

Assassination Attempt on Pashinyan Thwarted

YEREVAN (TASS) – Armenian National Security Service prevented an attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the agency said in a statement on Saturday, November 14.

“The National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia has revealed cases of illegal acquisition and storage of weapons, ammunition and explosives by a group of persons with the aim of seizing power in the Republic of Armenia,” the statement says. It is clarified that the attackers, who did not agree with the domestic and foreign policy of the state, intended to seize power



by killing the head of government.

The statement clarifies the information that the weapons were transported to Armenia from Karabakh, where military operations have been going on since September 27. Due to this, on the basis of direct suspicions of committing a crime, the former head of the National Security Service of the country, head of the Rodina party Artur Vanetsyan, former MP Vahram Baghdasaryan and two other people were detained.

Earlier on Saturday, Vanetsyan's lawyer Lusine Sahakyan wrote on her Facebook page that he had been detained. “Today Artur Vanetsyan was invited to the Investigative Department of the National Security Service and detained. The authorities charged him based on false suspicions of usurping power and preparing the murder of Nikol Pashinyan,” she wrote.

On November 12, the

Special Investigation Service of Armenia decided to put ten opposition politicians under preliminary arrest, including Vanetsyan, the leader of the Prosperous Armenia party Gagik Tsarukyan and the representative of the Dashnaksutyun party Ishkhan Saghatelian on charges of organizing an illegal meeting. On November 13 they were all released from custody.

(See related stories inside.)

Putin: Status of Karabakh Is Not Resolved

MOSCOW (Combined Sources) – The status of Nagorno Karabakh will be determined in the future, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday, November 17, in an interview with Russia TV.

Putin said he believes that the “end of war” agreement on Karabakh between Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan provides an opportunity to resolve the situation in the future. “The most important thing that has

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Pashinyan Under Fire Over ‘Inflammatory’ Appeal

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has provoked a storm of criticism and defections from his political alliance with what critics see as a call for a violent response to opposition groups demanding his resignation.

In a Facebook post early in the hours of Monday, November 16, Pashinyan praised Armenian soldiers remaining on the Nagorno-Karabakh frontlines and voicing vocal support for

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US Secretary of State Pompeo Discusses Karabakh with French FM Le Drian

ISTANBUL – At a November 16 US State Department press briefing in Istanbul, a State Department official reported on what was discussed concerning Nagorno Karabakh between French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo earlier that day in Paris. At the same press conference, it was announced that a “scheduling issue” prevented Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from meeting with Pompeo during the latter's visit to Istanbul, where he did meet with

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US Secretary of State Pompeo and his delegation meet with French Foreign Minister Le Drian and his officials at the Elysee Palace in Paris (photo from Secretary Pompeo's Twitter)

Let Us Prudently Evaluate the Blow to Artsakh and Armenia

The peace agreement signed on November 10 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia places Artsakh and Armenia in a critical situation which must be faced with vigilance and wisdom.

The Supreme Council of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party:

a) Welcomes a temporary ceasefire to avoid further casualties. The Armenian people express their gratitude to Russia for its military assistance during this war and for its role



in ending the war.

b) Requests an end to the panic and confusion, because this obstructs the possibility of adopting a prudent policy.

(c) Deplores the absence of OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs United States and France in the process of formulating the terms of this ceasefire agreement. We consider the involvement of these countries indispensable.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Foreign Minister Mnatsakanyan Resigns

YEREVAN – Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan submitted his resignation on November 16, according to Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan.

Mnatsakanyan was foreign minister from May 2018. A career diplomat, he worked himself up the ranks and previously held many important positions in the Armenian Foreign Ministry, including ambassador to the United Nations and deputy foreign minister.

The turmoil in the Armenian government and society continues due to the disastrous Karabakh war.



Echmiadzin Decries Desecration of Ghazanchetsots Cathedral

ECHMIADZIN – The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin (Armenian Church) issued a statement on November 14, strongly condemning the vandalism of Holy Savior Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots in Shushi, Artsakh, by Azerbaijanis.

“We learned with sorrow that following the joint declaration on ceasefire signed between the Armenian, Russian and Azerbaijani leaders overnight November 10, the Azerbaijanis who entered Artsakh's Shushi city vandalized Holy Savior Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots, leaving their traces on the external and internal walls of the Cathedral.

“We strongly condemn the incident, assessing it as an overt act of vandalism and intolerance. Azerbaijan should not be allowed to continue its policy of cultural genocide with Turkish support,



which for decades has been carried out in Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan.

“At the same time we call on the international community and the inter-religious and inter-church organizations to voice about that and take appropriate steps to stop such barbaric acts by Azerbaijani authorities in Artsakh against religious-cultural monuments and demonstrations of anti-Armenian moods,” reads the statement.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

President Proposes Snap Elections and Government Of National Accord

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — President Armen Sargsyan stated on November 16 that the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces, representatives of the Diaspora, who came to him for consultations, want the resignation or termination of the Prime Minister in accordance with the Constitution, and early parliamentary elections.

According to him, it is obvious that early elections to the National Assembly will be inevitable in order to keep the country from experiencing detrimental effects.

“In this context, I think the only responsible approach may be the government and the ruling political force potential objective assessment and roadmap to represent them within the appropriate initiation timing constitutional processes will be designed, which will allow to carry out snap elections to the National Assembly, and before “That government will be handed over to a highly qualified National Accord government,” he said, adding that the decision was in the national interest.

Russian Forces in Karabakh

YEREVAN (News.am) — Russian military transport planes have conducted 22 flights in one day from Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport to Armenia, transferring 64 vehicles and special equipment—including armored personnel carriers, off-road trucks, cistern vehicles, excavators, and other logistics equipment, reported the Russian Defense Ministry's press service.

After the unloading, respective convoys will be formed to cross into Nagorno-Karabakh [(Artsakh)], and military helicopters will protect—from the air—the route of this convoy, the Ministry added.

Fans bid Final Farewell to Actor Armen Dzhigarkhanyan

YEREVAN The funeral service of prominent Armenian-Russian actor Armen Dzhigarkhanyan took place on Tuesday, November 17, at the State Drama Theatre of Moscow. The farewell ceremony was open to public. The actor will be buried in Moscow Vagankovo Cemetery. Dzhigarkhanyan died aged 85 on November 14.

To note, USSR People's Artist, theater and film actor, director and theater teacher Armen Dzhigarkhanyan was born in Yerevan on October 3, 1935. The prominent actor starred in more than 200 films.

On March 12, 1996, the Moscow Drama Theater directed by Armen Dzhigarkhanyan was set up at the actor department of the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK) where he taught.

Green Future Leader, Others Arrested Outside Ministry

YEREVAN (News.am) — Vahagn Varagyan, the leader of the Green Future environmental movement, and several others were apprehended on November 17 by the police, outside the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia.

Varagyan had written on Facebook Monday that they were going to the Ministry the next day, and Minister Arayik Harutyunyan must answer the question as to whether he is in favor of the “treacherous” statement signed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan — and with respect to ending the hostilities in and around Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

Varagyan announced at the time of his apprehension that they were not carrying out a rally, he had not organized anything like that, and he had just come to ask a question to the minister. But police said that he was being apprehended for carrying out a rally.

Police said through a loudspeaker that rallies are prohibited during the current martial law in Armenia.



Refugees returning from Yerevan to Stepanakert

Hundreds More Refugees Return to Artsakh

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Hundreds more ethnic Armenian refugees have returned to Nagorno-Karabakh nearly one week after a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, on Sunday, November 15, alone, 475 of them arrived in Stepanakert from Yerevan in a convoy of 19 buses escorted by Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in the Karabakh conflict zone in line with the agreement.

Like other refugees, they were bused through one of the two main highways connecting Armenia to Karabakh. It passes through the Kelbajar district that has been Karabakh Armenian control since 1993.

Under the truce accord announced on November 10, Kelbajar was due to be placed back under Azerbaijani control by Monday. Baku said at the week-end that it has agreed to delay Armenian withdrawal from the moun-

tainous district until November 25.

An RFE/RL correspondent witnessed on Monday numerous cars, buses and trucks moving along the Kelbajar road. They transported refugees and their possessions back to Karabakh.

There were also signs of a return to normality in Stepanakert and other Karabakh towns and villages severely damaged by Azerbaijani air strikes and shelling. The streets of Stepanakert were visibly filled with more people than during the six-week war.

After Kelbajar's handover to Azerbaijan the other highway passing through the Lachin district will become Karabakh's sole overland link with Armenia. Its sections close to the Karabakh town of Shushi (Shusha) were the scene of fierce fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in the final days of the war.

The Russian peacekeepers are being deployed along the Lachin corridor and the current Armenian-Azerbaijani

“line of contact” in and around Karabakh. The Russian Defense Ministry said on Monday that they have started clearing the road from landmines and wreckage of military hardware destroyed during the fighting.

“The road is being prepared for the return of the refugees,” said Colonel Alexei Polyukhov, the deputy commander of the Russian peacekeeping contingent.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan predicted, meanwhile, that the Lachin road will likely be reopened to traffic “in the coming days.” Pashinyan also said that more than a thousand Karabakh refugees have returned home in the last several days.

According to authorities in Stepanakert, the war displaced at least 90,000 Karabakh Armenian civilians making up around 60 percent of the territory's population. Most of them took refuge in Armenia.

Putin: Status of Karabakh Is Not Resolved

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been accomplished is the cessation of bloodshed,” he said.

Putin noted that on October 19-20, an agreement was reached to end the fighting in Karabakh, but it was not successful.

He said that in October he persuaded Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev to stop hostilities on the condition of the return of Azerbaijani refugees to Shushi, but to Putin's surprise, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan didn't agree and decided to continue the war.

According to Putin, the situation on the ground in Karabakh was at a critical point before the cessation of hostilities, the situation was changing each hour, and it was impossible to negotiate within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group because of a lack of time.

The Russian president says that Armenia's refusal of the current agreement on Karabakh would have been suicide for the country.

Speaking about lack of Russia's and

the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) intervention in the war, Putin explained that Armenia's territory was not attacked.

“Under international law, Karabakh has always been an integral part of Azerbaijan. The CSTO could not intervene; no one attacked Armenia,” he said.

“As for Turkey and its role, this is well known, it has been talked about many times in Azerbaijan. The Turkish side has never hidden it. They have unilaterally supported Azerbaijan,” Putin said.

Touching on the internal political situation in Armenia, the Russian President expressed that it is necessary to unite the country, not to divide it. At the same time, he insisted that the accusations against the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan were baseless.

“There are no grounds for accusations of treason against [Pashinyan],” Putin said.

He also spoke about being able to convince Turkey not to send peacekeeping forces.

“Azerbaijan and Turkey always talked

about the possibility of Turkey's participation in peacekeeping efforts. Anyway, I think that we have been able to persuade our Turkish partners and our colleagues in Azerbaijan that conditions that can thwart our agreements should not be created, conditions that can push one of the parties of the agreement to some extreme methods and extreme actions,” Putin said, clarifying that he means the very heavy legacy of the past years and the tragic and bloody incidents and the genocide that took place during the years of the World War I.

“It's a factor that can be recognized or not recognized. Someone recognizes it, someone does not recognize it. But there are no issues for Russia here. We recognized it long ago. So why to provoke Armenia with the presence of Turkish soldiers on the contact line? I think President Erdogan also admitted this and understood. We encountered no problems here,” the Russian President said.

(Civilnet and Armenpress contributed to this report.)



ARMENIA

Anger, Frustration Spill Out onto Yerevan's Streets in Demonstrations, Riots

By Mateos Hayes

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — It was around 1:00 a.m. on November 11 that the people of Armenia were made aware of a shocking development: Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan agreed to a Moscow-brokered truce effectively surrendering the bulk of the provinces that once made up the Republic of Artsakh.

Though the war's prognosis had grown increasingly bleak on the Armenian side, this development nevertheless came as a great shock to many Armenians. In the days leading up to Armenia's surrender, the atmosphere of confidence in Yerevan was hard to miss. Large billboards and digital signs proudly bore patriotic slogans ("We will win!", "I continue work-

front entryways were significantly damaged by rioting. In the wake of an upswell in outrage and fury, Armenia's opposition parties have taken this opportunity to launch an all-out offensive against Pashinyan's government.

Parliament

Since morning scores of demonstrators have congregated on the grounds of the parliament. Despite a heavy police presence and the generally agitated nature of the crowds, the demonstrators have been largely non-violent, limiting themselves to animated arguments with fellow demonstrators, and the occasional shoving.

Opposition parties such as Prosperous Armenia took this opportunity to address the crowds from the steps of the parliament building. Armenia's political spectrum encompasses around 17 opposition parties all of which called in a joint statement for rallies to be held in Yerevan's center to protest the truce. The oppo-

er, denouncing each other as instigators, arguing for or against Pashinyan's decision, and for or against alliance with Russia. In one such incident, a middle-aged man declared loudly his belief in the benefits of siding with Russia, only for an elderly man to retort, "You fool! Russia has sold us out! Why do you speak such nonsense!?", before storming off.

In the wake of its vandalization, the House of Government has now been surrounded by an army of police in riot gear, who have cordoned off the building whilst workmen began to repair the smashed glass at its front entrance. Scores of demonstrators jeered at the officers as they passed by, with some stopping to deliver long speeches denouncing Pashinyan's government and the truce.

WEDNESDAY Opera

Demonstrations continued into November the 11th, as picketers gathered in major centers in downtown Yerevan, including at the Opera and Republic Square. It appeared a significant increase over the attendance reported yesterday, with several hundred demonstrators grouped in these areas.

Parliament's gates have been closed, and no one has attempted to enter its grounds.

The areas where protestors have congregated have been the focus of a heavy police response, with police vehicles and officers surrounding the opera and Republic Square, causing significant traffic jams along Yerevan's avenues.

At the opera, large numbers of protestors gathered along the steps of the opera building as police attempted to gradually push them



A clergyman from Etchmiadzin delivers a fiery speech against Pashinyan's government and the ceasefire agreement



Police in riot gear stand guard at the House of Government at Republic Square as workmen begin to repair doorways damaged during rioting

ing so we may win"), and scores of people on the home front, ranging from Artsakh refugees to Yerevan locals, expressed confidence that the Armenians could still snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

In the immediate aftermath of this morale-shattering announcement, scores of protestors stormed government buildings in the early hours of Tuesday morning, with some even managing to steal private property from Pashinyan's own residence.

Armenia's House of Government, located on Republic Square, was heavily vandalized and its

sition parties have presented an outwardly united front, calling for Armenia's agreement to the truce to be rescinded, and for the Pashinyan government's resignation.

Republic Square

The iconic center of downtown Yerevan has been abuzz with demonstrations for the past two days. Various groups of people have congregated in front of the Armenian History Museum, setting up makeshift dioramas commemorating those lost in the war, and carrying signs and flags.

Demonstrators were clearly disunited howev-



A bra hangs from a tree along with a sign with an emasculating message on it directed towards Nikol Pashinyan

away from the building. The situation, while chaotic, was mostly contained as officers were able to outnumber and overpower the demonstrators, who attempted to push back. Onlookers jeered at the police, calling them 'Turks' whilst others tried to compel the police to 'change sides' with bottles of water and chants.

Chants of "Nikol, traitor!" rung out at regular intervals as the crowd remained steadfastly defiant. Additionally, demonstrators were generally unwilling to give interviews to members of the press.

When asked why he had chosen to come, Mudik Baseryan a middle aged man, and one of the few demonstrators willing to speak openly, explained that he had come to understand what the reality of the situation is: "there is so much misinformation, and I just want to know what the truth is." As with most of the attendees at the demonstration, Mudik was steadfastly

opposed to the ceasefire agreement, particularly to its stipulation that Armenia must cede five of the seven provinces that encompass the Republic of Artsakh: "We must renegotiate this and the people of Armenia must be consulted this time. We cannot have this decision made by just one person in our name. We are all Varchapet so we must all be involved in this decision [meaning prime minister, referring to Nikol Pashinyan]."

This sentiment has been reflected in the rhetoric of oppositionists in recent days. Most notably, a priest from the Echmiadzin diocese chose the front of the House of Government as his spot from which to deliver a fiery speech which had a similar message. Wearing an armored vest over his cassock and flanked by two flag bearers, the clergyman shouted angrily into his microphone, declaring that the loss of Shushi was "shameful" and branding Pashinyan "our traitorous Prime Minister."

The priest characterized the truce as "surrendering the lands of Artsakh to Satan." He also engaged in a homophobic rant, reminding the animated crowd: "Sodom and Gomora existed thousands of years ago, before god effaced them from the earth for their sins!", adding "I cannot believe that we now have sodomites and homosexuals amongst the Armenian people! This is unconscionable!"

Yerevan Remains Calm

Despite the widespread demonstrations in downtown Yerevan, the general normalcy of everyday life remains one of the most striking aspects of this difficult period in Armenian history.

Outside of the areas where police and protestors clash, the rhythm of city life continues. Many residents have continued to go to work and go about their daily lives, and across the street from troubled spots such as the Opera, locals sip coffee while lounging in outdoor cafes.

In much of the city, the only signs of this difficult period are the occasional blare of ambulance sirens, the distant roar of fighter jets, and the increased number of uniformed officers patrolling the streets.

For now, Yerevan — much like the rest of the country — remains in a precarious state of limbo as the incumbent administration attempts to weather the storm of public outrage.

(This article is accompanied by three videos on www.mirrorspectator.com.)

Pashinyan Under Fire Over 'Inflammatory' Appeal

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his administration amid opposition protests in Yerevan sparked by the outcome of the war with Azerbaijan.

"Guys, you are right. I am waiting for you in Yerevan," he wrote, calling on them to help him "sort out" his "whimpering" detractors.

Opposition and public figures were quick to condemn the statement. Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, added his voice to the condemnations on Monday.

Tatoyan noted that in recent days pro-Pashinyan combatants, most of them mobilized army reservists and volunteers, have circulated video messages containing death threats and hate speech against the prime minister's political opponents. Pashinyan effectively endorsed those threats with his Facebook statement, he said.

The statement also prompted three pro-government members of the Armenian parliament to announce overnight that they will leave Pashinyan's My Step alliance.

"Our political team is making one mistake after another," one of the lawmakers, Taguhi Tovmasyan, wrote on Facebook. "Instead of admitting and correcting our mistakes, mitigating the situation through dialogue and thereby trying to ease tensions in our country, we are taking steps undermining foundations of the state."

Pashinyan's controversial appeal also led to the resignation of Varag Siseryan, the top aide to Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinian. Siseryan said he has also decided to terminate his membership in the ruling Civil Contract party, the dominant component of My Step.

Pashinyan responded by accusing critics of misinterpreting his statement. Speaking at a news conference held on Monday morning, he insisted that he did not advocate any violent acts and simply wanted to show his appreciation to the soldiers staunchly supporting his administration.

Pashinyan said he plans to meet those servicemen in Yerevan in an effort to end opposition allegations that his decision to accept a Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan amounted to high treason. "I must also say that nobody returning from the frontlines with weapons," he added in that regard.

The premier went on to accuse the Armenian opposition and Tatoyan of not condemning violent mobs that ransacked government buildings in Yerevan and severely beat up parliament speaker Ararat Mirzoyan immediately after the announcement of the ceasefire agreement early on November 10.



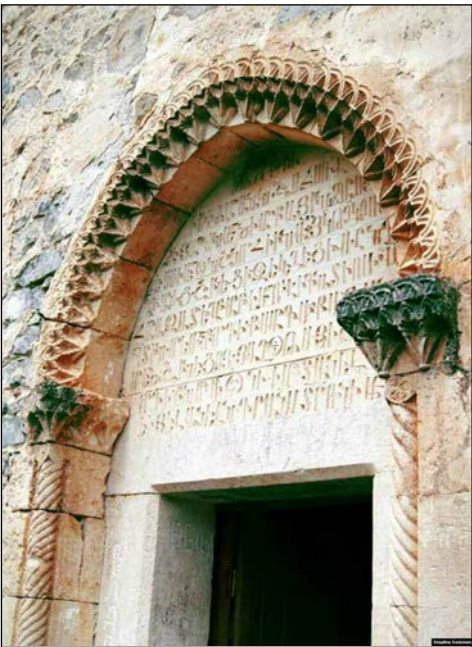
ARMENIA

Left Behind?

Churches, Monasteries Due For Handover To Azerbaijan

By Amos Chapple

Several historic churches and Christian monuments are in territory either captured or due to return to Azerbaijani control in a controversial new cease-fire agreement that ended the recent conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Chapple is a New Zealand-born photographer and researcher with an interest in the former Soviet Union. This photo spread was originally published on the RFE/RL website.



Armenian script towers over the door at an entrance to the Yeritsmankants monastery. The partially ruined monastery was built in 1691



Ghazanchetsots, which is considered to be the cathedral of Shushi/Susa. The photo was taken in 2008 during a mass wedding ceremony.



The interior of Ghazanchetsots after it was damaged by Azerbaijani artillery in October. The cathedral was completed in 1887.



A detail of a carved stone cross (visible just right of center in the previous photo) near the entrance to Gtichavank. The monastery was completed in 1248



Visitors pray inside the Kataro monastery, which was completed in the 17th century



Dadivank, a monastery in the Shahumian region near Nagorno-Karabakh



sarcophagus inside the Amaras monastery that is said to hold the remains of St. Grigoris, the grandson of the man who converted Armenia's king to Christianity in A.D. 301. The Amaras monastery is believed to have been founded in the 4th century.



The Yeritsmankants monastery in the forested Martakert region



Gtichavank, a monastery in the Hadrut region



Details of a stone carving and Armenian script inside Dadivank. The monastery was completed in the 13th century.



The Amaras monastery, a heavily fortified complex near Sos village in the Khojavend district



Katarovank, a monastery on a mountaintop in the Hadrut region



Kanach Zham, a church in Shushi/Susa, the strategically vital town recently captured by Azerbaijani forces.



The Tsitsernavank monastery, on an isolated mountainside of Kashatagh Province

Armenian Opposition Leader Freed Despite Coup Charges

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Artur Vanetsyan, a former National Security Service (NSS) director leading an opposition party, was released from custody late on Sunday despite being charged with plotting to assassinate Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and overthrow Armenia's government.

The NSS arrested Vanetsyan and three other opposition members on Saturday. It formally brought the same coup and murder charges against three of the suspects on Sunday just hours after Yerevan courts opened hearings on appeals against their preliminary detention filed by their lawyers. The latter rejected the accusation as politically motivated.

One of the court judges agreed to declare Vanetsyan's detention unjustified and order his release. Another judge is expected to rule on Monday on the former NSS chief's pre-trial arrest sought by investigators.

Vanetsyan's Hayrenik (Fatherland) party is one of 17 Armenian opposition groups that launched on November 10 street protests against the terms of a Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh. They accuse Pashinyan of capitulating to Azerbaijan and demand his resignation. The prime minister has dismissed the accusations.

The Armenian authorities say that the opposition protests are illegal, citing martial law declared by them following the



Former National Security Service Director Artur Vanetsyan addresses opposition protesters in Yerevan, November 11, 2020.

outbreak of the war on September 27. The opposition forces have pledged to continue their demonstrations in Yerevan, however.

One of the arrested and indicted suspects, Ashot Minasian,

is the commander of a volunteer militia from the southeastern town of Sisian that took part in the six-week war. The NSS claimed on Saturday to have found large quantities of weapons in a property belonging to him.

On Sunday the security service publicized what it described as audio of Minasian's wiretapped phone conversations with two other suspects, Vahram Baghdasarian and Ashot Avagian, during which they blamed Pashinyan for the unsuccessful war and seemingly discussed ways of assassinating him and seizing power.

Baghdasarian is a senior member of former President Serzh Sarkisian's Republican Party while Avagian is affiliated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun).

One of Vanetsyan's lawyers, Lusine Sahakyan, insisted that the recordings do not prove her client's involvement in the alleged conspiracy. Speaking before his release, Sahakyan said the NSS has failed to substantiate its accusations against Vanetsyan with any other evidence.

Vanetsyan, 40, was appointed as head of the NSS immediately after the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power. He resigned in September 2019 after falling out with Pashinyan. He has since repeatedly accused Pashinyan of incompetence and misrule, prompting angry responses from the premier and his political allies.

Political Tension and Threats of Violence Increase in Armenia, Officials Resign from Posts

YEREVAN — While protesting continued in the streets of Yerevan over the last few days concerning the terms of the Karabakh ceasefire, four leaders of an alleged plot to assassinate Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan were arrested on November 14. However, the next day at least one of them, Artur Vanetsyan, was released. Later the same day, a Facebook statement by Pashinyan led to the resignation of several members parliament from his party and the chief of staff of Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan.

Prior to this arrest, on November 12 the Special Investigation Service put Vanetsyan and 9 other opposition politicals under preliminary arrest, including Gagik Tsarukyan of the Prosperous Armenia party and Armenian Revolutionary Federation leader Ishkhan Saghatelian for organizing an illegal meeting, but on November 13 they were all released.

Vanetsyan, former director of Armenia's National Security Service, is leader of the Fatherland opposition party. The other suspects in the plot included Vahram Baghdasaryan, former head of the Republican Party parliamentary faction, Ashot Avagyan of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and Col. Ashot Minasyan, commander of a volunteer military group during the recent war.

Pashinyan wrote on November 15 on Facebook that he viewed dozens of frontline soldiers' videos that day. He exclaimed, "Boys, you are correct. I am awaiting you in Yerevan. Finally to solve the issues of those whining under the walls."

This statement was interpreted as a call to use force to solve the domestic political unrest. In turn, members of his parliamentary My Step faction declared on social media that they were going to resign, including Gayane Abrahamyan and MP Taguhi Tovmasyan. MP Lusine Badalyan declared she would lay down her mandate if My Step did not take immediate action concerning this situation. Furthermore, Varak Sisserian, chief of staff of Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan, declared on Facebook that after Pashinyan's statement, he is resigning from his position and Pashinyan's Civil Contract Party. On November 13, Sisserian noted on Facebook that he and his family received a threat from "Yergate Prountsk" and asked that the National Security Service look into this.

To understand the background better, on November 10, President of the National Assembly Ararat Mirzoyan was beaten badly by a mob searching for Prime Minister Pashinyan and had to undergo surgery. He was said to be doing better, though requiring a second surgery, by November 13.

Pashinyan on November 16, again on Facebook, gave an interview in which he gave his own interpretation of his words of the prior day. He said that he was positively responding to the requests of various soldiers who requested to meet with him after they return from the front. This would, he said he meant, end the accusations of treachery that had been directed at governmental and military leaders. He added that no soldiers were allowed back into Yerevan with their military arms.

On November 16, Deputy Minister of the Environment Irina Ghaplanyan submitted her resignation.

U.K. House of Lords member Baroness Caroline Cox visits Artsakh

YEREVAN (ARKA) — Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) human rights defender Artak Beglaryan met on November 14 with a delegation led by a member of the United Kingdom House of Lords Baroness Caroline Cox, who have arrived in Artsakh together with Armenian human rights defender Arman Tatoyan.

Beglaryan presented the results of the fact-finding mission and the war crimes committed by Azerbaijan from September 27 to November 9. He said during the war, he published two interim reports on the atrocities of the Azerbaijani armed forces, three closed reports on the inhuman treatment of Armenian prisoners of war and corpses of military personnel by Azerbaijanis, one report on the attack on the Holy Savior Cathedral (Ghazanchetsots) in Shushi and another report on the violation of children's rights, as well as a joint report with the human rights defender of Armenia on the use of chemical weapons by Azerbaijani armed forces.

He said the recorded facts are more than enough for international human rights organizations and the international community to take appropriate steps to condemn the criminal behavior of Azerbaijan.

In turn, Baroness Caroline Cox emphasized that for many years she has talked about the rights of the people of Artsakh at international platforms, and during the war called on them to take practical steps to protect the rights of the people of Artsakh.



Baroness Caroline Cox, second from left, with Armenian and Artsakh human rights defenders and other visitors

After the meeting, the delegation visited a number of civil buildings in Artsakh capital Stepanakert destroyed as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression.

Let Us Prudently Evaluate the Blow to Artsakh and Armenia

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d) Notes the signed agreement cannot be rendered binding until it is ratified by the National Assembly of Armenia. Therefore, we call on the prime minister to immediately assume his constitutional responsibility and lead the process required by the constitutional order.

e) States that if the prime minister is unable to fulfill his responsibilities under the current circumstances, whether in order to avoid civil unrest or in case of his resignation, we call on the National Assembly to propose to the president of the Republic of Armenia the formation of an "Interim Coalition Government" of experienced, respected and trusted leaders to bring the country out of this dangerous situation.

f) Declares that the November 10 peace agreement contains historically unacceptable elements that must be rejected immediately, such as the legal control of any foreign power over the south of Armenia (Meghri).

g) States that the absence of a decision on the legal status of Artsakh in the agreement opens the path to a new genocide.

h) Calls upon the Armenian diaspora to stand by Armenia unconditionally, demonstrating unity and support, so that we can overcome these difficulties and be ready to face the challenges of the future with united forces.

We bow to the sacred memory of all our courageous martyrs and express our support and sympathy to their family members.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Spanish Parliament Passes Motion to Send Aid to Artsakh, Suspend Azerbaijan Arms Sales

MADRID (Panorama.am) — The Spanish Parliament on Monday, November 17, adopted a motion submitted by MP Jon Inarritu to send humanitarian assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and to suspend arms sales to Azerbaijan. ehBildu reported.

The motion also urges international organizations to be actively involved in the search for a “peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict which has already caused a humanitarian crisis.”

The Spanish lawmaker stressed the urgency of providing humanitarian assistance to refugee families and the need to maintain a proactive position within international organizations, so that “the conflict in the Artsakh Republic is put on the international humanitarian agenda.”

“Despite the ceasefire agreed last week, the conflict continues and a lasting solution is needed more than ever,” he stated.

Recently, Inarritu was part of a delegation of observers comprising parliamentarians and journalists from different states of the European Union. He saw first-hand the situation in Armenia and Artsakh and has witnessed the damage caused by the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression.

Russia Expects UN Involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh Efforts

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) — Russia expects the UN structures to join the work on resolving humanitarian problems in Nagorno Karabakh, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on November 17, according to Ria Novosti report.

He clarified that he means the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The minister added that it is also necessary to solve the problems of preserving the region’s cultural heritage, and the UNESCO should deal with this.

Lavrov noted that the above mentioned and other organizations could benefit from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) experience, which has been working in the Nagorno Karabakh region for a long time.

Dutch Parliament Adopts Motions against Aliyev, Erdogan for War Crimes

AMSTERDAM (Panorama.am) — The Dutch Parliament on Monday, November 16, adopted five motions on Turkish-Azerbaijani atrocities against Nagorno Karabakh, the Federation of Armenian Organizations of the Netherlands (FAON) reported.

The motions envisage individual sanctions against Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and others for war crimes and atrocities against Artsakh. One of the motions also calls for EU arms embargo on Turkey for its complicity in the aggression.

Turkish Deputies Visit Sisli Sports Club

ISTANBUL (Jamanak) — A group of deputies from the investigative committee on Human Rights of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey recently visited the Sisli Sports Club.

These members have been in contact with the Turkish-Armenian community recently in light of the war in Artsakh. They have visited various community institutions including the Patriarchate and Surp Prgich National Hospital.

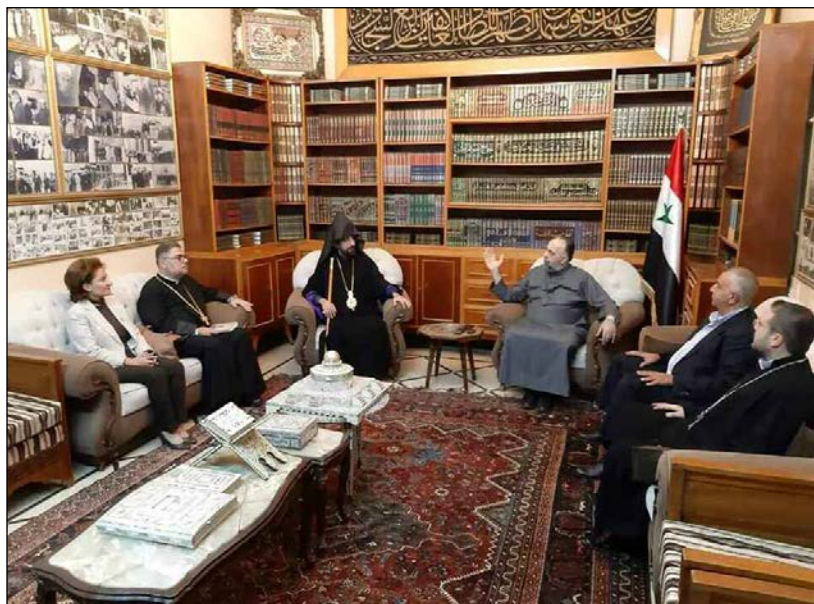
At the Sisli Sports Club, they were welcomed by the chairman of the board, Alen Tekbicaki. Discussions revolved around the effects of the war on the Turkish-Armenian community. In the course of the cordial conversation, the difficulties faced by the Sisli Sports Club also came onto the agenda.

Primate of Aleppo Armenian Diocese Leads Delegation To Visit Syrian Minister of Religious Properties

TARTOUS, Syria (*Kantsasar*) — On Friday, November 13, the Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Aleppo, Bishop Masis Zobuyan, with his delegation visited Syrian Minister of Religious Properties Dr. Mohammed Abdul-Sattar al-Sayyed at the latter’s residence in Tartous. Forming part of the delegation were member of the Armenian National Administration, Metr Houri Abahouni-Boshgezenian, member of the Religious Council, Fr. Khoren Bertizlian, pastor of Latakia and the Coastal Region, Fr. Vazken Keoshgerian and Garo Pamboukian.

The minister warmly greeted the Primate and his delegation and stressed the unique place and role of the Syrian Armenian community in Syria’s prosperity and development. In the course of a cordial conversation, the minister underlined that the Armenians, in the course of their entire history, have made a splendid contribution to the Syrian mosaic in all areas of life. He highlighted the deep-rooted bonds of friendship between the noble people of Syria and the Armenians, which have historically have had a special importance. He declared that Syrian-Armenians in a practical way demonstrated their loyalty and attachment to the Syrian homeland and have become an eloquent example for others in regard to the values of all of humanity.

The Primate highlighted the battles



The delegation visiting with the Minister of Religious Properties

and difficulties that the Diocese of Aleppo has faced, at the same time indicating that with a spirit of cooperation and consistent efforts, it will be possible to overcome all obstacles. He stressed that cordial Muslim-Christian relations were indispensable in order to rebuild the Syrian homeland with united efforts.

The Minister and the Primate turned their attention to the latest developments in Artsakh. The minister men-

tioned with sorrow the current state of Artsakh and the treaty that was signed, indicating his solidarity with the Armenian people of Armenia and Artsakh.

At the close of the meeting, the Primate conveyed to the Minister the greetings of Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I, and gifted to the minister Catholicos Aram’s book *The Armenian Church in Arabic translation*.

Documentation Project on Atrocities in Nagorno-Karabakh

STEPANAKERT/NEW YORK — The Program on Peacebuilding and Rights (PBHR) at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) launched on November 12, a research project on “Human Rights and Foreign Terrorist Activities in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).” In partnership with the Human Rights Ombudsman for Artsakh, the project will draw on primary sources documenting crimes against humanity and other atrocities committed by Azerbaijani armed forces and Turkish-backed Islamist fighters against Armenians. Project arrangements were facilitated by the Armenian Assembly of America.

Azerbaijani armed forces attacked Nagorno-Karabakh on September 27, 2020. They were backed by Turkish military and mercenaries with armed drones, heavy artillery, rocket systems and special forces. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights,

Turkey deployed up to 2,000 Islamist jihadis from Syria and Libya who are promised a bounty for killing Armenians.

Gruesome reports of torture and beheadings have emerged. French and other intelligence services along with the international media have confirmed that Turkish-backed foreign terrorists are paid a bounty for beheadings.

More than 1,400 Armenian fighters and civilians have died since the beginning of Azerbaijani/Turkish operations, with over 100,000 civilians displaced by Azerbaijan’s scorched earth policy. Armenian Orthodox churches have also been targeted, as have civilians.

There are numerous verified cases of Azerbaijani soldiers treating Armenian war prisoners inhumanely, mutilating dead bodies, beheading and executing both combatants and civilians. Azerbaijan also used banned weapons extensively.

Turkey’s President Erdogan affirmed, “Turkey stands with and will continue to stand with friendly and brotherly Azerbaijan with all our means and all our heart.” Turkey officially denies the Armenian Genocide.

“It is critical that we bear witness to crimes against humanity,” said David L. Phillips, who directs PBHR. “Documentation can be a deterrent to future crimes. It can also be used to hold perpetrators accountable.”

According to Artak Beglaryan, the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Artsakh, “Any individual or organization that claims to defend human rights must defend them without limitation, especially when the lives of a vulnerable and disadvantaged population are at stake.” He deplores atrocities that are “invisible” to the international community, turning a blind eye to crimes against humanity.

US Sec. of State Pompeo Discusses Karabakh with French FM Le Drian

POMPEO, from page 1

the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. Pompeo is on a seven-country tour, which some in the media speculate is an attempt to burnish his legacy.

In an interview to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, Pompeo declared that during his same Paris visit, “France’s president Emmanuel Macron and I spent a lot of time discussing the recent actions of Turkey and we agreed that they have been very aggressive,” referring to Turkish support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as military actions in Libya and the Eastern Mediterranean. “Europe and the United States must work together to convince Erdogan that such actions are not in the interest of his people,” he continued.

An excerpt from the official State Department transcript of the Istanbul press conference follows. The speaker was only identified as “Senior State Department Official One.”

“Foreign Minister Le Drian today in Paris. They talked broadly about counterterrorism and ongoing work there. The foreign minister noted recent successes that the French have had in the Sahel and that they could not have done without the support of the U.S., highlighted that this is a great example of where we have made such strides in the broad global counterterrorism effort. Obviously, the French with a particular emphasis on the Sahel and the real progress there.

They talked about Nagorno-Karabakh extensively. As two co-chairs, they shared the same view that we are – we remain

committed to our role as co-chairs in the Minsk Group process, that that’s where it is, recognizing the actions that Russia took which has led to a ceasefire that’s actually held now for about a week, but also acknowledging that there were still a lot of questions that needed clarity from the Russians as to the parameters of that agreement, and that included the role of the Turks.

They both noted that the Russians have invited the co-chairs to Moscow for more clarity, and as you probably have seen in the wires, there have been phone calls between and among the co-chairs. Foreign Minister Le Drian noted that he had spoken to Lavrov, who acknowledged that they were trying to take action to stop what was really an emergency humanitarian situation, but there do remain questions to be discussed about that.

So a lot of talk about Nagorno-Karabakh, the Caucasus, and then broadly also about Turkey and the various areas where we’re – we have some concerns and differences with the Turks – various theaters across the region from the Eastern Med., Libya, Syria, and other parts. Obviously, the Secretary was on his way here. And they spoke too about security in Baghdad, keeping in close touch on the issues that we’ve raised there, Foreign Minister Le Drian noting that the French have also done their part to urge the Iraqis to take the appropriate steps necessary to provide security in the Green Zone. I’ll leave it there.”

Non-Profit Kooyrigs Inspires Young Diasporans to Aid Artsakh

By Maggie Ovia
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – On Sunday, September 27, on an ordinary sunny day, Yerevan woke up to news of attacks on the border between Artsakh and Azerbaijan. If you weren't aware of the news, it might have seemed like any other Sunday. But if you were, you would notice the young men and women nervously checking their phones, either for news that they had been called to serve or to find out that their friends had. You would notice the makeshift donation collections that had appeared on every corner from Republic Square to the Cascade promenade. You'd notice the university students buzzing around, filling boxes with medicine, clothing, and diapers to be sent in the many trucks going to Artsakh daily. And you would notice that in the corner of your cell phone, mobile providers sent out the unifying message #HAGHTELU-ENQ, or "We will win," emblazoned on screens



Members of the Kooyrigs

throughout the country for the past forty-four days.

Kooyrigs, with the help of dozens of volunteers, packs food to be sent weekly to soldiers fighting on the southern border.

What has happened in Yerevan over the past six weeks can only be described as mobilization. Every person seems to be doing what they can, from the older women selling jingalov hats on the street to the repatriate community enlisting and going to Artsakh to fight. Everyone has been doing their part to ensure that Armenia does, in fact, win. Kooyrigs, or "Sisters," an Armenian feminist platform that began on Instagram but has grown into a prominent non-profit, is no exception. Within twenty-four hours of the start of the war, Kooyrigs had launched

its aid and relief program Looys, or "light" in Armenian.

It began as a straightforward initiative to raise funds for the war effort in the form of humanitarian aid to be hand-delivered by the four in-country team members. Founder Karine Eurdekian had reached out to the Women's Support Center, a Yerevan-based non-profit that primarily serves victims of domestic abuse, to create a collaborative effort to provide direct aid to those affected by the war in Artsakh. Looys has been headed by both Karine, based in New York, and Country Director Mariam Avagyan, based in Yerevan, along with a team located both in Yerevan and around the US.

At first, Kooyrigs' approach was to fulfill requests made by the Ministry of Health and the Stepanakert and Goris hospitals. However, as the number of displaced families coming into Armenia from Artsakh drastically rose, Kooyrigs shifted its focus to providing food and medicine to these families, most living in shared apartments or hotels that have opened their doors. Due to a strong network throughout the country, Kooyrigs is able to source food directly from farms, and medicine from a local family-owned pharmacy, thus also contributing to the local economy, an important aspect of the Looys initiative. The on-the-ground team hand-delivers these resources to the families throughout Armenia and Artsakh, documenting the entire process along the way.

Transparency is always at the forefront for Kooyrigs, which publishes receipts of its spending online. Videos, photos, and interviews are also shared quickly to donors via Instagram, the organization's primary platform and means of communication.

Kooyrigs, which began as an Instagram platform in 2018 with the mission to fight for women's rights in Armenia, has a unique fundraising advantage in its widespread reach throughout the international diaspora. Over the past two years, Kooyrigs has established itself as a tool and gathering space that connects young female and female-identifying Armenians with both their culture and other Armenians living in the diaspora. With eye-catching graphics and witty punchlines, Kooyrigs creates content that resonates with the millennial and Gen-Z generations and sparks pride in traditions, current events, and even collective grievances. Its many initiatives to aid Armenian communities around the world have led the organization to file for non-profit registration in both Armenia and the United States, both of which are still pending due to delays



Making a delivery in Vayk, Vayots Dzor

related to COVID.

When the war began in late September, Kooyrigs already had an established Instagram audience of fourteen thousand followers, most located in the US, but with a significant presence around the world. Since then, its influence and following has exploded. Looys quickly became a prominent recipient of funds due to its immediate announcement and easy donation process. Kooyrigs has been able to capitalize on the viral nature of social media to reach not only young people in the diaspora but their non-Armenian friends, therefore creating more buy-in and encouraging everyone to care about and participate in the daily events in Armenia and Artsakh.

Fortunately, young people are not strangers to caring about and acting in solidarity with causes that don't necessarily affect them. This is a generation that does not hesitate to open their wallets and give, often in micro donations, to a conflict happening on the other side of the world in the name of human rights. Also to Kooyrigs' advantage is the fact that it's both easier than ever to transfer small amounts of cash

to causes, and it is seen as social capital to be politically active on social media channels.

The result of these factors was huge: Kooyrigs raised over \$140,000 in a matter of weeks, and the fundraising efforts are going strong. Individual followers have undertaken their own fundraisers: selling everything from art prints and jewelry to services like yoga classes and Armenian coffee cup readings, and funneling their proceeds to the Looys initiative. The effort to help is both collective and far-reaching.

Kooyrigs has already had a direct impact on the lives of many families that have had to flee their homes in pursuit of safety, but its goals are not short-term. The outlook of the conflict suggests that Artsakh'sis will be displaced for the foreseeable future, and Kooyrigs' efforts reflect that reality. By directly sourcing items like food and medicine, the organization is able to cut down costs and, therefore, help more people. As the war rages on with no end in sight, it is critical that organizations like Kooyrigs orient themselves towards long-term relief. The constant work done by dedicated individuals will not relent any time soon.



The Aliyevs enjoy a photo shoot in full camouflage in Karabakh.

Photos of Aliyevs in Crosshairs of Iranian Sniper Emerge on Social Media

TEHRAN (Panorama.am) – The President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his wife Mehriban visited on Monday, November 16, the occupied territories of Nagorno Karabakh. Photos of visit were widely shared in Azerbaijani media.

As part of the trip, the Azerbaijani president and his wife visited also the Khoda Afarin bridges near the Iranian border, where a photo session was organized for them.

In the meantime, social media users and Iranian media disseminated photos of what appear to be Aliyev, his wife and group of accompanying people in the crosshairs of a sniper's rifle.

The images presumably taken from the Iranian side show the Aliyevs participating in a photoshoot.

Lavrov and Azeri Counterpart Discuss Russian Contingent to Karabakh

MOSCOW (TASS) – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov discussed in a phone conversation on Sunday the deployment of a Russian peacekeeping contingent to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"As a follow-up to the contacts between [Russian and Azerbaijani] Presidents Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev the ministers considered in detail the implementation of the November 9 joint statement of the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Russian Federation on a ceasefire and halting all military actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone," the ministry stated.

Special attention was paid to coordinating

practical steps of the parties to the joint statement in the context of deploying a peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Armed Forces and streamlining its work "on the ground."

Lavrov also informed his Azerbaijani counterpart about key aspects of an effort on setting up the inter-agency humanitarian response center in Nagorno-Karabakh. The two ministers confirmed the need for an active involvement of international organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Program, UNESCO and the International Committee of the Red Cross, "in order to facilitate post-conflict restoration, solve humanitarian tasks and preserve religious and cultural heritage in the region."

Community News

Mt. Davidson Cross Armenian Council in San Francisco Announces Six New Board Members

SAN FRANCISCO – The Mt. Davidson Cross Armenian Council announces the appointment of six new members to the Cross Council, as well as the full slate of board members for 2020-2021. The Council is comprised of thirty-one Armenian organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area and serves as a steward of a historic monument dedicated to the Armenian Genocide.

“We’re excited to expand our board with six new members who will bring their diverse expertise and insight to our ongoing work,” said Sevag Kevranian, chairperson of the Mt. Davidson Cross Armenian Council, “We are eager to channel the energy and talents of our new members into furthering our mission.”

As of October 2020, the new members include:

Fr. Mesrop Ash, St. John Armenian Apostolic Church

Valina Agbabian, Armenian Assembly of America

Dena Aslanian-Williams, West of Twin Peaks Central Council

Kim Bardakian, St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church

Sona Bekmezian, Calvary Armenian Congregational Church

Charles Cherezian, St. John Armenian Apostolic Church

The Cross Council Committee members comprise a dedicated team of community leaders. They will join incumbent board members in providing vision and setting the direction for the council and its initiatives. During these uncertain times in Artsakh and Armenia, the council also acts as a conduit for important information to be disseminated to the organizations throughout the Bay Area.

The Council elected the following officers for 2020 - 2021:

Chairperson Sevag Kevranian

Vice-Chairperson Bryan Agbabian

Treasurer Judy Jingirian

Secretary Sona Bekmezian

The At-Large Board Members include Garo Arabatyan, Ara Harmandarian, Levon Ishag, Zaven Kanneian, Jacques Oskanian, Hagop Tatoian, Paul Tour-Sarkissian and Ani Yeni-Komshian.

The Mt. Davidson Cross Armenian Council meets regularly to discuss maintenance, planning and event reservations as well as community events involving the Cross.

Mt. Davidson Cross is home of the historical San Francisco landmark which adorns spectacular views from the highest point in San Francisco and also includes trails, nature, meditation, and



a forest in the middle of an urban environment. The mission of the Cross is to promote the Armenian culture and historical heritage, and to provide documentation and information on Armenian issues, particularly as to the Armenian Genocide. Mount Davidson Cross is home to the annual April 24 Armenian Genocide Commemoration and Easter Sunrise Service.

On July 12, 1997, the Council of Armenian-American Organizations of Northern California (CAAONC), a coalition of over 30 Armenian-American Organizations outbid other groups, purchased the Cross from the City of San Francisco. On November 4, 1997, the CAAONC became the legal owner of the Mt. Davidson Cross and assumed the responsibility for maintaining it.



An Armenian soldier suffering from devastating injuries this October

Wounded Heroes of Armenia and Artsakh Still Need Diaspora's Help

WATERTOWN – The war may be over for now, but soldiers in Armenia and Artsakh are still on duty and still need the diaspora's help, says the co-founder of the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund (AWHF).

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

Razmig Arzumian in an interview this week said that the AWHF has raised almost \$6 million in 6 weeks from global supporters.

In a statement sent to donors and supporters, the organizers suggest that the support for the troops should continue, as their enemies will still be there.

“Armenia remains under constant threat, surrounded by hostile enemies who are committed to complete their genocidal goals. Our enemies will use this time to reload their military, so we will need to rebuild our defenses. Sadly, we have almost 2,000 fallen heroes and 5,000 wounded heroes who need our help. Despite our disappointments, Armenia and Artsakh are still our homeland and we can't turn our backs on our heroes and their sacrifices,” the statement read in part.

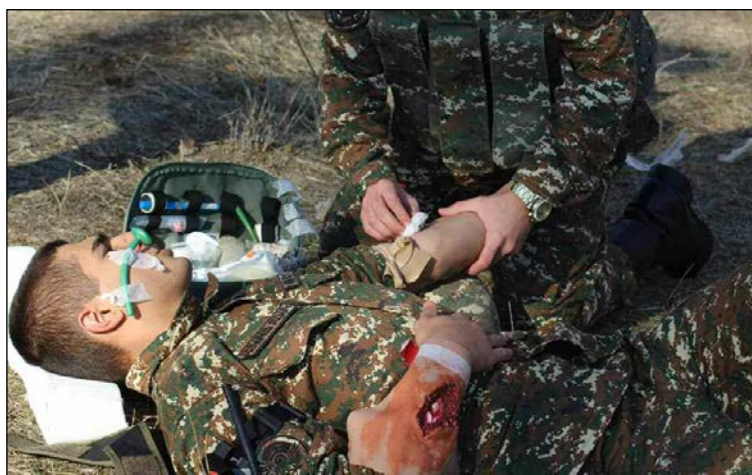
Among the items that will be sent there purchased by these funds are heavy-duty personal protection equipment.

They have provided first-aid training to many of the soldiers on the frontlines.

Among things that have been sent already or are in the process of being sent are:

- 2,302 level 4 body armor vests
- 5,800 ballistic helmets
- Thousands of military-grade first aid kits (in addition to over 21,000 first aid kits delivered prior to the war)

see WOUNDED, page 10



A training session by AWHF before the war, teaching the use of the first aid kits

Early Data Show Moderna's Coronavirus Vaccine Is 94.5% Effective

By Denise Grady

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (*New York Times*) – The drugmaker Moderna announced on Monday, November 16, that its coronavirus vaccine was 94.5 percent effective, based on an early look at the results from its large, continuing study.

Researchers said the results were better than they had dared to imagine. But the vaccine will not be widely available for months, probably not until spring.

Moderna is the second company to report preliminary data on an apparently successful vaccine, offering hope in a surging pandemic that has infected more than 53 million people worldwide and killed more than 1.2 million. Pfizer, in collaboration with BioNTech, was the first, reporting one week ago that its vaccine was more than 90 percent effective.

Pfizer and Moderna were the first to announce early data on large studies, but 10 other companies are also conducting big Phase 3 trials in a global race to produce a vaccine, including efforts in Australia, Britain, China, India and Russia. More than 50 other candidates are in earlier stages of testing.

The Food and Drug Administration has said that coronavirus vaccines should be at least 50 percent effective to be approved.

Researchers test vaccines by inoculating some study participants and giving others placebo, and then watching the two groups to see how many people get sick. In Moderna's study, 95 people contracted the coronavirus: five who were vaccinated, and 90 who received placebo shots of saltwater. Statistically, the difference between the two groups was highly significant. And of the 95 cases, 11 were severe – all in the placebo group.

The results were analyzed by an independent data safety monitoring board, appointed by the National Institutes of Health.

Moderna, based in Cambridge, Mass., developed its vaccine in collaboration with researchers from the Vaccine Research Center, part of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the institute, said in an interview: “I had been saying I would be satisfied with a 75-percent effective vaccine. Aspirationally, you would like to see 90, 95 percent, but I wasn't expecting it. I thought we'd be good, but 94.5 percent is very impressive.”

Stéphane Bancel, the chief executive of Moderna, said in a statement that the results had provided “the first clinical validation that our vaccine can prevent Covid-19 disease, including severe disease.”

Pfizer and Moderna each announced the findings in news releases, not in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and the companies have not yet disclosed the detailed data that would allow outside experts to evaluate their claims. Therefore, the results cannot be considered conclusive. The studies are continuing, and the figures on effectiveness may change.

The companies' products open the door to an entirely new way of creating vaccines – and creating them fast. Both use a synthetic version of coronavirus genetic material, called messenger RNA or mRNA, to program a person's cells to churn out many copies of a fragment of the virus. That fragment sets off alarms in the immune system and stimulates it to attack, should the real virus try to invade. Although a number of vaccines using this technology are in development for other infections and cancers,

see MODERNA, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Federal Authorities Arrest 9 for Scheme that Laundered Over \$30 Million in Fraud Proceeds

LOS ANGELES — Federal authorities on November 12 arrested nine defendants, most of whom allegedly were involved in a sophisticated money laundering scheme that moved tens of millions of dollars derived from tax fraud and health care fraud schemes.

Two indictments unsealed this morning allege that a total of 10 defendants participated in a large operation that laundered more than \$30 million in tax refunds that had been obtained from approximately 7,000 fraudulent tax returns filed using identities stolen from thousands of American taxpayers. Seven of the 10 defendants named in these two indictments were arrested this morning, and three are still being sought by authorities.

Two additional defendants arrested this morning are charged in two other indictments that allege fraud, one involving a car leasing scam and one involving a short sale

scheme involving a \$2 million residence that was forfeited to the United States earlier this year. A second defendant in the real estate scam is also a fugitive.

The leader of the schemes outlined in the two money laundering indictments — Gagik Airapetian — directed other conspirators to use altered foreign passports, mostly from the Republic of Armenia, to rent mailboxes and open bank accounts to launder funds from tax fraud and health care fraud, according to the indictments. Members of the conspiracies allegedly altered Republic of Armenia passports by placing their photographs on top of the real passport holders' photographs, and then using the altered passports to open more than 500 bank accounts.

The nine defendants were arrested on November 12 by special agents with the FBI and IRS Criminal Investigation.

The defendants arrested are: Gagik Airapetian, 62, of Woodland Hills; Tigran Galstyan, 48, of Sylmar; Moses Seraydarian, 54, of Northridge; Stepan Terakopyan, 35, of Granada Hills; Petros Terakopyan, 64, of Sun Valley; Karen Pogosian, 49, of Van Nuys; and Haroutioun Demirdjian, 54, of North Hollywood.

Authorities are continuing to search for three money laundering defendants: Davit Asoyan, 29, of Granada Hills; Nikoghos Petrosyan; and Albert Andriasov, 28, of Las Vegas.

Ara Sahakyan, 54, of Reseda, was arrested pursuant to the indictment alleging the car leasing scheme in which he leased three different vehicles by falsely claiming to be a CFO earning \$189,000 per year.

In relation to the indictment that alleges the short sale scheme, Armen Oganessian, 56, of Los Feliz, was arrested this morning. Arsen Abrahamyan is also charged in this case, and he is believed to have fled the United States.

Members of the money laundering conspiracies used attorneys to try to unfreeze bank accounts that banks had frozen due to suspected fraud, according to court documents. Airapetian bribed a lawyer to use his attorney client trust account — which is supposed to be used by attorneys to segregate client funds from the attorney's money — to launder more than \$500,000 in tax fraud proceeds, the indictment states. Glendale lawyer Arthur S. Charchian previously pleaded guilty to one count of money laundering and one count of making a false statement to the Social Security Administration as he admitted laundering \$549,000 for the scheme.

According to one of the indictments unsealed, defendant Galstyan bribed bank managers to unfreeze bank accounts that contained funds suspected to have been derived from fraud. Last year, a former Wells

Fargo Bank manager, Hakop Zakaryan, pleaded guilty to bank fraud for his role in the scheme.

The other money laundering indictment unsealed on November 12 describes a related conspiracy, also orchestrated by Airapetian, that laundered monies derived from health care fraud. Similar to the tax fraud money laundering scheme, members of this conspiracy allegedly opened bank accounts using fraudulent identities, and Airapetian allegedly charged a 30 percent laundering fee. As detailed in the indictment, the FBI also conducted an undercover operation where the schemers laundered funds they thought were from health care fraud.

The arrests are part of a continuing multi-agency investigation into a Stolen Identity Refund Fraud (SIRF) scheme — dubbed Operation “SIRF's Up” — that involved conspirators who used false identities and fake Republic of Armenia and other former Soviet Republic passports to open hundreds of bank accounts that were used to launder tens of millions of dollars in tax refunds fraudulently received from the IRS. After the arrests this morning, federal authorities have now charged a total of 35 defendants linked to the scheme. So far, the investigation has resulted in 15 convictions, and the seizure of at least five residential properties worth millions of dollars and more than \$700,000 from bank accounts. Five defendants remain fugitives from justice.

If convicted of all charges, Airapetian would face a statutory maximum sentence of more than 400 years in federal prison. The other defendants in the money laundering indictments unsealed today each face prison statutory maximum sentences of more than 100 years of imprisonment.

This matter was investigated by IRS Criminal Investigation, the FBI, and Homeland Security Investigations.

Together for Artsakh

This is a message for those who wonder how they could contribute today to counter the genocidal threat against the people of Artsakh.

The ongoing aggression against Artsakh is a continuation of the 1915 Armenian Genocide by Turkey. The tripartite alliance of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Islamist terrorism continues attacking peaceful communities across Artsakh. The aggressors use their entire military might, including internationally banned cluster munition and chemical weapons.

The international recognition of independence of the Republic of Artsakh is the most practical way to end war crimes against Artsakh and to solve the Karabakh conflict. Artsakh's independence stands on a strong legal and historical platform; not only is it underwritten by the last 30 years of Artsakh's factual sovereignty, it also rests on the historical record of fifteen centuries of Artsakh's uninterrupted institutional self-governance, starting in the fifth century AD.

The Americans for Artsakh, Inc. (AFA) is a US-registered non-profit organization, working to bring together American supporters of Artsakh's recognition, and channeling the energy and expertise of Armenian American professionals into concrete ways to support the people of Artsakh in their democratic aspirations.

In consultations with the Government of the Republic of Artsakh, AFA is currently building a team of professionals willing to join hands in this battle. Please contact us if you would like to contribute your expertise and make a firm time commitment to this effort. Outnumbered and outgunned, Artsakh continues to defend its freedom on the battlefield. With the goal of leveraging Artsakh, we need professional supporters who have skills and contacts in the following areas:

- Human rights, especially in remedial self-determination and secession
- Democratic governance
- Former Soviet Union regional experts
- Journalism

We also need the following technical experts:

- Copywriter
- Editor
- WordPress Content Manager
- Video & Audio Producer and Editor
- Infographics Illustrator
- Graphic Designer
- Programmer: PHP, WordPress, Security
- Search Engine Optimization specialist
- Social media specialist
- Office Manager

At this point, we have to rely only on the help of accomplished professionals or companies who can quickly deliver high-quality products.

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Early Data Show Moderna's Coronavirus Vaccine Is 94.5% Effective

MODERNA, from page 8
none have yet been approved or marketed.

“The fact that two different vaccines made by two different companies with two different kinds of structures, in a new messenger RNA concept, both worked so effectively confirms the concept once and for all that this is a viable strategy not only for Covid but for future infectious disease threats,” said Dr. Barry R. Bloom, a professor of public health at Harvard.

Natalie E. Dean, a biostatistician at the University of Florida, said an important finding was that the vaccine appeared to prevent severe disease. Pfizer did not release information about disease severity when reporting its results.

Researchers say the positive results from Pfizer and Moderna bode well for other vaccines, because all of the candidates being tested aim at the same target — the so-called spike protein on the coronavirus that it uses to invade human cells.

Dr. Bloom said that the success of the two vaccines meant that measures of immunity used in earlier phases of the studies—participants' antibody levels—were reliable, and that other companies could use those measures as proof of effectiveness to shorten the testing and approval process for their vaccines.

It will be important to determine whether the vaccines work equally well in older and younger people, experts say. Researchers also want to know if the vaccines prevent people from spreading the virus — an ideal result that could help quash the pandemic.

Another big unknown is how long the immunity provided by the vaccines will last.

An additional concern is that both vaccines must be stored and transported at low temperatures — minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit for Moderna, and minus 94 Fahrenheit for Pfizer — which could complicate their distribution, particularly to low-income areas in hot climates.

Although both vaccines are made of mRNA, their temperature requirements differ because they use different, proprietary formulations of fat to encase and protect the mRNA, Ray Jordan, a Moderna spokesman, said.

Other coronavirus vaccines being developed will need only refrigeration. If handled improperly, vaccines can become inactive.

But on Monday, Moderna said researchers had found that its vaccine had a longer shelf life in the refrigerator than previously thought: 30 days, not seven. And it will last 12 hours at room temperature, the company said.

Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University, said the relative ease of handling the Moderna vaccine would give it a big advantage.

“This vaccine presents the opportunity of using doctors' offices, clinics and pharmacies as vaccination sites,” he said, adding that he would not be surprised, should both vaccines become available, if vaccination sites requested Moderna's.

Both companies said they expected to apply within weeks to the F.D.A. for emergency authorization to begin vaccinating the public. In addition to the evidence for effectiveness, the companies must also submit two months of safety data on at least half of the participants.

So far, studies of the two vaccines have not found serious side effects, but participants have reported sore arms, fatigue, fever and joint and muscle aches that last for a day or two.

Moderna's study did not include children. Dr. Tal Zaks, the company's chief medical officer, said the company planned to test it in them in the coming months, starting with adolescents.

Moderna said it would have 20 million doses ready by the end of 2020; Pfizer said it would have about 50 million by then. Both vaccines require two shots, so 20 million doses would be enough for 10 million people.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Wounded Heroes of Armenia and Artsakh Still Need Diaspora's Help

WOUNDED, from page 8

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- 1,410 solar chargers
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"These guys have been through hell for 45 days, to say the least. There is a calamity in the hospitals with burn patients and soldiers who have brain damage, are handicapped and blind.

They have all been through massive trauma," he noted.

"The diaspora thinks everyone has left. There is still a lot of stuff going on. We need to support them now more than ever," he added.

Arzoumanian was in turns optimistic and worried. "The guys on the frontline are freezing their butts off," he said, noting that they are still on duty defending Armenia and the smaller Artsakh and their needs continue even after the official end to the hostilities.

"It's not the last war, unfortunately," Arzoumanian added.

And thus the help is still needed. "What we don't want to see is to have an entire force fall.



The donations still get there because they are met by a specific central line in the US to the

Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Defense," he noted.

And those are still functioning, he said.

To get supplies there, the group charts a plane.

"We cover a lot of the budget ourselves," he said. "We don't have a staff and its all volunteers. One hundred percent of all our money gets to where it should go. There is a tight vacuum and it is all going to the soldiers."

After the capitulation, he said, so much is up in the air.

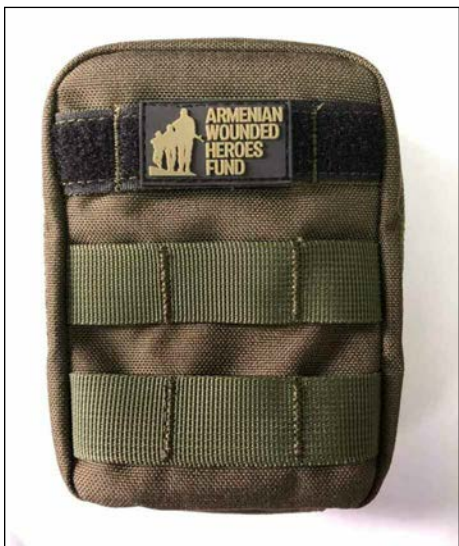
"The key is, these guys still need us and we can still help them. After all the sacrifices they have made, we can't turn our backs on them. I hope we can learn from this and realize we need to be more actively supporting our forces. Otherwise, we won't survive. If we don't defend ourselves, we will get screwed."

"If we want a country, we have to be prepared," he said, especially in light of neighbors like Turkey and Azerbaijan.

To send donations, go to <https://armenian-woundedheroes.com/>



AWHF cargo landing in Armenia

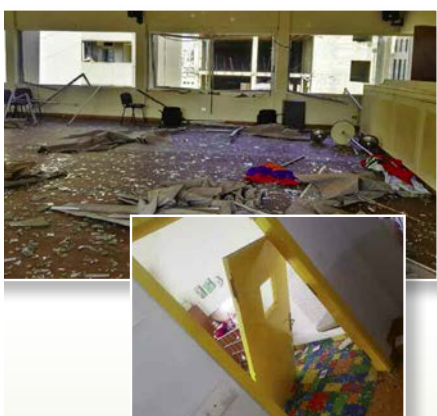


One of the first aid kits



The Tekeyan School of Beirut

The Vahan Tekeyan School, founded in 1951, was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It primarily 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 it is trying to reopen for the fall semester.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance too. Make your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or as checks mailed 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.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Protesters Persist in Boston



By Kenneth Martin
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — Armenian-American young men and women in Boston haven't given up demonstrating and fighting for Armenian human rights and against Azerbaijan and Turkey for their invasion of the Artsakh Republic, Nagorno-Karabakh, and a six-week war with the loss of life, property and cultural assets of the Armenian heritage. Organized by the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF), members from several organizations formed a 100-strong unit that displayed informational signs on November 14 to traffic and pedestrians in Boston's Back Bay Copley Square across from the Boston Public Library. The flags of Artsakh, Armenia, and the United States flew briskly in the wind on Copley Plaza. Later, the youth formed a march around the square and in front of the iconic Trinity Church.



Several grievances were highlighted, including the vandalism, recently shown in photographs and video by Azerbaijani military and their Syrian mercenaries, of grave markers, churches and historic sites, including more attacks and painting of threats to Armenians on the Church of the Holy Savior in Shushi City. Demonstrators were also protesting the silence of many European powers, the United States and the United Nations for not speaking up and acting to prevent these crimes. Additionally protesters pointed to what they consider an illegal document that ended the fighting brokered by Russia that gave away significant lands and rights to Azerbaijan because two signatories of the Minsk Group that has been responsible for negotiations for years in the region, the United States and France, did not take part in negotiations or sign the documents ceasing hostilities between the warring parties.

The protest action, though smaller than recent Armenian protests in Boston and New England, was effective in informing and educating the Greater Boston public since the location allowed its messages to be seen by drivers and pedestrians alike. Passing vehicles often sounded their horns in solidarity. Many of the demonstrators spoke about their feelings of loss and depression one day before the Artsakh Republic was to give significant territory in their homeland to Azerbaijan and likened that to losing huge areas of the traditional Armenian homeland after the Genocide of 1915 to Turkey. They vowed though to use every opportunity to keep fighting for what is right.

(See [mirrormirror.com](https://www.mirrormirror.com) for an accompanying video by Ken Martin, edited by Craig Martin.)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

US Must Reengage with OSCE Minsk Group to Ensure Lasting Settlement that Protects Returning Civilians

WASHINGTON — On November 12, Representatives Jackie Speier (D-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Frank Pallone (D-NJ), co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, sent a letter to President-elect Joe Biden regarding the crisis in Nagorno Karabakh, or Artsakh, where a war launched by Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey and foreign mercenaries, has caused a mass humanitarian disaster. The letter asks that the president-elect prepare to act after his inauguration to reorient US policy in the region in response to the devastating events of the past month, and to support democracy, human rights, and the right of self-determination.

On November 10, Armenia agreed to a ceasefire brokered by Russia to avoid a mass atrocity against Armenian civilians, but at tremendous cost. Under the agreement, Azerbaijan will hold territory in Nagorno Karabakh and be guaranteed pas-

sage to its enclave, Nakhichevan, through Armenia itself, while doing nothing to resolve the final status of Nagorno Karabakh.

“While we welcome peace, we are deeply concerned about the immediate and long-term implications of this deal, which does nothing to settle the question of Nagorno Karabakh’s ultimate status. Further, we believe that this tragic outcome was avoidable had the United States and the international community acted decisively,” the members wrote in the letter. “For far too long, we have condoned the bellicose rhetoric and aggressive actions of Turkey and Azerbaijan, and the results are now devastatingly clear. As you take office, you have the opportunity to forge a new policy towards the region, one that reorients our foreign policy towards supporting democracy, human rights, and the right to self-determination.”

In the letter, the members urged the

incoming Biden Administration to:

Immediately end the waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act with regard to Azerbaijan, and end military assistance to Azerbaijan under Section 333 which has totaled more than \$100 million in the past two years;

Reengage on negotiations for a lasting settlement through the OSCE Minsk Group, to define the future status of Nagorno Karabakh in a way that is consistent with the right of self-determination;

Provide significant humanitarian aid and assistance in clearing unexploded munitions, and ensure that displaced Armenian civilians can return to their homes;

Engage in a thorough review of U.S. policy towards Turkey, a nation that while a member of NATO has repeatedly acted against U.S. interests;

Seek to strengthen our ties to Armenia, a young democracy that has been shaken by the events of the past month.



Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA)

OBITUARY

Lucia ‘Lucy’ (Pamboukian) Sabounjian

Moved from Brazil to Boston

WATERTOWN — Lucia “Lucy” (Pamboukian) Sabounjian, of Watertown, passed away on November 8, at age 93.

She was the wife of the late Missah Sabounjian.

Born in Aleppo, Syria she was the proud daughter of Armenian Genocide survivors Sarkis and Makrouhi Pamboukian. They immigrated to Sao Paulo, Brazil and in 1948, she,

along with her mother, visited relatives in South Boston. During her visit here, Lucy met Missah and were married three months later.

She was welcomed into an extended family where she loved and lived life to the fullest. She especially enjoyed being surrounded by family and friends and enjoyed cooking for anyone who appreciated her natural art of fine Armenian cuisine.

Loving mother of V. Jack Sabounjian and his wife Liz, Joyce Kenis and her husband Alex, Janet Pugh and her husband Greg and Judy DelRaso and her husband John; grandmother to Nicholas Kenis and his wife Angela, Alysson Kenis, Lisa Moore and her husband Dennis, John DelRaso Jr., Gregory Pugh Jr., Rachel Pugh and her fiancé Kyle and Matthew Pugh; great-grandmother to Cecily and Alexandra Kenis and Gino and Giada Moore. She was predeceased by her brothers, Dickran and Jacob Pamboukian. She is also survived by many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, funeral services will be private. She will be laid to rest in the Sabounjian family plot at Ridgelawn Cemetery in Watertown. Social distancing will apply.

Arrangements by Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.



Mardiros (Martik) Petrossian

BELMONT, Mass. — Mardiros “Martik” Petrossian passed away peacefully on November 12, 2020 at his home in Belmont, surrounded by his loving family.

He was 97 years old.

He leaves behind his loving wife Elik, his children Anna, Boghos, Carine, Robert and Garen; his son-in-law Robert and two daughters-in-law Mineh and Melineh, brother Raffik and his wife Anahid; grandchildren: Raffi and Kate, Taleen, Michael, Armen, Bobby, Natalie, Patrick, Alex, Phillip,

Christina, Ella, Lia and great-grandchildren: Declan and Sloane, nephews, nieces and friends.

Martik was born in Rostov-on-Don in Russia to Mihran and Vartanoush Petrossian. He was the eldest brother of Mano, Onnik and Raffik.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, private funeral services will be held at Saint Stephen’s Armenian Church in Watertown. A memorial celebration of his life will take place at a later time when the dangers associated with the current pandemic are no longer a health threat.

Should you wish to make a memorial donation, in lieu of flowers, consider the following: Armenia Fund – Please make checks payable to Armenia Fund, Inc. and mail to: M. Petrossian, 20 Rayburn Road, Belmont, MA 02478; St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown, MA 02472.



Esther ‘Stitch’ Vosgerchian

Dance Instructor, Active in Community

DEARBORN, Mich. — Esther “Stitch” Vosgerchian passed away peacefully in her sleep on the morning of November 11, 2020 at her residence, American House, in Dearborn Heights, at the age of 97.

A beloved teacher of Armenian dancing to generations of people, Stitch is remembered as a “big sister” by many.

In recent years, Stitch was on the Board of Nor Keghi helping raise funds for the Arakelyan Kindergarten School in Nor Keghi, Armenia.

She was active in the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) and, in her younger years,

participated in the AYF Olympics.

She was involved with fundraising and event planning for many important causes, and served on various committees, where her hard work and organization skills served others well.

She was the daughter of the late Ohannes and Kegoohie Vosgerchian; sister of the late Roxie Vosgerchian and the late Dr. Aram “Buzz” Vosgerchian; aunt of Lynn Marentette, Karen Roberts and Gregory Vosgerchian. She also leaves behind six great-nieces and nephews, one great-nephew, a number of cousins and many other relatives and friends.

Funeral services took place at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, Dearborn, on November 17, with Fr. Hrant Kevorkian officiating. Interment was in Woodlawn Cemetery, Detroit.

Arrangements were made by the Simon Javizian Funeral Directors.



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Arts & Living



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Armenian Stuffed Meat Balls

From *In The Vintage Kitchen*

This recipe was originally published in the 1971 edition of the *New York Times International Cook Book*, and was reprinted on January 8, 2020 at In The Vintage Kitchen food blog.

"Armenia is the birthplace of the apricot and home to the oldest winery in the world, dating back 6,000 years," says Katherine Barber at the In The Vintage Kitchen food blog. "Yerevan predates Rome, and is considered one of the oldest inhabited capital cities in the world. Armenia's traditional cuisine has been influenced and

PHOTO AND RECIPE ARE COURTESY OF IN THE VINTAGE KITCHEN.



enhanced by its surrounding neighbors, giving Armenian cuisine a blend of Russian, Turkish, Georgian and Mediterranean flavors. Our mission at In The Vintage Kitchen is to bring new life to old recipes, forgotten cookbooks, historic kitchen tools, and basic cooking techniques from the 1800's to the 1970's. We learn about food, where it came from, and how it came to be in our lives today," she adds.

This version of the popular Armenian stuffed meatball or kudma (or kufteh) is made with lamb stuffed inside another meat ball, also made of lamb, and cooked in beef broth. Each batch of meatballs, Katherine says, is made with a different blend of ingredients – one vegetable laden, the other grain laden.

"This recipe offers two alternatives for the bulgur, couscous and quinoa, both of which are available in Middle Eastern markets, and both substituted with the same one to one ratio. Couscous is a small, granular pasta made of semolina flour and contains gluten. Quinoa is actually a small seed that is cooked and eaten in a similar manner to most grains, but it's gluten-free and relatively high in protein."

HOMEMADE BEEF STOCK AND ARMENIAN STUFFED MEAT BALLS

There's no getting around the fact that preparing this kudma is time-consuming, but the results are delicious, a true feast for any occasion.

Homemade Beef Stock

4-5 lbs. beef short ribs or beef soup bones
2 leeks, trimmed, split and washed well
2 medium carrots, trimmed and scraped
2 medium ribs celery, cut in half
1 medium onion stuck with two cloves
2 sprigs fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
Salt to taste
1 teaspoon peppercorns

Place the beef short ribs in a large kettle and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and see MEATBALLS, page 14



Ruben Giney Armenian Quest in China

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / SHANGHAI – Film director, actor, researcher and writer Ruben Giney (Gasparyan) started making movies when he was 5. His first 8mm film was screened

at the Moscow Children's Film Festival. Before graduating from high school, he started attending the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema.

In 2002 he entered the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK). He was a junior assistant at such Russian directors as Nikita Mikhalkov and Igor Maslennikov.

In 2005 he moved to China, where he joined the international advertising company "Kuiyou Production House" as an artistic director. During this period, he has shot more than 15 commercials for several international companies such as Panasonic, Asahin, McDonald's, Shiseido, Honda and Toshiba.

Since 2010, he has participated in the production of a number of Chinese TV series and feature films. He is a freelance photographer for National Geographic and the author of a number of scholarly articles. His films include "Black Caviar" (1999), "Lower Depths" (2003), "Hernan Du Struberg" (2005), "Hamazkayin Cultural Forum" (2008), "Cities of the World. Shanghai" (2008), "Andin. Armenian Journey Chronicles" (2014). In 2016 he published a collection of articles in Yerevan (in Russian) on Armenian-Chinese historical contacts in the Middle Ages.

Dear Ruben, our friendship started due to our mutual interest in Armenian-Chinese historical relations, so let's start our conversation from that point. How did you end up in China and what has China given to you?

Usually people said that there are two types of foreigners in China; those who came for a specific purpose and the others who accidentally ended up in China. I suppose I belong to the second type. Many years ago I came to mainland China to make a short feature film as a part of my university work, and I met director of major commercial company in Shanghai. Mr. Yansan had a short conversation with me and invited me to work with him. I thought he might be joking, since I was only 18, but the director was quite serious. I returned to Moscow and a couple of months later eventually decided to move to China. At that time, I did not know anyone in China, I could not speak any Chinese, my English also was not good enough. But I was young and fearless. Now I speak Chinese, but I am afraid I am not as brave as before. China and Chinese culture have given me the opportunity to understand the spirit of the Orient. I grew up in Shanghai and absorbed Asian views on life itself. As an Armenian I used to express my emotions, show anger or dissatisfaction with someone, but in China all these expressions are

see CHINA, page 14

Fresno State Armenian Series Publishes The Armenians Of Musa Dagh

FRESNO – Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian announced the publication of Dr. Vahram Shemmassian's *The Armenians of Musa Dagh: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame 1840-1915*, Volume II in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

The Armenians of Musa Dagh is a comprehensive history of the people of Musa Dagh, who rose to prominence with their resistance to the Genocide in 1915. Shemmassian, has presented a thorough analysis of the social, economic, religious, educational, and political history of the six villages which constituted Armenian Musa Dagh. His work focuses on the important period of the mid-19th to the early 20th century, offering the reader a previously unavailable insight into the people whose courage and persistence ultimately led to their successful self-defense.

"The Armenians of Musa Dagh is an important addition to the Armenian Series," said Der Mugrdechian, general editor of the Armenian Series. "Dr. Shemmassian's meticulous study is significant in that it brings to light much of the history of Musa Dagh in the late 19th to early 20th century."

Shemmassian, whose roots go back to Musa Dagh, for the first time in any language, provides a clear view of the complex multi-faceted history of the region in seven chapters and an epilogue. The last chapter, in particular, is an 80-page treatment of the Genocide resistance, including its widespread coverage in the contemporary international press.

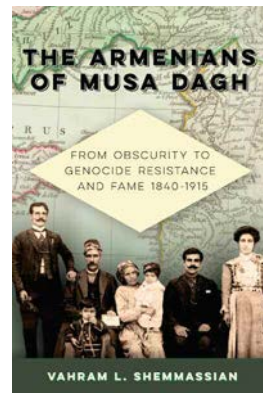
The book demonstrates that this was a period of great change, during which the Musa Dagh Armenians transitioned from an isolated and largely unknown people to a collectivity that prepared to defend its national identity and rights against an increasingly discriminatory and oppressive Ottoman Empire. Shemmassian's work reveals much information which has been uncovered for the first time, based on primary sources.

The volume includes 5 maps, 14 tables, and 162 rare photos, providing a glimpse into the life of the people of Musa Dagh.

Vahram L. Shemmassian is Professor and Director of the Armenian

Studies Program at California State University, Northridge. He holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His book, *The Musa Dagh Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History, 1919-1939*, was published in 2015 by the Haigazian University Press in Beirut. He has given many lectures and organized and participated in international academic conferences. He has also published scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals, as well as book chapters on the fate of Armenian Genocide survivors in the Middle East between the two World Wars. He has received a number of awards for his academic endeavors, dissemination of Armenian culture, and community involvement.

Copies of *The Armenians of Musa Dagh* are available from: Abril Bookstore or the National Association for Armenian Studies & Research.





ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Quest in China

CHINA, from page 13

considered a weakness. At the beginning, I did not understand well, but over the years I finally have managed to understand how to behave right in this society. And the discipline. The high value of discipline in China has made me extra organized and serious towards some things, especially in work and education. I am really grateful for these traits that China has taught me.

Many would like to know: why this name, Giney?

Names in Chinese culture are not constant. Some people change their names several times during their lives. In my case the rules of cinema came into force when Chinese characters were not able to transliterate my Armenian name “Gasparyan.” That would require four or five Chinese characters, though usually Chinese names use only 3. I had to change my name accordingly to be able to sign contracts after my arrival to fit in in the industry. People should not be surprised that some authorities, even the police, require foreigners to take Chinese names. That is completely legal. Hence Ruben Giney was born.

The association with Armenian gini (wine) was intentional?

I wanted to keep my initials as well, and tried not to lose the connection with my homeland even in the name.

So far your most significant film project has been “Andin: Armenian Journey Chronicles,” about the Armenian presence in the Far East from early ages until the early 1800s. It is an unprecedented documentary on Armenian history that you have made in 11 countries. Please tell us about that big adventure of yours.

Spending many years in China, I came across some astonishing evidence on Armenian presence in this corner of the world. One day I read a paper about the foreigners who dressed like Armenians to get access in Ming Dynasty China. Later I found out that in the central park of Shanghai there is the grave of a little 5-year-old Armenian boy. Nobody could explain the story behind this tombstone. Nobody knew who this little boy was, and why he had died at such a young age. Later I learned about the famous Nestorian Stele preserved in the Xi'an Museum, that has typical Armenian “kenac car” (tree of life) holy cross depicted at the top. The last bit of proof was the Western medieval coins collection at the Shanghai Museum presented by Linda and Roger Doo. I was standing there alone, and looking at these coins glimmering in the darkness, coins so familiar to me from my childhood. There was a coin of Parthian kings Vardanes, Shapur, Narseh and Tirdates. Those coins hypnotized me. Suddenly I clearly understood that I must find out all that is possible about the Armenians in China. Literally everything, every bit of information. I became obsessed with this idea and spent

the next two years researching in numerous libraries, archives, private collections. I met hundreds of interesting people worldwide who somehow were connected with these subject. I met Prof. Armen Baibourtian, who is Council General in Los Angeles now. I met Prof. Ina McCabe and Edmund Herzig, both experts in the New Julfa trading network and special dialect of New Julfan Armenian language. I dined with legendary professor Alexander Wang Zhi Cheng, who spent his entire life studying Russian and Armenian immigrant life in Northern and Central China, I learn a lot from Prof. Paul Arthur Van Dyke from Macau University. Later I made the acquaintance of two marvelous ladies - Liz Chater, a distant relative of famous Paul Chater, and Nadia Wright the author of academic books on the Armenians in Singapore and Malaysia.

This was a very interesting period of collecting materials, books, maps, images. In the last nine years I have collected three million digital and physical data on the Armenian history in China, India and South-East Asia. But the main adventure began of course when I started filming in early 2012. For three years myself and my shooting crew from different countries visited 11 countries (including India, Tibet, China, Armenia, Mexico, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, France). It was another huge step of this project. I am very proud that we were able to finish the film with some academic publications and valuable findings, such as 19th century Russian explorer in Central Asia, Pantusov's grave-stone with the Armenian inscriptions on it dated 1323 AD. Eventually the cinema version of “Andin” documentary was shown in various countries, but the TV-Series has never been released. And most of materials had never been showed to anyone.

The great research work you have done made you a specialist in this field. Don't you wish to continue the subject?

I must confess, that being a film director is not my only desire. From early childhood filmmaking and an interest in archeology and history were my passions. Sometimes people do not understand how I can be a feature film director, a showman and professional historian at the same time. But I kept my options open all my life and I really do not see any contradictions here. If I am not involved in film shooting I rather continue doing my researches. Cultural exchange, History of the Silk Road, Early Christianity in China and History of trade are in the main foci of my studies. The year 2020 was a pretty tough year for the film industry worldwide, so that is why I am about to publish my new book on Armeno-Chinese relations.

You acted in some Chinese films - I assume Chinese-speaking European actors are in demand in China.

Like many filmmakers around the world, Chinese cinema also requires foreigners for the screen. Especially when it comes to his-

torical characters such as Richard Sorge, Stalin, sometimes foreigners get the role of American soldiers during the Second World War, or portraying The White Movement Russian soldiers in China at the first quarter of the 20th century. I got several roles, once it was Georgian communist Vissarion Lominadze in Chinese picture “Winds and Clouds in 1927.” That was fun and most of all I learned that being an actor is a stunning opportunity to create a character, a person on the screen right from your own life expe-



rience and painful memories. But above all, as a director, I learned how crucial is to give the actors more freedom on the shooting set. Before that I was tyrant director, now I am a more kind of listener.

Being from the writers' family – grandson of well-known Armenian writer Ruben Hovsepyan and son of Lilit Hovsepyan, the chief editor of Nork literary magazine, no wonder you also write, although in Russian, that are translated into Armenian, Chinese and English. What concerns Ruben Giney the writer?

Time. Time itself. The evolution of a person, a human being, from his childhood to the oldness. I presume the time has monstrous influence on us every single second. And the same time, you never can catch the moment. One second could be devastating, five minutes can create a great Idea, that could change the world or that could make the world better or destroy entire city. I keep in mind the image of a man, who was literally erased within a second in Hiroshima when A-bomb fell on the city. The person vanished, only indistinct shadow left on the ground. That is the rare point when you can catch the time. See its devastating power. I am deeply concerned with time problem, maybe these feelings go along with my possession with filmmaking and history. Trying to catch the history with the help of camera at least for a bit longer. To me the camera and the writer

pen both are for creating a story, nothing more. Different tools with one goal - try get the access to the audience or reader's heart. Make him listen to you, trust you and follow you. And never let him down.

You are very active in organizing aid to the recent war in Armenia.

With the unexpected outbreak of the war, all Armenians living in China expressed a desire to help. As a member of the council of Armenian Community of China “Chinahay,” my colleagues and I started to act immediately. Within a day the community board organized fundraising for Himnadram in our homeland Armenia. While realizing that we live in one of the most productive countries in the world, we began to collect essential items for the front and the army. The first

two shipments were sent at once. Now the community is preparing a large cargo with special items for civilian and non-civilian use. Every single Armenian in China and our Chinese relatives and friends, are deeply concerned about what is going in Artsakh right now. We all stand together. We all have no doubts in victory.

Your restless nature should guide you to other endeavors.

There are some things that have always piqued my curiosity, such as mycology, the study of fungi. Many years I turned one of my rooms into a home lab, and from time to time I continue research in this field cooperating with international organizations. Fungi are unique organism on our planet, especially the mold, which is barely studied even in the context of the 21st century. These organisms and their toxic compounds might provide a huge amount of new type of medicine for example.

My other desire is to cross the Northern branch of Takla-makan Desert in western China, which was used as one of the Silk Road routes. While making the documentary film eight years ago my crew and I have already crossed that route from Xi'an via Dunhuang, Aksu to the Urumqi. But we were in hurry, and I remember a thousand abandoned caves, and medieval city outlines under the sand. That mysterious land beckons me; one day I will definitely return there with a new expedition.

Armenian Stuffed Meat Balls

MEATBALLS, from page 13

blanch about 5-10 minutes, then drain and run under cold water. Return beef short ribs to the kettle, and add remaining ingredients. Add more cold water to cover, and simmer, uncovered, for about 3 hours. Skim surface as the stock cooks to remove fat and scum. Strain and set aside.

Armenian Stuffed Meat Balls

For the stuffing (filling):

- 1 lb. lean ground lamb
- 4 medium onions, sliced or diced
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon chopped mint, to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

For the meatballs:

- 1 lb. very lean ground lamb
- 1 cup fine bulgur (cracked wheat) or 1 cup quinoa or 1 cup couscous
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
- Water
- 4 cups boiling beef stock

Note: Other traditional seasonings for this recipe may include: cumin, coriander, allspice, cloves, white pepper, cayenne pepper, and paprika. Pine nuts or chopped walnuts may be added to the stuffing.

To make the stuffing, sauté the lamb over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the

onions and cook over low heat for 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the green pepper, parsley, and mint, and cook 10 minutes. Add salt and pepper, and simmer for 5 minutes. Chill stuffing for at least 2 hour or longer. After it is chilled, shape into the size of marbles (about 1 teaspoonful for each).

To make meatballs, combine the meat, bulgur, salt, pepper, onions, and parsley and knead mixture as you would dough, adding a few drops of water as you go along. Knead mixture well for 20 minutes until mixture is like a medium soft dough.

Dip hands in a bowl of cold water and make balls the size of walnuts. Make a dent in the middle of each ball with your thumb and press all around the inside wall to make a round opening for the filling. The wall should be fairly thin Place marble-sized filling in each shell and bring the edges together to close. Smooth surface with wet fingers, and flatten slightly by gently pressing between the palms.

Drop meatballs into boiling stock and cook for 10 minutes or until meat balls come to the surface. Remove with a slotted spoon to drain excess liquid. Keep warm until all are cooked. This dish is traditionally served with rice or bulgur pilaf or in a shallow bowl of broth like a soup.

Serve with pita bread, yogurt, hummus, and garnish with lemon wedges and sprigs of parsley. (Made smaller and in the shape of mini-footballs, these meatballs may be fried and served as appetizers.)

Makes 22-24 meatballs.

For this recipe, go to:
<<https://inthevintagekitchen.com/2020/01/08/the-international-vintage-recipe-tour-week-1-armenian-stuffed-meat-balls/>>
<https://inthevintagekitchen.com/2020/01/08/the-international-vintage-recipe-tour-week-1-armenian-stuffed-meat-balls/>



COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

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EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:
Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:
Armenia - Hagop Avedikian
Boston - Nancy Kalajian
Los Angeles - Taleen Babayan
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:
Jirair Hovsepian

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrords@aol.com

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Baikar Association, Inc.
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Armenia and Armenians at A Watershed

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The fall of Nagorno Karabakh is a defining moment in Armenian history. Almost a century ago, Turkey struck a sufficiently powerful blow to the Armenians to grieve for one hundred and five years and recover gradually.

It looks like the leadership of the current government of Turkey has decided that the time has come to cause another calamity for the Armenians to deal with for the next few decades.

Before we delve into self-flagellation, we need to place the Karabakh war and the November 10, 2020 peace agreement into the perspective of regional developments and crosscurrents of major powers.

Since the beginning of the conflict over the fate of Karabakh (Artsakh) some three decades ago, the major world powers warned that there is no military solution to the problem, which had been relegated to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to resolve. In the process of dealing with the issue, the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, tasked specifically with the problem, tried to keep the developments under control to make sure that no major power took advantage of the situation and derived dividends at the expense of the stakeholders in the problem.

But the war that was launched by Azerbaijan in September 2020 at the instigation and active participation of Turkey has resulted in the stationing of Russian peacekeepers on Azerbaijan's territory, outside the control of the OSCE format.

However, the peace agreement signed on November 10 reflects all the elements of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's plans and more. Indeed, except for a brief period at the Key West negotiations in 2001, the southern tip of Armenia's territory was not on the negotiation table.

While the international community was under the impression that President Vladimir Putin of Russia had outsmarted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in the deal, the power play between Russia and Turkey performed in Syria and Libya was reenacted in the Caucasus, bringing Turkish forces into Azerbaijani territory to face Russian peacekeeping forces.

The Russian action and Turkish reaction catapulted the conflict to the world stage, marginalizing Azerbaijan's victory and Armenia's defeat. At this time, Armenia's humanitarian catastrophe has been sidelined as the Russo-Turkish confrontation takes center stage.

Criticism by French President Emmanuel Macron of Turkey's jihadist exploits and the OSCE co-chairs' moves to have a say in the new developments offered little consolation for the Armenian side.

The above developments manifest the broader contours of the conflict. Armenians are left alone to lick their wounds and bury their dead and above all, to put their house in order.

The catastrophe befallen on the Armenians will be amplified if confusion, recriminations and senseless actions continue.

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, but soon after, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was able to resurrect a modern republic out of the ashes. Similarly, World War II devastated Germany, but Conrad Adenauer performed the economic miracle of Europe.

Rather than lamenting and fingerpointing, Armenia needs a sober and wise voice to pull the entire nation out of misery.

At this time, the political atmosphere is overheated in

Armenia, and ripe to veer into uncharted territory.

The mob which was chanting "Serzhik Out" in Freedom Square a couple of years ago is now gathering to shout "Nikol Out." Many discharged or AWOL soldiers have returned from the battlefield with their weapons. The situation is very volatile and a spark can trigger civil unrest. Groups from the former regime who were swept out of power have been joining the mob to take advantage of the chaos.

Former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan has raised the alarm and called for calm to steer away from civil war.

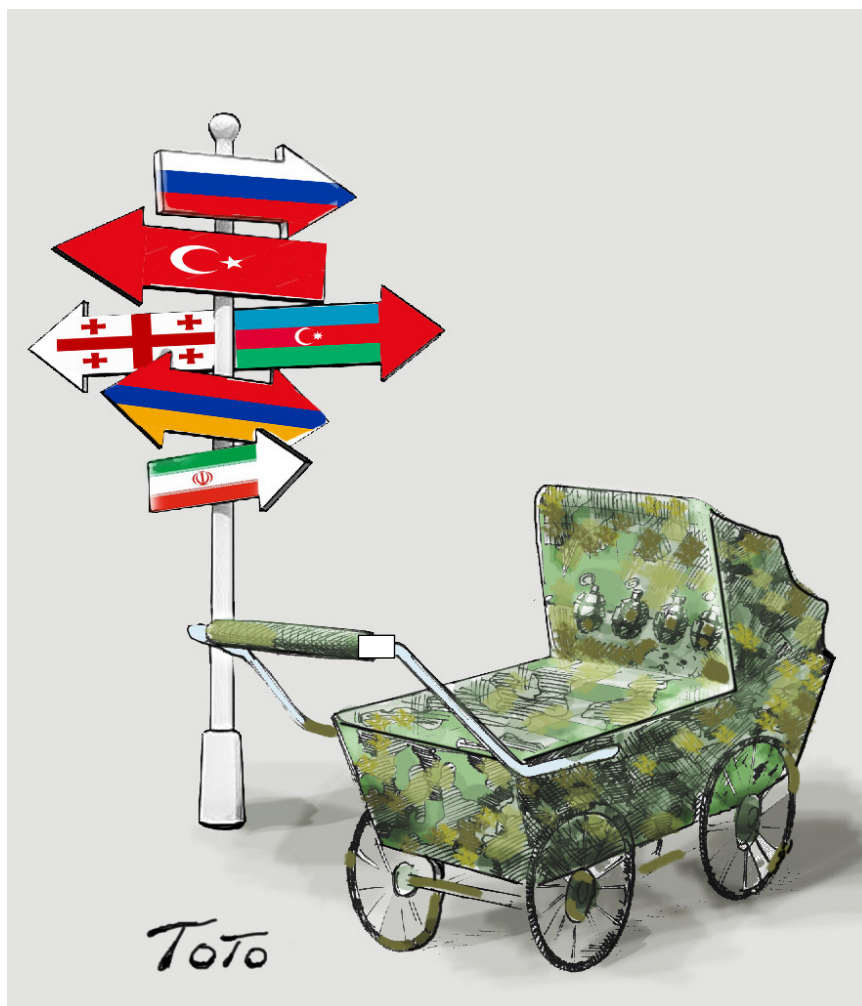
Incidentally, the first president feels today that history has vindicated him.

After the ceasefire of 1994, when large swathes of Azerbaijani territory came under Armenian control, Ter-Petrosyan proposed to cut a deal while in a position of power. He warned that time was against Armenians and whatever deals that the Armenian side could seal with Baku might not be attainable at a later time.

He was called a traitor and was deposed before he completed his second term as president.

Today, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is in the same hot seat for delivering territories and getting nothing in return.

Defections from the parliament, the government and army are taking place at a dizzying pace and Pashinyan's circle of supporters is narrowing and leaving him isolated before a furious mob. He remains defiant but not for long. At a recent



session of the parliament he stated that he is not ready to resign until he can see a mechanism through which the people's voice may be heard in an orderly, constitutional way.

If true, that matches perfectly with the proposal which President Armen Sarkissian made in a speech on November 16. Thus far, the president has been overshadowed. The constitution had reduced his office to a figurehead. Sometimes, even the most pedestrian functions of protocol were denied him. Sarkissian's reputation as a world-class scientist and his political and business contacts were untapped. Unlike Pashinyan, he knows how to listen to people and draw his own conclusions. Ever since November 10, he has been meeting with political parties, inside and outside the government. He has come to the conclusion that Pashinyan and his government have to resign and an interim leadership has to organize snap elections in an orderly fashion.

Thus far, his deceptively mild manners had created the impression that he was not capable of taking resolute action. However, he has proven himself as a father figure who can build consensus. Neither members in the Pashinyan group
see EDITORIAL, page 17



COMMENTARY

A Closer Look at the Trilateral Agreement to End War



By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

While this column always tends to be analytical in approach, this current one will focus in minute detail on the agreement whose signing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced on November 10 to end aggression by Azerbaijan and Turkey in Karabakh (Artsakh, NKR). The three signatories are Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. The shock waves are still reverberating in Armenia. It is submitted in this legal opinion that:

1. The statement is only of political nature, and not of a legal one; it is therefore not legally binding (International Court of Justice (ICJ), *Bolivia v. Chile*, 2018). It all depends in this regard on the wording of the text;
2. Since the referral to the Parliament is not foreseen in the statement, it tends to confirm that it is not a legal agreement, but only a political declaration;
3. This is confirmed by Armenian domestic law: an agreement of that type, dealing with military and territorial questions, if it were to have legal effects, it would then have had to go to Parliament;
4. Assuming it is a legal agreement, hence it would be invalid for reasons exposed herein below;
5. The scope of the political statement is a violation of the three principles agreed by all parties so far in the Minsk Process for settlement of the conflict;
6. The circumstances of the “statement” signature question its validity too.

Text of the Statement

Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation

November 10, 2020 11:45 pm
(Kremlin official translation)

We, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, state the following:

1. A complete ceasefire and termination of all hostilities in the area of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is declared starting 12:00 am (midnight) Moscow time on November 10, 2020. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, hereinafter referred to as the “Parties,” shall stop in their current positions.
2. The Agdam District shall be returned to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 20, 2020.
3. The peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation, namely, 1,960 troops armed with firearms, 90 armored vehicles and 380 motor vehicles and units of special equipment shall be deployed along the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin Corridor.
4. The peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation shall be deployed concurrently with the withdrawal of the Armenian troops. The peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation will be deployed for five years, a term to be automatically extended for subsequent five-year terms unless either party notifies about its intention to terminate this clause six months before the expiration of the current term.
5. For more efficient monitoring of the Parties’ fulfillment of the agreements, a peacekeeping center shall be established to oversee the ceasefire.
6. The Republic of Armenia shall return the Kelbajar District to the Republic of Azerbaijan by November 15, 2020, and the Lachin District by December 1, 2020. The Lachin Corridor (5 km wide), which will provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia while not passing through the territory of Shusha, shall remain under the control of the Russian Federation peacekeeping forces.
- As agreed by the Parties, within the next three years, a plan will be outlined for the construction of a new route via the Lachin Corridor, to provide a connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and the Russian peacekeeping forces shall be subsequently relocated to protect the route.
- The Republic of Azerbaijan shall guarantee the security of persons, vehicles and cargo moving along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.
7. Internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
8. The Parties shall exchange prisoners of war, hostages and other detained persons, and dead bodies.
9. All economic and transport connections in the region shall be unblocked. The Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport connections between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions. The Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service shall be responsible for overseeing the transport connections.
- As agreed by the Parties, new transport links shall be built to connect the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and the western regions of Azerbaijan.

Closer Analysis

This document, whose terms are reproduced above, is a statement and not an agreement. However, the word “shall,” when it relates to evacuation of some territories or positions, contradicts its political declarative value. As the “treaty” will shortly be enforced, not due to its legal force, but by the will of the parties, it thus leads to transfer of territories to Azerbaijan. It will establish a new factual situation that can only be restored through war.

In addition, there is no reference at all to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and its negotiation processes. The latter has been tasked with finding a solution for the final status of Artsakh for decades.

Of great importance, there is no mention of future discussions regarding the final status of the territories remaining under NKR administration (as did President Emmanuel Macron of France in his declaration regarding the end of the war.)

If NKR remains an enclave, the lives of its Armenian inhabitants will remain under threat. Due to the continuous and recently reinforced racial hatred, the Armenians will live in danger. What if one of the parties decides to terminate the mandate of the Russian peacekeeping force (Item 4 of the Declaration)? NKR Armenians are condemned to isolation and oppression if there is no Armenian sovereign or secure link between NKR and Armenia. The territory may deplete quite rapidly.

NKR Armenians may be obliged to re-establish themselves in Armenia, despite their ancestral and rural roots, leaving behind the previous generations whose graves dot the land. But, in the long run, this unfair situation sows the seeds of future wars despite the demographic imbalance to the detriment of Armenians.

The statement is more than a cease-fire; it speaks of “regions” in general terms but does not fix territorial delimitations. That vagueness tends to prove that the “statement” is not enforceable as it is; it requires a proper legal agreement to be concluded, with the borders of the regions concerned.

The agreement is oriented to the advantage of Turkey and Azerbaijan economically, since no compensation is mentioned either for Armenia or for the Russian Federation; The South corridor opens the road for Turkish influence in the Eastern Caucasus and Central Asia.

Armenia does not get anything in exchange for this Turk-Azerbaijani route (Nakhichevan, similarly Armenian in origin, which became an exclave of Azerbaijan, is now wiped clean of its past during its century under their rule, to the point that it is a military outpost of Turkey), not even the opening of borders with Turkey.

And last, but not the least, this agreement does not mention the right to self-determination of the Armenians of Artsakh. Neither the Republic of Armenia, nor the other parties, has the right to decide upon the territorial status of the NKR. This omission of their voice confirms that this statement is at best a political agreement, but not a treaty within the meaning of international law. Armenia had just a mandate to negotiate the cease-fire and the intervention of Russian peacekeeping forces to stop the bloodshed.

Ceasefire or Peace Agreement?

A ceasefire consists of an agreement organizing the cessation of all military activity for a given time in a given space. It can be declared unilaterally or it can be negotiated among the parties to a conflict. It is also sometimes referred to as an armistice, although the two mean slightly different things. An armistice is a military convention which provides for the suspension of hostilities throughout the theatre of war, often for an indefinite period. A ceasefire and an armistice should not be confused with a peace agreement. They do not mean the end of hostilities but constitute a temporary truce. Furthermore, they do not legally end the state of war.

On the contrary a peace agreement clearly puts a definitive end to the war.

The document signed is a mix of ceasefire and peace treaty.

However, this subject matter is of minor importance and not decisive. This argument assumes that there exists in international law legal categories defining “peace treaty” and “cease-fire agreement”, which is not the case. Nothing prevents an accord from being a mixture of the two; this does not affect the legal effect or scope of the agreement.

The fact that there are no final clauses could be interpreted as meaning that it is not a treaty (see for instance ICJ *Somalia/Kenya*, 2017).

Regarding the statement signed by Armenia, there is by contrast a plausible case to make that there is no indication at all that Armenia considered that the statement is a binding agreement whose entry into force only depends on its signature.

Exclusion from the Minsk Process

The Minsk format has been clearly recognized by all parties to the conflict, mediating countries and international organizations (OSCE, UN, EU, PACE, etc.) the exclusive format for the settlement of the dispute. The ceasefires were another example of this acceptance (there were three previous cease-fires negotiated successively in Moscow, Paris, and Washington, by the co-chairs of the Minsk Group). This agreement contradicts all the principles settled on by the Minsk Group co-chairs, namely those of territorial integrity and self-determination principles.

Azerbaijan itself has always insisted on the three principles

fixed in the 1996 OSCE Lisbon Summit: “territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic; legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh defined in an agreement based on self-determination which confers on Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan; guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh and its whole population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the Parties with the provisions of the settlement.”

Signatory Power

It is significant that the signature constitutes the first means of expressing consent to be bound cited by Article 11 of the Vienna Convention. In addition, under Article 12: “1. The consent of a State to be bound by a treaty is expressed by the signature of the representative of that State: “(A) when the treaty provides that the signature will have that effect; “(B) where it is otherwise established that the negotiating States had agreed that the signature would have that effect; or “(C) when the intention of the State to give that effect to the signature appears from the full powers of its representative or was expressed during the negotiation;” 2. For the purposes of paragraph 1: “(A) the initialing of a text constitutes a signature of the treaty when it is established that the negotiating States had so agreed;

No mention is made in the statement about all those required provisions to validate the consent of the Armenian State.

The determination of the competent authority to negotiate is a matter for the constitutional law of each state and it is the authority which is invested by the state constitution that has the power to appoint and provide plenipotentiaries with full powers. It is usually the Executive that is conferred these full powers.

However, the question is not relevant here since, in international law, the signature of the Prime Minister (head of state) engages the Republic of Armenia, but again from a pure political perspective, and not a legal perspective.

Indeed, the ICJ relied on Article 7 of the Vienna Convention to recall that “[c] in accordance with international law, there is no doubt that any head of state is presumed to be able to act on behalf of the State in its international relations (see ICJ, *Application for Revision of the Judgment of 11 July 1996 in the Case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Yugoslavia)*, Preliminary Objections (*Yugoslavia v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*) Application of the Genocide Convention).

Legal Validity of Treaty

In the present case, the validity of the Treaty may be in question from a constitutional standpoint in Armenia if it may be proven that the exception prescribed in the article 46 of the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties is applicable.

Article 46 (Provisions of internal law regarding competence to conclude treaties) writes: “1. A State may not invoke the fact that its consent to be bound by a treaty has been expressed in violation of a provision of its internal law regarding competence to conclude treaties as invalidating its consent unless that violation was manifest and concerned a rule of its internal law of fundamental importance.”

The treaty according to the constitution of Armenia must be ratified by the Parliament and then be referred to the Constitutional Court for a control of constitutionality.

The Item 1 of Article 116 of the Republic of Armenia Constitution (Ratification, Suspension or Revocation of International Treaties) writes: “The National Assembly shall ratify, suspend and revoke international treaties: (1) which concern the basic rights and freedoms of the human being and the citizen, as well as obligations thereof; (2) which have a political or military nature...”

Moreover the item 3 of this article writes that “International treaties contradicting the Constitution may not be ratified.”

And last, if it were to be considered a valid treaty, the circumstances of the signature of the “statement” would question its validity. It must be reminded that it was signed by Armenia for urgent humanitarian reasons. The pressure exerted by Russia and Azerbaijan and the threat of continued military operations, in other words under coercion by the other parties to the statement, cannot be regarded as Armenia’s free consent to sign the statement; moreover, the conditions of this statement were imposed by the other party as a consequence of the full violation of article 2 (items 2 and 3) of the United Nations Charter, which prohibit the use of force for international disputes.

As a conclusion, the circumstances of the obtaining of signature from Armenia, the non-respect of the right to self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, as well as the missing final clauses in the document tend to question the binding effect of the statement.

Constitutionality of the Statement

Article 168 of the Constitution stipulates the Powers of the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court, as prescribed by the Law on the Constitutional Court, shall (3) prior to the ratification of an international treaty, determine the compliance of the commitments enshrined therein with the Constitution.

Meanwhile this unconstitutionality won’t cancel the fact that Armenia engaged itself internationally and must respect its duties if it cannot be proven that article 46 of Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties is applicable.

(Yerevan, 14 November 2020)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

‘Statement’ on Artsakh War by Armenia, Azerbaijan & Russia Should Be Rejected

The leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement, calling it a “Statement,” on November 9, 2020 to stop the 45-day war in Artsakh and return to Azerbaijan the territories previously belonging to Armenians.

This shocking announcement was made by Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan creating distress and despair among Armenians worldwide. There are four reasons why Armenians reacted with such pessimism and grief:

1) After 45 days of constantly hearing from Armenian officials that “We are winning,” all of a sudden we are told that we have in fact suffered a devastating defeat. Even the number of our dead soldiers was underreported, according to the latest announcement of the Armenian Health Ministry. Regrettably, the final toll is expected to be in the thousands.

2) This was probably the greatest loss since the Armenian Genocide 105 years ago. Armenians are demoralized and deceived by their own leaders. It shook the very essence of their souls. This was a humiliating capitulation. The descendants of the Armenian Genocide, who still carry in their genes the transgenerational trauma of that greatest tragedy, are deeply affected by this enormous defeat, exposing their long unhealed wounds.

3) The thousands of young Armenian soldiers killed in the battle have deeply saddened all Armenians. Many are wondering if their sacrifice was in vain.

4) Armenians lost a large portion of their historic territories along with their homes, churches, monuments and cemeteries. Just like the effects of the Genocide a century ago are still raw in today’s generation, this latest disaster will have a lasting effect on the psyche of all Armenians.

A huge controversy has been raging in Armenia and the Diaspora after the release of this problematic “Statement.” The Armenian people, who were united like one person throughout the war, all of a sudden have been divided and at each other’s throats. There have been many ugly incidents in Yerevan, which will hopefully not spill into the Diaspora. No Armenian should commit an act of violence against any other Armenian or destroy any property. Even though we have a very serious problem, attacking each other will not solve anything. At the same time, those who are engaged in peaceful protests in Yerevan should be allowed to do so without any harassment by the government. People’s right to free speech should be respected especially by a leader who came to power touting democratic rights and values.

The next controversy is identifying those responsible for this debacle. Here again we have two opposing camps. Prime Minister Pashinyan and his supporters acknowledge that he

had no choice but to sign the tripartite “Statement” in order to avoid the loss of more territories to Azerbaijan and save thousands of Armenian soldiers who may have been captured or killed. Those supporting this point of view have blamed the previous presidents for enriching themselves at the expense of the nation and not strengthening the military. Pashinyan said that if he had refused to sign the “Statement,” the consequence would have been much worse for the Armenian nation. Azerbaijan would have taken over the rest of Artsakh.

Those opposed to Pashinyan’s position state that the Prime Minister is merely dumping responsibility for the defeat on his predecessors. They point out that Pashinyan made the decision to sign the “Statement” unilaterally, consulting only with the President of Artsakh and the military leaders. Pashinyan did not inform the President of Armenia, the Foreign Minister who just resigned or the Armenian Parliament. They all found out about this ill-fated announcement from the media. This was not expected from a Prime Minister who came to power as a defender of democracy and transparency. Not even France and the United States, the two other mediating members of the Minsk Group, were consulted. Pashinyan also did not respect the promise he had made on August 17, 2018, in front of the 300,000 people at the Republic Square, announcing that he “will not sign secretly any paper on Artsakh.” He added that “if there is such a situation, I will come and stand here, present to you all the details, and you will decide if we are going to accept that option or not.” Pashinyan now claims that this “Statement” is merely a ceasefire, not an agreement on the Artsakh conflict. Obviously, the signed “Statement” is much more than a ceasefire. It is the return of the seven regions in addition to giving up a large portion of Artsakh. As a result, Pashinyan’s opponents seek his resignation.

In my view, there is a much simpler explanation. Ever since the 1994 ceasefire, Armenians in and out of Armenia were totally opposed to returning the liberated territories to Azerbaijan, as were the leaders of Armenia and Artsakh. The only exception was President Levon Ter-Petrosyan who wanted to make territorial concessions to Azerbaijan, as a result of which he was forced out of office. The subsequent Presidents of Armenia knew well that the Armenian people would not accept any kind of territorial concessions regarding Artsakh. Ever since the 1994 ceasefire, there have been dozens of fruitless meetings between the foreign ministers and heads of Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by the Minsk Group of France, Russia and the United States. The Armenian position was that we will consider returning some of the territories around Artsakh, if Azerbaijan recognized Artsakh’s independence. Armenians wanted a package deal rather than a step-by-step solution. The reason was that should Armenians give up the surrounding territories first, Azerbaijan would then be in a position to take over Artsakh itself.

In the meantime, Armenians and the rest of the world repeatedly stated that there is no military solution to the Artsakh conflict which should be resolved through peaceful negotiations. However, President Aliyev kept threatening to use military force to recover the lost territories. Using its huge oil income, Azerbaijan bought billions of dollars of sophisticated weapons from Israel, Russia and others. Armenia also bought some weapons, but did not have the resources to match Azerbaijan’s military buildup. Armenians

did not take Aliyev’s threats seriously. Finally, Azerbaijan secured the support and participation of the powerful Turkish military and recruited several thousand Islamist terrorist mercenaries to fight on its side. The highly technological war with remote control drones and missiles devastated the Armenian military and conquered what Armenia and Artsakh was not willing to give up, despite the heroic efforts of the Armenian soldiers.

Therefore, rather than asking who is to blame for this fiasco, Armenians need to acknowledge that we paid the price for being unable to counter the powerful weapons of Azerbaijan and Turkey which has the second most powerful military in NATO. As Prime Minister Pashinyan acknowledged, if he had conceded some of the territories around Artsakh earlier, there would not have been this capitulation. However, if we had given up these areas without an agreement on the final status of Artsakh, Azerbaijan would have then attacked and captured Artsakh itself.

There are two basic facts that we must all admit:

1) The powerful side always wins in a war, no matter how just the weaker side’s cause is. Armenians did not use the last 26 years to turn Artsakh into an impenetrable fortress. They should have had a defense system to shield Artsakh from drone attacks.

2) When you are weak and rely on others to save you, you would be disappointed and defeated. Armenians kept saying that we were left alone. This is not surprising. All countries make decisions based on their own national interests.

The “Statement” signed by Pashinyan is devastating. We need to find a way to minimize our losses. Besides losing the territories in and around Artsakh, we should not have agreed to provide a corridor through Armenia to Azerbaijan to connect with Nakhichevan. This would allow Turkey to cross Armenia by land and link with Azerbaijan and beyond to other Turkic republics. This is the realization of Turkey’s Pan-Turanian dream which we should not permit at all cost.

Finally, the text of the “Statement,” which is the equivalent of a treaty according to Armenia’s constitution, should be submitted to Armenia’s Constitutional Court and the Parliament for ratification. Otherwise, it would have no legal value. Armenia should also involve France and the United States, the other two Minsk Group of mediators, in the negotiation process to get a better deal.

Even though Pashinyan acknowledged that as Commander-in-Chief he is responsible for Armenia’s defeat, he refuses to resign. Therefore, a referendum should be held to see if the Armenian public approves or rejects the “Statement.” If they reject it, Pashinyan would have no choice but to resign. The elected new leader, hopefully not one from the discredited previous regimes, would then try to negotiate a revised agreement considering the one signed by the ousted Pashinyan to be null and void. This option, however, carries the risk of a fresh attack on Artsakh by Azerbaijan.

I hope Armenia’s new leaders will go through this traumatic experience with sound judgment and concentrate their energies on building a powerful military so they can counter any future attacks by Azerbaijan and Turkey. Finally, this is the right time for Armenia to recognize Artsakh’s independence or its unification with Armenia, thereby introducing an unexpected new factor in the negotiations with Azerbaijan.

Armenia and Armenians at a Watershed

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nor the members of the former government can garner a majority at this stage.

Only when a government of national accord takes the reins of power can the arduous task of recovery begin.

The first order on the agenda is the interpretation and implementation of the peace agreements. As bad as the deal is, there are many ill-defined clauses and loopholes. It is well said that the devil is in the details. But in this case, we may also discover some life-saving angels in those murky details.

The agreement is already under the scrutiny of international law experts who may extract some favorable deals for the Armenia. The most urgent challenge is determining the status of Karabakh because that will give assurance to the refugees to return home.

During these uncertain and fluid times, the greatest number possible of refugees have to return to Karabakh. The depopulation of the enclave will surrender those lands to the same fate as Western Armenia, with no resident population to fight for self-determination.

Currently, the situation is in turmoil in

Armenia. That image is also reflected in the diaspora. Incidentally, who represents the diaspora? Where is the diaspora’s voice? The diaspora is also in shambles. Once a government of national reconciliation takes power in Armenia, that will inspire the direction of the diaspora.

Recently, the diaspora was able to create national unity by default, driven by the sole and urgent need of helping the homeland. This time around, the challenge of the recovery will be even greater to cement that unity across the diaspora.

Unfortunately, diasporan resources will not be sufficient to launch an economic recovery. Appeals have to be extended to friendly major countries and international agencies for assistance as well as investments.

Facing the pandemic is another challenge which can only be met after economic recovery.

With Turkey’s presence in the region, instability will be there for the long haul. That will require Armenia to rebuild its armed forces to be ready for future wars. In addition, a strong army will also deter possible future aggression by Azerbaijan.

Armenia should not only develop its arsenal of drones which gave the decisive edge to Turkey and Azerbaijan, but it has to look beyond to the next generation of weapons and even a nuclear option should be on the table.

Armenia does not threaten any nation but it has to seek the ultimate weapon for its survival, without apologies.

As the geography and demography change in the region, so will its politics. Thus far, Turkey had conditioned the lifting of the blockade of Armenia with the resolution of the Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan’s favor. Now that its condition is met, Turkey will try to reap dividends by playing the good guy in front of the international community.

Turkey has mastered the art of invading and benefitting. It invaded Syria and killed thousands of innocent people and displaced four million people and then Erdogan played the part of patron saint of refugees and bilked billions of dollars in subsidies from Europe to meet the needs of those refugees.

Ankara will try to apply the same policy to Armenia, proposing to lift the blockade as a favor.

This time around, Armenia has to turn the tables and set its own demands. Thus far, Yerevan has proposed to resume diplomatic relations without preconditions. Today, it has to propose conditions: recognition of the Genocide and proper reparations. Turkey is very vulnerable to the issue of the Armenian Genocide, and that is why Erdogan is spending millions to form government commissions to deny the Genocide. It is to Yerevan’s advantage to keep Turkey on the defensive.

Besides, if the borders are opened, Turkish goods will flood the Armenian markets and Armenian tourists will flock to Turkish beaches. What does Armenia have to sell to Turkey?

We have to be forewarned by Georgia’s example. Turkey has colonized Georgia economically and politically under the guise of investments. Being colonized by Turkey is the last thing Armenia needs.

Armenia, Karabakh and the diaspora are at a historic watershed. The Karabakh defeat has to serve as a bitter lesson to propel Armenians forward to a more promising future.



COMMENTARY

Stop the Blame Game

By Raffi Bedrosyan

IT HAS BEEN A WEEK since the statement signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan announcing the ceasefire in the Artsakh war. I am sure most Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora were utterly shocked and devastated, as the official Armenian Ministry of Defense updates until the previous day still gave upbeat reports about the heroic defense of Artsakh by the Armenian forces against all odds, against a combined army of Azerbaijanis, Turks and jihadists which had manpower and resources at least five times larger. Although we do not know the exact details yet, Shushi fell, unfortunately resulting in potentially immense vulnerability for the rest of Artsakh and the Armenian soldiers. Under the circumstances, agreeing to a ceasefire secured by Russian peacekeepers saved the rest of Artsakh and the army, but with harsh conditions difficult to accept by the Armenians.

As soon as the ceasefire conditions became known, the initial shock was quickly replaced with a vicious blame game to find a culprit for the lost war. Seventeen political organizations immediately started blaming Pashinyan and demanded his resignation, labelling him a “traitor” and “land giver.” Protesters attacked the Parliament, severely beating up the president of the National Assembly.

Government spokespersons blamed the protesters for not joining the war effort and not going to the front. The Artsakh president and the minister of defense blamed the lack of men and resources. Pashinyan blamed the previous government leaders for bribery and corruption, ‘eating’ the resources instead of strengthening the army. Several people blamed the previous government leaders for not negotiating seriously, not acknowledging that the ‘liberated’ or ‘occupied’ territories would be given away sooner or later in return for some security guarantee for Artsakh. Some analysts blamed Pashinyan for appearing anti-Russian, and for provoking Azerbaijanis even more by stating “Artsakh is Armenian, full stop.” Others blamed the minister of defense for boasting that “the next war will not be to exchange territories for peace, it will be war for more territories.”

All of the blame may have some truth in it, but none of the blame will bring back the thousands of young Armenians martyred or wounded during the war. None of the blame will bring back the seven territories around Artsakh, or Shushi and Hadrut within Artsakh. It is time to stop the blame game, assess the facts, accept the facts, see the positives and negatives and start working based on the facts.

First of all, we need to realize that all Armenians, in Armenia, Artsakh, and the diaspora, need to share the blame, and acknowledge their own mistakes instead of blaming the others. The only persons not to blame in this war are the heroic soldiers and volunteers, who died or got injured, sacrificing for the nation.

Secondly, we need to realize that the ceasefire outcome is a proposal which was put on the negotiating table for almost 25 years, rejected by both sides with maximalist expectations at different times. It is now imposed not by Azerbaijanis on Armenians, but imposed on both sides by the Russians who did allow the occupied territories to be taken back by the Azerbaijanis, but also allowed Artsakh to be kept by the Armenians. Artsakh is intact, except for Shushi, which is under Russian control not Azeri control, with roads in and out of it still under Armenian control. As stated earlier, the occupied territories would be exchanged for some sort of security guarantee in the past. Now, that security guarantee for Artsakh is in the form of Russian peacekeepers. Provided Artsakh Armenians feel secure enough to go back to Artsakh, Artsakh will remain Armenian and not controlled by Azerbaijanis. Every effort should be undertaken by Armenia, Artsakh and diaspora leaders to start reconstruction and rebuilding of Stepanakert and rest of Artsakh, and to provide all necessary social and financial assistance to the Artsakh Armenians to return to their homes as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the Armenian army proved itself as a formidable force against all odds. The technological deficiency of not having drones nor much defense against drones was the main obstacle to achieve victory. The critical importance of keeping up with advances in technology, not only in the military sector, but in all sectors including biotechnology, electronics, nuclear, transport, etc. will be the key for survival in a hostile environment. I keep wondering if there was enough emphasis on recognizing the importance of drones in preparing for the war, and whether there were enough steps taken to acquire drones from other countries, including even Israel. Every effort should be undertaken by Armenia, Artsakh and diaspora leaders to engage, finance and maintain technical advances.

Fourthly, Armenians again discovered that no other state would be able or willing to help Armenia, no matter how sympathetic, supportive and eloquent statements are made by other state leaders. In whose interest is it to recognize Artsakh, no matter how many petitions, protests or road closures we organize in the Diaspora? In whose interest is it to stop the Azeri advance, gross human rights violations, murders or destruction of Armenian churches? The one and only ally would be the Russians, not because they love the Armenians, but because it serves Russian interests to help Armenia, to place their boots between Azeris and Armenians, to keep their control over Caucasus against other states such as Turkey. On that note, it would be wise for Armenia to adopt a more pro-Russian stance than present. After the situation stabilizes in a few weeks, hopefully an orderly process to hold early elections would help find a more suitable leader in Armenia, adaptable to the new realities.

Fifthly, the diaspora proved that it can quickly mobilize and unite during a crisis. The amount of funds and essential materials transferred during October was more than the totals transferred in the past 20 years. We should recognize that the real crisis is not over, but just starting now, with even more need for uniting the resources of Diaspora with Armenia and Artsakh.

There is now a window of security for at least five years or more, without worry of military aggression or sniper attacks by Azerbaijanis nor Turks. Armenians of Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora must use this time wisely, in full cooperation and unity, in order to prepare themselves for the consequences after the Russian security is lifted. During this time, there should also be diplomatic and economic efforts to deal with the Azerbaijanis and Turks to fully utilize the benefits of the blockades which will be lifted. No matter how much we are bleeding or burning internally, we will need to appear strong, calm and competent with our neighbors to the east and west, as well as to our allies and peacekeepers. Therefore, let us please stop the blame game and get to work.

Leftovers of the Sword and The Big Ideas of the World

By Harry Kezelian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Sirvart-Auntie was a “leftover of the sword.” This remarkable woman, a native of Fenesse, Turkey, and a survivor of the Armenian genocide, was the reason my great-grandmother, Vartanoush Kezelian, her fellow survivor and sister-in-law, made it to America. Sirvart Kerkorian, who was always referred to with the Armeno-English construction “Sirvart-Auntie,” was deeply respected by the succeeded generation of the family for her bravery and for her role in our move to the New World and to Detroit in particular. But few people knew the literal scar she carried on her back her entire life.

Last spring, President Erdogan of Turkey made headlines when he openly used the derogatory phrase “kilic artigi” or “leftover of the sword”, a reference to Greeks, Assyrians, and especially Armenians who had escaped the Ottoman scimitar during 1915 and the ensuing years of massacre in the WWI era. The connotation of the term is to degrade Armenians and other Christians still living in Turkey as some kind of “infidel trash” who had survived the death by sword that the Ottoman Turks inflicted on their Christian subjects. Erdogan associated the word with terrorists. I associate it with a great-aunt I never knew.

Sirvart was the wife of Haji Margosian (we don’t know his real first name), the older brother of my great-grandmother Vartanoush (nee Margosian). Haji was drafted into the Turkish Army. The Margosians as well as Sirvart walked the death march to Der Zor. At some point, they got separated. Vartanoush, after many adventures that space does not permit me to share, ended up in an orphanage in Aleppo. Sirvart was with a group of Armenians that were attacked by a group of...soldiers? Bandits? It’s unclear, but the men were cutting down Armenians with, quite literally, swords. Sirvart was slashed across the back and fell to the ground. She played dead until the men were gone. After the war, she made it to Adana where she married Armenian Legionnaire Khachig Mashlakjian (later changed to Kerkorian) and came to Detroit. Khachig ran into his first cousin Onneg Kezelian in an Armenian coffeehouse in town. Onneg wanted a wife too. Sirvart knew Vartanoush was alive in the orphanage and sent for her. And so, because of this woman who, under her housedress, carried the scar of an Ottoman sword across her back for the rest of her life, I am here today.

Erdogan’s reckless use of the word “leftover of the sword” displays a callous indifference toward the lives of Armenian people. We Armenians have constantly asked for recognition, for some kind of restitution or justice. What justice? Erdogan, and the rest of the Turkish leadership, Turkey as a state if you will, has been unrepentant. Let us repeat that word: Unrepentant. Because Erdogan’s use of this word also acknowledges the Genocide itself. There can be no leftover of the sword if there was no sword, after all. They know what they did. Imagine a world where Angela Merkel tries to rehabilitate the image of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, and not only denies that the Holocaust happened, but spends untold amounts of money to cover up the fact that it happened and wage a propaganda war against the Jewish community. Imagine a world where German immigrants walk through the streets of New York City calling for Jews to come out of their homes. And imagine a world where, all this being said, “leftover of the gas chamber” is a common derogatory term for Jews in Europe.

Armenians are living in such a world right now. Non-Armenians find it hard to

understand why we care so much about a historical event that happened 100 years ago. Many of us had even begun to relegate the issue to a back burner. Some of us were well settled in the Diaspora and concerned with American politics, for example. Others insisted that the current well-being of the Republic of Armenia was more important than “all that Genocide stuff.” The Ottoman Empire seemed like something unreal and belonging to a vanished 19th-century world. We became complacent about Genocide recognition.

We were wrong to become complacent. Not because there is a real possibility of regaining Western Armenia or Cilicia. Not because there is really any possibility of reparations. We were wrong, rather, because Turkey is unrepentant. Turkey and Turkish society have not owned up to what their ancestors did. Yet, many, I would dare say most of them, actually do know that it happened. Certainly their leadership does. And to continue to deny something that you know happened is to justify it. To use “leftover of the sword” as a derogatory term is not even to deny it anymore – it is to justify it. To say they were right to kill Armenians with the sword. To say they were right to cut down Sirvart-Auntie with the sword. And it is also to say that anything Turkey, and by extension, Azerbaijan does in their national interest is justified, and that Armenians’ lives do not matter. It doesn’t matter if grandmothers and children are killed in the shelling of cities. And those who are left, will be “leftovers of the drone.” Turkey has openly helped Azerbaijan in the current war, as we all know. How can a member of NATO – that is, one of the closest allies of the United States, which is supposed to be a beacon of democracy and human rights – do these things, and remain a member of NATO?

William Saroyan in his 1936 story, “the Armenian and the Armenian” assures us that there is no way to destroy the Armenian people. I should like to see any power of the world try it, he says. See if they won’t be laughing about it twenty years after. See if they won’t be mocking the big ideas of the world. There is a famous Armenian song, that was written in America in the 1940s by the Istanbul-born singer and comedic actor in Armenian plays, Edward Boghosian. It is a silly keftime song, everyone knows it, and no one really gives it much thought. The chorus is “Khoski mi khapvik, seri mi havadak, ays ashkharhin mech amen pan sood e / Sood e, sood e, sood e, amen pan sood e, ays ashkharhin mech, amen pan sood e”. The translation is “Don’t be fooled by words; don’t trust in love; in this world, everything is false (or fake or a lie). It’s false, false, false, everything is false, in this world, everything is false.” Many people think this song is merely an exhortation to “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die.” Although the rest of the lyrics, and indeed the cynical view of love, do support that surface meaning, in my opinion this song has always had an undertone that reflects Saroyan’s story of two Armenians who meet twenty years after the Genocide in a Russian beer parlor and speak in their mother tongue in the following scene:

“And the Armenian gestures, meaning so much. The slapping of the knee and roaring with laughter. The cursing. The subtle mockery of the world and its big ideas. The word in Armenian, the glance, the gesture, the smile, and through these things the swift rebirth of the race, timeless and again strong, though years have passed, though cities have been destroyed, fathers and brothers and sons killed, places forgotten, dreams violated, living hearts blackened with hate.”

All Armenians should always have these words in mind. And when Saroyan says that

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COMMENTARY

Now Comes a Karabakh War over Cultural Heritage

By Thomas de Waal

Azerbaijan's military success confirmed by a Russian-brokered ceasefire has rapidly changed the map of the South Caucasus. Attention has now turned to the rich cultural heritage, in particular the Armenian churches falling under Azerbaijani control.

Beyond preserving these precious monuments for future generations and as places of worship, this is a test of goodwill. Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to a cessation of hostilities but are still a long way from peace. On an issue where human lives are not at stake, can the parties agree to a more inclusive narrative of regional history that does not seek to erase the identity of the other? The early signs are not positive.

This is not a simple story. As Azerbaijani armed forces recaptured territories this autumn that had been under Armenian occupation since 1993, the scale of cultural devastation became apparent. Armenians had not just destroyed almost all the houses, but also, in many cases, wrecked graveyards. Pictures of a mosque in Alkhanli village of Fizuli region, which had been turned into a cowshed, caused outrage.

The Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture also expressed indignation at Armenian excavations at the famous Azykh cave, a prehistoric site in the Martuni region which was extensively researched in the Soviet period, and at alterations to the Shahbulaq fortress in Aghdam region.

As Azerbaijani forces moved deeper into Karabakh, the issue then arose of the hundreds of Armenian churches, tombstones and monuments there. Azerbaijan now controls most of Hadrut region and its monuments such as the Gtichavank church, which dates back to the 13th century.

As Armenians prepare to cede Azerbaijani territories under the November 10 deal, they are handing over many significant monuments. These include the Tsitsernavank basilica church in Lachin region and the archaeological site of the old city of Tigranakert in Aghdam region. The Amaras monastery in Martuni region, which contains a 5th century mausoleum and is said to date back to the era of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the founder of the Armenian church, is situated on the new front line and it is not clear whether Armenians or Azerbaijanis currently control it.

Most attention has focused on the 12th century Dadivank monastery in Kelbajar region, now due to be returned to Azerbaijan on November 25. News footage showed Russian peacekeepers at the site.

Azerbaijan's Ministry of Culture has said it regards churches such as Dadivank to be "Albanian," not Armenian. Anar Karimov, first deputy culture minister of Azerbaijan, posted a controversial tweet in which he referred to the monastery as having been "built by wife of Albanian prince Vakhtang."

The "Albanian" reference is to a bitter political-historical quarrel that has raged in parallel to the military Karabakh conflict.

The idea that churches in Karabakh are not Armenian but actually "Caucasian Albanian" stems from a 1960s Soviet Azerbaijani thesis advanced by Ziya Buniatov, an influential

scholar who was later regarded as Azerbaijan's national historian.

The Albanians were a small Christian people in the Caucasus region who had mostly died out by the 10th century – although the Udins, a small ethnic group in northern Azerbaijan, are their likely successors. A handful of old fragments of Albanian script have survived and been deciphered.

However, Buniatov and others argued that a Christian ecclesiastical eparchy named the "Church of Albania" had lasted until the 19th century and that this was proof of a separate Albanian identity lasting hundreds of years longer than previously thought. This ambiguity allowed Azerbaijani politicians to assert that Karabakh's churches were not actually Armenian (and its people were therefore not either) – while ignoring the

day Azerbaijanis.

Similarly, the Azerbaijani authorities have restored the Armenian church in the center of Baku. However they have not put a cross on the dome, and the only public service in the church in the last 30 years occurred when Catholicos Karekin visited Baku in 2010. A smaller 18th century church of the Virgin Mary near Baku's Maiden Tower was pulled down in 1992. In 2008 many graves in the Christian cemetery in the north part of Baku, known as Montino (the main Armenian cemetery in the city), were also hastily razed to make way for a new road.

The Azerbaijani authorities have also restored churches in the towns of Nij and Gabala in controversial fashion. The Nij church – which has good reason to be called "Albanian" as it

is located in a region populated by the Udin ethnic group – was restored with the support of a Norwegian NGO, Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise. However, Armenian-language inscriptions on the church were erased at the end of December 2004, with the result that foreign ambassadors declined to attend the re-opening of the church.

Based on that experience, Steinar Gil, Norwegian ambassador to Azerbaijan at that time, commented, "I am worried because Azerbaijan has a sad reputation related to Armenian religious monuments," and referred to "the almost total Albanization of Armenian churches and monasteries, irrespective of their time of construction."

As members of UNESCO, Armenia and Azerbaijan are both obliged to honor international cultural conventions, including the 1954 Hague Convention which is designed to protect monuments at risk due to armed conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also invoked UNESCO in comments on November 12. But UNESCO mainly operates in a country at the discretion of a national government. So pressure to preserve monuments may come down to mobilization

by international heritage experts.

Well-known monuments may remain untouched after the intervention of no less an authority than Russian President Vladimir Putin, who personally asked President Ilham Aliyev for – and reportedly received – reassurances on the "preservation and normal operation" of churches such as Dadivank.

Simon Maghakyan, an Armenian scholar who researched the Djulfa cemetery destruction, says he is more worried about the fate of lesser-known Armenian monuments. He said, "My fear is that the monuments at the highest risk for immediate erasure are being overlooked, including smaller medieval churches and especially the numerous statuesque khachkars that are nearly impossible to 'Albanize,' given their rich Armenian inscriptions. One of the most prominent khachkars at grave risk is the 14th century Angels and the Cross in the Vank village of Hadrut region, which Azerbaijan captured last month."

Those Armenian and Azerbaijani experts who work to an international standard rather than a nationalist agenda can play a positive role – but only if given the space to do so. Azerbaijani scholar Cavid Aga argues, "By preserving Armenian heritage, we can learn Caucasian Albanian heritage too."

(Thomas de Waal is a senior fellow with Carnegie Europe, specializing in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. He is the author of numerous publications about the region. This commentary originally appeared in Eurasianet.org.)



Armenians visit the Dadivank monastery in Kelbajar region on November 14. The region will be turned over to Azerbaijan later this month. (photo: Jonathan Alpeyrie)

fact that they were built in an Armenian style and covered in Armenian-language inscriptions.

What will happen to Karabakh's Christian monuments now? Judging on past experience, their future may be one of preservation, unilateral restoration or destruction.

Destruction has been the fate of almost all Armenian monuments in Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhichevan. The most egregious case was the razing of the famous medieval Armenian cemetery at Djulfa, with thousands of khachkar cross-stones, in 2005-06. As Nakhichevan is relatively unvisited, this story has not received the attention it would if the region were more accessible.

Unilateral and tendentious restoration has been visited on several monuments on both sides of the conflict.

For example, Armenians have restored and re-opened a "Blue Mosque" in Yerevan, a city which had a strong Muslim identity in the 18th and 19th centuries. The mosque is mostly used for worship by resident or visiting Iranians. A smaller less conspicuous mosque in Yerevan situated at Vardanants Street near the city center was pulled down as the Karabakh conflict began.

The Karabakh Armenian authorities also controversially restored the two mosques in the town of Shusha. The Yerevan and Shusha restorations used the mirror image of the "Albanian theory." Armenian restorers called the mosques "Iranian" or "Persian," seeking to deny any Azerbaijani identity to them – even though it is clear that the Turkic-speaking Shiite builders of these mosques were the ancestors of modern-

Leftovers of the Sword

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he "should like to see any power of the world" destroy the Armenians, he continues to say, "see if you can stop them from mocking the big ideas of the world." Because Saroyan knew that the pronouncements of the civilized world on Democracy, on the Rights of Man, on Justice, were baloney. Edward Boghosian knew it too, and sang "ays ashkharhin mech, amen pan sood e." When we ask ourselves, how could America let us down, how could Europe let us down, this is the answer. And when we, the remnants of the sword, are able to have the wisdom of

Saroyan and Boghosian, we are indestructible.

Does that mean that we should become complacent again and put the Armenian issue on the back burner? Not at all. We should continue to hold Turkey responsible for their crimes. We should continue to hold the West responsible for upholding the human rights that they claim to prize. We should remember the words of Theodore Roosevelt: "...the Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war, and the failure to act against Turkey is to condone it... the failure to deal radically with the Turkish horror means that all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous nonsense." Many people do not know that the context of this quote is actually Roosevelt's suggestion that the US declare war on the Ottoman Empire, which never officially hap-

pened. Of course we know the aftermath. The Holocaust. And now the war in Artsakh. Why? Because Turkey has never been held responsible for their crimes. They have remained unrepentant. They talk about "leftovers of the sword." Such a stance is an outrage. It is disgusting. But it is also laughable. It is laughable because everyone knows what they did, including themselves.

I am not a political strategist. I am only a writer and a student of Armenian culture and history. I don't know the best course to take. But I do know that as Armenians we must walk a sort of tightrope. On the one hand, we have to continually and endlessly remind the US and the other Western powers of what Theodore Roosevelt knew to be true, about what happened to our people and about the consequences of Turkish unrepentance – con-

sequences we are seeing before our very eyes. On the other hand, in order not to become discouraged, we must not put too much faith that the Western powers will actually do anything, because in regard to the "big ideas of the world" – "amen pan sood eh." And we should also not forget, that when Saroyan wrote those words, he wasn't just referring to the noble ideas of the West, but also, and perhaps primarily, to the evil ideas of the Turks. He was also referring to the plans of Genocide and Pan-Turanism unleashed by the Young Turks in those days and the Grey Wolves in our day. And in regard to these ideas, that is, the idea that the Armenians can ever be destroyed – Saroyan, Boghosian, and all the other "leftovers of the sword" taught us that we Armenians will forever have the ability to laugh in their face.



COMMENTARY

Trump Won't Be the Last American Populist

After four horrible, discombobulating years, many Americans want to believe that the United States is on the verge of a new beginning. Former Vice President Joe Biden appears to have squeaked past President

By Prof. Daron Acemoglu

Donald Trump in a hotly contested presidential election that doubled as a stress test for the instruments of American democracy. All the same, this contentious election season should leave no one sanguine about the future. The autocratic, populist turn of the Trump presidency arose from deep fractures in U.S. politics and society, and Americans must understand and address these if they are to prevent similar forces from once again seizing the nation. The roots of Trumpism don't begin or end with Trump or even with American politics—they are closely connected to economic and political currents affecting much of the world.

Fertile Ground

The United States was ripe for a populist movement by 2016, and it remains so today. Vast inequalities have opened in the last four decades between the highly educated and the rest and between capital and labor. As a result, median wages have been stagnant for about 40 years, and the real earnings of many groups, especially men with low education levels, have fallen precipitously. Men with less than a college degree, for example, earn significantly less today than their counterparts did in the 1970s. No serious discussion of the political ills that have befallen the United States can ignore these economic trends, which have afflicted the American middle class and contributed to the anger and frustration among some of the voters who turned to Trump.

The root causes of these inequalities have proved surprisingly difficult to pin down. The rise of new, "skill biased" wunder technologies, such as computers and artificial intelligence, has coincided with a period of singularly low growth in productivity, and analysts have not convincingly explained why these technologies have benefited capital owners rather than workers. Another frequently cited culprit—trade with China—is clearly a contributing factor, but Chinese imports really exploded only once inequality was already rising and American manufacturing was already on the decline. Moreover, European countries with similarly huge trade inflows from China do not show the same extent of inequality as the United States. Nor can deregulation and the demise of unions in the United States account for the disappearance of manufacturing and clerical jobs, for instance, as these losses are common across essentially all advanced economies.

Regardless of its origin, economic inequality has become a source of cultural and political volatility in the United States. Those who have failed to benefit from economic growth have become disillusioned with the political system. In areas where imports from China and automation have led to the loss of American jobs, voters have turned their backs on moderate politicians and have tended to vote for those who are more extreme.

Good policy can begin to redress economic inequality: a higher federal minimum wage, a more redistributive tax system, and a better social safety net would help create a fairer society. Nonetheless, such measures are not enough by themselves. The United States needs to create good—high-paying and stable—jobs for workers without a college degree, and the country is far from a consensus on how this can be done.

Together with economic resentment has come a distrust of all kinds of elites. Much of the American public and many politicians now express a mounting hostility toward policymaking based on expertise. Trust in American institutions, including the judiciary, Congress, the Federal Reserve, and various law enforcement agencies, has collapsed. Neither Trump nor recent party polarization can be held solely to blame for this anti-technocratic shift. The almost complete rejection of scientific facts and competent, objective policymaking among many in the electorate and the Republican Party predates Trump and has parallels in other countries—Brazil, the Philippines, and Turkey to name a few. Without more deeply understanding the root of such suspicion, American policymakers can have little hope of convincing millions of people that better policies, designed by experts, will improve their lives enormously and reverse decades of decline. Nor can policymakers hope to put a lid on the discontent that fueled Trump's rise.

Poisonous Seeds

Populist movements thrive on inequality and on resentment of elites. Yet these conditions alone don't explain why American voters in 2016 turned right rather than left as inequality rose and the very wealthy benefited at ordinary people's expense. In the United States, a right-wing populist movement stood ready to make itself the vehicle for the grievances of regular people and to marry those grievances to a stance that was anti-elite, nationalist, and often authoritarian.

Right-wing populism did not emerge in the United States because of Trump's deranged charisma. Nor did it begin with the news media's infatuation with his outrageous statements, or with Russian meddling, or with social media. Rather, right-wing populism resurged as a potent political force at least two decades before Trump's takeover of the Republican Party—remember Pat Buchanan? And it has analogs all over the world, not just in mature democracies reeling from the loss of manufacturing jobs but in countries that have benefited economically from globalization, including Brazil, Hungary, India, the Philippines, Poland, and Turkey.

That the Republican Party would give itself over to such a movement—and to Donald Trump as its standard-bearer—was never a foregone conclusion. One can argue that Republicans supported Trump because he was willing to execute their agenda: cutting taxes, fighting regulation, and appointing conservative judges. Alas, this is only a small part of the story. Trump's popularity surged based on positions diametrically opposed to Republican orthodoxy: restricting trade, increasing spending on infrastructure, helping and interfering with manufacturing firms, and weakening the country's international role. One can point to skyrocketing rates of polarization before Trump or chide the role of money in politics. Yet these factors hardly explain the wholesale abandonment of many of the key policy tenets of a 150-year-old party. Before 2016, few would have believed that the Republican Party would try to dismiss and cover up meddling by a hostile government in a presidential election.

A Global Unraveling

Trump and Trumpism are American phenomena, but they arose within a context that is undeniably global. Under Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom, the Tory Party is transforming in a manner similar, if more benign, to that of the Republican Party. The French right has fallen behind the National Rally (the new name for the far-right National Front). And the Turkish right has remade itself in the image of a strongman, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Together, these and other cases demonstrate not just polarization but a complete unraveling of the old political order.

How and why this unraveling has happened is not self-evident. The first place to look for an answer is in the major, crosscutting economic trends of the present era: globalization and the rise of digital and automation technologies, both of which have induced rapid social changes coupled with unshared gains and economic disruptions. As institutions proved unable or unwilling to protect those suffering from these transformations, they also destroyed public trust in establishment parties, the experts claiming to understand and better the world, and the politicians who appear complicit in the most disruptive changes and in cahoots with those who have stealthily benefited from them.

From this perspective, it isn't sufficient to decry the collapse of civic behavior or even to defeat toxic populists and authoritarian strongmen. Those who seek to shore up democratic institutions must build new ones that can better regulate globalization and digital technology, altering their direction and rules so that the economic growth they foster benefits more people (and is perhaps faster and of a higher quality overall). Building trust in public institutions and experts requires proving that they work for the people and with the people.

(Daron Acemoglu is a Turkish-born Armenian-American economist who has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1993 and is currently the Elizabeth and James Killian Professor of Economics. This analysis originally appeared in the November 6 edition of Foreign Affairs.)



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