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Turkey Declares Itself Party to Karabakh Conflict

ISTANBUL (RFE/RL) – Turkey’s strong support for Azerbaijan makes it a party to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said on Thursday, August 27.

“Turkey is also a party to the conflict, standing with a brotherly state and defending its rights,” Akar told the Turkish Anatolia news agency.

Successive Turkish governments have unconditionally backed Azerbaijan in the conflict, reflecting close cultural and ethnic ties between the two Turkic nations. They have refused to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia and kept the Turkish-Armenian border closed. They have also provided military assistance to Azerbaijan.
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Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar

Armenia in Talks With Russia Over Another Fighter Jet Deal

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia is holding talks with Russia to buy more Sukhoi Su-30SM fighter jets for its armed forces, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said over the weekend.

“The acquisition of a new batch [of Su-30SM jets] is planned,” he said. “Negotiations are underway at the moment.”

Tonoyan, who most recently visited Moscow last week, gave no details of the negotiations.

In a significant boost to its small Air Force, Armenia has already purchased four such multirole jets at an undisclosed price. They were delivered to an airbase in Gyumri in December. Tonoyan said earlier in 2019 that Yerevan plans to acquire eight more Su-30SMs in the coming years.

Su-30SM is a modernized version of a heavy fighter jet developed by Russia’s Sukhoi company in the late 1980s. The Russian military first commissioned it in 2012.

Before receiving the first four Su-30SMs the Armenian Air Force largely consisted of 15 or so Su-25 aircraft designed for close air support and ground attack missions. The Armenian Defense Ministry contracted on August 24 a Russian defense company, United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), to modernize some of these aging jets.

Tonoyan revealed on Saturday that UAC will repair and upgrade four of them in Russia. He stressed the importance of that deal, saying that the Armenian military had sought it “for years.”

The deal was signed in Moscow in Tonoyan’s presence. While in the Russian capital, the latter also attended the opening ceremony of the International Army Games and met with Russia’s Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Tonoyan praised the current state of Russian-Armenian military cooperation and, in particular, defense contracts signed by Moscow and Yerevan in the last several years

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Roma Auctioning Henrikh Mkhitaryan Shirt to Benefit BLM

ROME (PanARMENIAN.Net) – A Roma home shirt worn by Henrikh Mkhitaryan during the Roma-Fiorentina match in July 2020 has been put up for auction to support the Black Lives Matter movement, the team announced on August 28.

The shirt bears the special “Black lives matter - Together” patch, a symbol of the club’s commitment to combating the phenomenon of racism after the recent events that have shocked the United States, AS Roma said on the page of the auction.

The killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man in Minneapolis, sparked protests all over the world, with hundreds of thousands of people marching against racism. In Rome, Roma manager Paulo Fonseca and his players all took a knee before training at Trigoria to show their support for Black Lives Matter.

The proceeds from the auction will go to support Roma Cares for the promotion of initiatives to combat racism among the youngest.

Now, for the remainder of the Serie A season, the AS Roma team are wearing a special patch on their left sleeve which features the words ‘Black Lives Matter’ along with ‘ASSIEME’ - meaning Together, the campaign Roma Cares launched during the Covid-19 crisis.

The team will wear the patch for a total of 12 Serie A games.

The club is auctioning off match-worn shirts, featuring the Black Lives Matter / ASSIEME patch, to raise money for a number of prominent anti-racism organisations.

Turkey Denies Airspace Use to Yerevan-Bound German Military Flight

ISTANBUL (Der Spiegel) – Turkey in late July did not allow a Germany military aircraft en route to Armenia’s capital Yerevan to enter its airspace, the German magazine Der Spiegel reported on Friday, August 21.

According to Der Spiegel, Turkish air traffic controllers, without explanation, refused to allow the Bundeswehr aircraft to fly via the country’s airspace, forcing the Airbus 310 to return to its base in Cologne.

The plane was actually on its way to Yerevan to pick up Armenian soldiers there who were to be trained in Germany. The Bundeswehr (Germany’s armed forces) is cooperating with Armenia on a military level, and soldiers from both countries are carrying out peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.

As a result, the German Air Force had to take a much longer flight route over Russia in mid-August to transport the soldiers. According to publication, the German military sees the incident as a deliberate provocation by Ankara.

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Power of Art In Germany

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The Komitas statue with the graffiti

Komitas Statue in Paris Defaced

PARIS (PanArmenian.net) – A monument to the great Armenian composer Komitas was desecrated in Paris, it was reported on August 30.

“Vandalism during a pandemic. On the monument to Komitas, personifying the Armenian Genocide, it is written: “This is a fake,” a Facebook user wrote.

Designed by Armenian architect and artist David Yerevantsi, the monument was inaugurated on April 24, 2003, while the small park nearby was renamed Yerevan Garden in 2009.

The inscription on the monument reads: “An homage to composer, musicologist Komitas and the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.”

The Armenian Embassy in France issued a statement condemning the desecration.

“The Embassy of Armenia strongly condemns the desecration of the statue of Komitas in Paris which is a manifestation of denialism, of a monument dedicated to the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims, as well as Armenians fallen for France,” the statement says.

Sunny with a Chance of Funny: Sona Movsesian Wants to Be Your Friend

“If I have a camera pointed at me or not, I am the same person. It’s me.”

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenak Urfanyan Posthumously Awarded Artsakh Hero Title

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Captain Armenak Urfanyan who died in the Four-Day War in April 2016 this week was posthumously awarded the title of the Hero of Artsakh, the highest title in Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan launched a large-scale military offensive across the entire line of contact with Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh). Clashes that began in the wee hours of April 2 in 2016 lasted four days and were later dubbed the Four-Day War or the April War.

Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan hosted a special ceremony in Stepanakert, Karabakh's capital.

The Hero of Artsakh title “is awarded for exclusive services in the defense of the state, strengthening its economic might, and for creating significant national values.”

Junior sergeant Robert Abajyan and sergeant Adam Sahakyan, who also fell in the April War, were awarded the title earlier.

In August, Armenian Experts Demined 33,143 Square Meters in Syria

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenian explosives experts in Syria have cleared an area of 33,143 square meters from mines in August.

According to a Facebook post from the Armenian Center for Humanitarian Demining & Expertise, a total of 238,230 square meters have been demined since the beginning of the mission in 2019.

In particular, the group of specialists from Armenia have uncovered anti-personnel mines, hand grenades, and other ammunition.

The first group of Armenian sappers and doctors left for Aleppo in February 2019. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said back then that sending a humanitarian mission to Syria means responding in kind to the people who helped Armenians fleeing the Genocide in 1915.

Armenia Plans to Update Nuclear Power Plant

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia plans to upgrade the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant through its own resources, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said in an interview to Interfax news agency, commenting on the statement of the Russian Ambassador to Armenia according to which Moscow and Yerevan continue discussing the issue of extending the loan for upgrading the plant.

“We plan to upgrade the plant based on our budget resources. And in this respect the possibility of new loans is viewed from the very prism that we do the abovementioned activity with our own resources”, he said.

Iran-Based Fraudsters Bilk Europe Travelers in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Several members of an organized crime syndicate consisting of Armenians and Iranians are under arrest for racketeering and defrauding around 50 citizens of Iran in a travel fraud, Armenian police said in a news release on September 1.

Two Iranian citizens recruited 50 countrymen and transported them to Armenia under the pretext of organizing their travel to other European countries. The accomplices of the Iranian duo, who are citizens of Armenia, met the victims of the fraud in Armenia and charged them a total of nearly \$300,000 for their services. The con artists presented themselves to be representatives of law enforcement or diplomatic sectors in order to obtain the victims' trust.

Some of the 50 people were taken to Turkey and Georgia and promised to be sent to their preferred destinations afterwards. However, they were again taken back to Armenia and had their passports seized by the perpetrators.



Statue of Alexander Griboyedov, Tigran Mets St, Yerevan, inscription underneath statue reads “Alexander Griboyedov, with gratitude from the Armenians”, sculptor H. Bejanyan, 1974.

Unseen Armenia

Discovering Griboyedov

By Hovsep Daghdigian and Vladimir Tchagharyan

YEREVAN – A number of locations and institutions in Armenia have Russian names – most of which we may have heard of; Sakharov Square in Yerevan, the Pushkin School, etc. On Yerevan's Tigran Mets street, near the amusement park, stands the statue of Russian author Alexander Griboyedov and in Armavir province lies the village of Griboyedov. In back of the Noy Yerevan Wine factory is an inscription indicating Griboyedov's play “Woe from Wit” was first performed here. So, who was Griboyedov?

Alexander Griboyedov was born on 4 January 1795 in Russia's Vladimir Province to a family of minor Russian nobility. Though poor, his mother insisted he get an education. In Moscow, as a member of the nobility, he was entitled to attend the “Noble Pension” school. Subsequently at age 11 he entered the Imperial University's faculty of literature. Though good at languages and with good grades, he demonstrated no special aptitude for literature. In 1812, when Napoleon's army invaded Russia, Griboyedov briefly served in the army but saw no action.

After leaving the military in 1814, prior to the death of his father, he moved to St. Petersburg. There he became involved in literary circles and befriended members of the Decembrist Russian revolutionaries who planned to overthrow Czar Nicholas I and free the serfs (indentured servants with few rights). While sympathetic to their cause, though not a member of the Decembrists, he may have known of their plans but did not participate in their activities. After their failed revolt, he came under the suspicion of the Czar and his police but was subsequently acquitted. Many of his close friends, though, were hanged, imprisoned or exiled to Siberia. During this time, among his other literary works, he started his masterpiece, a play variously interpreted as “Woe from Wit” which satirized the life of Russian high society and

nobility. The play, under revision for many years, dealt with the negative consequences of being a bit too clever for one's own good. Czarist censors, considering the play offensive, continuously denied permission for its performance though underground copies were widely circulated.

Persian Shah Abbas and the Armenians: Due to Armenia's strategic location, between 1513 and 1737 portions of eastern Armenia including Yerevan were fought over by Ottoman Turkey and Persia (Iran), with the area around Yerevan changing hands fourteen times. During the Ottoman-Persian war of 1603-1618 Persian Shah Abbas I implemented a scorched earth policy, devastating the Ararat valley and deporting 250,000 to 300,000 Armenians from areas as far away as Bayazid and Van to various regions of Persia. This action was intended to prohibit an invading Turkish army from living off the land. The wealthy Armenians and craftsmen from Julfa, Nakhichevan, were settled in the newly constructed town of Nor (new) Julfa near the Persian capital of Isfahan. Here, given special religious, cultural, and commercial privileges, they thrived greatly enhancing international trade and commerce in Persia. But Armenians who were settled in other areas of Persia did not fare as well. Some estimates indicate that as many as 50% of the deportees died during the deportations. Consequently, much of eastern Armenia was depopulated with Armenians constituting a minority in much of their eastern Armenian homeland.

Russo-Persian War (1804-1813) and Treaty of Gulistan: Starting with the rule of Peter the Great (ruled 1682-1725), Russia started advancing into the Caucasus resulting in a number of Persian-Russian conflicts. In the war of 1804-1813 Persia was soundly defeated with much of Armenia, including Karabagh and Ganja, coming under Russian control. Yerevan and Nakhichevan, however, remained under Persian



Painting depicting the siege of Yerevan Fortress, by Franz Roubaud, 1827

domination. The subsequent treaty of Gulistan (1813) left some border issues to be resolved in the future.

Russo-Persian War (1826-1828): Following the death of Czar Alexander I in 1825, Czar Nicholas I succeeded him as Czar, and shortly thereafter brutally put down the Decembrist revolution in which many of Griboyedov's friends were involved. Aba Mirza, the Persian crown prince and commander in Tabriz, miscalculated. Believing these



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recent events left Russia weak, he attacked and devastated Karabagh. Shushi, however, succeeded in defending itself for 6 weeks thus preventing further Persian advances. The Czar replaced Russian General Yermolov with General Paskevich who soundly defeated the Persians, taking Yerevan and its fortress after a 6-day siege, taking Nakhichevan, and occupying eastern Armenia up to the Arax River. In response for taking the Yerevan Fortress, including the Sardar's (military governor's) palace, he was bestowed with the title "Prince Paskevich Erevanskii". During a brief absence of Paskevich two of his officers, contravening orders, attacked and took the important Persian regional capital of Tabriz.

Treaty of Turkmanchai (1828): Griboyedov, as Paskevich's chief diplomatic advisor, maintained a hard line in the peace negotiations with Persian crown prince Abbas Mirza, stating that the Czar's conditions for peace were not negotiable. Besides occupying Yerevan and Nakhichevan, the Russians indicated they would remain in Tabriz until a large indemnity was paid, equivalent to about twenty million silver rubles. Russia needed this money to help finance a likely war with Turkey. Paskevich, slowly advancing and capturing more territory in Persian Azerbaijan, provided an added incentive for Persia to quickly accept Russia's terms. The Russian demands included: 1) cessation to Russia of the provinces of Yerevan and Nakhichevan; 2) confirmation of the khanates (provinces) already occupied by Russia; 3) payment of 20 million silver rubles; 4) Persian neutrality in case of war between Russia and Turkey; 5) free emigration of Persian citizens, and Armenians in particular, who wished to return and resettle in the new Russian territories - including Armenia. Persia had no choice but to accept.

Griboyedov returned to St. Petersburg to report to the Czar and to deliver a copy of the Turkmanchai Treaty signed by the Shah. In Russia he also visited his friend, author Alexander Pushkin, whom he had not seen for many years. Returning to Persia through Georgia, where he got married, he then proceeded to Tehran as Russian plenipotentiary where he joined other Russian diplomats for the final steps of ratification and implementation of the treaty. The Persians were offended with the behavior of the Russians, the humiliating conditions being forced upon them, and especially Russian repatriation of Islamized Armenians in Persia. The British, who had a significant presence in Persia, were holding back payments that the



Noy Brandy, Wine, Vodka Factory, on the site of Yerevan Fortress and Palace of the Sardar

Regiment," celebrated their victory by performing Griboyedov's play "Woe from Wit" in the fortress, in Griboyedov's presence. General Paskevich, aware that performance of this play was still forbidden, nevertheless let it pass. This was the first performance of "Woe from Wit" anywhere and it occurred in Armenia. An authorized, uncensored performance of the play was not performed until well after Griboyedov's death.

Yerevan Fortress: The Yerevan fortress was originally built during the Turkish occupation of Yerevan (1582-1583) and destroyed by an earthquake in 1679. Later, when Persia occupied Yerevan, the fortress was rebuilt using forced labor. During the Soviet era, in the 1930s, the fortress was completely demolished with only traces of it remaining. Then the Yerevan Ararat Brandy Factory was established on the site in 1877. The current building was designed by noted architect Rafael Israelyan (1908-1973) who also designed the Sardarabad Memorial on the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Musa Dagh memorial in Musaler village, and the Bash-Aparan memorial. The current owner of the Noy Brandy and Wine Factory is Gagik Tsarukyan.

On a wall in back of the factory is an inscription commemorating the site of the first performance of "Woe from Wit". Tours of the factory take visitors by the stage where the play was first performed. Other features of the tour, besides the wine or brandy tasting, are displays of old cannons and artifacts, and in the basement sections of wall which were part of the old fortress.

The Search for Griboyedov: In June 1829 Griboyedov's body was being transported by ox-cart from Tehran to Tiflis' St. David church for burial. As it passed through Nakhichevan, a memorial service was conducted in an Armenian church there. The cart continued traveling over the mountains north-west of Lake Sevan. At that time Alexander Pushkin was traveling to Kars to visit his brother who was serving in the Russian army. Pushkin, seeing the cart, approached and asked the drivers "What are you carrying?" "The body of Griboyedov", they replied. This was the first Pushkin learned of the death of his dear friend. The pass was subsequently named "Pushkin Pass". During the Soviet era



Sardar's Palace

a monument was erected there to memorialize this event. The road through the Pushkin Pass is now seldom used, though it is still passable. A tunnel now passes under the mountain easing travel from the south towards Stepanavan. The monument has been moved to the highway north of the tunnel.

A search for the memorial first led us to Dilijan, which some sources cited as the memorial's site. A woman working in a restaurant there helped us determine its actual location. Back in Yerevan the manager of the Green Bean restaurant helped, as did Hagop, a local taxi driver with a superb knowledge of Armenia. As we headed towards Stepanavan, at the tunnel's southern entrance there appeared a number of statues commemorating Pushkin and Griboyedov. Tunnel workers there directed us to the monument's location north of the tunnel, on a slight rise west of the highway. The monument depicts the meeting of Pushkin and Griboyedov's remains.

Prof. George Bournoutian has written extensively on the history of the Caucasus and the history of Eastern Armenia. After the Treaty of Turkmanchai, tens of thousands of Armenian, and their descendants, forcibly displaced to Persia returned to Russian Armenia, as did tens of thousands of Armenians from Turkish occupied Armenia. By 1836 Armenians went from being a minority in much of their Caucasian homeland to a majority. Armenians in many villages in southern Armenia will relate that their ancestors came from Persia after the treaty was signed. One villager, however, indicated though his ancestors came from Persia, he emphatically stated "We are not Barsgahye!" ("We are not Persian Armenians"), we are from here, indicating his family's roots are in Armenia.

In Russia and Armenia Griboyedov is a highly regarded author. Friends from Armenia tell of memorizing parts of "Woe from Wit" in school. Of course, in Armenia Griboyedov is also



Overview of memorial to Pushkin - Griboyedov encounter, memorial is on highway north of Pushkin Tunnel, heading towards Stepanavan.

Persians believed they were owed. Since the British did not want Russia to linger in Persia, they paid the Persians at least part of what they owed them. The Persians paid the indemnity and the Russians withdrew. In February 1829 an irate mob gathered outside the Russian mission, forced its way in and, with the exception of a sole survivor, killed all the Russians including Griboyedov.

"Woe from Wit:" In the days after taking Yerevan fortress, officers of the 7th Carabniers, later renamed the "Erean

Correction

Due to an editing error, a mistake was introduced in a story on the front page last week, "Armenian Art Through the Gaze of Western Institutions," by Isabelle Kapoian, the summer intern for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

In the story, she quotes the author of *The Missing Pages: the Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript, from Genocide to Justice*, and an art history professor at the University of California, Davis, Prof. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh. The print edition instead cited her husband, a fellow professor at the university, Prof. Keith Watenpaugh.

We regret the error.

Putin Again Congratulates Kocharyan

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned Robert Kocharyan on Monday, August 31, to congratulate his indicted former Armenian counterpart on his 66th birthday anniversary.

Putin also sent Kocharyan a separate congratulatory message on the occasion.

"People in Russia know you as a remarkable statesman who has done a great deal for the development of modern Armenia," read the telegram publicized by the Kremlin. "We highly value your personal contribution to strengthening the friendship and alliance between our countries."

Putin has made a pointing of congratulating Kocharyan since the latter was first arrested in July 2018 on charges stemming

from the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. He was also subsequently charged with bribery. The Russian Foreign Ministry criticized the arrest as politically motivated.

Kocharyan, who strongly denies all charges leveled against him, was released from custody in August 2018, only to be arrested again three months later.

The ex-president, who ruled Armenia from 1998-2008, was again set free days after going on trial in May 2019. He was arrested for a third time nearly two months later.

The Russian ambassador to Armenia, Sergei Kopyrkin, was criticized by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's political allies and summoned to the Armenian Foreign Ministry after meeting with Kocharyan shortly before

his third arrest. Putin continued to signal support for Kocharyan even after that. He met with Kocharyan's wife Bella during an October 2019 visit to Yerevan.

Kocharyan, who is very critical of Pashinyan's administration, was freed again in June this year after paying a record \$4.1 million bail set by Armenia's Court of Appeals. The bulk of the hefty sum was reportedly provided by four wealthy Russian businessmen.

Armenian officials maintain that Moscow's gestures of support for Kocharyan have not damaged Armenia's close political, economic and military ties with Russia. The ex-president's loyalists claim the opposite.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Azerbaijanis Protest in Riga against Armenia

RIGA (Armenpress) – An anti-Armenian demonstration carried out by Azerbaijanis outside their embassy in Riga on August 31 had not been authorized by the Latvian capital's authorities, the St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church of the city said in a statement.

The church said it contacted the city council to find out if the Latvian-Azerbaijanis had received a permit to assemble outside the Azerbaijani embassy on July 17 for the rally – which unsurprisingly proceeded in anti-Armenian nature. “In response to the inquiry the local self-governing body informed that it hasn't received any application for carrying out meetings, protests or rallies on July 17, 2020 outside the Azerbaijani Embassy in Latvia.”

Such hate-fueled anti-Armenian demonstrations, accompanied with provocations, were frequently taking place in different cities across the world after the latest Azerbaijani military attack on Armenia in mid-July.

New Dress Code at Hagia Sophia

ISTANBUL (Duvar Enlight) – Turkey has introduced a new dress code to visit Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, which was converted into a mosque last month, Duvar English reports.

According to the code, visitors have to wear a headscarf to visit the sixth-century site. Entering with shorts or “revealing” clothes is banned.

Following the code's introduction, authorities started to distribute overalls and headscarves in front of Hagia Sophia.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared the monument a mosque last month following a court ruling revoking its status as a museum.

Hagia Sophia was built in 537 under the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I as the cathedral of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. After the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453, the basilica was converted into a mosque.

Under the Ottomans, architects added minarets and buttresses to preserve the building, but the mosaics showing Christian imagery were white-washed and covered.

In 1934, under a secularist Turkish government, the mosque was turned into a museum. Some mosaics were uncovered, including depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Justinian I, and Zoe Porphyrogenita. It was declared a World Heritage Site under UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in 1985.

Survey of 3000 Armenians Provides Snapshot of Opinions in The Diaspora

LONDON – The results of a major research on public opinion in Diaspora communities will be formally launched at an online event on September 5.

The Armenian Diaspora Survey (ADS) – the first of a three-year study project – was held in four communities in 2019: Argentina, Lebanon, Canada (Montreal) and Romania. The fieldwork took place between September and December 2019, 3000 Armenians took part in the study.

“The Armenian Diaspora Survey is an attempt to study the opinions of Armenians living in various communities around the world and aims to explore the ‘ingredients’ of being Armenian in the 21st century,” said ADS director Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian of University of Oxford.

The research provides a snapshot of the contemporary Diaspora by studying public opinions on identity, language and culture, community engagement, and relations with Armenia.

ADS is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and is carried out by a team of experts under the auspices of the Armenian Institute in London.

The 175-page full results of the 2019 study will be available for downloading for free from the ADS web-

Turkey Declares Itself Party to Karabakh Conflict

TURKEY, from page 1

Ankara voiced support for Baku in unusually strong terms during and after last month's deadly clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The Armenian government 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.

Akar again blamed Yerevan for the flare-up of violence which left at least 17 soldiers from both sides dead. “Armenia does not act reasonably by

relying on forces standing behind it and punching above its weight,” he said, apparently alluding to Russia, the South Caucasus state's main ally.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged Ankara to exercise restraint in its reaction to the Armenian-Azerbaijani hostilities when they spoke with their Turkish counterparts by phone in late July.

A few days later the Turkish and Azerbaijani militaries began joint exercises in various parts of Azerbaijan which lasted for two weeks. Akar attend-

ed the concluding session of the drills.

“We will continue to support Azerbaijan in its just struggle,” the Turkish minister said on August 13.

The drills and the more aggressive statements made by Turkish leaders raised the possibility of Turkish military intervention in the Karabakh conflict. A senior official in Yerevan said on August 3 that Armenia counts on Russia's support in its efforts to counter the Turkish threat.

Armenia hosts about 5,000 Russian troops on its soil as part of close military ties between the two states.

HRW Condemns Azerbaijan's Latest Crackdown

BAKU (RFE/RL) – Human Rights Watch has condemned Azerbaijan's latest crackdown on opposition leaders and activists that followed a July 14 unsanctioned rally in the capital, Baku.

Numerous people were detained on “spurious” charges that range from violating lockdown rules to an attempted coup, the rights group said in a statement on August 19.

“The latest wave of arrests in Azerbaijan follows the well-documented pattern of politically motivated arrests and prosecutions and threatens to decimate one of the country's oldest opposition parties,” said Giorgi Gogia, associate Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

“The authorities should immediately end the crackdown, release those unjustly imprisoned, and investigate law enforcement's conduct.”

Thousands of people attended the rally to support the country's armed forces amid an escalation of tensions with neighboring Armenia.

During a rally on the evening of July 14, a small number of people emerged from the crowd and briefly broke into the parliament building and damaged property before being removed by police.

Authorities claimed it was an attempt masterminded by the opposition to violently overthrow the government. Dozens of activists were rounded up by police in the following days.

Local activists said the number of those detained was at least 80 people, including 17 members of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP), one of the country's oldest opposition groups.

None of the detained APFP members was in the group that broke into the parliament, their lawyers said.

Armenia in Talks With Russia Over Another Fighter Jet Deal

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He also said: “In the area of defense industry there have been quite interesting developments. I don't want to go into details now, but I am buoyed by the involvement of private companies in the creation of [Russian-Armenian] joint ventures in Armenia.”

One such development is the production of advanced models of Kalashnikov assault rifles which was launched by the Armenian company Neutron in July. Russia's Kalashnikov Concern has granted Neutron a 10-year license to assemble up to 50,000 AK-103 rifles annually.

Russia has long been the principal source of military hardware supplied to the Armenian army. Membership in Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allows Armenia to acquire Russian weapons at knockdown prices and even for free.

Many were not even at the rally.

The arrests followed a speech by the country's longtime president, Ilham Aliyev, who accused the APFP of instigating the violence.

He called the opposition “traitors,” “enemies,” and the “fifth column” and vowed to “resolve” the issue.

Following minor clashes between a small group of protesters and police outside the parliament, security forces dispersed the crowd, using tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets. Officials say at least seven officers were injured and 16 vehicles damaged.

Citing defense lawyers and official documents, HRW said that 16 of the detained APFP members face criminal charges of using violence against an official, violating public order, and destruction of property. One is accused of spreading an infectious disease.

Five detainees – Asif Yusifli, Mammad Ibrahim, Fuad Gahramanli, Bakhtiyar Imanov, and Ayaz Maharramli – are members of the party's presidium, a decision-making body.

Gahramanli and Ibrahim face an

additional charge of attempting to overthrow the government, punishable by up to 20 years or life in prison.

Authorities in the oil-rich Caspian Sea nation have long been criticized for frequently seeking to silence dissent by jailing opposition activists, reporters, and civil society advocates on trumped-up charges.

On July 31, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's rapporteurs on Azerbaijan expressed “grave concern” about what they described as “the troubling pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention of government critics.”

In his July 15 speech, Aliyev emphasized that he would “not pay attention” to criticism from the Council of Europe and other international organizations about the crackdown.

HRW said that Azerbaijan's international partners should not be intimidated by Aliyev's belligerent speech and should speak up against the crackdown.

“They should urge the authorities in Azerbaijan to do the right thing: End the crackdown and release all those unjustly imprisoned,” Gogia said.

Austria Says Turkish Spy Caught Amid Probe into Turkish-Kurdish Clashes

VIENNA (Al-Monitor) – Austria has caught a person spying for Turkey on its soil, the interior minister said on September 1, in a revelation that threatens to further strain relations between Ankara and Vienna.

During a televised news conference, Austrian Interior Minister Karl Nehammer said that an individual had been “recruited by the Turkish secret service to spy on other Turkish citizens or Austrian citizens with a Turkish migration background to then report them to the Turkish security authorities.”

“We have a clear message to the Turkish Republic: Turkish espionage and Turkish interference with civil liberties have no place in Austria,” Nehammer said, adding that he had informed EU Council President Horst Seehofer about the investigation.

“We will also work at the European level to ensure that Turkey does not interfere in the internal affairs of the EU states,” Nehammer said in a statement.

No further information was given about the alleged spy, who was discovered during Austria's investigation into clashes that broke out between Turkish and Kurdish protesters in Vienna in late June. According to the Interior Ministry, investigators were probing whether the Turkish secret service had a hand in the riots.

At the time, Austrian police said that extremist groups had confronted a peaceful Kurdish demonstration protest-

ing Turkey's attacks on Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq. Police issued fines to some of the Turkish counter-protesters who were allegedly using a banned hand gesture associated with an ultranationalist group in Turkey called the Grey Wolves.

But Turkey said the protesters themselves were the extremists and accused them of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a decades-long violent insurgency on Turkish soil. The PKK is designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union and the United States.

Both Ankara and Vienna summoned each other's envoys following the clashes.

Some 300,000 people of Turkish origin live in Austria. Relations between the two countries have soured since the attempted coup in July 2016 and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's subsequent crackdown on dissent.

On Tuesday, Integration Minister Susanne Raab said that Austria is now a target of Turkish espionage, with Ankara's secret service “exerting influence on individuals, associations and mosques.”

“Erdogan's long arm reaches as far as Vienna,” Raab said. “We will fight all these influences that try to drive a wedge into Austrian society and the Turkish community in Austria.”

There was no immediate comment from the Turkish Foreign Ministry on Tuesday.



INTERNATIONAL

Crime Boss of Post-Soviet Underworld Shot Dead in Turkey

By Ron Synovitz

ISTANBUL (RFE/RL) — The killing of a notorious crime boss from the Caucasus region is echoing across the criminal underworld of the former Soviet Union, with reverberations reaching an alleged Uzbek crime boss in Turkey who is the nephew of the former international amateur boxing chief.

Nadir "Lotu Guli" Salifov, a reputed member of the "thieves-in-law" criminal syndicate, had been known as a top crime boss in Russia and Azerbaijan.

He was shot dead at a restaurant in Turkey's southern coastal city of Antalya on the evening of August 19.

Multiple underworld sources said the killer was one of Salifov's bodyguards.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, those sources told RFE/RL the bodyguard stood behind Salifov and shot him four times — including at least one shot to the back of his head — while he was seated at a card game.

Those sources also said the killer had made a short mobile-phone video of Salifov earlier in the evening and sent it to several people before carrying out the killing.

They said the bodyguard fled the restaurant after the shooting.

According to Turkish media reports, a suspect was detained by Turkish police on August 19 as he tried to flee north along the Antalya-Denizli highway. Turkish authorities have not named the suspect.

But RFE/RL's sources say Turkish police confiscated the suspect's mobile phone and found that he'd sent the video of Salifov to at least four people.



Nadir Salifov was known as "Lotu Guli."

All four of the individuals said to have been sent the video were detained by Turkish authorities for questioning.

They include Ravshan "Zolotoi" Muhiddinov, a reputed criminal boss from Uzbekistan and the nephew of Gafour Rakhimov, the disgraced former head of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) who is wanted in the United States as an alleged kingpin of international drug trafficking.

Muhiddinov was detained at his home in Istanbul at 3 a.m. local time on August 20 and questioned by Turkish police for seven hours before he was released without charge.

Meanwhile, Russian media reports say agents from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) detained one of Salifov's associates in Siberia

and released him without charge after questioning.

The 47-year-old Salifov was an ethnic Azeri who had been born in Georgia but moved to Azerbaijan with his family shortly after his birth.

Rising to the top of an Azerbaijani criminal syndicate, he had been repeatedly convicted in Baku on charges that included theft, banditry, and kidnapping.

After a conviction in the 1990s, Salifov spent 22 years in a Baku prison, where he is said to have continued issuing orders to subordinates, including members of his Azerbaijani crime syndicate in Russia.

By 2014, Salifov managed to gain control over three large markets in Moscow.

Russian authorities had launched several criminal investigations against Salifov in connection with kidnappings and extortion in Moscow and other Russian regions.

He was also under investigation in Russia as a powerful figure within the thieves-in-law criminal clan — a position he is thought to have risen to following the jailing in 2016 of the Russian mafia godfather and thieves-in-law leader Zakhary Kalashov, an ethnic Georgian Yazidi who uses the nickname "Shakro Molodoi."

Thieves-In-Law 'Code Of Conduct'

The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) describes thieves-in-law as "a Eurasian crime syndicate that has been linked to a long list of illicit activity across the globe," saying it poses a threat to the United States and its allies.

Thieves-in-law originated in Stalinist prison camps during the Soviet era.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the OFAC says thieves-in-law has expanded across the former Soviet republics, Europe, and the United States, with crimes that include money laundering, extortion, bribery, kidnapping, and robbery.

According to the OFAC, the syndicate's members are "initiated or 'crowned' after demonstrating an 'ideal' criminal biography and take an oath to uphold a code that includes living exclusively off their criminal profits and supporting other thieves-in-law."

Sources with ties to Central Asia's criminal underworld told RFE/RL that Kalashov had issued a death order from his Russian prison cell against Salifov.

They say Salifov broke the thieves-in-law "code of honor" by assaulting rival members in a dispute.

France's Macron Urges Political Reform After New Lebanon PM Named

BEIRUT (DW) — French President Emmanuel Macron called for political reforms in Lebanon on Tuesday, September 1, as the former French mandate marked its centenary amid a political and economic crisis.

Macron is also due to meet President Michel Aoun for a centenary reception and meetings with Lebanon's various factions.

Macron kicked off his visit to Lebanon — his second since the deadly Beirut blast — on Monday by spending more than an hour with popular singer Fairuz, a unifying figure in Lebanon. He also planted a cedar tree, Lebanon's national symbol, to express "confidence in the future of the country," his office said in a statement.

wounded at least 6,500 others and destroyed entire districts of the capital.

He also met with around 400 French soldiers working with the Lebanese army to clear thousands of tons of debris from the vitally important port, which imports 85% of Lebanon's food stocks.

Read more: Lebanon at 'risk of disappearing' without reforms, warns France

Late on Monday, Macron additionally met with former Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the Ottoman-era residence of the French ambassador, from whose porch Lebanon's modern borders were proclaimed 100 years ago.

He is also set to meet with the political leaders who are widely blamed for the August 4

'Hotel Rwanda' Hero Paul Rusesabagina Arrested

KIGALI, Rwanda (CNN) — Paul Rusesabagina, who saved hundreds of Rwandans during the genocide by sheltering them in the hotel he managed, and saw his story made into the Hollywood film "Hotel Rwanda," was arrested on Monday, August 31, on terror related offenses, Rwandan authorities announced, according to CNN.

The country's bureau of Investigation said in a Twitter statement that Rusesabagina was now in their custody after being arrested "through international cooperation." It did not indicate which country helped them with the arrest.

An international warrant had been issued for his arrest and he is currently in police custody in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, said the Rwanda Investigation Bureau.

Rusesabagina, 66, is accused of being the "founder, leader and sponsor of violent, armed, extremist terror outfits," the agency said.

His supporters, and Rusesabagina himself, have long maintained that he became a target of Paul Kagame's government after sustained criticism of Kagame's government and the conduct of the Rwandan Patriotic Front in ending the Genocide in 1994.

Rusesabagina gained prominence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide for saving the lives of hundreds of people.

Around 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the genocide. The genocide was led by Hutu extremists.

At the time, he was a manager at the Milles Collines hotel where he hid and sheltered people in the luxury hotel.

Rusesabagina has not lived in Rwanda since 1996 when he survived an assassination attempt.



Paul Rusesabagina (CNN Photo)



French President Emmanuel Macron in Beirut

Macron was greeted outside Fairuz's home by protesters who held placards reading "No cabinet by, or with, the murderers," and "Don't be on the wrong side of history!"

In a colorful display, the French air force also flew overhead, leaving a trail of red, white and green smoke — the color of Lebanon's national flag.

Macron later visited Beirut port, the site of the blast that killed more than 180 people,

explosion, which was caused by a stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that had been held in the port for several years. Upon his arrival on Monday, Macron said his position towards Lebanon's political establishment "is unchanged: demanding without interfering."

If Lebanon hopes to unlock desperately needed international assistance, political leaders must enact "real reforms" long demanded by donors, he said. "If we do not do this, the

Lebanese economy will collapse" and "the only victim will be the Lebanese people, who cannot go into exile," he warned on Friday, ahead of the visit.

Macron decried Lebanon's chronic systemic corruption and said the country desperately needs to reform its energy and banking sectors as well as its justice system. The French president said of Lebanon's future, "Everything is there, but change will require political will."

In the hours before Macron's arrival, Lebanon designated a new prime minister, Mustapha Adib, reaching a consensus among

major parties that senior Lebanese politicians said was decided under pressure from Macron.

After being designated on Monday, Adib called for the rapid formation of a government, the immediate implementation of reforms and an agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

With its economy in deep crisis and reeling from last month's blast, Lebanon is facing the biggest threat to its stability since the 1975-1990 civil war. Since October, the currency has collapsed, people's savings have been frozen, and poverty and unemployment have been on the rise.

Community News

Abp. Hovnan Derderian of Western Diocese Calls for Deacons' Council

LOS ANGELES – As Holy Scripture spells out (Acts 6), the first deacons of the Church were ordained to assist the Apostles in the Christian ministry which was quickly expanding after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For centuries, and now for two millennia, the Christian Church has found a strong front-line ambassador and soldier in the deacon. Today, the Armenian Church in the Western Diocese is expanding quickly and the need for qualified and trained deacons to meet the needs of the Church and her people is ever more important.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Diocese, has appointed a group of young deacons to serve as the Deacons' Council, to organize activities and continuing education programs for the deacons serving throughout the Western Diocese. He has appointed Fr. Vazken Movsesian, to guide and direct the Council.

In the Christian Church there are three main ranks of clergy: deacons, priests and bishops, each of which are scripturally designated with duties and responsibilities within the Church. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the clergy receive the authority to minister within the Church. On his ordination day, each deacon, on bended knee came before a bishop who vested him with rights and privileges to serve within the Armenian Church. Primary among the deacon's responsibilities is to serve at the Holy Altar during the sacred Divine Liturgy. But there are other responsibilities, and the Deacons' Council is here to assist those who wish to explore more closely the gifts of ordination. The focus will be on service to the holy altar as well as to work closely with parish priests in the ministry of the Church – to reach out to the sick, the bereaved and those suffering injustices.

Continuing Education Program

To achieve its goals, the Deacons' Council is presenting continuing education programs for the deacons in the following areas:

- 1) Liturgical - Knowledge of the Holy Badarak, the Seven Hours of the Church, the Seven Sacraments, Holy Week and in the Armenian language.
- 2) Theology of the Armenian Church - 20 sessions
- 3) Bible Study - knowledge and methods of teaching - 20 sessions
- 4) Social Outreach via pastoral assistance

Continuing education will take place using virtual formats and will include a system of accreditation and certification. Instructors are priests and scholars in the subject area. The entire program is scheduled to be unveiled in October 2020.

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages – visiting holy shrines and places are set up to build camaraderie among the deacons as well as to present opportunities to renew the deacons' vows. Two have been scheduled for this year:

October 18 – at the St. Mary Armenian Church in Yetem, California

December 26 – St. Stephen the First Deacon's Feast Day to be celebrated at the St. Leon Ghevondyants Armenian Cathedral.

Conferences

Organized annually, the first one is scheduled for Lent 2021. Here deacons can come to learn from instructors and one-another.

Outreach Ministry

Considering the various ministries of the Western Diocese and the growing spiritual needs within the communities served by its churches, the Deacon will play a crucial role in assisting local parish priests in ministering to the congregation on multiple levels. True to his calling, the Deacon will be engaging in Christian ministry through outreach programs.

Commending Fr. Vazken Movsesian's vital role in the success of the expansion of the Deacons' ministry, the Diocesan Primate said, "Fr. Vazken is a visionary priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church who continues to fulfill his pastoral ministry with a compassionate heart. Undoubtedly, under his leadership, the Deacons' Council will expand our Diocesan mission to new heights. Thus we urge all of our pastors to guide their deacons and encourage their participation in this God-pleasing undertaking."



Praying with the Fr. Vazken Movsesian

Pilgrimage to Bless Grapes at Garden of Eden

YETTEM, Calif. – The celebration of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, Asdvadzadzin, carries with it the tradition of blessing grapes. The first fruits of the land are brought to the church in an offering and gesture of thanksgiving.

By Fr. Vazken Movsesian

This year a group from the Western Diocese made a pilgrimage to the St. Mary Armenian Church in Yetem, to witness this

centuries-old tradition in the "garden where it all began."

The town of Yetem is about 35 miles southwest of Fresno. As the story is told, when the first Armenian settlers escaping the massacres of the late 1800's and early 1900's arrived in California, they looked out over the lush green San Joachim Valley and saw a vision of paradise. They named this area "Yettem" (Armenian for Eden), in reference to the Garden of Eden. At one corner of this town of less than 300 people stands the St. Mary Armenian Church, the center for Armenian Christian life in the area for over a century.

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, has long since insisted that pilgrimages are a necessary component in the spiritual welfare of the individual. Each church within the diocese has been consecrated with the Holy Muron and therefore is designated as a sacred shrine. As such, each church is a destination for individuals and groups organizing pilgrimages. The St. Mary Armenian Church in Yetem, with its unique history and location, has been designated the point for several pilgrimages this year, beginning with this one on its name day.

Fr. Vazken Movsesian has been appointed by the Primate to lead these pilgrimages. On the feast of Assumption, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy and officiated at grape blessing service in Yetem. A group from the Diocese jour-



Parishioners gather around Fr. Vazken Movsesian

neyed there for a spiritual pilgrimage to receive the blessings of the Holy Mother of God, Christ and His Church. Adapting to the conditions set forth by the COVID-19 pandemic, services were held outdoors, under tents and the trees. A special "pilgrim's prayer" was offered by Movsesian, focusing on the "ookhd" or the sacred vow made by the pilgrims for that day. The parishioners at St. Mary, under the chairmanship of Myron Sheklian, welcomed the group in a most hospitable and gracious manner. The message of the day was not missed, as the grapes and God's goodness were celebrated in the Garden "where it all began."

The next two pilgrimages to St. Mary will be held on September 13, organized by the Diocesan Ladies Society and then on October 18, organized by the Diocesan Deacons Council. More information is available on the Diocesan website or by writing to Fr. Vazken at fv@wdacna.com

Consul General of Armenia in LA Meets With Glendale Council Member Brotman

GLENDALE - Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian met with the newly elected member of the Glendale City Council Dan Brotman. During the meeting held at the Consulate General, Baibourtian congratulated the latter.

Brotman presented the priorities of the City and his approaches in various fields. Items related to clean energy and environmental spheres also became a subject of discussion.

Baibourtian presented the forthcoming plans of the Consulate General, including the Armenian Festival in Glendale which had been originally scheduled for May 2. The festival will instead be held in 2021 with the joint organization of the Consulate General of Armenia and the City of Glendale.

The two also talked about the tech companies from Armenia which extended their operation to Glendale. Baibourtian also stressed the importance of promoting tourism to



Consul General of Armenia Armen Baibourtian, left, with newly elected Glendale City Council member Council Dan Brotman

Armenia, when the situation allows.

Baibourtian emphasized the importance of developing and implementing projects in the framework of the Glendale-Gyumri and Glendale-Kapan sister city relationship.

ASA Awards Silver And Gold Medals

The Armenian Students' Association (ASA) Silver Medal Award Committee selected four (4) seniors to receive the Silver Medal Award.

The following students were selected to receive this award:

Mark Antranig Arkun, Lynnfield High School, Lynnfield, MA; he will be attending McGill University

MacKenzie Douglas Campbell, Smithfield High School, Smithfield, RI; he will be attending Bryant University

Alina Ovsanna Kouzouian, Arlington High School, Arlington, MA; she will be attending the University of Toronto

Zachary Ronald Semerjian, Smithfield High School, Smithfield, RI; he will be attending Suffolk University.

The Silver Medal Awards are given annually to high school seniors who have demonstrated outstanding scholastic ability.

Applications for Silver Medal Awards can be obtained at: www.asainc.org. Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is May 1, 2021.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Kenosha Shooting: Mayor Says 'Timing Is Wrong' For President Trump's Visit

KENOSHA, Wis. (CBS) – After a week of protests stemming from the police shooting of Jacob Blake, and the shooting deaths of two people by Antioch, Illinois resident Kyle Rittenhouse, Kenosha officials on Monday, August 31, were preparing for President Donald Trump's visit, but not everyone is rolling out the welcome mat.

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian said the timing is wrong for Trump's visit on Tuesday (after *Mirror-Spectator* press time).

"I think that you have a community that's in the process of trying to heal," Antaramian said. "It just seemed to me, and I think others, that it would be better for us to get them to actually heal up the process of what's going on and start dealing with the concerns that we have that need to be addressed."

He added that he could not comment on the details of President Trump's visit because it was under the workings of law enforcement and not his office, but he said that this is not the time.

"I think that Kenosha at this present time needs peace, and needs to heal, and needs people to allow us to do that." The Mayor of Kenosha said that as far as President Trump's visit on Tuesday, he said that a meeting with him "has not yet been established."

He's not the only official wary of Trump's visit.

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers on Sunday asked President Trump to "reconsider" his upcoming visit to Kenosha as the city continues to be roiled by protests after Blake, a Black man, was shot several times in the back by police last weekend. Mr. Trump's visit will be one week after two people were shot and killed at a protest over Blake's shooting.

Around 1,500 National Guard troops are in Kenosha because of the unrest.

Sheriff David Beth didn't want to put out a direct comment regarding whether President Trump should be visiting the city at this time.

"Does anyone of that stature, create more work for us? It does," Beth said. "For me to give my opinion truthfully on that right now, it doesn't matter. I know that he is coming and we're



Mayor John Antaramian

going to be doing our best to protect him."

President Trump was asked Monday if he had considered Evers and Antaramian's request that he not come to Kenosha.

"Kenosha was something we did a good job on," President Trump said. "The governor didn't want us there. He didn't want the National

Guard, as you know. He was very reluctant. But I give him credit, because ultimately, he said yes, and as soon as he said yes, the problem ended. But I have to see the people that did such a good job for me, and we're meeting with numerous people, and we have tremendous support in the State of Wisconsin, so I promised them, when it all gets taken care of, we'll..."

The reporter followed up to ask if the president has concerns that his visit to Kenosha "could exacerbate tensions and increase violence."

"Well, it could also increase enthusiasm, and it could increase love and respect for our country, and that's why I'm going, because they did a fantastic job," President Trump replied. "As soon as I called and told them let's go, the whole problem stopped. That was what - six days ago."

A week ago Sunday, on August 23, a police officer shot 29-year-old Blake seven times in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He was left paralyzed, and a community was left infuriated.

The shooting touched off protests; led to civil unrest, looting, and fires; and sparked even more violence when two people were killed and a third was injured in a shooting in the streets early the following Tuesday morning. Kyle Rittenhouse, 17, of Antioch, has been charged in that incident.

It was a week that changed the way many view the normally peaceful lakefront town - about 66 miles north of Chicago and 40 miles south of Milwaukee, and a center of attention in the local news for both cities and the news for the nation and even the world.

Sheriff Beth said he had no further information on the Rittenhouse investigation.

"The major reason for that is DCI (Division of Criminal Investigation) did the inventory. For

me to give the details that I that my department is not investigating, that'd be completely inappropriate. So DCI, I know that they're trying to get this done as expediently as possible. But I don't have comments on the investigation. I just can't do it," Beth said.

Mayor Antaramian said while not completely unexpected, he said he wants Kenosha to heal first becoming involved in politics.

"You know, everyone is going to be always doing this with the politics of what's happening to get a presidential election," Antaramian said. "At this point in time, you know what, I care about my community. I care about the people in my community. And that's what my focus is and that's what I'm going to focus on."

Char Bobrick told CBS 2's Chris Tye she was in the camp that is happy President Trump is coming. But she and her grandson, Logan Marienau - who is a big fan of police and displayed a "police lives matter" collage - hope the president's visit is about healing and not politics.

"I hope it's not just because he's running for office, you know, for president," Bobrick said. "I hope it's beyond that. I hope it's about what's going on here, and not about everything else."

Among President Trump's plans is to tour the widespread damage that happened amid the unrest in Kenosha last week, and to meet with police to thank them.

Rustic Road Brewing Company was among the businesses that was damaged.

"It's been a real mess," Rustic Road's Calvin Tooney told CBS 2's Charlie De Mar.

The downtown Kenosha brewing company is now protected by boards.

"They just threw a chair and broke one of our windows," Tooney said.

Of President Trump's visit, Tooney said, "Seems a little political to me, but I guess that's what presidents do."

But Tooney is hopeful that the president's trip will allow Kenosha's healing to continue.

"I think it is good for him to come and show support for the town," Tooney said. "He's been here once before, so he's not a stranger."

The president will not take any time to meet with Blake. He said he did not feel comfortable talking to the family with a lawyer on the phone.

President Trump's controversial visit on Tuesday was also underscored by his tweet about Kenosha and his role in getting troops to the city, saying "there would be no Kenosha" without his orders.

At the White House on Monday, President Trump also took credit for saving Kenosha.

"At least the governor asked me if I could. I said, 'You've got to get the National Guard,' and he finally agreed to even a small number. And they were able to take care of things, and that was about five days ago, six days ago, and ever since, it's been very good," the president said.

That's not correct, according to National Guard Major General Paul Knapp, who said it was inappropriate to comment on the president's comments, but added that the coordination of National Guard troops, from Alabama, Arizona and Michigan, comes from discussions by governors.

"The White House has talked a lot about sending National Guard members in. What I want to reemphasize is that the process is really governor-to-governor through EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact). We had already started talking to other states. That's something we do right away for something like this," Knapp said.

Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser was more candid and while he didn't say the president isn't welcome, Kreuser took umbrage at the comments insinuating that the city of Kenosha wouldn't exist unless through Trump's orders. He said he hasn't been contacted to meet with President Trump on Tuesday. He too said this was not the time.

"Because Kenosha is a strong community. We were going to come back, regardless. Great things happen in Kenosha County. We went from 1988, when the assembly plant closed, we rebuilt. We went through the great recession in 2008 and rebuilt. Because this is a working class community. We have a lot of businesses here. We doubled the amount of businesses here in the last decade, that are substantial employers and Kenosha is going to be on the comeback," Kreuser said. "And for someone to say we wouldn't exist but for their

see KENOSHA, page 9

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.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: 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

OBITUARY

Gladys Aranosian Hayes

Dedicated to Family, Business Owner

PEMBROKE, N.H. — Gladys Aranosian Hayes of Pembroke, NH passed away on August 7, 2020 at her home. She was 94.

Born on June 5, 1926 in Concord, NH, she was the daughter of Oscar and Mary Aranosian, staunch supporters of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL). She was a loving mom, grandmother and wife.

After graduating high school, Gladys attended Bryant College where she graduated with the high honors.

She is survived by her two sisters (Margaret Gattis and Isabelle Hodgson) her brother (John Aranosian), her son and daughter in law (Floyd and Suzanne Hayes), her daughter (Mary Austin), her grandchildren, (Brianna Austin, Zachary Austin, Justin Hayes and Savannah Hayes), and her two nieces (Mary Aranosian and Cathy Aranosian) and numerous cousins.

Gladys was a loving mom and grandmother who adored her grandchildren. She was extremely proud of her two children and was very close to her brother and sisters. Her family was the center of her universe. She was always looking out for her family and put their needs first.

While family was always first, she was also a very successful business owner. Working together with her siblings, she had a 50-plus-year career managing and operating Aranosian Oil Co., Inc. She was very fond of many of her employees.

For years she was a member of St. Paul's Church in Concord, NH.

She also loved to travel, read and spend as much time with her family as possible. Gladys



was also very proud of her Armenian heritage and culture.

The family would like to thank "Seniors Helping Seniors" (Vicki, Linda, Denise and Vera) for the compassionate care given to Gladys.

A private burial service will take place at Blossom Hill Cemetery. The Water's Funeral Home is assisting with all of the arrangements. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the "Children of Armenia Fund", 149 Fifth Ave., Suite 500, New York, NY 10010 or log onto www.coafkids.org/donate, with memo section Gladys Aranosian Hayes.

Annie (Yetimian) Kalaydjian

Dedicated to St. James Armenian Church WOBURN, Mass. — Annie Kalaydjian (Yetimian) of Woburn passed away on August 26, 2020 after a brief but courageous battle with cancer. She was 75 years old.

She was born on June 16, 1945 in Beirut, Lebanon to the late Setrak and Ovsanna (Panosian) Yetimian.

She was devoted mother, wife, and sister.

She was a member of the St. James Armenian Church staff, a committed teacher, a devoted parishioner, and a dear friend to many.

She devoted much of her life to the St. James parish. She was the church office administra-

tive assistant for more than 20 years, and was a vital part of the day-to-day parish life. She had a strong work ethic and took great pride in serving the church and our parishioners. Her friendly voice and heartwarming smile were a true light to the many people she interacted with on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis.

In addition to her work in the church office, she also devoted much of her time and efforts to teaching Armenian language at our parish St. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian School, having taught for more than 30 years. Over the years, she taught and mentored hundreds of children, teaching them Armenian language, history, and culture.

She had also previously worked at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and was actively involved in the AGBU Greater Boston Chapter, having served as secretary and past chair.

She is survived by her husband of 32 years, Alex Kalaydjian; son Nareg Kalaydjian and sister Mayda Yetimian. In addition, she is survived by her brothers-in-law: Arek Kalaydjian and his wife Lisa of North Andover, Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian and his wife Rosie of Germany and the late Ara Kalaydjian and his wife Shoushanig of Waltham. She was the loving aunt to her nieces, Kerstin & Ruth and her nephew Dr. Antranig Kalaydjian and his fiancée Taline Abrimian. She is also survived by many cousins, relatives and friends.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, private funeral services will be held for the family at St. James Armenian Church.



Beloved Wyckoff Resident Remembered Through Grants

By Montana Samuels, Patch Staff

WYCKOFF, N.J. — A local non-profit remembered long-time Wyckoff resident Andrea Tilbian Halejian through two grants through her namesake memorial fund.

The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation's (NNJCF) Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund awarded two grants to nonprofit organizations in her memory, according to a news release.

The NNJCF donor advised fund donated \$5,000 to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey and \$10,000 to Yale University.

Based in Hackensack, the NNJCF is a non-profit organization which concentrates on the focus areas of education, public health, civic engagement, the arts, philanthropy, and the environment.

The NNJCF Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund contributes to qualified charitable organizations Halejian supported, a news release said.

Subscribe

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity increased tremendously. The contribution to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey was intended to remember Tilbian Halejian's volunteerism at area food banks.

"Food insecurity, now stretched even further amidst a global pandemic, was always something our mother sought to aid. If she were still walking this earth, she would have immediately jumped in to see how she could support our food banks close to home," said Alexis Halejian, who is a member of the Fund's Advisory committee, and daughter of Tilbian.

Sarah Halejian, daughter of the Fund's namesake, served as captain of the Yale women's varsity basketball team.

The awarded to Yale honors her support of the college's academics, and provides a scholarship for an undergraduate student attending the post secondary institution.

"Our mother was our biggest cheerleader both on and off the court. She always loved watching our games and was a constant pillar of support throughout all three of our athletic careers," said Alexis Halejian.

"She especially enjoyed countless trips to New Haven to watch Sarah and the rest of the Yale Bulldogs play. She always instilled in us a balance between academics and athletics and would be thrilled that this year a scholarship is being awarded to a Yale student."



The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation recently awarded two grants in memory of Wyckoff resident Andrea Tilbian Halejian.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



Donations Towards Renovations of Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut

In response to the appeal of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board of Directors, the following donations were received as of August 29, 2020 for the renovation of the Vahan Tekeyan School (nursery through middle day school) of Beirut, Lebanon, which was heavily damaged during the August 4 tragedy. Donations continue to be received.

Please mail your tax-deductible donation to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472 or donate by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm>

Nazar Nazarian \$20,000.00

In Memory of Artemis Nazarian

TCA NJ Chapter 10,000.00

TCA Detroit Chapter \$1,000.00

Raffi Bilemjian \$500.00

Harry and Mary Hintlian \$500.00

Karen Nargizian \$500.00

Arsen Sanjian \$300.00

Elizabeth Abrahamian \$250.00

Sonia Iskandarian \$250.00

Serge Panossian \$250.00

Meline Toufayan \$250.00

In Honor of Steve Nargizian's Birthday

Dr. Herach O. Doumanian \$200.00

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Kevork Keushkerian \$100.00

Alice Mazmanian \$100.00

Karekin and Maria Movsesian \$100.00

Masis Parunyan \$100.00

Ruth Swisher \$100.00

Dr. Gary and Mariann Zamanigian \$100.00

Theresa Nargizian \$100

Arda Derian \$100.00

Vergine Jarakian \$100.00

Dr. Charles, Manoushag Garabedian \$100.00

George Mikhjian \$100.00

Antranig T. Garoyan \$55.00

Tania Festekdjian \$50.00

Yervant and Mary Jamgotchian \$50

Harry Keyishian \$50.00

Sylvana Mikaelian \$50.00

David Ojakian \$50.00

Lily Ordoubeigian \$50.00

In memory of my brother Albert

Dorothy Piranian \$40.00

Norman, Rosemary Kondy \$25.00

Futi and Ara Ishanian \$25.00

Mayor Says 'Timing Is Wrong' For President Trump's Visit

KENOSHA, from page 7

action. When I believe it to be false, because I know things too, I just have to tell you what I believe the answer is, and that's false."

He added that he has heard what people from the community have said in the recent days. He said body cameras will be part of the force beginning next year.

"On August 4, the Kenosha County Board approved a resolution declaring racism as a public crisis, health crisis. And I'm committed to this work. We're going to build up, build upon our already strong partnerships. The pastor and many other organizations have been doing great work here in Kenosha County," Kreuser said. "I've also heard the call for transparency. And I can tell you that body cameras for the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department will be in the budget that will present October 6 for implementation in 2021."

Sheriff Beth said hundreds have been arrested in the last week.

"There's been over 200 arrests, since the started. Over half of those have come from out side of Kenosha. And I've learned that, and this is really for the people of Kenosha. There are a lot of outside agitators that tried to scare people, they will make phone calls to businesses to churches to residents. Trying to scare and intimidate," Beth said.

Meanwhile, President Trump on Monday also was asked if he would condemn the actions of vigilantes such as Rittenhouse.

"We're looking at all of it. That was an interesting situation. You saw the same tape as I saw, and he was trying to get away from them, I guess, it looks like, and he fell, and then they very violently attacked him. And it was something that we're looking at right now, and it's under investigation," President Trump said. "But I guess he was in very big trouble. He probably would have been killed."

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot also commented on President Trump's impending visit to a city still reeling from recent and sometimes violent protests.

"If I believed that he would come with a message of healing and unity, that would be one thing; but what we see from him over and over again - and particularly as part of his reelection bid - is to exploit tensions and division, and that's the last thing that Kenosha needs, it's the last thing that Wisconsin needs, and it's the last thing that our region and our country need," Lightfoot said.

"I understand with and agree with the call from the governor of Wisconsin and other local elected officials in Wisconsin asking the president not to go to Kenosha in this time. We need to figure out how we can build bridges to each other. We need to get rid of the divisive rhetoric. I have not seen this president, in almost four years, as somebody who understands the need to unify the country. What he seems to be focusing on is divisions, and driving a wedge between different races, genders, Democrats and so forth."

A number of protests are planned in Kenosha for the time when President Trump is there.

CBS 2's Chris Tye and Charlie De Mar contributed to this report.

ASA Awards Silver And Gold Medals

AWARDS, from page 6

The ASA Gold Medal Award

The ASA Gold Medal Award is recognized as the highest scholastic award within the ASA. Any member of the ASA who is an undergraduate student and is at least a sophomore in an accredited college or university within the United States is eligible for consideration for this award.

Selected to receive the award this year is Danielle Karen Mikaelian, Thousand Oaks, CA, majoring in English at Columbia University.

Applications for the Gold Medal Awards can be obtained at: www.asainc.org. Deadline for submitting applications and documentation is March 15, 2021.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Staying Connected, Coming Together

Armenian Heritage Park's Virtual Programs

BOSTON – Keeping people connected, coming together virtually during these unusual times is the focus of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park Planning Team, an extraordinary team of committed individuals providing key leadership in developing and implementing public programs.

These programs are inspired by Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston and its key design features "... public art that feels alive... gem of the Greenway...public art that is both permanent and alive..." states Joanna Weiss, The Boston Globe.

Armenian Heritage Park reflects the values and importance of Public Art to "engage public interaction, prompt awareness and reflect how our lives are interconnected". Key points highlighted in a report of the Americans for the Arts, a national non-profit comprised of a network of organizations and individuals who support the arts in America. "Public art is a reflection of how we see the world...the artists' response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are," the report continues. "Activities need to be planned and the space needs to be well-cared for and maintained". Both goals are being achieved at the Park.

"Public Art is the way we express ourselves as a community-it's the way we tell our story," comments Karin Goodfellow, Director of Public Art, City of Boston.

Jane Whitehead writes in "Forget Me Not" in ArchitectureBoston, the publication of the Boston Society of Architects, "Luckily, the project had a designer, Don Tellalian, AIA...who was sensitive to the imperatives of civic space...the design uses abstract, geometric forms...it evokes the broader historic struggles of all immigrants...offers multivalent possibilities for interpretation shaped by visitors' own histories..."

"Public Art employs a unique position within the art world...adds meaning to our cities...reflects who we are...the Abstract Sculpture and all its surrounding elements are a perfect example..." shares Lucas Cowan, Public Art Curator, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy on the occasion of Celebrate Public Art! during ArtWeek at the Park.

For many, walking the Park's Labyrinth, symbolic of life's journey, has become a respite, especially during these unusual times. Many are enjoying a quiet moment on one of the Park's benches that surround the Labyrinth and the Abstract Sculpture. Some visit the Park each day, a place of comfort. Passersby, they share, often pause to read the Inscription on the Reflecting Pool, upon which the Abstract Sculpture sits, that states that the Abstract Sculpture is dedicated to "lives lost in the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 and all genocides that followed".

Many pause to read the words - Art. Service. Science. Commerce. - etched around the Labyrinth's Circle in tribute to contributions made to American life and culture.

Now, all programs are cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic including the Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, a split rhomboid dodecahedron. The annual reconfiguration is symbolic of all who pulled away, or were forced to pull away, from their country of origin and came to these Massachusetts shores, establishing themselves in new and different ways. In early Spring, a crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron, made of stainless steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape.

The annual reconfiguration takes place, under the direction of A&A Industries and founders Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros,



2012 Abstract Sculpture (PeterVanderwarker photo)

who fabricated the Abstract Sculpture, their very generous gift in kind. They are joined by William Martin who oversees the Park's ongoing care and maintenance, and Don Tellalian, AIA. The annual reconfiguration is funded by the Park's Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund.

On April 24 this year, the Genocide Remembrance was held virtually, a fitting tribute planned by the Massachusetts Armenian Genocide Committee.

Several programs are being adapted to be offered virtually to keep people connected, coming together while expanding reach and building collaborations.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra is the newest collaborator to join the festive Welcome Reception for New Citizens at the Park following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall annually held in September. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Welcome Reception will not take place. Next year, the BSO will be joining the Armenian Museum of America, the Bostonian Society, Faneuil Hall Marketplace, the Greenway



Walking the Labyrinth (AndreaBurns photo)



COMMUNITY NEWS

Conservancy and Museum of Fine Arts at the Welcome Reception offering gifts to our newest citizens. The Welcome Reception is funded by the Park's Anna and Noubar Afeyan Endowed Fund for Public Programs.

Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story, the innovative curriculum inspired by the Park's design and geometric features has been developed in partnership with and piloted at the Eliot K-8 Innovation School, Boston Public School in the North End.

Now, adapted for remote learning, the curriculum sparks awareness of geometric shapes in our everyday lives and their creative expression of ideas and thoughts, and engages students in sharing their own, their families' or ancestors' immigrant experience and in doing so, celebrating what unites and connects us.

"This curriculum is an exciting and engaging way for students to learn more about their family heritage and reflect on the American immigration experience...and a wonderful way for teachers to learn about and better understand their students and for the students to learn about one another," comments Brianna Greene, 4th Grade Educator at The Eliot K-8



2015 Abstract Sculpture (Matt Conti photo)

Innovation School. An impressive team of educators from the Friends of Heritage Park and The Eliot School have developed this curriculum now available to all schools in Boston and beyond.

Celebrating What Unites Us! series has also been adapted virtually. The two-part program was launched three years ago to build community and cross-cultural understanding while pro-



moting healthy and active living. Each month highlighted the ethnic heritage of many living in the City of Boston and beyond. For two years, all first met at the Park where a community leader shared his/her immigrant experience. Many walked the labyrinth. Then all walked to The KITCHEN (now permanently closed) at the Boston Public Market where a guest chef shared a signature dish for all to enjoy for lunch and conversation. The series was offered in collaboration with City of Boston Age-Friendly and The KITCHEN and funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Planning is underway to continue the series once all are once again out and about.

Now, Celebrating What Unites Us! is a virtual cooking series with each program featuring a guest chef demonstrating signature ethnic dishes. The series is offered in collaboration with City of Boston Age-Friendly and OLDWAYS, a "food and nutrition non-profit helping people live healthier, happier lives".

Labyrinth Walking Wellness series was initially planned to be held at the Park to introduce the benefits of walking the labyrinth, as a part of the 2020 Greenway Fitness program. Now, the three-part introductory virtual series is offered in col-

laboration with City of Boston Age-Friendly, Boston Public Health Commission, the Greenway Conservancy and YMCA of Greater Boston.

Friends of Armenian Heritage Park Programs Planning Team, the team of volunteers providing the key leadership and professional expertise to develop and implement these programs include Kristin Asadourian, Jason Behrens, Andrea Burns, Susan Deranian, Tom Dow, Manneh Ghazarians, Martha Mensoian, Catherine Minassian, Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, Katrina Piehler, Tsoleen Sarian, Barbara Tellalian, Arlette Yegumians, Chiara Meghian Zenati and Zareh Zurabyan.

Friends of Armenian Heritage Park is an initiative of Armenian Heritage Foundation. The Foundation Board, comprising representatives from parishes and organizations within the Armenian-American community of Massachusetts, is responsible for proper governance and fiduciary oversight, as well as for the Park's ongoing care and maintenance.

To receive the Park's E-News and announcements, email hello@ArmenianHeriatgPark.org



The Tekeyan School of Beirut

The Vahan Tekeyan School was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It serves a low-income segment of the Armenian community and already was struggling due to Lebanon's economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Now the school is trying to reopen for the fall semester. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance.



Send your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or send checks to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (memo: Beirut Tekeyan School), at its headquarters (755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472). All administrative costs for this campaign will be borne by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4455.

Arts & Living

Maxime K. Yevadian:

'To Be Armenian Is to Resist Ambient Mediocrity'

By **Artsvi Bakhchinyan**
Special to Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/LYON - Maxime K. Yevadian is a historian, specialist in medieval and ancient Armenian culture. Born in 1979 in Fréjus (France), Yevadian holds the chair of Armenology at the Catholic University of Lyon. He works on the Christianization of Armenia, and, more generally, on ancient and medieval Armenia.

In 2006, he founded Sources of Armenia, a cultural association for the development of Armenian culture in the West, and especially in France. The association has developed along two directions: publications, through which they try to offer university-level syntheses to the French-speaking public on this millennia-old culture, and training, aimed at a wide audience, able to awake interest from the primary schools, secondary schools, students and adults, something that is unparalleled in Western Europe.

Among Yevadian's published works in Sources of Armenia editions are: "Stone, fabric, parchment and metal lace; The Art of the Christians of Armenia in the Middle Ages"; "Armenian ornamental grammar" (2006); "Christianization of Armenia" (two volumes, 2007-2008), "The metamorphoses of Tigran" (2014), etc.

I met Maxime several times in Armenia, and also once in Venice and we regularly are in touch, sharing academic interests.



Dear Maxime, where are your ancestors from and how did they reach France?

Let us say that out of four great-grandparents, I descend from two orphans of the region of Kharpert, from a peasant from Mush who became a fighter in the Armenian Legion, in Syria, and from a family that was saved through a miracle in Sivas. A tragically classic Armenian destiny. As Nina Garsöian, one of the best historians presently on antiquity and medieval Armenia and a great friend, said, God has not created the Armenian people on April 23 to immolate it on the 24th on the altar of genocide. On the contrary, I am like all the Armenians descendent of a Christian lineage that goes on for 70 generations or so and

see MAXIME, page 14



Sunny with a Chance of Funny

Sona Movsesian Wants to Be Your Friend

LOS ANGELES - Speaking to Sona Movsesian one would be hard-pressed to remember that this young woman regularly appears on the popular "Conan" talk show on TBS, and is co-host, along with Conan O'Brien and producer Matt Gourley, of the very popular "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend Podcast," as well as the "Summer S'mores with Conan and the Chill Chums."

Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

You can even buy Sona swag, including "Team Sona" t-shirts and "World's Worst Assistant" mugs.

Movsesian, who sounds exactly like the friendly person one hears on the podcast, said it is no accident. "If I have a camera pointed at me or not, I am the same person. It's me."

Movsesian sounds enviably relaxed. "I have always been someone who is not stressed or anxious. I'm definitely not creating a persona."

For about 10 years, Movsesian has been O'Brien assistant. For the bulk of those years, the running joke, both on television and now on the podcast, is what an awful assistant she is, and in turn, what a mean boss O'Brien is.

Of course, had Movsesian been a bad assistant in real life, she would have long been replaced. The older-brother-bratty-younger-sister dynamic is one that both relish and which has resulted in ratings gold. According to *Variety*, each "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend" podcast is downloaded more than one million times, making it one of the most popular podcasts now.

O'Brien frequently says her name and nails it every time.

Movsesian said she never wanted to change her name in order to make it more pronounceable. In turn, "He really wanted to make sure he got the name right," she added. "He's really gotten the name down. It sort of makes me feel that any person can do it."

Sona on TV Skits

Search for Sona on YouTube and you will see some of the funniest O'Brien TV skits. In one, from 2018, O'Brien starts talking to Sona when she says she wants a new car as her Jetta has more than 100,000 miles on it. The host sits in the driver's seat and starts breaking bits of the interior, from the light to the dangling sunglasses holder. In the end, he suggests he buy her a car. The suggestions range from a used Bugatti (\$2 million) to a used Honda (\$1,000). The Honda wins, with the sellers bringing down the price to \$500 - without haggling.

The story is true, said Sona Movsesian in an interview this week, with a hearty laugh. (She ended up getting herself a new Kia.)

In another, O'Brien hunts for Sona's "stolen" mug, with the logo and name of see MOVSESIAN, page 16

World Premiere Of Ballet 'Two Suns' on Mezzo Television

YEREVAN - The ballet "Two Suns" is the first ever performing arts work to present Armenian art and cultural heritage on Mezzo TV, the international television channel with a worldwide community of 60 million subscribers.

The premiere broadcast of Roudolf Kharatian's "Two Suns" on the Mezzo TV channel took place on August 23, at 20:10 (CET). Following the premiere of "Two Suns" on August 23, broadcasts are already scheduled on August 29, September 9 and 15.

Broadcasting in more than 80 countries, Mezzo TV has become a leader in presenting the best of the performing arts to a discerning global audience since 1996. Ballet 2021 Development Foundation has signed a 5-year contract with Mezzo TV granting the channel broadcasting rights.

Fusing the past and the present, "Two Suns" presents Armenia's impressive creative legacy through the prism of the 21st century becoming an innovative, timeless, Armenian and universal work of art that affirms Armenia's relevance as an ongoing contributor to the humankind.

The broadcast of the ballet "Two Suns" to the millions of Mezzo TV international viewers is the first step to establishing Armenia on a world-class stage. This was part of Roudolf Kharatian's mission when he took the position of the Artistic Director of the National Ballet of Armenia back in 2009 at the invitation by the Government of Armenia.

The ballet "Two Suns" is based on Grigor Narekatsi's Book of Lamentations. With libretto and choreography by Roudolf Kharatian, the musical score features 4th to 21st century compositions by Mesrop Mashtots, Grigor Narekatsi, Aram Khachaturian, Alan Hovhanness, Arno Babajanyan, Avet Terterian, and Ashot Ariyan. The sets and costumes were designed by Astghik Stepanyan.

For this project, Ballet 2021 has created an international ballet troupe with artists from Japan, France, Greece, Israel, and the United States, and guest principal dancers from



A scene from "Two Suns"

Germany and the United States.

The "Two Suns" international ballet project was realized in 2015 by Ballet 2021 Foundation with the funding from the State Commission on the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation. The ballet premiered on May 27, 2015 at the National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Armenia.



ARTS & LIVING

Art Is More Powerful Than War

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – When Azerbaijan attacked the Tavush region in July, Armenians everywhere responded with protest demonstrations. In Berlin, as reported in this newspaper, several cultural associations came together to organize an artistic response, with an exhibition that opened on August 9 and ended on August 30. Hosted by the Wolf & Galenz Gallery in Berlin, it was entitled, “Armenia: Grace and Violence. Images of Landscapes and Traces of War.”

Artist and curator Archi Galentz told guests at the vernissage that the exhibition had come as a spontaneous reaction to the renewed outbreak of violence. The initiative is a cooperative effort between his gallery, the Association of the European and Armenian Experts e.V. (AEAE) and the Tavush Spiritual Revival Foundation.

Mikayel Minasyan, chairman of the Board of the AEAE, greeted the visitors, and introduced them to the contrasting themes presented in the works on display. On the one hand, magnificent Armenian landscapes adorned with historic architectural monuments; on the other, ravages of war. Here it is not only the scenes of the recent conflict that are evoked, but also war zones in 2016. In the violent four-day war, Minasyan said, both sides suffered massive casualties. “What we want to do with this exhibition,” he said, “is to show what war destroys and what peace offers.”

On one wall Minasyan pointed to the breathtaking Armenian landscapes, on another, the photographs of monuments of Armenian architectural treasures, churches, monasteries and Khachkars. Both expressions of beauty stand in stark contrast to the devastation and suffering in the war zone, depicted also in images of internalized horror.

Not long after the conflict was rekindled in July, Minasyan recalled, a massive explosion obliterated large parts of Beirut. The Armenian quarter was also hit, leading to 13 deaths, more than 100 wounded and 200 missing.

“After the Corona pandemic,” he noted, “there came one crisis after the other,” he noted.

The landscape paintings and drawings, that come from private collections in Berlin, include the works of Mher Abeghyan, Mariam Aslamazyan, Seda Bekaryan, Hakob Hakobyan, Khachatur Jessayan, Harutyun and Armine Kalentz, Vanik Sharanbeyan, Henrikh Siravyan, A. Karpatyan, Albert Tzovyan and Hovhannes Zardaryan.

Renowned photographer Zaven Sargsyan, founder and director of the Paradjanov Museum in Yerevan, has on display photographs of historic church architecture, including the 13th-century Khoranashat monastery in the Tavush region. Traces of war there may be seen in the photographs from 2016 and from this summer, made available for the exhibition by the Tavush Spiritual Revival Foundation. Among the artists featured are Silvina Der Meguerditchian, David Banukyan, Harutyun Chobanyan, Karen Minasyan and others.



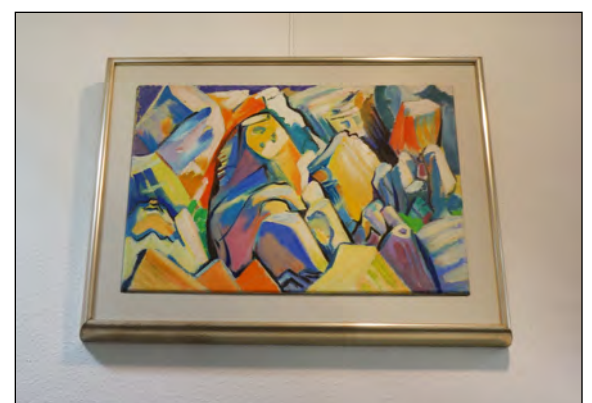
Former German Ambassador to Armenia Hans Jochen-Schmidt (seated) and Archi Galentz

Following Minasyan’s greetings, violinist Davit Khachatryan played two solo pieces by Komitas, and Father Yeghishe Archimandrite Avetisyan concluded the event with the Hayr Mer, and a blessing. Among the honored guests were the third Secretary of the Armenian Embassy Lusine Sargsyan and the Counselor Sedrak Davtyan.

The month-long exhibition was a success, not only in terms of numbers of visitors; the message it sent was a powerful moral statement. In the face of aggression and violence, war and destruction, one must not respond in kind, but rather take the high road. News of the exhibition appeared in the Armenian press.

And it must have reached Azerbaijan as well. But the message seems to have fallen on deaf ears there. On August 19, Wolf & Galentz received a letter by email from Baku that denounced the exhibition as “a provocation” by the Armenian community in Germany because of the use of “Artsakh Republic.” It argued that designating Karabakh as Armenian constituted a violation of international law. “We, people of Azerbaijan,” it read, “want you to react and to stop exhibiting aggression and violation of human rights.” Curiously, the person speaking in the name of the people, identified himself as an engineering student at the Process Automation Engineering Department of the Baku Higher Oil School. The organizers of the exhibition are looking into the matter.

Whatever the background, whoever the



Armine Kalentz. Curator Archi Galentz’s grandmother, would have been 100 years old in August.



Landscapes in Armenia on display at the gallery

person or agency behind the letter, the nature of the reaction invites reflection on the enduring conflict, not so much on its territorial, political and geopolitical dimensions, but on the moral, intellectual and cultural aspects. It brought to my mind the story of the Djulfa cemetery in Nakhichevan, where Azerbaijani forces have systematically destroyed thousands of ancient Khachkars over the decades, and, in answer to international outcries, denied that Armenians had ever inhabited the region.

The exhibition at Wolf & Galentz continued, undisturbed, and received considerable public attention. Among the guests attending the closing ceremony, held as scheduled on August 30, was Hans-Jochen Schmidt, a former German ambassador to Armenia.



ARTS & LIVING

Maxime K. Yevadian: 'To Be Armenian Is to Resist Ambient Mediocrity'

MAXIME, from page 12

which has for 60 generations resisted the conversion to Byzantine Orthodoxy or to Islam, while this conversion would have allowed us a more comfortable and agreeable life in the metropolises of the times, rather than to have suffered harsh winters in the highlands. Nevertheless, this small, undisciplined people that was also stubborn has had its continued exchange with these great empires and many others, a contribution that the specialists are wrong in neglecting. This is the perspective, which isn't a doloristic or miserabilistic one, that I would like to transmit to my children, Krikor and Méliné, on top of the language of their ancestors, to allow them to better understand the complicated world in which they will have to live.

No doubt that people like you will transmit the national identity to the next generation. How did the idea of establishing Sources of Armenia come about?

In fact it is an expansion of the same ideas. For the Western general public, the "Armenians" mean the genocide. Isn't that a little bit inadequate? What is more, overwhelmed by the trauma of 1915, Armenologists essentially work around the history that is contemporaneous to Armenians, mostly in the US, something which is probably necessary, but is also insufficient. I'm the first one to fight for justice for the Armenian people, and not only in the limited frame of the recognition of this genocide. To try to pressure the Turks to recognize a genocide which enriched them and has allowed for them a form of partial modernization of their country is to fail to know this people well, and to put oneself in a situation of subordination in front of their leaders who are among the finest diplomats in the world. It seems that it would be appropriate to explain to them that their pseudo-modernization was largely a failure, and that if they had known truly how to modernize their society and how to give the same rights to minorities as the Muslims had gotten, this state would be one of the first powers in today's world. Far from this, they are trailing in 20th place in rank, their society is and remains one of a great violence which has set itself against families and social groups in part due to the absence of a minority to persecute. One will have eventually to work on this violence in order to overcome it. Where does this compulsion of death come from, which leads the Turks to such a degree of violence between men, against buildings (churches, monasteries, etc.) and nature itself? I think it's a direct consequence of the situation of the Turanians in Central Asia who, during centuries, have been cannon fodder during wars between the great kingdoms such as the Tibetan Empire and China, and also other kingdoms. During those continual fights men, women and children were sold as slaves for a vile price. The situation of permanent insecurity has shaped the collective character of this people which is attempting to wipe the slate clean of its past and establish its domination and its security on blood and violence. This is illusory and they will have, one day, to confront the situation.

As for the Armenians, they have to get out of the "emotional trap" of trauma, to build a personal and collective future. For this, the knowledge of the past lived as a formidable legacy and as an intense spiritual life. In fact, in France and nowhere else in the world outside Armenia, according to me, was there any "market," in the economic sense of the term, for books on the Armenian culture which were not summaries of, or which did not deal with, the genocide and its trauma. Whoever says no market, also says the no series of editions possible. As such, one either had to make do with the situation, or to establish a place where one could have works that sprung in existence of a high level of academic achievement. Additionally, Sources of Armenia has allowed us to publish books of a quality unseen in Europe for Armenian books.

This initiative has probably shocked and angered some communities, perhaps as they had gotten used to being miserable. Few readers have made it all the way to the end of my 840 pages on the Christianization of Armenia, but this study has played a role in the evolution of historiography, and this is what matters.

Who are your promoters?

We are a small group and we are aware of the challenges of our world in its many dimensions. This has enabled us to publish one book per year on average, for the last 10 years, to start over again and develop the Chair of Armenology which has existed in the midst of Lyon Catholic University since 1987, and more recently, to contribute to the launching of a Chair of research on Eurasia, in the same university. For example, Rouben Malians has offered a warehouse of his restaurant franchise to be used as a place to keep our books, a warehouse that is built to the dimensions of a combine harvester.

Additionally, we've met some very nice personalities and been supported by them, such as Zaven Yeghavian, the former director of the department of Armenian communities, and his first successor Astrig Tchamkerten, who helped us in developing a program for the schools of the diaspora, the Armenian numeric campus (<https://campusnumeriquearmenien.org/>), or the Geneva sponsor Vahé Gabrache, who is a rare combination of great Armenian sensitivity, a will for action, and financial means at a high level! We've been also recognized and supported by the administrators of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, both on the Armenian part of our programs as well as on the academic pole of excellence of the Research Chair on Eurasia.

Last and foremost, I have had the huge pleasure of meeting dozens of scholars of a high level who have made it possible to shape an expertise and acquire a real level of requirement. I have already mentioned Nina Garsoïan with whom we have spent days working on the nakhararoutiun (Armenian dynasticism); the historian of the Roman Empire, Yves Roman, my professor at Lyon II who has a luminous vision of the spread of Rome as a civilization pole and who has taught me a lot on the Roman world, and with whom we still maintain a conversation on these questions that has been ongoing for 20 years now; the architect Mourad Hasratian who, when I was a student, accompanied me for visits of dozens of Paleo-Christian Armenian churches, which has strongly contributed to my knowledge of this extraordinary art; the specialist of Armenian liturgy, Benedictine father Charles Renoux who has revealed for me the intimate relationship between Armenian liturgy and Jerusalem; specialists of patristic studies such as Michel Van Esbroeck and Bernard Outtier who have supported me and oriented my work when I worked on the Christianization of Armenia; I must also mention Lilith Zakarian and Erna Shirinian, two great researchers of the Matenadaran of Yerevan who became friends, as well as Anelka Grigoryan, the former director of the Armenian History Museum who knows well the finances of her institution, and my dissertation advisor Armenouhi Drost-Abgarjan without whom I would not have come out of those 10 years of doctoral work. In the midst of all these very nice encounters, I have to also cite Marie, my wife, who has embraced the workaholic that I am.

I follow your publications with admiration. Please tell us about them in details.

For a start, let us say that each one of our publications tries to bring a renewal on an already known subject or to expand the field of Armenian studies on a new question. In order to achieve this, we have shown interest in the edition of sources and their commentaries. In a certain way, we could think that I have spent my life constituting corpuses, inscriptions and texts or coins and their exploitation.

In 2006, during the Year of Armenia in

France, I was invited to accompany the curator of the Museum of miniatures of Montélimar, C. Courbère, to organize an exhibit on sacred art of Armenia and its symbolism. I gave over my salary to Sources d'Arménie to print its first book which is a synthesis of this art. My idea was to make a point on what we can say on the reality of the Armenian artistic tradition, its expansion and its relationship with other artistic traditions of the East and West. Then, after this book which is a sort of general introduction, we will have to publish some synthesis works on the main types of art: architecture, khatchkar, miniatures, and rugs. Only the volume on architecture has been published to this day. In 2010, Mourad Hasratian published a formidable synthesis of a great work of genius which is also admirably rigorous! I pursued for this project, by publishing recently a study in German on the relationship between the architecture of the time of Charlemagne and Armenia, with an accent on the Cathedral of Aachen, the dedication inscription of which should read as: *Insignem hanc dignitatis aulam, Karolus caesar magnus instituit, Egregius Odo Magister, [venit De montem Araratam], explevit* (Charles, the great Emperor, has erected this remarkable temple of prestige the excellent master Odon, who came from Mount Ararat has seen to its construction).

Currently, I am working on the symbolic structure of the churches which, starting from the 4th century, reuse the quaternary structure of the Jerusalem Temple and of which we find the first examples in Armenia.

The main field on which I have worked starting with my first years at the University of Aachen is the origins of Christianity in Armenia, since my master in history in 2003-2004 and my sojourn at the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary of New Rochelle, NY, where I was invited by Abraham Terian and Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, who both helped me make progress in my understanding of Armenian theology. Thus, in 2007 we published a first volume on *Les origines de l'Église arménienne au milieu du iiiie siècle*, and the year after one major breakthrough was *L'œuvre de saint Grégoire l'Illuminateur* which has allowed, for the first time in the world, for Christianity to become durably the official religion and the unique religion of a State while the great empires of the time persecuted it. This event is a major threshold, a conceptual rupture point, all the more if we place it in the true chronology: neither around 295 and 300 or 301, which is a date with a theological value in its inception, nor in 314, which rests on philological and historical errors. On top of assembling some 250 texts, I studied at length the question pertaining to the date of the conversion, without stressing too much the "political" bearing of some of those dates. But be assured that those who speak of 314, either do not know this dossier, or else they have a hidden agenda that is not scientific.

This work on the origins of Christianity has led me in two directions, the link to Jerusalem which is rather well studied, and the mission of preaching of the Armenian prelates which is much less studied. It was as such the subject one had to study. I have worked since the beginning of the year 2000 on many Armenian saints who came to evangelize in Europe, among them Servatius of Tongeren-Maastrich.

Armand Tchouhadjian published a book in 2010 which is a thesis on those Armenians who came to evangelize and travel in Europe, and there appeared in 2010 a volume on Gregory of Tallard, and another one the following year on Servatius of Maastricht.

Many volumes are in preparation for the period of Christian antiquity and for the Middle Ages.

I have gathered important documentation and materials, which I have made the theme of my doctoral dissertation, defended in Halle-Wittemberg in 2017, thanks to Armenouhi Drost-Abgarjan and Cornelia Horn.

The other direction of Christian preaching is

Eurasia, all the way to India and China. This research has led me to the Silk Road. It is a huge and fascinating research and it is for the most completely neglected by Armenologists, while those Armenians have continually maintained close relations with Eurasian cultures. This study that is so important for us today has led to the foundation of a Research Chair on Eurasia which develops its work in this direction with many international cooperation projects.

We have also published anthologies of thematic articles. There was in France in 2010 a Turkish season, following the year of Armenia (2006). In the program for this, the Turkish government read things through its Kemalist and primary reading grid, where everything Ottoman is Turkish, which is in turn pure ideology. I have invited many specialists to study some subjects on the contribution of the Armenian minority to Ottoman influence, as I reserved for myself the question of architects. It was a nice volume translated, as early as 2011, in Turkish at an academic publisher, with the help of the Gulbenkian Foundation. Then, in 2017, we had to celebrate with dignity to 300th anniversary of foundation of the Congregation of the Mekhitarist fathers by Mekhitar Sepastiansi.

Those Catholic Armenian fathers played an essential role in the transmission of European modernity to the Armenian people, which was then repressed by the Turkish night, but also in the development of the study of the Armenian language in its modern Western form, and also to the spread of schools of the diaspora. My cordial relations with Msgr. Levon Zekiyian, the pontifical delegate for this order, have allowed us to organize a series of articles published in the *Nouvelles d'Arménie* during the year 2017, and then gathered in a very nice volume, thanks to the organizational capacities and selflessness of Ara Aharonian, a man devoted to his church.

Finally, we have a dozen of Armenian schools, in France, three of which have been erected thanks to the energy and the consciousness of the venerated Msgr. Norvan Zakarian. The need has been felt within the school of Lyon to have a sort of a history manual on geography of Armenia, in its Middle Eastern context. This is what brought us to direct an Atlas of Armenia which, through about 20 maps with their commentaries, posits the essential basis for an understanding of Armenian culture and of its development. We are currently working on the 6th edition of this work. Jacques Hagopian, in collaboration with the director, is in charge for many years of the subtle balance whereby he hopes to make of the school an establishment of excellence where the transmission of Armenian culture is assured in a dynamic way.

The metamorphoses of Tigran, initiated by you and musician Alexandre Siranossian, became a "table book" for me. These two volumes include rare and generally unknown stuff - the Armenian topics and heroes in European operas and plays in late middle ages. I assume that after publishing this book, you have found more interesting facts, right?

This project has to be replaced in the context of the anniversary of printing in Armenian letters (2011-2012): this small people was the 10th nation to publish a work with its alphabet, after France, Germany or England, but without a state, an administration, nor an army... all the while being dominated from all sides! One had to put words on this prowess. I have thus asked three researchers to write a book of 128 pages on three interesting and original subjects. Alexandre Siranossian was one of them. 20 operas with Armenian themes had been published in 2011. He knew more than 50, there was thus enough to do something! And this was without factoring in the development of digitalization and thousands of books now available online. Alexandre has proven to be a discoverer of texts who has consulted dozens of thousands

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ARTS & LIVING

George Kirazian's Novella, *A Time for Fathers*, Is Released

SAN DIEGO – Author and composer George Kirazian's novella, *A Time for Fathers*, has been released by Laurel Publications and is available on Amazon.com.

In the short novel, Doug Foster, 14, is fed-up staying with his moody aunt and uncle, wants to avoid permanently living with them and decides to search for his father. His journey takes him from one end of San Diego to the other, meeting strange, quirky, and beautiful people who knew his father. Some of them couldn't care less and don't help him at all. Others, in their own kind way, offer memories that help Doug to forget his bitterness and see his father in a way he never has before.

Author, teacher, and composer George Kirazian completed undergraduate and graduate studies at New York University, and for more than 30 years taught writing, literature and music appreciation courses at Grossmont College and San Diego State University.



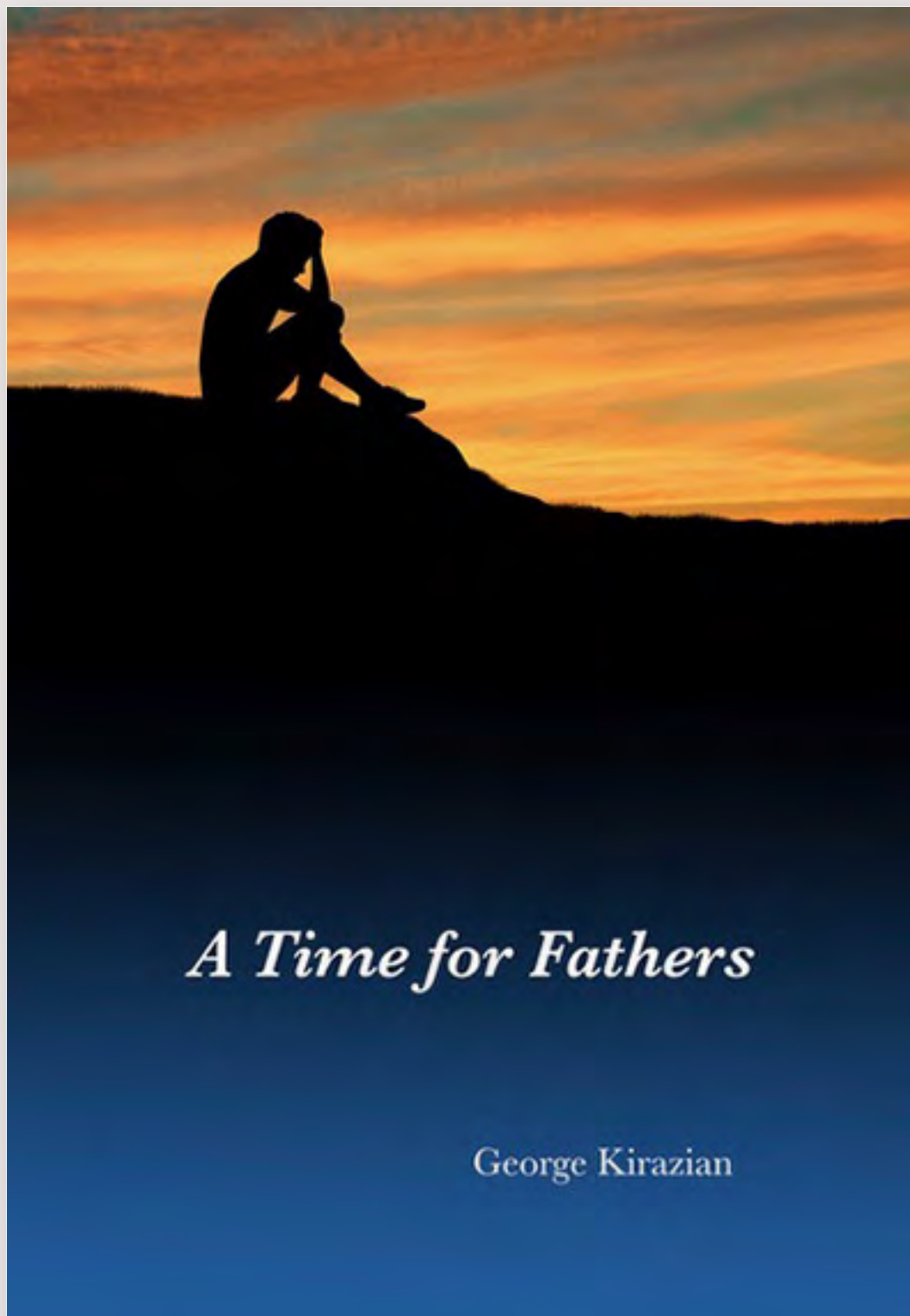
George Kirazian

In addition to his novella, *A Time for Fathers*, Kirazian has written and published extensively in poetry and fiction. He also wrote the children's books *The Sleeping Violet*, *Perry the Peacock* and *Beyond the Koala Kingdom*, also recently released by Laurel Publications. His nonfiction book, *Easy Writing*, helps adults improve their writing. He has also written scripts and instructional videos, including the popular

Let's Play the Piano and All Those Keyboards (Kultur Video).

Kirazian's work as a composer includes various art songs, hymns, the Armenian Apostolic Church liturgy (kirazianbadarak.com), and a ballet, "The Book of Ruth." Several of his works have been performed by various choral groups in the San Diego area.

For more information visit his website, georgekirazian.com, or his Amazon Author Page.



FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

of pages and has gathered 640 works related to Armenia, an unexpected harvest! Then we had to classify and analyze all of this. This is where problems started. As a man of the notes and music, he was not able to entirely put his treasure into words... I have thus morphed, while I was in the midst of writing my dissertation, into this project and I have consecrated the hundreds of hours necessary to its finalizing. It was a pharaonic project which has united dozens of people living all over Europe. Those 500 pages in two volumes have been the occasion of the birth of a new branch in the already majestic tree of Armenian studies, and they have also completed what we knew of the mental universe of Europeans in modern era. However, the reception has been lukewarm, few people have understood its value and the consequences one must draw from it. Be that as it may, the book is there, as a foundation stone for an intellectual rebirth that is to come.

What are your planned publications with Sources of Armenia?

Let's say that we still have around 10 projects in the works. The most advanced one is on the relationship between Armenia and Urartu, which has required two years of work, with a text that is at present written, followed by 32 sources which are at the base of our reflection on the subject. I hope this will be published soon! We also have a project in development on Armenian art with Prof. Alain Navarra di Borgia, which is very promising. Still in this field of art, I am working with the choreographer Michel Hallet-Egayan, on a project of the video podcasts that is truly fascinating. Dancer

that he is, he has been able to transform my rather terse university teacher material into a superb poetic declamation. He has gathered around us a series of specialists and I can't wait to see the results when COVID-19 will be over and we will regain some freedom.

To cite one branch of work, for some years, the new coins from antiquity have been discovered and allow one to reread the history of the Artaxiad dynasty. It is an immense project on which I been working for years with Roy Arakelian. Three articles have appeared, or are being printed, with three others in the course of finalization, and the work continues!

You have studied the presence of the Armenians in Western Europe in ancient times. From what year does it begin, and how could you characterize that presence?

You see, one has to keep the difficult balance between high-level research so that Armenian studies could progress. This balance is what undergirds the courses offered within the Chair of Armenology. It is also this double preoccupation which has led us, with Roy Arakelian, to develop an application on the Armenian patrimony outside of Armenia: the Armenian traveler's guide. We have started on three Italian cities, Venice, Ravenna and Milan, and about 100 points of interest. And there are close to 10,000 for Europe only!

In a general way, we must say that Armenians have been coming to the Western world (the Latin world, the Germanic kingdoms, the Catholic Christendom, etc.), since some 20 centuries, and their situations have been different! In antiquity, Rome welcomed some Armenian princes to perfect their education, and in late

antiquity, Armenian missionaries traveled over Europe to spread Christianity, in what was then a land of missions where many became bishops. In the middle of the 7th century, there was an Armenian monastery in the city of Rome. I have alluded to the time of Charlemagne. But then the Seljuq dynasty came, the Mongols, the Timurid dynasty and others which brought the inexorable decline of Christian societies in the Middle East. Europe has been an asylum more than a support, and has largely used to its advantage the know-how and the knowledge of these Christians.

What is the most amazing fact on Armenians in Europe?

There are so many breathtaking places! In Paris for example, go to the Pantheon, one of the most important memory places in the whole country. Under its vaults, the great men of the nation lay around four statues of the greatest names of French literature. Among those, in full-size is Jean-Jacques Rousseau dressed as an Armenian... On the same place, there is the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, one of the great libraries of the capital. On its front are engraved the names of the main men of knowledge of mankind. On top of the main door, and the beautiful flag of France, one can read the name of the learned man and Armenian political figure of the 11th century Grigor Magistros. Florence, worldwide capital of the arts has taken, in the Middle Ages, as a patron saint the soldier who died as a martyr Miniato (arm.: Minas) and there is no nicer panorama on this marvelous city than the one which one finds from the front steps of the monastery of San Miniato al Monte. In this

church there is, on top of the altar, a mosaic from the 13th century where we can see written besides the Saint "S. Miniatus Rex Erminie." Those two examples owe nothing to the Armenians. They reflect the vision that Europeans have had, during the centuries, of Armenia and Armenians. To give one last example, on the San Marco Piazza in Venice, the square that's the most visited in the world, there are on the columns of the Cathedral San Marco 31 Armenian graffiti (which I have published in 2017), left there by the negotiates and which are as many direct proofs of the relationship between the Venetian Republic and the people...

How would you describe the state of Armenian studies in France today?

The situation of Armenian studies is particular in the Francophone world. The places of teaching and research are integrated with public universities with only a few exceptions. This is a great advantage because they are not tied to private sponsorship, as it is generally the case in North America, but the consequence is that they follow the general trend of the humanities, which is not very good. For teaching the Armenian language, there is the INALCO in Paris which, under the direction of Anaïd Donabédian, possesses a real dynamism. There are places where the language and Armenian culture is taught, for instance in Aix-Marseille, Montpellier III, and Paris' Catholic Institute in France, and also in Louvain and Geneva in the Francophone space. In Lyon, as previously mentioned, I am the only strange bird but I do my share.

(Translated by Philippe Gagnon, Catholic University of Lyon)

Sunny with a Chance of Funny: Sona Movsesian Wants to Be Your Friend

MOVSESIAN, from page 12

the reaty show “Gigolos,” about real-life gigolos. Such manifestly awful viewing is one of her guilty pleasures. It turned out another staffer had simply taken the mug from the kitchen.

In other skits, he often complains about her terrible taste in television — the lowest-brow reality shows. Movsesian freely admits “the amount of television I watch is insane.” She jokes that she always wanted to work in television because then she could watch TV at work. “There are TVs at all the desks. I would put on ‘Jerry Springer’ or ‘Bad Girls’ Club.”

She has also made it to “Conan” as a guest because the actual guest, actor Kumail Nanjiani, had a last-minute emergency.

From NBC to Team Coco

Movsesian, a graduate of the University of Southern California, worked for NBC in the events and operations division before connecting with O’Brien. Her Los Angeles-based department collaborated with many programs on the network and she ended up in contact with O’Brien’s publicist. At that time, his talk show was still based in New York.

“When I found out that Conan was coming to LA, I said I wanted to work for him. They said they would post the job in the fall. At that time, a PA [production assistant] position was open,” and they suggested that she apply for that. However, right before the interview for that post, Marc Liepis, a writer and line producer for O’Brien who had worked with Movsesian, texted O’Brien about her. In brief, she was interviewed by O’Brien instead for the post of assistant that day and got it that day.

“When I first started, it was the typical stuff. I take care of his schedule and lunch and make sure he is where he is supposed to be. Basically the job is to keep the boss happy. I am a gatekeeper for Conan,” she said. She noted that he does not assign her many personal tasks like the dreaded dry-cleaning runs and dog walks.

Over time, she said, the relationship organically evolved from being “very professional and very respectful” on both their parts, to one that involves a familial and familiar relationship between the two. “We weren’t in the same city, let alone same state,” she said, when she first started working for O’Brien. O’Brien moved to Los Angeles three months after she started working for him.

O’Brien is genuinely funny in real life and wants to joke with everyone, she said. “It’s because he is from a big Irish Catholic family and he jokes with all the people around him,” Movsesian said.

The icebreaker that transformed their once-professional relationship was when she was talking on the phone to her grandmother in Armenian at the office. “He had just moved out here. I was talking to my grandmother and he says, ‘It sounds like you are arguing with Dracula.’”

Movsesian could not stop laughing. “That kind of opened the floodgates,” she said. “It quickly deteriorated into a brother-sister dynamic.”

Team Coco and NBC Debacle

Before hosting the talk show “Late Show with Conan O’Brien” starting in 1993, he had been a writer for “Saturday Night Live” and “The Simpsons.”

O’Brien may joke about Movsesian’s work ethic and she in turn might call him a demanding jerk in jest, but their relationship has been tested by a real drama of epic proportions.

Long story short, in 2009 Conan O’Brien took over “The Tonight Show” after host Jay Leno’s retirement. The move had been long in the making. Leno, breaking his word, came back to work, this time on an hour-long talk show in prime time, therefore directly competing with “The Tonight Show” for guests. The ratings kept deteriorating and he got the network to give him the 11.30 time slot, pushing back O’Brien’s “Tonight Show” to midnight. O’Brien complained that he was being hemmed in from every side and wasn’t given a chance. NBC agreed to buy his contract out, but also according to the terms of the settlement, prohibited him from appearing on television for six months.

O’Brien experienced a lot of pain and received a groundswell of support, leading to the launch of his show, “Conan,” on TBS. Movsesian was a tremendous support to O’Brien at the time he was experiencing a deep depression.

“I was one year into my job and it still felt like a new job for me. When I look back on it, it was one of the most exciting and thrilling times,” she said.

The situation resulted in a relentless media circus, with many outlets offering money for any morsel of information about the participants. Paparazzi were pitched in front of O’Brien’s house and often, Movsesian said, she would go and pick him up in her car, which was nondescript enough that they would ignore it.

The situation, she noted, was a real eye opener for her in terms of who is trustworthy, what goes on behind the scenes and how the business operates.

He could have been really bitter, she recalled; instead, “his last speech on the show was really sweet and uplifting. They had screwed him over,” she recalled. His gracious attitude, she said, “made me look at him differently.”

In turn, she earned his trust. “It was very easy for people to

exploit this position. That is definitely not in my DNA to betray the person I am working for. He knows that about me now.”

O’Brien embarked upon a national comedy tour during the time he could not be on television. Footage from the 32-city-tour eventually was turned into a documentary, “Conan O’Brien Can’t Stop.”

‘Conan O’Brien Needs a Friend’ Podcast

If you haven’t listened to the “Conan O’Brien Needs a Friend” podcast, do yourself a favor and download it. The hour-long podcast, which was launched in 2018, heavily features Movsesian and producer Matt Gourley. The guests range from comics and actors (Tom Hanks, Sarah Silverman, Tina Fey, Martin Short, Jim Gaffigan, Eric Idle) to fellow talk show hosts (Jimmy Kimmel and David Letterman), all the way to political heavyweights Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, Jimmy Carter and President Bill Clinton.

The format allows O’Brien and his guest to delve deeply into subjects — sometimes seriously — without commercial interruptions and censorship. His razor-sharp intelligence shines through. (Since March all the hosts and guests have participated remotely.)

Of course, he and his crew — including Movsesian — also do hilarious ads for various services and products, from State Farm Insurance to the Tushy Bidet.

The latter, Movsesian said, is a favorite. “He brought me in to say it,” she recalled, chuckling.

If O’Brien comes across as intelligent, it is because he is, Movsesian said.

“He is probably one of — if not the — smartest people I have ever met. He chooses the right combination of words that is always the funniest,” she said.

The Harvard grad (with honors), and two-time president of the



Sona Movsesian on her wedding day with husband Tak Boroyan

Harvard Lampoon, “constantly feels the need to educate himself. He is always reading a giant biography of a president or a book on the Civil War or World War II. I knew he was smart but I did not fully understand” just how smart, she noted.

“He and I always knew we have a very dysfunctional boss and assistant relationship,” she said.

A focus group for the podcast indicated, “people liked our dysfunctional dynamic.”

Movsesian clearly enjoys herself on the podcast. “It’s one of the favorite parts of my job,” she said.

Movsesian comes through as someone who is comfortable in her skin.

“I’m very open. He grew up in a very different household, which was not as loud as mine. He censors himself a lot more,” she added.

Movsesian, like O’Brien is self-deprecating. “I was never an aspiring writer or comedian. The end game is not to become a comedian,” she said.

Asked how she prepares, she notes honestly, “I don’t really prepare. Mot of the time we just start recording.”

And deflecting any compliments, she said, “I am only as good as I can be with Conan. I think Conan has a way of bringing out the funny with me.”

Some of the guests are superstars. When asked if she gets nervous or the opposite, jaded, she replied, “It is the coolest thing in the world. The worst thing that can happen is to get jaded. I have kept that in mind. I constantly remind myself how cool it is.”

She joked that she and a long time friend have what they call “just come home” moments, when either of them is in a situation which is so incredible that they feel they don’t belong in it. One such moment was when Movsesian was attending the White



Sona Movsesian with Conan O’Brien in Armenia

House Correspondents’ Dinner in Washington in 2015, with O’Brien hosting it.

“I kept thinking ‘you don’t belong there.’ I have so many moments like that,” she said.

Just how nice are some of those celebrities who come across as nice? It turns out, they are.

“Ted Danson [of ‘Cheers’ and ‘The Good Place’], right before we started recording, was really nice to everyone,” she said. Pre-taping tests can be tedious, as the guest has to get connected to microphones just right.

Another was Sean Hayes of “Will and Grace” who chatted happily to everyone during the pre-taping process.

And who can forget the super chill, super jazzy and laid back Jeff Goldblum. “He is really cool. After we recorded the interview, he called the office. He said ‘I just wanted to call and follow up and have a conversation’ with the staff,” Movsesian said.

And of course, famously nice guy Tom Hanks, she recalled, called everyone out by name. “He is a genuinely nice person. It is not a myth. He is a very decent person,” she recalled.

Of course some people fluster the cool-as-ice Sona. “I am a big Lakers’ fan and I met [the late] Kobe [Bryant] right after they had won the championship. He was so happy and loose. Not how he normally was, which was very focused.”

Other standouts, he said were Magic Johnson and guitarist Slash of the band Guns and Roses.

And of course, famously nice guy Tom Hanks, she recalled, called everyone out by name. “He is a genuinely nice person. It is not a myth. He is a very decent person,” she recalled.

On the show, another running joke O’Brien makes is Movsesian’s use of cannabis. When asked about it, Movsesian chuckled and said, “It has been legal here for a very long time.”

She added, “I told him I do it from time to time. I am not a pothead. I just unwind sometimes. I never wake up and do it. I’m not Tommy Chong.”

She added, however, that if she and her friends go to Disneyland, they do so while ingesting the good stuff.

Movsesian also has her own Instagram show, “Sona Fixes Your Life,” where viewers submit questions or dilemmas they are facing. “I am completely useless,” she said. “The name should be ‘Sona makes your life even more complicated!’”

Sona and Conan Visit Armenia

O’Brien started recording travel shows as part of “Conan” in 2015, with a trip to Cuba. The show was well received and so enjoyable to do that he decided to do another one.

Many Armenian-Americans have seen the absolutely riotous episode of O’Brien’s visit to Armenia.

Movsesian recalled that the writers were sitting around a table when O’Brien said, “Why don’t we take Sona to Armenia.”

“As we were planning it, Armenia books were coming in and the writers were researching all the names and I heard Yerevan,” she added, noting that she was incredibly touched.

“All these things I had grown up listening to and learning about... I can’t tell you how amazing that experience was,” she said.

The trip, which was her first to Armenia, made for hilarious viewing. Before the trip, she said, she was very nervous. “If you put something out there, it could very easily have been a disaster.” Instead, the result was a funny and touching episode capturing a lot of sweet moments. “I was very proud to be part of that episode,” she added.

In addition, she got a bonus present, a tape of her grandmother. In the early portion of the episode, O’Brien visits the Movsesians’ home in Los Angeles and speaks with her granddaughter. In broken English, she asks that O’Brien find her granddaughter an Armenian husband. “She passed away a few months later,” Movsesian said.

In Armenia the ‘64’, super pale O’Brien got a lot of attention. Add a trailing camera crew and everyone’s interest was piqued.

Some in Armenia, she added, had seen his clips on YouTube. “We met a lot of people who knew of Conan because of YouTube.”

The trip was a success. “He really liked it. There were 10 of us. Everybody was so pleasantly surprised at how beautiful Yerevan

ARTS & LIVING

Calendar

CONNECTICUT

SEPTEMBER 19 — Armenian Open 2020, Saturday, 11 a.m. Tallwood Country Club is the home of the Armenian Open which provides a unique, traditional experience for

this golf tournament. The three churches of St. George, St. Mark and Holy Resurrection have combined their efforts to continue on the tradition, at the original site of where it all started. The committee is working diligently to ensure a memorable experience while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines. Register to play and become a sponsor at <https://www.armenianopen.com/register>. To learn more visit our Facebook page : <https://facebook.com/events/s/armenian-open-2020/326043275095372/?ti=icl> or <https://www.armenianopen.com/>.

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 9 — Wednesday, at 10am. Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. ARMENIAN CUISINE. Lena Tashjian, Cookbook author, recipe developer, writer, The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook: Recipes and Stories from Armenia and the Armenian

Diaspora (2020); founder, Vegan Armenian Kitchen.com. To register via Zoom, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 13 — Trinity's On-The-Go Picnic, Sunday, Noon – 3 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Pre-Orders Only! Place your orders online or download the mail-in order form to place your order by Wednesday, September 9.

SEPTEMBER 20 — St. James Fall Kick-Off To-Go! Hosted by the St. James Men's Club and Hye Café groups, in lieu of in-person September events. 12:30 - 2:30pm. Meals will be available for pre-order curbside pickup only. Online ordering will be available starting on September 1st at <http://stjameswatertown.square.site>. St. James Armenian Church - 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown. Please contact info@sthagop.com with any questions.

SEPTEMBER 22 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston 2020 Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament. Tuesday, Marlborough Country Club, Marlborough. Please submit completed registration information directly to the Church office via mail or e-mail. Questions? 617 354-0632

SEPTEMBER 23 — Wednesday, at 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. BREADS! Andrew Janjigian. America's Test Kitchen Bread Expert. Editor, Cooks Illustrated. To register email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

OCTOBER 7 — 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. NATIVE AMERICAN CUISINE Chef Sean Sherman member of the Oglala Lakota tribe Cookbook author, The Sioux Chef Indigenous Kitchen - 2018 James Beard Award for Best American Cookbook; co-founder, The Sioux Chef.com - 2019 James Beard Leadership Award. To register via Zoom, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

RHODE ISLAND

SEPTEMBER 4 — The Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Presents Armenian Cultural Hour Friday, at 7:30 pm. YEREVAN Chorale & Orchestra Of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge, Selected Songs

- September 11 — Friday, 7:30 pm, Komitas Vardapet, Berinyan Badarak, Premier Presentation in the US
- September 18 — Friday, 7:30 pm, Dedicated to of Armenia's Independence. A Special Program, "Salute to Armenia"
- September 25 — Friday, 7:30 pm "Meet with our Doctors" via the Zoom Conference Platform. Questions & Answers. Dr. Ara Sadaniantz, Cardiologist, Jason Martiesian, Moderator

You can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



Simit

Jill Simonian, the creator of TheFabMom® blog, is a popular TV/media host/contributor and author with over 200 on-air parenting/lifestyle segments to her credit. Born in Fresno, Jill attended UCLA and lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two daughters.

This is her late mother Bonnie Simonian's simit recipe she makes for her family at Easter and the holidays. "Simit is a traditional, not-too-sweet Armenian cookie that goes great with coffee, tea, or hot chocolate that I can serve any time of day. My mother's version is simple, and I remember her each time I make it with my daughters."

INGREDIENTS:

3 cubes butter (1 1/2 cups), softened
2 eggs (plus one egg for brushing on top of cookies)
1/2 cup fresh orange juice
1 cup sugar
5 cups flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
Sesame seeds for sprinkling on top, optional

PREPARATION:

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, beat 2 eggs with the butter for a few minutes. Add the sugar and orange juice, and mix well. Add the flour, baking powder, and baking soda, and knead well.

Roll quarter-sized pieces of dough into skinny round strips of 1/2-inch thickness (6 inches long). Fold each strip in half, and make "twisty shape" cookies and criss-cross on ends. Pinch so they stick together on one end.

Place cookie twists on an ungreased cookie sheet (use parchment paper, if desired). Brush lightly with beaten egg. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake for about 15 minutes or until golden brown (they may turn golden brown after 10 minutes, depending on your oven). Do not burn. Makes about 5 dozen.

References:

<http://thefabmom.com/>
<http://thefabmom.com/fab-moms-guide/>
<https://www.facebook.com/jillsimonian.thefabmom/>
<https://www.instagram.com/jillsimonian/>



Jill Simonian and her daughters. Above, Simit photo by Larissa Block@beautiesandbabies.

is as well as the countryside," she recalled. One day, after a particularly harrowing car ride to the mountains to herd some sheep, she said O'Brien told her, "This is one of the prettiest places I've ever seen."

He was also touched to see her teary reaction, looking at Mount Ararat in the distance. The episode contains a lot of self-deprecating humor by O'Brien, as well as hilarious efforts to learn the language [Let me eat your liver] and find a husband for the then-unattached Movsesian through a matchmaker. He even found time to make a cameo in a soap opera and dance at Garni in traditional garb.

O'Brien and the crew have also gone on to many other countries, including Haiti, Korea, Greenland, Qatar, Ghana and Israel. Those episodes are part of "Conan without Borders" specials.

Background

Movsesian was born in Montebello to parents who were both

born in Turkey. Her father hails from Western Armenian, Sivas (Sepastia), and her mother from Istanbul. Her father, she said, came to Los Angeles when he was in his late teens, and later met his future wife here.

She has one brother.

A graduate of the Mesrobian Armenian School, she regularly lends her time and name to various Armenian organizations, including the Armenia Tree Project, Armenia Fund and Children of Armenia Fund.

"It's honestly been the best byproduct of my job," she said. "One of the things I really loved was how many Armenian organizations and philanthropists I met."

She added, "I am blown away by how much people in the diaspora help Armenia."

Movsesian noted that she tries to help out whenever possible. "Chances are I will do it. I try to say yes to everything."

Movsesian married Armenian-born graphic designer Tak

Boroyan in 2018. She and Boroyan met at ComiCon. "He recognized me because of the Armenia show. Conan will always take credit for it," she said with a laugh.

Their connection, however, was no joke. "Both of us knew on the first date that we would get married," she said.

Now Movsesian's problem is that if she has a tough day at work or disagrees with O'Brien, she will get no sympathetic ear at home. "Tak was a fan of Conan before we met. It is really hard to complain about your work. He will say 'It's CONAN!' There's a real bromance brewing."

(You can see a video of their wedding as well as O'Brien dancing at the wedding, on YouTube.)

As for the future, Movsesian said, "I don't try to plan too far in advance." She said she is pretty happy where she is. "Why rock the boat?"

Watch "Conan" on TBS and listen to "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend" on all podcast platforms.

EDITORIAL

Turkey Casting Its Threatening Shadow Over Armenia

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey's foreign policy has all the trimmings of a superpower. That robust posture is based on its military might, which is being deployed arrogantly in regions away from Turkey's immediate sphere of influence.

On the one hand, Turkey is engaged in a standoff with Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, while on the other hand, it is challenging China for the mistreatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority.

In the West, only France has been vocal about its concerns over Turkish aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean, while Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has been soft-peddling between the two antagonists' camps.

This reaction has been creating some tensions among the members of the European Union.

In response to Turkey's increasingly aggressive stance in the Mediterranean, President Emmanuel Macron of France has stated that the time has come to draw a red line in front of Turkey's unlawful activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, adding that Turkey has adopted a behavior unbecoming a NATO member.

This comment triggered a furious reaction in Ankara, where Hami Aksoy, the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, replied: "Those who think they have drawn red lines against the just cause of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean will only face the firm stance of our country. If there is a red line in the region, it can only be that of the rights of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, which stem from international law. It is time for those who have delusions of grandeur to face reality. The era of defining imperialist conceptions by drawing lines on maps is long gone."

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statement was even more blunt: "In addition to our fight against terrorism, we are facing challenges against our interests in the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas. We are fighting against all enemies and we are throwing the gauntlet before our enemies."

Macron just made his second visit to Lebanon in the wake of the devastating explosion at the Beirut harbor on August 4 to assess the situation. It is not just a gesture of goodwill on his part; the French are keeping an eye on the activities of various Turkish ministries preying on the misery of the citizens of that beleaguered nation.

Turkey's foreign policy and militant posturing have a symmetrical counterpart in the Caucasus. But before dwelling on that region, it is important to find the source of Turkey's extraordinary arrogance in dealing with the international community.

Watching Turkey's role in the configuration of global forces, we can find a diminished role for the US military in the world. That does not mean the US is reducing commensurately its interest in world affairs but there is a shift; once the US was outsourcing manufacturing and was fighting foreign wars. Today manufacturing is returning home, particularly from China, and Washington is outsourcing foreign wars. Remember that one of the highlights of Mr. Trump's acceptance speech at the Republican National Committee's convention was bringing back the troops.

Turkey has found its niche in this shift of policy. During the Cold War, Turkey served as the bulwark against the expansion of communism. In this new role, Ankara is becoming the policeman of the Middle East and the Caucasus.

Another force is emerging in the Asia Pacific region: Japan. At the end of World War II, when Japan signed an unconditioned surrender to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers Gen. Douglas MacArthur, a new constitution, drafted by the general himself, limited Japan's military to self-defense only. But in recent years, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe changed that constitution with the acquiescence of the US, paving the way towards a new brand of militarism, particularly in view of China's growing military presence in the region.

Before his recent resignation for health reasons, Shinzo Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine, where many executed Japanese war criminals are buried, and paid tribute to them while the Emperor Naruhito made an equivocal statement grieving all the victims of war.

If President Trump is reelected, we may see more evidence of this policy and other policemen may pop up in different regions doing the bidding of the US.

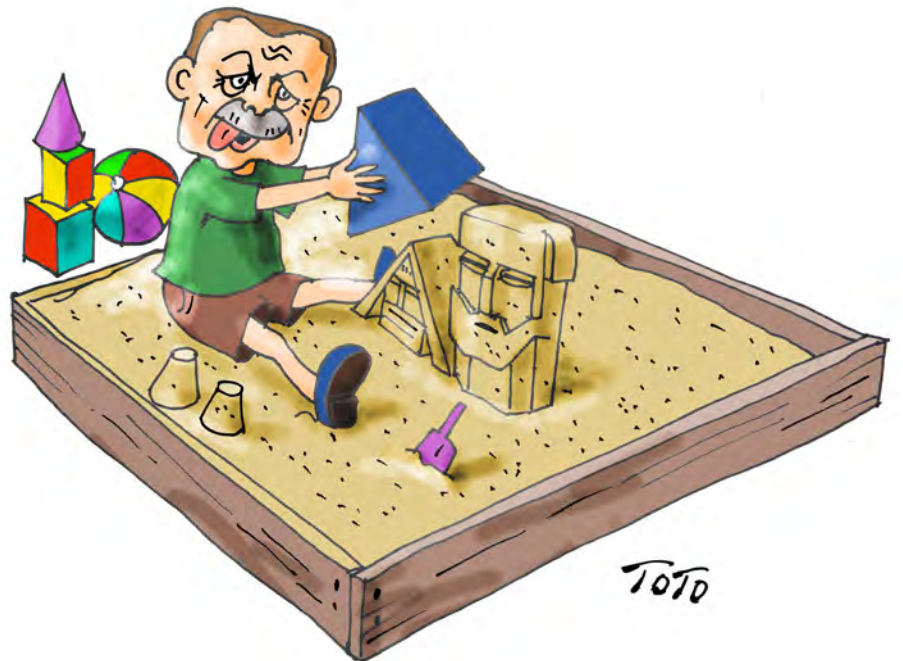
For example, President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil may fit the bill for South America.

While Turkey is assuming this role of policeman, supposedly serving the interests of Western powers, it will take care also of its own business, consolidating the foundations of its Ottomanist designs.

During the July war on the Tavush border, Azerbaijani forces lost face; the \$5 billion shiny military hardware proved to be ineffective against the less-well-armed Armenian foes. As a result of that set-back, President Aliyev lost his credibility. This development has helped Turkey to fill in the power vacuum there. First, Turkish-Azerbaijani joint forces held impressive war games to intimidate Armenia and then Turkey moved its military forces into Nakhichevan, turning it into a virtual military base, mirroring the Russian base in Gyumri.

These moves were more significant than Turkey supporting its brother nation of Azerbaijan; Turkey was exercising its new role as the policeman of the region, with one eye to Washington, showing it was performing its role of containing Russia. The Karabakh war has been in reality only an excuse to serve a broader geostrategic plan.

Mr. Erdogan's war hero, the ubiquitous Minister of Defense



Hulusi Akar, who has been commanding Turkey's murderous raids in Syria and Libya, has also appeared on the Karabakh front during those military drills.

Assuming the same arrogance as his boss, Akar threatened Armenia, stating that "Turkey is also a party to the conflict, standing with the brotherly state [of Azerbaijan] and defending its rights." He added, "Armenia does not act reasonably by relying on forces standing behind it, punching above its weight."

This statement was a direct reference to Moscow, revealing the real thrust of the increasingly menacing Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan.

Mr. Akar's reference was a direct challenge to Russia, ignoring Armenia.

Thus far, Moscow has been playing it cool. It is reported that President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have urged Ankara to exercise restraint, speaking to their counterparts on the phone.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has added more fuel to the Turkish rhetoric, saying at a joint press conference: "Armenia has proven it is not a trustworthy country. Azerbaijan is not alone. We work under the notion of 'one nation, two states,' and we conducted our meeting today with the same understanding."

The truth of the matter is that to reflect the truth it is more correct to say "two nations, one state."

For all intents and purpose, Armenia is facing Turkey as the main challenge to its security in the region. This fact was acknowledged by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during an awards ceremony in Karabakh recently, where he said, "From

continued on next page

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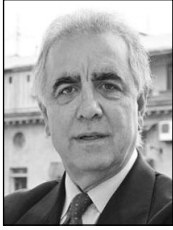
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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkey's Leaders Furious at Biden For his Attack on President Erdogan

Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden was interviewed by the New York Times editorial board on December 16, 2019. In his interview, Biden called Turkish President Erdogan “an autocrat,” urged his “isolation” and sought his “defeat” in the next elections.

Even though the interview took place eight months ago and was published by the New York Times on January 17, 2020, the Turkish government and media showed no reaction at the time. A week ago, several months after the interview became public, a series of orchestrated hysterical attacks were launched in Turkey on Biden's comments to the New York Times.

Let's start with what Biden told the New York Times last December:

“I've spent a lot of time with him [President Erdogan of Turkey]. He is an autocrat. He's the president of Turkey and a lot more. What I think we should be doing is taking a very different approach to him now, making it clear that we support opposition leadership. Making it clear that we are in a

position where we have a way which was working for a while to integrate the Kurdish population who wanted to participate in the process in their parliament, etc. Because we have to speak out about what we in fact think is wrong. He has to pay a price. He has to pay a price for whether or not we're going to continue to sell certain weapons to him. In fact, if he has the [Russian] air defense system that they're flying F-15s through to see how they can try to figure out how to do it.”

Biden went on: “So I'm very concerned about it. I'm very concerned about it. But I'm still of the view that if we were to engage more directly like I was doing with them, that we can support those elements of the Turkish leadership that still exist and get more from them and embolden them to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan. Not by a coup, not by a coup, but by the electoral process. He got blown out. He got blown out in Istanbul [during the mayoral elections]. He got blown out in his party. So what do we do now? We just sit there, and yielded. And the last thing I would've done is yielded to him with regard to the Kurds. The absolute last thing!”

Biden concluded: “I had a couple of those meetings with him about the Kurds, and they did not clamp down at the time. We have to make it clear that if they're looking to, because, at the end of the day, Turkey doesn't want to have to rely on Russia. They've had a bite out of that apple a long time ago. But they got to understand that we're not going to continue to play with them the way we have. So I am very concerned. I am very concerned. I'm very concerned about our airfields [in Turkey] and access to them as well. And I think it takes an awful lot of work for us to be able to get together with our allies in the region and deal with how we isolate his actions in the region, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean in relating to oil and a whole range of other things which take too long to go into. But the answer is yes,

I'm worried.”

On August 16, 2020, in response to Biden's above comments, the Jerusalem Post reported that Turkish presidential adviser Ibrahim Kalin slammed Biden, accusing him of ignorance, arrogance and hypocrisy. “The days of ordering Turkey around are over,” he tweeted. “But if you still think you can, be our guest. You will pay the price.”

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also attacked Biden after meeting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, calling the Democratic Presidential nominee ignorant. Speaking about Biden's comments, Cavusoglu said: “It's weird that someone this disinformed [sic] wants to run the country.”

It is understandable that Turkish leaders would be upset at Biden for talking about removing the Turkish President from office. Furthermore, given Erdogan's chummy relationship with President Trump, it is also understandable that Turkish leaders would not want to see Trump replaced by Biden. A few days ago, Trump told Fox News that Erdogan listens to him. In fact, it is the other way around. Trump is the one who listens to Erdogan and does his bidding.

Nevertheless, there are deeper reasons for Turkish leaders to whip their public into frenzy against Biden. Erdogan is engaging in his favorite political trick of distracting his people's attention away from their economic and social deprivations by blaming the foreigner, Biden! Erdogan is also relying on the long-standing Turkish hostility to Western Europe, the United States and Christianity. Erdogan is used to whipping the emotions of his uneducated followers to stand by him, regardless of his poor performance. Instead, Erdogan has conveniently pivoted towards Russia and China, despite his country's NATO membership!

Should Biden win in the Presidential elections, it remains to be seen if he would maintain his hard line approach to Erdogan and Turkey.

Turkey Casting Its Threatening Shadow Over Armenia

from previous page

now on, Armenia recognizes Turkey, rather than Azerbaijan, as a challenge and threat. Armenia's perception is changing and that of course, is a pivotal change.”

In the perception of Armenia's foreign policy establishment, Azerbaijan does not hold any particular policy; all it does is reflect the wishes of Erdogan.

Over the last 30 years, Turkey has resorted to many manipulations to have a say in the Karabakh conflict. At one point, it tried to play a more assertive role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but it failed. On many occasions, it tried to participate in a joint peacekeeping force in Karabakh. But Armenia and Russia objected and managed to fend off the threats. Now that President Erdogan has overhauled its foreign policy by moving from “zero enemies in the neighborhood” to all-out aggression, he has decided to occupy Azerbaijan with “brotherly love.”

With Turkey's forceful advance in the region, the situation has become far tenser. Every movement reflects the intensity of the situation. Recently, Turkey banned a German military plane from flying over its territory to land in Armenia, carrying some military personnel to Germany for NATO training.

Another minor incident turned into a political scandal when President Aliyev called out President Putin for shipping 400 tons of military equipment to Armenia.

The situation is escalating while Mr. Lavrov is trying to kick-start the negotiations.

Andranik Kocharyan, chairman of the Defense Committee of the Parliament, has interjected that since President Aliyev has become so nervous, it means that Russian-Armenian relations are on a developing trend.

With the emergence of Turkey as a major player in the region, it behooves Armenia to finetune its foreign policy around two major issues: a) capitalizing on the recognition of the Genocide, with an emphasis on compensation and b) placing Russian-Armenian relations on a more solid footing.

Turkey has occupied 90 percent of Armenia's historic territory and is citing international law to claim Karabakh for Azerbaijan. Armenia has to place the Genocide issue on the forefront of its foreign policy. Both Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan failed to capitalize on the Genocide when they appeared separately on the BBC news program “HARDTalk.” “Human rights,” “democracy” and “gender equality” all seem to be the new additions to the Armenian political lexicon and Armenian leaders believe they can seduce the West by championing those virtues, whereas the West has devalued them by supporting medieval potentates such as those in Saudi Arabia or has destroyed Iraq, Syria and Libya under the pretense of offering democracy to those peoples. Those leaders may face a rude awakening when they realize the cynical content behind those virtuous phrases and stop using them as political assets.

Instead, Armenia must shout from the rooftops

“enough genocide.”

As much as Mr. Erdogan assumes a macho swagger in politics, he is vulnerable when faced with the recognition of the Genocide. That is why he spent many hours personally supervising a committee tasked with the denial of the Genocide. And that is also why millions of dollars continue to be spent by Ankara on lobbying firms in major world capitals. When the enemy recognizes the political value of an issue, it is not up to Armenia to underplay it.

Also, we have to face the reality that Turkey will not lift the blockade nor establish diplomatic relations. Under that presumption, it becomes a hollow statement that recognizing the Genocide is not a precondition to resuming diplomatic relations. It should be a precondition, along with the demand for compensation and territorial restitution.

We should not be under the illusion that all our demands will be met, but we have to put Turkey on the defensive and at least issue those demands. Right now, it is on the offensive on behalf of Azerbaijan but it could be on the defensive facing Armenian accusations.

When Pashinyan began his march from Gyumri to Yerevan, he vowed that his Velvet Revolution was in response only to domestic issues and did not have a foreign policy agenda. What mobilized the people was the goal of getting rid of a corrupt regime, inequality and injustice.

But certain elements who joined the march and attained seats in the new government had their own hidden agendas and now are delivering to their foreign overlords. They are a liability to Pashinyan and his goals. Those are people who engage in anti-Russian rhetoric and activities.

Now that Turkey has well established itself in Azerbaijan, Armenia's leaders believe that development has enhanced the value of the Russian base in Armenia and they are under the illusion that Russia needs that base more than Armenia does. They don't realize that they have been walking on thin ice.

Historically, Turkey and Russia have demonstrated that they can engage in pragmatic statesmanship, as they did in 1923 when they signed the Treaty of Kars, according to whose terms Russia sold out the Armenians to Kemalist Turkey.

Turkey is in the Caucasus to harass Russia at the behest of the West. The anti-Russian campaign will only serve to antagonize Moscow and create a pretext, which may result in a difficult payback down the road.

It is also in the interest of the ruling power to seek stability and peace in the country; witch-hunting and the harassment of people identified as Russia's friends will only destabilize the country.

The pandemic has already created enough panic; Armenia does not need any manmade tensions.

Looking out of the window to see the Turkish armed forces in Nakhichevan may sober up every citizen in Armenia.

There's a New Game of Thrones in the Mediterranean

As if there wasn't enough trouble around the world, two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey, have lit up a new and dangerous crisis, dragging in countries near and far. In this game of thrones, only Germany seems to have the sway to mediate a return to sanity.

At the core of the crisis, as in so many other dangerous squabbles around the globe, is energy – specifically the rich gas deposits discovered over the past decade under the eastern Mediterranean. Greece claims that its many islands in that region give it sole drilling rights in the waters around them, a stance broadly supported by international law. But Turkey, feeling hemmed in, says otherwise, and it has sent ships, accompanied by warships, to explore for gas off Cyprus.

Feuds between Greece and Turkey are hardly new. What complicates this one is that the gas reserves are also being eyed by many other countries. In principle, the vast reserves should bring those countries together to tap and share the riches off their shores. In fact, most of the countries – including Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Italy, Jordan and even the Palestinians – have done just that.

Turkey, however, has found itself excluded, in part because of Greece's territorial claims, and in part because Turkey's authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has antagonized many of his allies and friends with his aggressive behavior in Syria, Libya and at home. Further complicating matters is that Turkey is a member of NATO but not of the European Union; Cyprus is a member of the European Union but not NATO; and Greece is a member of both, creating overlapping and conflicting loyalties. Then there's the fact that Cyprus is divided into a Greek south and a Turkish north, although nobody except Turkey recognizes the Turkish part as a separate state.

An attempt by Germany to untie this Gordian knot foundered when Greece announced an energy deal with Egypt that effectively claimed rights to a broad area of the sea, which it did in response to a similar accord between Turkey and Libya. Turkey soon started exploring again, its operations monitored by a Greek naval frigate.

On Aug. 12, the Greek warship managed to collide with a Turkish warship, and things quickly heated up. France, already furious at Turkey over its support of the faction in Libya that France doesn't support, briefly sent in a couple of fighter jets and warships, and it's currently holding military exercises with Greece, Cyprus and Italy to deter further exploration by Turkey. Greece announced a demonstrative extension of its territorial waters off its western coast to 12 miles, in effect warning Turkey that it could do the same in the Aegean Sea on its eastern side, a move Turkey would not tolerate.

What is peculiar in this crisis is that competition for fossil fuels should have given way by now to competition over how to stop using them, especially among countries that have subscribed to the Paris climate agreement. Besides, with the slowdown in the global economy from the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting drop in energy prices, Europe has plenty of gas.

see GAME, page 20



2.2 Million More Syrians at Risk of Hunger: WFP

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Rudaw) – Another 2.2 million Syrians are at risk of poverty and hunger as food prices soar after nearly a decade of conflict, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Monday, August 31.

“A record 9.3 million people in Syria are food insecure, & without urgent help 2.2 million more could slip further into hunger & poverty,” the United Nations agency tweeted.

Food prices skyrocketed this summer when the Syrian pound dropped to its lowest ever recorded rate in June as new United States sanctions came into force. The cost of food is now more than double the high prices reached during intense conflict in 2016 and still rising, according to the United Nations humanitarian affairs office.

While need is great, it is now more difficult to deliver humanitarian aid. In July, the UN Security Council narrowly passed a resolution allowing scaled down aid. Weeks of wrangling ended when Russia and China abstained from a vote, allowing a border crossing between Turkey and Syria’s rebel-held Idlib province to remain open to aid for another year. Authorization from the Security Council allows UN agencies to deliver humanitarian aid without approval from Damascus. Border crossings with Jordan and Iraq have been closed to aid.

The UN estimates 400,000 people have died in Syria’s conflict since 2011, more than 5.6 million people have fled the country, and over 6 million are internally displaced.



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New Game of Thrones in the Mediterranean

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It also seems bizarre for Mediterranean and European countries to be plunged into extraneous tensions when there are so many serious crises to keep them busy, including the economy, the pandemic, the political suspense in the United States, the street clashes in Belarus and Russia’s threat to intervene in Belarus.

In an earlier era, the United States would have stepped in to separate feuding NATO partners, as it did when Greece and Turkey almost went to war in 1996. President Trump did make a call to Mr. Erdogan urging him to negotiate, but that had no effect – the United States under the Trump administration is not regarded as a viable go-between, especially with Mr. Trump in campaign mode. Britain, too, has retreated from European affairs now that it is out of the European Union. The union also lacks leverage over Turkey, since it has become evident that Turkey under Mr. Erdogan, despite its status as a candidate for membership, has no chance of joining the union.

So Germany, which currently holds the rotating chairmanship of the European Council, the policy-setting assembly of E.U. heads of government, has taken the lead in trying to get Turkey and Greece to the negotiating table, with Heiko Maas, the German foreign minister, shuttling between Ankara and Athens. The mediation is not entirely altruistic – a cornered Turkey could unleash another flood of Syrian refugees into Europe, most of them seeking to reach Germany. But with nearly three million Turks living in Germany, Mr. Erdogan has at least some assurance that his side of the argument will be heard.

That is important. Though international law is largely on the side of Greece in the maritime dispute, there is room for negotiation, and Turkey’s explorations in disputed waters have not yet crossed a legal red line. On Friday, E.U. foreign ministers met in Berlin and effectively endorsed Germany’s role, putting off any discussion of sanctions against Turkey until E.U. heads of state meet in late September.

War is in nobody’s interest, and a conflict between NATO members ought to be unthinkable. But when tensions reach the level they have in the eastern Mediterranean, as Mr. Maas has said, “Even the smallest spark can lead to a catastrophe.” Germany has called on all sides to immediately halt provocative military exercises, a step that should be followed by a moratorium on exploration in disputed waters. Then let diplomacy take over.

(This New York Times editorial appeared in the August 31 edition of the newspaper.)