted, "give you strength."

A rally of support will take place at a future date, Andonian added.

One of the more touching calls, Andonian recalled, was from a Turkish man, who told her he was genuinely sorry for the incident and even offered to come protect the school and its students.

The Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles issued a statement this week expressing its concern. "The vandalism at educational institution testifies toward the fact that the Armenian community of California has become a victim of a hate crime apparently organized by the Azerbaijanis. The Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles strongly condemns the

It is also a CRIME. We are working with San Francisco Police Department to investigate. We stand with our Armenian brothers and sisters."

"It is very important that they are caught. It is a hate crime and should be treated as a hate crime," Andonian added.

A GoFundMe page has been set up by the board to pay for the cleanup as well as enhancing the current fence around the school's perimeter. The fund had raised \$78,000 by July 27.

KZV has an annual student population of

## Washington, DC

An Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) Washington DC Ani chapter-led community-wide protest last week against Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia was met by a hostile mob that, under the direction of Azerbaijani Ambassador to the US Elin Suleymanov, unloaded a barrage of hate-speech, and threats of violence.

"Armenians want peace, Azerbaijan wants war" was the Armenian American community's



Azeri counter demonstrators in Los Angeles



Armenians hold up signs outside the Azeri consulate in Los Angeles

120-140. The only Armenian school in Northern California, it starts at pre-K through 8th grade.

## Los Angeles

One person was arrested and several people, including an officer, were injured after a peaceful protest turned violent at the Azerbaijan Consulate in Brentwood on July 23, the Los Angeles Police Department said.

The protest, organized by the Armenian Youth Federation, started about 2 p.m. Tuesday with hundreds marching to the Azerbaijan Consulate near the 11700 block of Wilshire Boulevard. A smaller group of Azerbaijani counterprotesters also was present.

message of the day, as they flashed peace signs and condemned the Azerbaijani targeting of civilians, which resulted in the bombing of a kindergarten in Tavush's Aygepar village, the temporary closing of a PPE mask-making factory, and even Azerbaijani threats to shell Armenia's Metsamor nuclear power plant.

Suleymanov was videotaping and speaking on his phone as his followers participated in a bizarre mixture of yelling hateful slogans and joyful dancing in the face of the President Aliyev ordered onslaught, which began on July 12th, that has left at least 15 Azerbaijani soldiers dead, with reports of more casualties.

(The Los Angeles Times contributed to this story.)

# Arts & Living

## Concert in Times of Corona

By **Muriel Mirak-Weissbach**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – Cultural events, especially featuring music, have suffered since the outbreak of the coronavirus, but creative artists are finding ways to perform, in conformity with the public health measures introduced to prevent contagion. In Ingelheim, Germany, a beautiful location on the Rhine, two young Armenian musicians are presenting an open-air concert on August 1, organized by the Rhine Hesse Music Festival.

Baritone Gurgen Baveyan and pianist Diana Sahakyan have prepared a program featuring art songs (Lieder) and opera arias, as well as piano solo works, performing in a historic architectural setting. The Aula regia, as its name indicates, was the Throne Hall of Charlemagne, King of the Franks and crowned Emperor in 800, and was the meeting place for imperial assemblies. The imposing structure was built in the late 8th-early 9th century, and was restored in 1994-1998. Since 2001 it has been open to the public and serves as an open air theatre for cultural events during the summer season.

Baveyan, born in 1986 in Armenia, earned his bachelor's degree at the Yerevan Komitas Conservatory, and studied at the Frankfurt University of Music and the Performing Arts under Hedwig Fassbender. Among the prizes he has won are the Yearly Prize for Young Singers of the Armenian President and the Pavel Lisitsian International Baritone Competition in Moscow. A graduate of the



Baritone Gurgen Baveyan

Frankfurt Opera Studio, he has performed as Count Almaviva ("Le nozze die Figaro"), Giorgio ("Die diebische Elster"), Don Alvaro ("Il viaggio a Rheims"). He sings at guest performances at the Armenian National Opera in Yerevan, and has already appeared there as Belcore ("L'elisir d'amore"), Enrico ("Lusica di Lammermoor") and Silvio ("Pagliacci").

In an interview with the Arte Musica Foundation for Art and Culture, which granted him a scholarship, he said his favorite composers are Rossini, Mozart and Puccini. His love for the opera came from his parents, who were both opera singers. Asked what excites him most about music, he said, "For me personally, every concert and every performance is the best motivation to become better and better, and to concentrate even more on my work."

see GERMANY, page 13



Miqayel Voskanyan

## Miqayel Voskanyan and Friends Bring Dynamism from Armenia To the Modern Folk Scene

DETROIT and YEREVAN – MVF Band has just released a music video of the classic *Makhmur Aghjik* dedicated to the song's creators, Silva Kaputikyan and Khachatur Avetisyan, and filmed at poetess Kaputikyan's House-Museum.

By **Harry Kezelian**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

(see <https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/04/23/two-new-albums-in-modern-armenian-folk-music-o-and-acoustic-armenia/>). However, as we have recognized, one of the leaders of the movement was Arto Tunçboyacıyan and the Armenian Navy Band based in Armenia itself – when they first started, they were calling it "avant-garde folk." More recently coming out of Armenia, we are hearing the talented young singer, composer, and *tar*-player, Miqayel Voskanyan. He has become one of the powerful new voices in this field and has been growing in popularity in Armenia as well as the Diaspora and international circles.

Voskanyan is a talented singer with a smooth vocal style that falls somewhere between Armenian folklore and current Western pop. His latest production of the song *Makhmur Aghjik* is accompanied by a high quality music video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WduBmvueWlc>), with no actors, performers or singers, nor images of Voskanyan himself, but simply the recording of the song accompanied by footage exploring the Silva Kaputikyan House-Museum from end to end. Legendary poetess Silva Kaputikyan (perhaps more recognizable to some by the Western Armenian pronunciation Gaboudigian) wrote the lyrics of this classic song, while the music was composed by Soviet-era *kanon* player, Khachatur Avetisyan, who helped bring the kanon to its current popularity in Eastern Armenia. The music video was dedicated to both artists. The video is deeply stirring, showing us the preserved home and personal life of one of the great Armenian writers of the past 100 years, and ending with a close-up of three photographs of Kaputikyan with other 20th century Armenian icons: Catholicos Vazken I, classical composer Aram Khachaturian, and fellow writer and poet Avedik Isahakian. The video, while deeply patriotic, is a welcome respite from other "patriotic" Armenian music videos of recent years which have featured over-the-top production, ultra-nationalistic imagery, anachronistic costume and music, and pomegranates gratuitously flying through the air. Voskanyan sings with deep Armenian – and human – feeling. The arrangement is jazz-influenced and modern, yet doesn't take away from the original feeling of the song.

Voskanyan is the leader of the MVF Band (Miqayel Voskanyan and Friends), formed in 2011, which includes David Melkonyan on saxophone, Arman Peshtmaljyan on keys, Gurgen Ghazaryan on bass, and Movses Ghazaryan on drums. Voskanyan is the leader of the band with his vocals and *tar* playing. The *tar*, also widely used in the Caucasus, is native to Persia and historically has had

see VOSKANYAN, page 13

## YerazArt Summer Music School Ends with Gala Concert

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The YerazArt summer music school presented in collaboration with the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra was summed up with a beautiful gala concert. The students of the summer school performed at the online concert held on July 16, presenting the knowledge acquired during these days of intensive education.

The annual music school was held for now online this year on July 6-14. Not only the musicians of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra, but also invited soloists and fellows of YerazArt program from different countries held master classes with participation of selected young musicians.

The head of YerazArt, also the general producer of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra Arman Padaryan, emphasized that this has been the fifth summer program by YerazArt.

"Our program for 15 years has supported talented young musicians in Armenia, supports their professional development. "Within the annual framework of the program, not only master classes are held, but also musical instruments, scholarships are provided, we help young musicians to get master classes both in Armenia and abroad," said Padaryan. He said that the goal for the participating talents is to get ready to perform on professional stages and in respected orchestras. The main goal of YerazArt is to prepare immaculate musicians, because even in a difficult and war situation it is possible to win also due to a high culture level.

Participating students were: Paolo Rizuto from Italy (French Horn, ANPO), Mary Khojayan from the Netherlands (violin, YerazArt fellow, Maastricht conservatory), Juan Pardo Gil from Spain (trombone, ANPO), Vardan Gasparyan from the USA (cello, YerazArtfellow, Colburn College), Sylvie Zakaryan (marimba, Longy school, member of YerazArt board), Nara Avetisyan (piano, YerazArtfellow), Kirill Soldatov from Russia (trumpet, ANPO soloist), Hrayr Karapetyan from Belgium (violin, YerazArtfellow, Liege Symphonic Orchestra), Narek Avagyan from Armenia (flute, ANPO), Andranik Kochar (bassoon, ANPO), Harutyun Shakhkhan (oboe, ANPO).

Flutist Narek Avagyan who has been teaching in the YerazArt Summer Music School for the third year, passing on his knowledge to the younger generation, said: "We were able to carry out all the lessons, keeping all the safety rules. I am very satisfied with the level of the participating talents, there were some really bright participants I had a great pleasure to work with," he continued.

Bassoonist Andranik Kochar has been teaching for the fifth year in a summer school. He says the talents have been very excited about these lessons. He has been very satisfied with the outcome of the SMS lessons, he emphasizes that the children showed very good results due to their intensive work.

A total of 19 children took part in the SMS from Yerevan schools named after Sayat-Nova, P. I. Tchaikovsky, V. Mokatsyan, Al Spendaryan and Jrbashyan, as well as students from the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, Maastricht conservatory.

The lessons were free for all participants.

Out of 19 participants, 7 took physical classes, keeping social distance at the rehearsal premises of Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall. 12 participants received online master classes from teachers who resided in USA, Russia, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands.

A total of 13 children were selected to participate in the final gala concert aired for general public via Facebook.

The concert in full can now be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQ7krS4RCm8&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0yIBMYXk9AVI1raohzRm2ymzCFRb086kiEX8fH-Bd3xZ9YAuRGire304>



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Miqayel Voskanyan and Friends Bring Dynamism From Armenia to the Modern Folk Scene

VOKANYAN, from page 12

roughly the same place in Eastern Armenian musical culture as the oud has had in that of Western Armenia. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, ashoughs (troubadours) of large cities and amateur musicians of small villages played the *tar* and sang for the enjoyment of the people; it was one of the most popular and versatile instruments used in Eastern Armenia before the Soviet Era.

Voskanyan has melded the enchanting sounds of the *tar* seamlessly into modern, jazz, funk- and hip-hop-inspired arrangements with the other instruments of the band, and the whole concept is quite reminiscent of Ara Dinkjian's band Night Ark which combined oud with jazz instrumentation in the 1980s and 1990s. And Voskanyan really pulls it off – this is not just a token addition of an ethnic instrument, as happens too often when we hear, for example, duduk dropped into a pop song with a hip-hop beat. Much of Voskanyan's music can be heard on YouTube, including several live videos. Some standout live performances that are viewable include classic folk songs *Esor Urvat E*, which Voskanyan imbues with a bit of a hip-hop feel in his vocal phrasing, and *Sari Aghjik* (known to readers perhaps as *Sari Gelin*, *Neynim Aman*, *Yerevan Bagh Em Arel*, etc. [[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9G5E1\\_ww3c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9G5E1_ww3c)]) which Voskanyan's vocals, at first gentle and then powerful are showcased, with saxophone obbligato from Melkonyan. This classic song is an excellent test of an Armenian musician – though it is a simple, powerful song that will sound good when played by any competent musician, a great musician will always turn



Miqayel Voskanyan and Friends



Miqayel Voskanyan

it into something new and fresh that usually shows forth that particular musician's style, feelings, and abilities. Voskanyan more than passes the test.

The live performances as well as album recordings available display Voskanyan's delicate yet powerful handling of the *tar*, his smooth vocals, the modernistic grooves of the rhythm section and Melkonyan's jazz- and folk-influenced saxophone playing (the choice of the soprano saxophone, rather than tenor or alto, is perfect for Armenian music, and has also been used this way in kef music circles in the US some 10-20 years ago). Melkonyan's solos are as an important part of the band's sound as are Voskanyan's vocals and *tar*. The band's first album was 2014's "Folk Fusion," and they have started work on a second album, "Nightology," currently awaiting release. This writer, for one, cannot wait.

## Concert in Times of Corona

GERMANY, from page 12

Diana Sahakyan began playing the piano at the age of 7, made her debut at 13, and graduated from the A. Spendiaryan Music School three years later. She continued her studies at the Komitas Conservatory in 2004 and in 2005 won the 16th "FLAME" Piano Competition for young pianists in Paris. She earned her diploma as concert pianist in 2009 and in 2010 studied at the Frankfurt University for Music and Performing Arts under Professors Lev Natochenny, and Catherine Vickers, graduating in 2014. She went on to complete a Masters at the same university and has received several prizes, including participation there in the advanced course of study under Professor Oliver Kern and the "Programa de Perfeccionamento" at the Escuela Superior de Musica Reina Sofia in Madrid. She has attended master courses in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, performs as a soloist, accompanist and in chamber music.

Due to the pandemic, programs for opera houses and concert halls, including the magnificent annual music festivals in the Rheingau, Beyreuth, and so many other German locations, have been dramatically cut back and revised, when not cancelled outright. Thus the open-air concert featuring Sahakyan and Baveyan is a special treat; those attending have been instructed to provide full contact information, and to bring face masks – as well as rain ponchos and umbrellas, in the (unlikely) event of inclement weather.

(Material for this article has been taken from Musikfestival Rheinhessen, Arte Musica Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur, and the website of Diana Sahakyan.)



Pianist Diana Sahakyan



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The Legend of Russian Makeup Artist Nanara Berezina

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/MOSCOW — Nanara Berezina, a leading beautician and makeup artist in Russia, world champion, creative director of the aesthetic section of the World Organization of Hairdressers, coach of the Russian national team for decorative cosmetics, teacher at the Dolores Academy of Hairdressing and the SPiKR Training Center, World Trainer, Golden Trainer of the World, laureate of international competitions, is a pioneer in her profession.

She was born in Armenia, lived in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria, North Caucasus) and then moved to Moscow, where she still lives. She graduated from Moscow State University with a degree in biology. Back in Soviet times, she was the main coach of the USSR national team of beauticians, as well as an international judge. Since 1982, her works have received prizes at all international competitions for makeup artists and beauticians, including 18 gold medals.

Berezina made a tremendous contribution to the development of the Russian and international competition movement of makeup artists. For her, makeup is an art created on women's faces and bodies...

**Dear Nanara, can we say that you are the founder the Russian school of makeup artists?**

The founders of makeup art in the USSR were Dolores Kondrashova, S. F. Mozheleva and T. I. Karsova. It was a laboratory where specialists from all over the Soviet Union were trained.

When I started my competitive career in the 1970s, the terms included daytime and evening makeup. It was boring for me, I wanted to complicate things, make them more creative. There was haute couture in clothes, and I wanted to create haute couture in makeup to go with the beautiful dresses. I came up with the phrase "Runway Makeup" competition. This was included in all countries in their championships, and to this day everyone uses it. Then I created makeup for young people — prom, then wedding makeup.

**Your life motto is "Feel the joy of beauty!"**

Yes, and back in the 1970s I was interviewed and asked to say a few words about my profession. So I came up with "Beauty is a good mood, and a good mood is a guarantee of health not only for her, but also for the people around her." Each face is individual, and one must be able to emphasize what is beautiful on each face.

**But the criteria for beauty change over time. What, in your opinion, is the ideal female beauty of the 21st century? For example, as a man, I am repulsed by silicone injections in a**



A creative look by Nanara Berezina

**woman's face. How do you feel about the fact that today even young girls are very prone to artificial changes?**

Nowadays, admiration in fashion is a blind imitation, especially for the young. Artificial beauty is terrible. Care should be reasonable, after consultation with competent specialists. All these swollen lips are a mark of dissatisfaction in one's personal life.

**Which method of skin rejuvenation do you prefer: Botox, cosmetic surgery or thread lifting?**

The best rejuvenation method is a kind smile on your face and daily face care!

**I believe that theater and music occupy an important place in your life. Some of your makeup items bear the names "Ravel's Bolero," "Harlequin" and "The Queen of Spades."**

Since childhood, I have grown up surrounded by beauty — my father's paintings, my beautiful and always fashionably dressed mother. In 1976 I visited Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) for the first time and did not leave the Hermitage for two days. The majestic luxury, created by human hands, simply captivated me. I visited the best museums in the world and got inspired there. I am also very fond of music - from classical to pop. This is what

I use in the Body Art category. I love pure shading (as in classical painting), this purity of the work distinguishes my students from all over the world with their beautiful works.

**You are a specialist at the Wella-Dolores Moscow beauty center, established by our fellow countrywoman Dolores Kondrashova (Terteryan), who founded also the first Union of Hairdressers and Beauticians in Russia. The De Vajan International Academy of Hairdressers, Makeup Artists and Nail Service is headed by Vazha Mkhitarian also operates in Moscow; the names of internationally acclaimed hairdressers and fashion designers Marina Amirbegova and Marina Vaskanyan are also known in Russia. And you have long been called the legend of modern Russian makeup art. How do you explain such high achievements by Armenians in this field?**

In 1972, Dolores opened a Beauty Center and brought us all together — Marina Vaskanyan and Marina Amirbegova, also Olga Berberyan, a very talented master from Rostov-on-Don was in the national team. The USSR team of makeup artists also included Vladimir Mkrtchyan, Ivan Grigoryan and Vazha Mkhitarian. And how can one explain the presence of so many talented Armenian makeup artists... you know, the Armenians are a talented people, skilled and creative, who appreciate beauty.

**Please tell me about your background.**

I was born in Gyumri-Leninakan. The surname is indeed Mkrtchyan, and my passport name is Armenuhi, but my dad called me Nanara from childhood, and remained so. In Leninakan, my father was known as Izoyi Vagho, as his name was Vagharshak Mkrtchyan. He took part in the war, was a scout. He had a workshop in Leninakan, drew a lot, sculpted, engaged in church mural painting. A lot of my father's paintings were hung at our house, but after the earthquake of 1988, when we went there, the neighbor gave us only three of his paintings. Unfortunately, the life of my parents turned out so that I grew up with my grandmother in Nalchik, studied and started my career there (in 1983 I was awarded the title of Honored Worker of the Household Service of Kabardino-Balkaria). Since the ninth grade, I clearly knew who I would be and walked step by step towards my goal.

**Do you remember your native language?**

In the eighth grade, I bought a self-instruction book for the Armenian language and learned to read, write and speak. And in childhood, I repeatedly went on vacation to Artsakh (Karabakh).

**If I am not mistaken, the last time you were in Armenia was in 2015, at the 10th Armenian Championship in hairdressing, decorative cosmetics and nail art. How do you assess the state of the makeup art in Armenia?**

Armenia, under the leadership of the President of the Union of Hairdressers and Cosmetologists of Armenia Marina Avetisyan, has been taking part in the world and European championship of makeup artists since 2002. The level of work is very high, which speaks of the awards and prizes that the Armenian masters have. The makeup art under the guidance of Hranush Yegoyan takes well-deserved prizes. I can say that in Armenia it is very developed, like nowhere else, to do makeup before going to any events.



Nanara Berezina



ARTS & LIVING

# Onnik Dinkjian Named NEA National Heritage Fellow

NEW YORK (*Broadway World*) – The National Endowment for the Arts recently announced the recipients of its 2020 National Heritage Fellowships on July 28. Onnik Dinkjian of Fort Lee, N.J. is among the nine recipients to be honored this year. These lifetime honor awards of \$25,000 are given in recognition of both artistic excellence and efforts to sustain cultural traditions for future generations.

Dinkjian is hailed as one of the most beloved and influential Armenian singers in America, with an expressive voice said to convey both the joy of his Armenian heritage and the deep sorrow of its painful history.

Dinkjian was born in 1929 in Paris, France. His parents, born in Dikranagerd (Diyarbakir), Turkey, were survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, and died when he was an infant. His godparents, also survivors of the genocide from Dikranagerd, adopted him and they immigrated to America in 1946. The Armenian dialect from Dikranagerd is unique and Dinkjian is one of the last remaining Armenians who speaks and understands it, and perhaps the last who sings in this endangered dialect.

Apart from the sacred music of the Armenian Church, Dinkjian's repertoire consists of mainly folk and popular songs from the Anatolian (Eastern Turkey) villages, Armenia, and the



Armenian Diaspora. Dinkjian is also a composer and lyricist, whose songs have become standards in the American-Armenian community. Read Onnik Dinkjian's full biography online.

When asked what receiving this honor means to him, Dinkjian said, "Not only did America give my people a safe haven, it also provided me the opportunity to keep the dialect and songs of my ancestors alive, which I have strived to do for over 70 years. My goal was not to be recognized, but rather to pass our rich Armenian culture down to future generations. Receiving the NEA Heritage Fellowship is an honor beyond my wildest dreams. I am truly humbled and appreciative."

A brief documentary captured Onnik recording his latest album, highlighting the importance of continuing and sharing this unique cultural art form. Watch the documentary online.

"For years, Onnik Dinkjian has used his talents to share the proud history of the Armenian people through traditional music," said Governor Murphy. "His work is an inspiration not only to the Armenian Diaspora, but to artists across the world. We are proud of his many accomplishments and success in using his music to promote and preserve Armenia's rich cultural heritage."

"The State Arts Council is proud to support and celebrate the various art forms rooted in cultural heritage - art forms that can be found in communities throughout New Jersey," said Council Chair Elizabeth Mattson. "We congratulate Mr. Dinkjian on this significant lifetime accomplishment and are honored to count him among the many talented and passionate artists who call New Jersey home."

"I applaud the National Endowment for the Arts for recognizing Mr. Dinkjian for a lifetime of artistic and historical contributions through his music," said Secretary of State Tahesha Way. "We are proud that New Jersey has been home for Mr. Dinkjian as he preserved the artistic heritage of his ancestors and shared his gifts with the world."

## Calendar

### MASSACHUSETTS

**AUGUST 22 – Saturday, at 9 a.m.**  
**"Labyrinth Walking: Connection between Movement and Wisdom."**  
 Facilitator: Kristin Asadourian, founder, KA Coaching. Virtual program of Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with The Greenway Fitness Program. For link, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

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## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Delos Releases New Recording of Komitas' *Divine Liturgy* for Mixed Choir by Vache Sharafyan

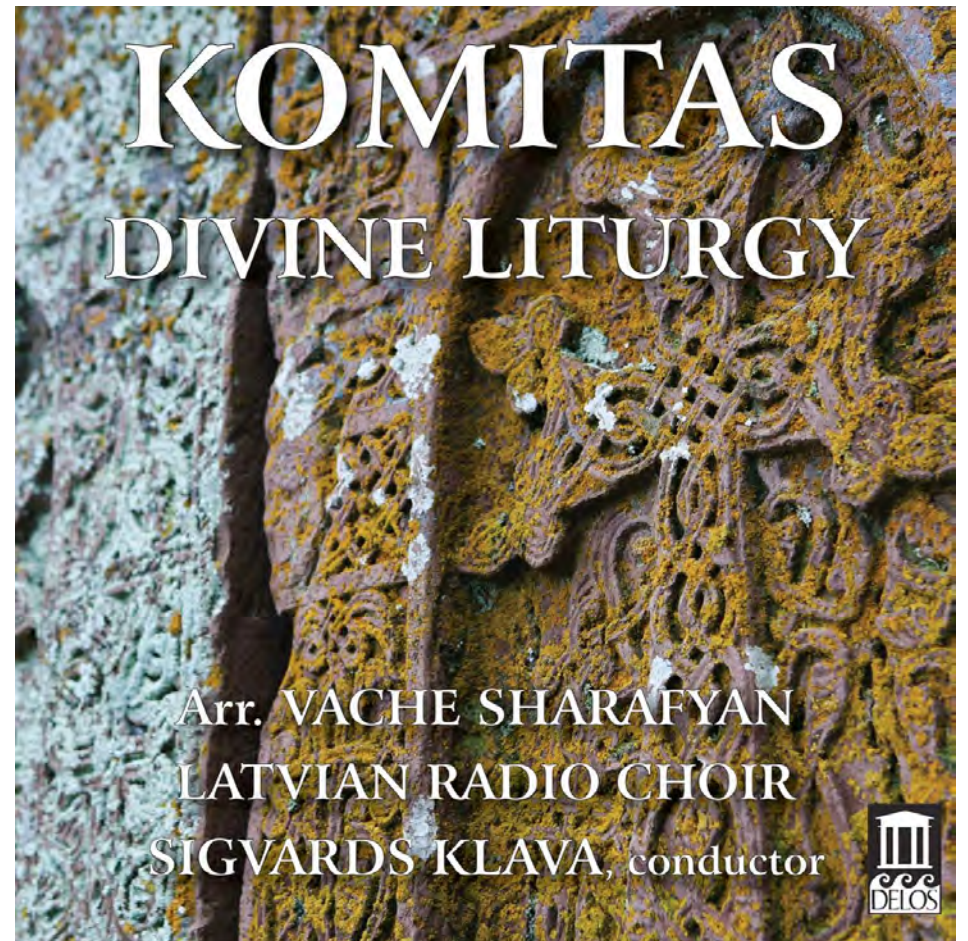
NEW YORK — On July 10, Delos released Komitas' *Divine Liturgy*, an early-20th masterpiece by the revered Armenian composer Komitas Vardapet (1869–1935), in the world-premiere recording of a mixed-voice arrangement by his 21st-century compatriot Vache Sharafyan. This new version features the critically acclaimed Latvian Radio Choir led by its artistic director, Sigvards Klava, with guest soloists bass Hovhannes Nersesyan and tenor Armen Badalyan.

The recording was made at St. John's Church

Armenians all over the world do on Sunday, April 24, to commemorate the anniversary of the 1915 genocide in which 1.5 million Armenians in Turkey were either slaughtered or died on forced marches into exile — the songs they sing are by Komitas Vardapet, the composer who speaks for the soul of their nation." Komitas, a priest and an eminent ethnomusicologist, was himself a victim of the Genocide. Though he survived, his psyche was shattered, and he spent most of his life's last two decades in exile in a Paris asylum.

Komitas began working on the *Divine Liturgy* in 1892, and at least ten versions exist. The final version—the one presented on this recording — dates from 1914–15 and was completed just before his deportation from Constantinople, where he had settled in 1910, to a prison camp in Cankin. The *Liturgy* is thus one of his final works. Komitas' output was modest: 80 choral works and songs, arrangements of the Armenian mass, and some dances for piano. And yet he singlehandedly laid the foundation for Armenia's classical tradition, as his better-known compatriot Aram Khachaturian acknowledged. As a collector and arranger of the authentic folksongs of rural peasants, Komitas did for Armenia what Bartók did for Hungary, turning simple material into bewitchingly sophisticated polyphony. Komitas collected, transcribed, researched and com-

pared more than 3,000 pieces of Armenian folk music, more than half of which were subsequently lost and only around 1,200 are now extant. His appetite for songs was voracious, and his transcriptions reflect a remarkable ear, seamlessly interweaving threads of music,



Cover photograph of Armenian Crossstone, Sevanvank, 9th Century, ©Aija Bley



Komitas Vardapet

(Sv. Jana Baznica), Riga, Latvia, September 20–23, 2019.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of Komitas Vardapet's music to the Armenian identity. "For Armenians, music is memory," wrote Michael Church in *The Guardian*. "And whenever they gather to honor their dead — as

movement, and complex social relationships.

The *Divine Liturgy* was originally composed for a male choir, and previous attempts over the years to transcribe it for mixed-choir performance were not enthusiastically received. But Tigran Mkrtchyan, the Armenian ambassador to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, believed a new concert version would bring more listeners to the masterwork, encouraging them to concentrate more on the music itself and the logic of its dramaturgy rather than on its ritual aspect.

Sharafyan's arrangement follows the original male-choir version as closely as possible, with the female voices lending it extra color and brightness.

The project took three years of preparation, and finally, on September 20, 2019, the Latvian Radio Choir, led by its artistic director, Sigvards Klava, became the first non-Armenian mixed

choir to perform the *Divine Liturgy*, in an historic performance at St. John's Church in Riga commemorating the 150th anniversary of Komitas's birth. This recording took place during the three days following that historic performance.

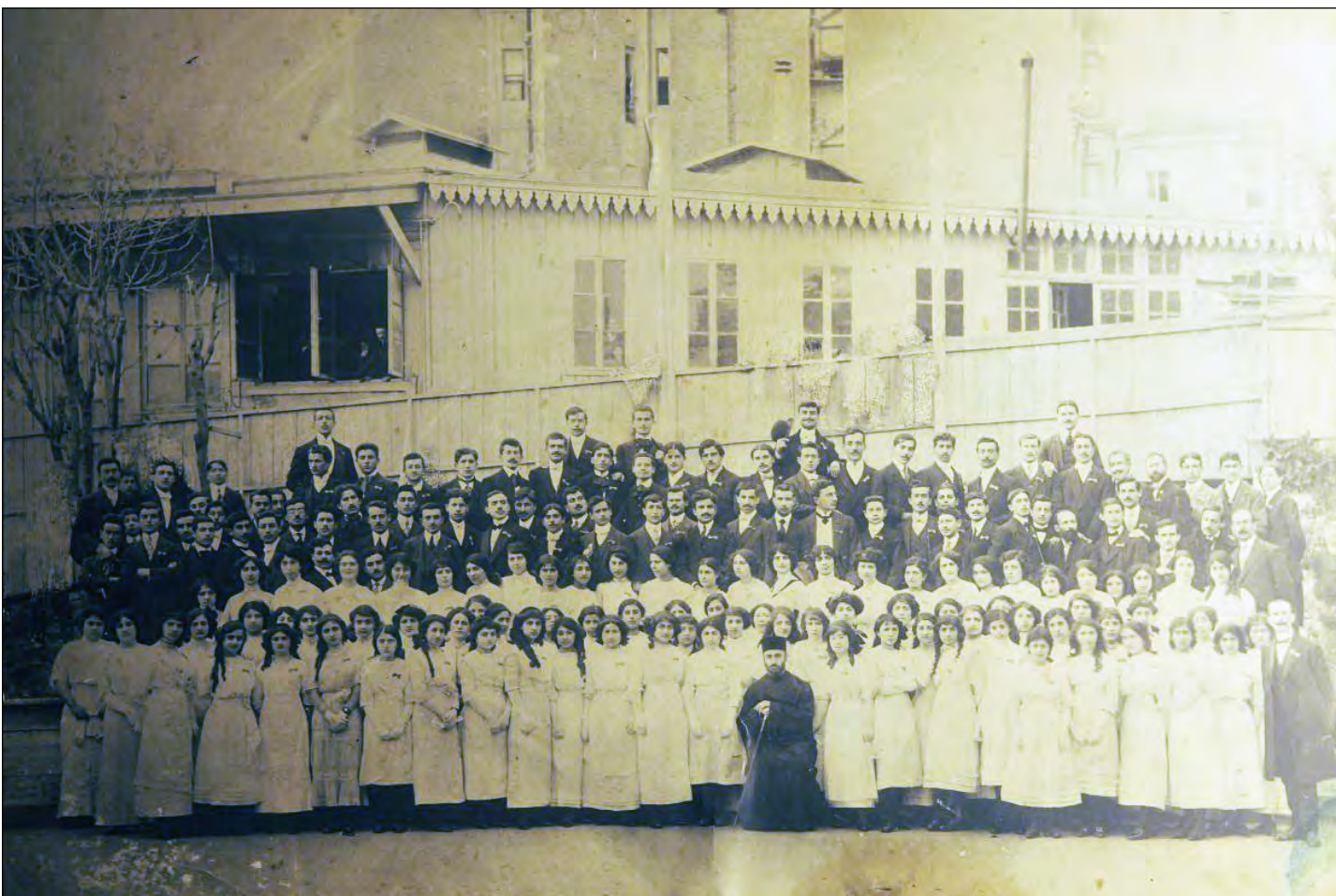
One of Armenia's major composers, Vache Sharafyan has created more than a hundred musical works. His music has been praised as "stark, mysterious and ultimately majestic" by the *New York Times*, and "complex, deliberate, captivating" by the *Boston Globe*. His output includes symphonic works, chamber music, and choral and other vocal music. His compositions include the opera "King Abgar," and the ballets "Another Moon" (inspired by G. I. Gurdjieff), "Ancient Gods" and The "Bride of the Desert." Sharafyan's compositions have been widely performed in his native country, but also internationally in the world's most prestigious halls and by many contemporary music festivals in the United States and Europe.

## About the Artists

Bass Hovhannes Nersesyan is both a priest and an opera singer. A graduate of the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan, since 2004 he has been a soloist at the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, and he also serves as a deacon in the Araratian Pontifical Diocese, one of the largest dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He has been a prize winner at many prestigious vocal competitions: the International Competition of Young Singers in Moldova, the International Young Opera Singers' Competition "Opera Without Borders," the Rimsky-Korsakov International Competition of Young Opera Singers, and the International Pavel Lisitsian Competition of Vocalists. In 2014 he was awarded the Armenian President's Youth Prize for young musicians. Nersesyan has given concerts around the world and taken part in several international festivals.

Tenor Armen Badalyan studied violin at the Music College of Vanadzor in Armenia, and in 2003 he enrolled at the Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan, from which he graduated as a voice teacher and opera singer. He has been a soloist at the Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet since 2008, and a member of the Tsaritsynskaya Opera Theatre (Volgograd, Russia) since 2013.

Since 1992, Sigvards Klava has been artistic



Komitas with his Gusan Choir | 1913 | Constantinople courtesy of the Komitas Museum

*continued on next page*

## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Delos Releases New Recording of Komitas' *Divine Liturgy* for Mixed Choir

from previous page

director of the Latvian Radio Choir, which under his leadership has become an internationally recognized, vocally distinctive group welcomed at the world's top music festivals and regularly invited to collaborate with outstanding composers and conductors. He has received the Latvian Great Music Award several times and is also a recipient of the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Award and the Order of the Three Stars. He has served as a principal conductor of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival since 1990 and as a professor in the conducting department at Jazeps Vitols Latvian Academy of Music since 2000, and he takes regular part in international juries and educational projects. Klava has conducted concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam,

the Berlin Philharmonie, and many other venues, with ensembles such as the Netherlands Radio Choir, the Netherlands Opera Choir, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Cappella Amsterdam, Berlin's RIAS Chamber Choir, and the MDR Leipzig Radio Choir.

The Latvian Radio Choir is a unique ensemble of professional singers that offers its audiences an extraordinary variety of repertoire, ranging from early music to the most sophisticated contemporary scores. Its recording of Arvo Pärt's *Adam's Lament*, conducted by Tõnu Kaljuste on the ECM label, won the Grammy® Award for Best Choral Performance in 2014. The choir is a repeat winner of the Great Music Award of Latvia (the highest national award for professional achievement in music) and has also received the Latvian



Latvian Radio Choir, Sigvards Klava & soloists ©Kaspars Balamovskis

## Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

### Eech

#### Helen Heghine Deraprahamian's (Modified) Eech Recipe

*Eech* (or *eetch*) is a traditional Armenian dish consisting of fine bulgur, onions, tomatoes, tomato paste, bell peppers, lemon juice, olive oil, green onions, parsley, and seasonings, incorporated to create a robust and fragrant presentation. It is served as a salad, a side dish,



or as a spread on fresh pita bread, lavash, or crackers. A common Lenten dish, it is also known as "mock kheyma" or meatless kheyma, but can be enjoyed any season of the year.

Helen Heghine

Deraprahamian was born on September 11, 1931 in Aleppo, Syria, the second of eight children of genocide survivors Vahan and Sara Der Barghamian from Kharpert (Elazig), Turkey. Helen was a devoted member of the St. George Armenian Apostolic Church in Hartford CT, and the Ladies Guild Association. Helen passed away in December 2019. In her honor and memory, we present this modified version of her recipe.



#### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup fine (#1) bulgur  
1/4 cup olive oil, or a little more  
1 large onion, chopped (cook half of it in oil and save the other half to mix with parsley for topping)  
1/2 medium green bell pepper, seeded and chopped  
1 (8 oz.) can tomato sauce  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
3/4 cup water  
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, or a little more  
1/2 large bunch parsley, chopped (use 3/4 of it in mixture and save 1/4 to mix with onion for topping)  
1 1/2 teaspoons crushed dried mint  
1/2 teaspoon crushed dried basil  
Salt and pepper  
Dash of paprika, cayenne pepper or Aleppo pepper  
1 1/2 cups grape or cherry tomatoes, cut in half (as garnish)  
1/2 large bunch green onions, finely chopped (as garnish)  
Romaine lettuce leaves and fresh lemon wedges

#### PREPARATION:

Sauté the onions and bell pepper in olive oil until soft. Add tomato sauce, tomato paste, water, lemon juice, and seasonings. Stir, bring to a boil, and let simmer for 10-12 minutes, or a little longer. Check seasonings and remove from heat.

Add the bulgur to the tomato sauce mixture, and stir. Stir in 3/4 of the chopped parsley. Check seasonings and set aside.

Cover and refrigerate until well chilled. When mixture is chilled enough to handle, scoop up a handful and shape into oval rolls (or use a 1/3 cup measuring cup for a uniform shape when it is inverted.)

Place on a platter and sprinkle with reserved onion and parsley mixture. Garnish with tomatoes and green onions, and serve with Romaine lettuce leaves and lemon wedges. It can also be served in a bowl, drizzled with olive oil, and garnished with the onion and parsley mixture.

Also see the late Buzz Baxter's recipe for Armenian *Eech* from Fresno at: <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/arm-eech.html>

Cabinet of Ministers Award. Its account of Sergei Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil* (Ondine) was praised by Gramophone as the best recording of February 2013 and was ranked among the 25 best albums of the year by America's National Public Radio network. In January, 2020 the Latvian Radio Choir won the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) Award in the Choral category for their album of sacred choral works by Pyotr Tchaikovsky.

### Producer/Director Nigol Bezjian's Donates Archives To Haigazian University

BEIRUT – On April 27, 2020, the Derian Armenological Library of Haigazian University was enriched with the archives of the well-known film producer and director, Nigol Bezjian.

In his letter addressed to the President, Rev. Paul Haidostian, he writes, "When I moved to Lebanon in the spring of 1997, the Armenological Library became my second home. And for all the films I produced after that year, I greatly benefited from its rich collection. Moreover, the Bezjian family has had close relations with the Armenian Evangelical Church since the 19th century, as one of the founders of Aintab College."

By gifting his archives to Haigazian University, Bezjian hopes that other centers of Armenian studies will make more efforts to integrate the archives of Armenian intellectuals and artists into their collections.

Nigol Bezjian is the author and producer of more than 20 feature and documentary films, many of which have had screenings at international festivals and competitions.

In the last two decades, Bezjian has donated numerous books and audiovisual materials to both of Haigazian University's libraries. Researchers will have access to Nigol Bezjian's archives according to the agreement made between the donor and Haigazian University.



Nigol Bezjian



COMMENTARY

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The Nuclear Option

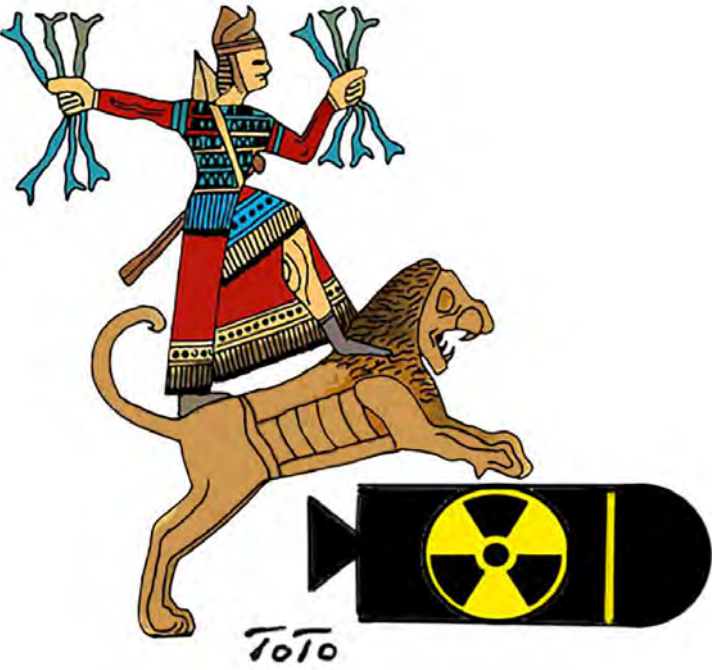
By Edmond Y. Azadian

On July 24, 1923, the Lausanne Treaty was signed to determine the borders of the current Republic of Turkey. This year, on the 97th anniversary of that treaty, Greece and Turkey were on the brink of war. However, there was not much coverage in the world media about that tension between the two neighboring countries.

Without interest by world media in shining a light on such issues, rogue states like Turkey and demagogues such as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan survive and even thrive.

Writing in the National Interest, Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute, states: "Greek and Turkish fighter jets engaged in mock dogfights this week, over the Greek island of Kastellorizo, just a mile and a half from the Turkish coast, causing tourists to flee. Meanwhile, there is a growing risk that the Turkish and Greek navies will clash hundreds of miles to the west, if Turkey pushes forward with its plan to survey for gas in Greece's exclusive economic zone. Greek officials say that all options are on the table and German Chancellor Angela Merkel has rushed to mediate as the US officials remain largely absent."

US officials are certainly absent by design and not necessarily by default, given the increasingly warmer relations between Ankara and Washington. The US has relegated the dirty work of the NATO to Ankara and in turn has been looking the other



way as Turkey bullies its neighbors and creates quagmires for Russian forces in Syria and Libya, while intending to do the same in the Caucasus.

A few weeks ago, a secret military document was made public in Turkey about the latter's plans to invade Greece and Armenia. Ankara did not disavow the news and its ensuing actions are coming to prove that they mean business and perhaps even deliberately to relayed its intent to those countries.

What is the upshot? What are Turkey's plans? Once again, Rubin answers in the same article, "For reasons of ideology, economics and ego, Erdogan now seeks to undo the Lausanne Treaty: ideology because Erdogan seeks to regain control of certain Ottoman territories and change the demographics of areas outside Turkey's borders; economics because Turkey seeks to steal resources from recognized Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones; and ego, because Erdogan wants to top Ataturk's legacy as a military victor."

Besides Greece and Cyprus, Erdogan's Drang nach osten ("drive to the east") has another dimension extending to Central Asia, marching through the Caucasus.

President Erdogan not only is talking about his intentions, but he is making good on his word, yet the international community is not alarmed, nor is it taking appropriate measures to stop his aggression.

Last year, the European Union offered a slap on the wrist for Turkey for its bad behavior. Only French President Emmanuel Macron has been consistently vocal in the face of Turkish aggression. He believes that additional measures are needed to stop Turkey.

"I am in full support of Cyprus and Greece, whose sovereignty is breached by Turkey. It is unforgivable to allow the territories of EU members to be compromised and threatened. The responsible party must be punished," Macron stated recently.

There are divisions within the EU member countries' policies

vis-à-vis Turkey. But there is a completely different perception regarding Turkey's actions in Washington. Recent statements by President Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo indicate that the US has shifted its focus from Moscow to Beijing. Today, China is the main adversary for the US, while Russia has been left to face Turkey in the wars named above. In addition, Turkey is vying to replace China as an economic supply chain for the US, as the Trump administration has been levying economic sanctions on China.

When President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger undertook their China trip in 1972, they intended to drive a wedge between the two communist powers (China and the USSR), by offering economic incentives to Beijing.

As a result, the Soviet Union eventually collapsed and President Reagan rightfully bragged "we destroyed the Soviet Empire without firing a single shot." Of course, other domestic factors also contributed to the implosion of that empire.

But in the meantime, the US got more than what it had bargained for. China developed into a major economic powerhouse, which fueled its military might.

On the one hand, Washington will try to challenge China, which has staked a claim in the economies of Africa and South America, while Turkey will be tasked with dealing with Russia. Mr. Erdogan's plans to dominate Central Asia, the space between China and Russia, matches perfectly the US's geostrategic goals. Turkey has already weaponized religion as an extension of its military hardware. It has been threatening to weaken

Russia by mobilizing its 25 million Muslims and has been agitating the Uyghurs, in China's Xinxiang Province. (There is little doubt that China is wreaking havoc on that minority but Turkey is making sure to insert itself in that issue as a voice of compassion.)

As the facts are sorted out in the Tavush region of Armenia, where Azerbaijan attacked Armenia starting July 12, it looks more and more as if the incident was stage managed by Turkey.

For almost 30 years, the Karabakh conflict was considered a regional issue, which called for a local solution between Armenia and Azerbaijan. But with the advent of Erdogan's imperial plans, it has become a component of a larger international problem.

As analysts have discovered in Armenia, Erdogan needs Karabakh more than Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev does. It is an excuse for Turkey to face Armenia and that falls perfectly in line with the goals Turkey has been pursuing.

After suffering a debacle in Tavush, Azerbaijan dispatched a military delegation to Turkey to discuss the conflict with the leadership there. Turkey's National Security Council held a meeting chaired by President Erdogan, and came up with a stern warning to Armenia: "We condemn Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan, whose territories it has occupied illegally, disturbing peace and trampling international norms."

What was more alarming, however, was Erdogan's personal threat to Armenia: "This is not a border skirmish but it is an aggression on the very territory of Azerbaijan. Armenia has landed a punch beyond its capacity. We will defend our friend and brother, Azerbaijan. We will bring to its conclusion our mission in the Caucasus, left as a legacy to us from our forefathers."

Earlier, Turkey's Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar had warned, "Azerbaijani blood will not be left unavenged."

Following these warnings, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense announced on July 27 that joint military exercises will take place with Turkish forces July 29 through August 10. This is an initiative to intimidate Armenia, after Turkey's verbal warnings.

There is a serious debate in Armenia whether Turkey can and will invade Armenia. Lillit Makunts, a member of parliament, and Turkologist Ruben Melkonyan, believe Turkey will not dare attack Armenia for two reasons: the international community still remembers Turkey's genocidal acts against Armenians and second, the Russian military base in Gyumri will serve as a deterrent.

However, Gen. Vagharshak Harutyunyan, the former minister of defense, insists that "Ankara has already crossed the Rubicon and it is in the game."

Erdogan is in the same headspace that Hitler was in the 1930s when he became the revanchist leader to avenge Germany's humiliation in the wake of World War I. That scenario was enacted in Istanbul during the ceremony converting the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, where Erdogan derided Ataturk's legacy, who had saved the present territory of Turkey from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and instead exulted Fatih ("conqueror") Sultan Mehmet II, who had occupied Constantinople in 1453. On that day, Erdogan assumed the conqueror's mantle as he is set to rebuild his empire.

continued on next page

COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkish Intellectuals Acknowledge The Armenian Genocide on TV Program

(Part III and end)

This is the third and final article on a lengthy video in which two Turkish Intellectuals are advocating the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Republic of Turkey. The discussion took place in 2015 on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The conversation between Erdogan Aydin and Aydin Chubukchu is in Turkish with English subtitles on the video. The name of the one-hour-and-37-minute-long program is “Tower of Babel.”The title of the program is “Facing the Genocide.” The Turkish discussion was translated and subtitled in English by Ohannes Kilicdagi, PhD. Here is the final segment of the excerpts from that discussion:

Moderator: “A question from the TV audience: ‘There are those in this country [Turkey] who are more Armenian than Armenians....’”

Aydin Chubukchu: “It is wrong to say that genocide was carried on Turks. It is true that they died massively. They died in the war as soldiers. Turkish people rather died at the front where their state sent them: In Gallipoli, Sarikamish, Yemen...Suez, Galicia....”

Moderator: “We cannot call these [Turkish] deaths genocide.”

Aydin Chubukchu: “Of course, we cannot. They died in the war.”

Erdogan Aydin: “For example, the Jewish genocide took place in Germany. Almost three times more Germans died than Jews. But one cannot evaluate them under the same category and express condolences for both.”

Moderator: “You mentioned the Germans who died in the Second World War.”

Aydin Chubukchu: “The one died in the clash of two armies, the other was civilians massacred by a state. It is not the same thing. Of course, Turks died, millions died. True. But they died in battles. There is no state massacring them in Turkey. As for “being more Armenian than Armenians” – right. If the Armenian people are oppressed and silenced, I will be more Armenian than Armenians and try to be their voice. If somewhere the Turkish people are oppressed and silenced by a state then I will be more Turk than Turks and defend them. I will be more Alevi than the Alevi and defend all who are silenced: Circassian, Kurd, Arab, Assyrian. I will be more Armenian than Armenians, more Assyrian than Assyrians to give them voice. This is not an insult. If that person asking the question is trying to insult me by saying ‘more Armenian than Armenians,’ it is my honor to stand in solidarity with the oppressed people.”

Erdogan Aydin: In answer to a question regarding the role of Germany in the Armenian Genocide: “They [Germans] played an essential role, but we should be careful not to give the impression that the [Armenian] genocide was carried out by the Germans.”

Moderator: “You say this does not acquit our Ottomans.”

Erdogan Aydin: “Exactly, because the annihilation of Armenians was part Islamization and Turkification of this land, beginning before the war. The policy of Islamization and Turkification of this land, meaning the cleansing of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians served the purpose of Germans who then made the Ottoman Empire and Enver Pasha their collaborators, so that they would use a wider area of influence against Russia and also please their collaborators. While pleasing the Turan dream of their allies, Germany would use the whole Ottoman land for its own system of exploitation.... The war was seen as an opportunity for the elimination of distinct domestic groups. The Ottoman sovereigns of the time aimed two main goals when they entered the war. First is the founding of a Turan Empire from the Adriatic to the China Wall leaning on the Germans, through their war mechanism. Secondly, the war provided them an extraordinary free hand, as no one could interfere in their domestic affairs. So, on this rare occasion, they aimed to clean all distinct identities from Anatolia.... This project is also the reason for sending millions of Ottomans, Turks and Muslims in the first place, to their deaths. So the responsibility of the deaths of Turks, in the question you asked, also belongs to those following Turanism as Talat and Enver. The responsibility for the annihilation of the whole Armenian population, kids and youth, also belongs

to Talats and Envers.... We should also underline that Armenians had been organized here 3,000 years before Turks came from Central Asia.... It is said that they [Armenians] were sent away from war zones. No! This is an absolute lie. Besides the war zone, they [Armenians] were exiled from places such as Adapazar, Izmit, Bursa, Eskişehir.... An approach that is based on the state but not the people and their rights cannot generate democracy and justice. Similarly, people who do not imagine fatherland with the rights of those living there but as a piece of soil with a sovereign cannot produce real wealth and justice. If we could carry our land into the future with Armenians who had been there before us, we would see how much they, as a people who constructed European-like cities 100-150 years before, would increase our material wealth. If they were still here in Turkey, we would have a higher rank in the unjust global income distribution. If those people were here today, and we could oppose all powerholders, Turk, Armenian, Kurd together, murders in Soma and Torunlar would have not happened. So, facing the Armenian Question calmly means to re-explore patriotism, our history, wealth, democracy, justice and humanity. It seems we should repeat to our friends, authors, professors, academics who try to cover it as “deportation” that those who were deported were ordinary people (pregnant women, children, the elderly), but not armed people. We should repeat that our friends and neighbors were deported, our humanity and conscience with them. Unfortunately, we continuously talk about the state and its right in a country where they do not exist. But the state is a mechanism of sovereignty with no conscience and morality. Humans have conscience, morality, feeling of solidarity, and their struggle for rights. Democracy is a system where the state is the weakest and the human is the strongest.... Some of our friends ask about documents. We should also be freed from document fetishism. The most important document is the absence of a whole people which once was one of the essential elements of this land. There cannot be any document bigger than this. Moreover, a power which was cold-blooded enough to do such inhuman things, deported, eradicated, exiled a people, would not leave a document saying ‘I deported and annihilated you.’ But we can already infer many conclusions from existing documents....”

(Correction: In the previous two articles, I had mistakenly transposed the names of the speakers Erdogan Aydin and Aydin Chubukchu.)

The Nuclear Option

from previous page

After striking a punishing blow to Azerbaijan’s forces, Armenians are in a state of euphoria. During that confrontation, Armenia’s armed forces proved their superiority not only on the battlefield, but also in their innovations in military hardware, which brought down 13 Azeri drones, including one from Israel, which had been considered invulnerable.

But the war is closing in on Armenia’s borders; Turkish forces are both in Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. Armenia should compound its military ingenuity with corresponding diplomacy. This is no time for anti-Russian rhetoric, as Russia remains our strategic partner.

Turkey has alienated a number of countries, creating a niche for international diplomacy for Armenia. Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel and Armenia have a common interest in forming a coalition to confront Turkey. Of course, Turkey and Israel are strategic competitors in Azerbaijan, working at cross-purposes. Even Saudi Arabia could find interest in the above proposed coalition, as it considers Turkey a competitor in the leadership of Sunni Muslims.

In terms of military prowess, Armenia must think also about the unthinkable as a nation, which has experienced genocide and has the right to deter another. Erdogan’s intention is to complete the grizzly task “his forefathers” have left unfinished.

Along this line of thought, prominent political analyst Hagop Badalyan believes that Azerbaijan’s threat to strike the atomic power plant in Armenia allows the latter country to consider the nuclear option.

“We can understand how delicate and complicated the issue is. For many even the idea may sound unthinkable, i.e., that Armenia can become a nuclear power. On the other hand, other nations have had the same hesitation before attaining nuclear forces. However, everything depends on the task ahead, the international situation and other factors.”

Since Armenia’s weapons designers are so ingenious, they have to consider the nuclear option as a deterrent or any other super weapon that can prevent another genocide.

The spent fuel at Metsamor power plant is shipped to Russia for storage. That is the ingredient which may serve to develop a warhead.

Since the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no country has used the atomic bomb, instead using it as a deterrent against potential aggression. Even the rogue state of North Korea brought the leader of the US to its doorsteps, because it obtained nuclear arms.

Currently, the following countries are members of the nuclear club, with their corresponding warheads: US (4,435), Russia (4,900), China (290), Pakistan (150-160), India (130-140), North Korea (20-30), Israel (?), France (300), and Great Britain (215). No one knows how many warheads exist in Israel’s arsenal. Some unconfirmed reports estimate it to be 200. But the country has never asked anyone’s permission to become a nuclear power nor has it allowed inspections by international agencies.

With Turkey’s current aggressive posture and track record, Armenia does not have the luxury of receiving anyone’s consent to stop the next genocide which may be looming on the horizon.

Turkish Nationalist and Religious Indoctrination

By Raffi Bedrosyan

THE WORLD recently witnessed how the Turkish state “reconquered” the 1500-year-old Byzantine holy church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, by converting it from museum to mosque. The chief Turkish Islamic cleric held a long sword in his hand during the first opening prayers of Quran, symbolizing the power of the conqueror and signifying that anything conquered by sword belongs to the conqueror – all churches, buildings, possessions, women and children of the conquered people. If the conqueror allows a few of the conquered people to live, they are called the “Remnants of the Sword,” as I had explained in a previous article. None of the invited foreign dignitaries, more significantly, none of the Islamic country dignitaries attended the opening prayers. Yet, masses of Turkish people rushed to the church/museum/mosque, chanting Allah-u akbar in the streets, on buses or subway trains, as if they are literally conquering the church from the Christian enemy right now.

The Turkish state has always relied on manipulating the masses against a real or imagined enemy, based on nationalism in the past and now, combining it with religious fanaticism, creating a Turco-Islamic fascist racist society.

In the eastern provinces of Turkey, the real or imagined enemy has always been the Armenians, and even one hundred years after wiping out the Armenian population in eastern Turkey (Western Armenia), the hatred toward Armenians is kept alive by annual celebrations, organized by the central and local governments, of ‘liberating’ every town or village from the dreaded Armenians.

These liberation celebrations have nothing to do with the 1915 Armenian Genocide operations, but rather, they are about the complicated events that took place in eastern Turkey/Western Armenia during 1915-1920. In 1915-17, the Russian army advanced into eastern Turkey already emptied of its Armenian population, occupying many provinces including Van, Erzurum, Erzincan, Bitlis, Mush, Sivas. But with the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Russian military operations ceased and Russian soldiers started returning home, leaving the defense of the front and the vast occupied territories to a few Armenian detachments, headed by General Antranig Ozanian, assisted by Mourad and Torkom.

The occupied territories were administrated by the Transcaucasian Commissariat with Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani officials, with its capital in Erzurum. It was almost impossible to govern, resulting in complete chaos and confusion. Although the war ended in 1918, the Turkish armies were not disbanded and they started advancing eastward, liberating town after town while General Antranig, severely outnumbered, retreated in an orderly way, thereby providing safe passage to Armenia for several thousand Armenian civilians still alive in these towns. Turks took back Erzurum unopposed in March 1918 and continued marching eastward taking other towns until May 1918. The Armenians defeated them at Sardarabad, securing the foundation for



COMMENTARY

# Bishop Findikyan Issues Statement Against Hagia Sophia Conversion

*On July 22, 2020, Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan issued the message below to support Orthodox Christian leaders, and to condemn an outrage against one of the wonders of the Christian world, Constantinople’s Hagia Sophia Cathedral.*

Dear Faithful:

This week I have received a solemn request from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and its leader Archbishop Elpidophoros, my dear brother in Christ, to share their grief over a deeply dispiriting turn of events in the life of Orthodox—and indeed all—Christians.

You are all aware that the Turkish government has rendered a decision to convert Constantinople’s magnificent Cathedral of Hagia Sophia – “Holy Wisdom” – into a mosque. The decision is an outrage to Christians across the globe, and its fulfillment would be a tragedy of historic proportions.

Our Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II, issued a strong statement of condemnation last week, which powerfully expressed the feelings of our entire church. I would like to quote it here at length:

“From the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, we regretfully learned of the July 10 decision of the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to turn the Hagia Sophia Cathedral—a shrine of enduring, eternal value to the Orthodox churches and the entire Christian world – into a mosque.

“Against the appeals of countless Christian organizations, Christian church leaders, and political authorities, the Turkish government has made this unilateral and reprehensible decision, violating the rights of Turkey’s national religious minorities. The concerns of millions of Christians were ignored—in spite of the fact that Hagia Sophia has long been listed among UNESCO’s World Heritage monuments.

“The Armenian people, who survived Genocide in Ottoman Turkey, share the pain and anxiety of our Orthodox brothers and sisters. The Armenian Church, which lost thousands of our own precious churches in the Armenian Genocide, condemns the decision of the Turkish government, which greatly hinders the progress of understanding and dialogue among religions. We call for its reconsideration, and for a return to the principle of peaceful, prayerful coexistence among the diverse religious communities.”

The words of our Catholicos speak for all Armenian Christians, and we thank him for expressing our sense of outrage with such clarity and conviction.

Indeed, the decision to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque is so contrary to common decency that we must see the mildly supportive statements issued by Christian authorities in Istanbul, including Armenian ones, to have been made under duress, and possibly coercion.

With this message, the Eastern Diocese joins the near universal condemnation of this act of cultural genocide. It represents a radical suppression of Christianity in one of our faith’s oldest, most magnificent homelands: the ancient realm of the Byzantine Orthodox Church in Asia Minor. Hagia Sophia was conceived and built 1,500 years ago

## COMMENTARY

as the splendid jewel in the great Byzantine capital of Constantinople—a city that has been, and continues to be, an important center of Armenian Church life. Faithful Armenian architects and artisans contributed to the design, construction, and upkeep of the cathedral for centuries. Today we stand with our brother and sister Orthodox Christians in their righteous cause, and along with our Catholicos convey supportive love to the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I.

In Archbishop Elpidophoros’ message to me, he notes that the leaders of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America are inviting all Christians to join them on Friday, July 24, in a day of mourning over the evident fate of Hagia Sophia. Quoting an encyclical from the Greek Orthodox Church, he writes:

“Knowing that Friday, July 24 will be an ‘inauguration’ of this program of cultural and spiritual misappropriation and a violation of all standards of religious harmony and mutual respect, we call upon all the beloved faithful of our Holy Archdiocese to observe this day as a Day of Mourning and

manifest grief. We urge you to invite your fellow Orthodox Christians, and indeed all Christians and people of goodwill, to share in the following observances. We ask that every church toll its bells in lamentation on this day. We call for every flag of every kind that is raised on the church property be lowered to half-mast on this day.”

With this directive, I inform our faithful that the Eastern Diocese and all its parishes will join our Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters, in a spirit of loving solidarity and familial support, during this Day of Mourning over the conversion of the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia (which took place on Friday, July 24).

I direct that on that day, every Armenian Church in the Eastern Diocese should lower its flags to half-mast, and at the hour of 3 p.m. (according to respective local times) should toll its bells for a period of one minute. I have asked our clergy to follow the bell tolling by offering solemn vesper prayers before the Altar of Our Lord. While most of us cannot come together for communal prayer under the current pandemic situation, I ask that every faithful Armenian offer a prayer at home at that hour.

These have been difficult, often painful weeks for all of us, in so many ways. The outrage against Hagia Sophia is truly an occasion for grief among us as Armenians, Christians, and civilized people. We hold out hope in the mysterious workings of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, whose purposes may seem unknowable to us, but whose hand is surely guiding all human events towards their fulfillment in him. May our Lord grant strength and perseverance to all his faithful children.

With my prayers,

Bishop DANIEL  
Primate  
July 22, 2020

## Turkish Nationalist and Religious Indoctrination

INDOCTRINATION, from page 19  
the new Republic of Armenia on May 28, 1918. Unfortunately, the Turks started attacking Armenia again in 1920, taking more territories until Armenia became a Soviet republic in November 1920.

The liberation of Erzurum and all other towns in eastern Turkey are celebrated every year, with mandatory attendance by all schoolchildren, the parents, various officials and army commanders. In addition to fiery speeches, a theatrical performance is prepared by the government in every town, showing the Armenian occupying forces and the victory of the Turks over the Armenians. The Armenian soldiers and officers are invariably depicted wearing black uniforms with a white cross sewn on their back; they give each other Nazi-style salutes. The commanding Armenian officer is named Arshak Pasha; his sidekick assistant Kirkor brings the local Islamic cleric

and young rebellious Turks to Arshak Pasha who beats and executes them, until the “heroic” Turkish soldiers rush to the sound of guns and artillery, murdering or chasing the Armenians out of town.

In past years, the local municipality sanitation workers were ordered to play the role of Armenians, but after several of them were severely beaten up by excited local townsfolk as “traitors,” they refused to participate. Then the local governments started advertising to pay anyone who would be willing to play the role of Armenian soldiers. When no one volunteered fully aware that they will be rewarded with a beating, the pay was doubled and tripled. For the past few years, real actors have been hired to participate in these liberation events, with strict orders by the police to the audience not to beat up the actors playing the Armenian traitors at the end of the performances.

## New Book on Armenian Publisher Is Released

ISTANBUL (*Jamanak*) – Turkish publisher Libra will publish a book by Ezgi Yildirim which focuses on the 19th-century publisher, Arakel Tozlian Effendi.

The book is titled *Kitapçı Arakel’in Kataloglarında “Tercüme” Eserlerin Tanıtımı* (Presentation of the ‘Translated’ Works in the Catalogues of Kitabji Arakel).

The book includes lists of the books sold in Arakel Tozlian’s bookstore. It also shows how translated works were presented to the reader during the Ottoman period and what information was included. In addition, the book shines a light on the history of bookselling in Babi-Ali and includes references to people from the provinces who worked in the same street as grocers, painters, pastry-sellers, photographers, and so on.



## First Phase 3 Clinical Trial of Coronavirus Vaccine in US Begins

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Investigators and participants will not know who has received the vaccine.

Results from a Phase 1 trial of the vaccine published earlier this month in the New England Journal of Medicine found it induced immune responses in all of the volunteers and was generally safe. It had mild side effects, including fatigue, chills, headache, muscle pain, pain at the injection site.

A Phase 1 study typically studies a small number of people and focuses on whether a vaccine is safe and elicits an immune response. In Phase 2, the clinical study is expanded and the vaccine is given to people who have characteristics – such as age and physical health – similar to those for whom the new vaccine is intended, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Phase 3, the vaccine is given to

thousands of people and tested for efficacy and again for safety.

The Moderna/NIH vaccine is one of 25 in clinical trials around the world, according to the World Health Organization.

Dr. Noubar Afeyan is the co-founder of Moderna, one of several companies that received support from Operation Warp Speed, the federal government’s Covid-19 vaccine program. On Sunday, Moderna announced it

had received an additional \$472 million from the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority for Phase 3 study and development of its Covid-19 vaccine, bringing the total to \$955 million.

According to Johns Hopkins University’s tally of cases in the United States, there are more than 4.2 million confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States and at least 146,935 people have died.