

High-Level Russian Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – The Prime Minister and the president of Armenia declared their full commitment to the implementation of the trilateral statement on Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday, when he and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu arrived for a visit.

“The Armenian leaders – we also met with the President of Armenia – both he and the Prime Minister stressed that this statement helped solve serious problems, helped save lives. And they are fully committed to ensuring that this agreement is fulfilled in the future,” Lavrov said on the results of the talks in Yerevan.

Welcoming the Russian Foreign Minister, Prime Minister Pashinyan said “the most



Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergei Lavrov in Yerevan

important issue for us now is the situation in Nagorno Karabakh. We have to make decisions on many issues, the most important thing is the humanitarian side of the issue, we have to ensure the return of the people of Artsakh to their homes.”

Of course, he said, already now there is a rather good dynamic of the residents of Artsakh returning to their homes. And in fact the Russian peacekeepers have been deployed in all the designated places and are provide security.

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Aid from France is unloaded in Yerevan.

France Sends Aid To Karabakh

PARIS (Combined Sources) – At the request of President Macron and the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France is establishing a structured effort to assist Armenians affected by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Coordinated by a steering committee at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs’ Crisis and Support Center, this mechanism mobilizes the efforts of the government, associations promoting solidarity with Armenia, humanitarian organizations belonging to Coordination Sud, corporate foundations and hospitals. It focuses on three areas.

- After initial emergency actions in recent weeks involving the dispatch of surgeons and medical/surgical supplies to Armenia, several humanitarian flights have been organized. An initial cargo plane leased by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs arrived in Yerevan this afternoon. It was transporting items donated by French authorities: emergency medical equipment, and in particular a Mobile Medical Station allowing for the care of 500 people as well as blankets and hygiene kits to be distributed to people affected by the conflict.

A second flight has been scheduled for November 27. Its cargo will include State resources, donations collected from associations promoting solidarity with Armenia such as the Aznavour Foundation and the Union Générale Arménienne de Bienfaisance, and humanitarian cargo supplied by humanitarian organizations and corporate foundations.

- Following on from the medical missions conducted since October, the second area of focus involves stepping up cooperation between hospitals in both countries. This will be facilitated by financial support from the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. In France, the public hospitals of Paris, Marseille and Lyon have already been mobilized.

- The third area focuses on supporting projects instituted in Armenia by humanitarian organizations and UN agencies. France will provide direct financial support for these structures that are active on the ground.

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Protests Continue to Demand Pashinyan's Resignation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenian opposition groups again rallied several thousand supporters in Yerevan over the weekend to demand Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation and fresh general elections.

Their leaders continued to blame Pashinyan for the Armenian side's defeat in the war with Azerbaijan that was stopped by a Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement on November 10.

“What we are saying is that a defeated leader who signed that humiliating [Russian-see PROTESTS, page 2

Turkey, Russia at Odds Over Turkish Military Post In Azerbaijan - Source

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey and Russia are at odds over Ankara's wish to set up an independent military observation post on Azeri territory, a Turkish source said, after the two agreed this month to monitor a ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Turkey and Russia have already agreed to set up a joint center in the region to monitor the November 10 ceasefire, which ended weeks of fighting between Azerbaijan's troops and ethnic Armenian forces in the enclave.

Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but is populated by ethnic Armenians.

The ceasefire agreement, which locked in Azerbaijan's territorial gains from the fighting, see MILITARY, page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Azerbaijani Troops Film Another Armenian Beheading After war Ends in Karabakh

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Azerbaijani social media users continue disseminating videos of war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

Footage appeared on November 23, after the completion of hostilities in Karabakh, of Azerbaijanis beheading another Armenian man. It is still unknown when and where the video was shot.

In addition, Azerbaijanis have recently murdered three civilians in the city of Shushi. According to Artsakh Ombudsman Artak Beglaryan, the bodies of the dead were mutilated: their ears were cut off, their eyes were gouged out, and their heads were partially cut off.

Azerbaijani soldiers have been filmed committing war crimes in the war that began on September 27 and ended on November 10: shooting Armenian servicemen from automatic rifles and handguns at close range, torturing and brutally murder prisoners of war and captives, cutting off fingers and ears of Armenians, both alive and dead.

Prisoners of war from Nagorno-Karabakh are regularly made fun of by Azerbaijani troops who also mutilate bodies of fallen Armenian servicemen.

World Monuments Fund Calls for Protection of Cultural Property in Artsakh

NEW YORK –World Monuments Fund (WMF) has called for the protection of all cultural property within the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

“WMF is reaching out to both sides to stress the importance of safeguarding humanity's cultural achievements. Recalling that the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia are both parties to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, WMF encourages both nations to honor these commitments fully and proactively safeguard the local heritage,” the organization said in a statement.

“We stand ready to offer support for the documentation and preservation of the many distinct, rich layers of history within Nagorno-Karabakh,” WMF said.

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Protect Our Heritage!

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Hayastan All-Armenian Fund Transfers 52.7 Billion Drams to Armenian Government

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The Hayastan All-Armenian Fund has transferred about 52.7 billion drams to the Treasury's corresponding account from the Fund's "We Are Our Borders" global fundraising budget, Armenian Ministry of Finance said.

It said the mentioned amount is aimed at only financing infrastructure, social and health costs conditioned by the circumstances of the declared martial law.

It said that the money transfer was made based on donation agreements concluded between the government of Armenia and the Fund and it was fully credited to the single treasury account.

"Moreover, the financing of the mentioned costs from the raised donations has enabled the government to direct its financial means intended for those expenses by the 2020 State Budget to the other urgent expenses conditioned by martial law, which, as of November 19, amounted to almost 101 billion drams," stressed in the ministry.

The ministry said also that reports on the money's use will be published as part of the budget execution report.

Earlier, the Board of Trustees made a decision to provide part of the donation raised within the framework of the campaign "We are our borders" to the government.

The government announced that under two of its decisions, about 20 billion drams will be paid to the displaced population of more than 100 communities of Artsakh's Kashatagh, Martakert, Shahumyan, Hadrut, Shushi, Askeran and Martuni regions — 300,000 drams to each person and 68,000 drams and more to around 100,000 Artsakh residents.

Dollar Exceeds 512-Dram Mark

YEREVAN — The American dollar's (USD) exchange rate against the Armenian dram (AMD) comprised AMD 512.31/\$1 in Armenia on Tuesday; this is up by AMD 6.99 from Monday, according to the official website of the Central Bank of Armenia.

The exchange rate for one euro was AMD 608.83 (up by AMD 8.71), that of one UK pound totaled AMD 684.65 (up by AMD 9.09), and the rate of one Russian ruble made up AMD 6.75 (up by AMD 0.09) in the country.

Armenian Church Marks Day of Mourning

ECHMIADZIN — In a poignant ceremony at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin on Sunday, November 22, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II presided over a special "Day of Remembrance."

In accordance with the declaration of the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Armenian churches around the world observed the day with memorial services to honor the memory of the heroes who gave their lives in the war defending Artsakh and Armenia.

Taking part in the service before the massive outdoor St. Drtad altar at the Holy See was Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, high-ranking clergymen and public figures, as well as throngs of military personnel—commanders and soldiers from every rank—who had fought in the recent war effort.

Catholicos Karekin II's quietly emotional sermon expressed grief at the costly loss of so many precious lives in the war, while extolling with pride the courage shown by soldiers and civilians alike. He placed the current crisis alongside the historic cataclysms of Armenian history, but also affirmed that the force that overcame those earlier trials—the Armenian people's faith in the risen Christ — would also prevail in the present circumstances.

Augmenting his earlier urgent calls for national unity in a time of crisis, he said: "Today, in the light of the memory of our martyrs, we now are called — we are obligated—to turn their cherished visions and dreams into reality."

Resignations and Firings Continue In Pashinyan's Cabinet

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Career diplomat Ara Ayvazyan was appointed as Armenia's new foreign minister on Wednesday, November 18.

President Armen Sarkissian signed a decree, initiated by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, two days after the resignation of Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.

Pashinyan announced on Monday that he has decided to sack Mnatsakanyan. The latter insisted, however, that he himself tendered his resignation.

One of Mnatsakanyan's deputies, Shavarsh Kocharyan, also stepped down following a Russian-mediated ceasefire that stopped the bloody war in Karabakh.

Ayvazyan also served as deputy foreign minister before being named to replace Mnatsakanyan. The 51-year-old was appointed to that position as recently as on October 16. He had previously worked as Armenia's ambassador to Mexico and various European countries.

Armenia's Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Youth Affairs Arayik Harutyunyan was dismissed on Monday, November 23, in an ongoing cabinet shakeup announced by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

He was replaced by Vahram Dumanyan, who has worked until now as dean of the Computer Science and Applied Mathematics Department at Yerevan State University.

Pashinyan said on November 18 that he will reshuffle his government to implement over the next six months a plan of actions designed to "establish stability and security in the country" following the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

His announcement came amid opposition demands for his resignation and snap parliamentary elections sparked by significant Armenian territorial losses suffered during the war. The embattled premier and his political allies have rejected those demands.

Harutyunyan, 41, is a close associate of Pashinyan and founding member of the latter's Civil Contract party. He actively participated in the 2018 "Velvet Revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power.

The prime minister's office did not say whether Harutyunyan will be appointed to another position in the executive

branch.

Pashinyan replaced on Friday the ministers of defense, labor and emergency situations as part of a cabinet reshuffle promised by him earlier this week.

Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and Labor and Social Affairs Ministers Zaruhi Batoyan were replaced by two of Pashinyan's advisers: Vagharshak Harutyunyan and Mesrop Arakelyan, respectively.

Harutyunyan is a retired army general who had served as defense minister 1999-2000.

Another, active duty general, Andranik Piloyan was appointed as minister of emergency situations. His predecessor, Felix Tsolakyan, stepped down last week.

The resignations were widely attributed to the six-week war with Azerbaijan which resulted in significant Armenian territorial losses in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Some pro-government lawmakers have blamed Tonoyan for the military defeat in Karabakh. The Armenian Defense Ministry has rejected the criticism.

In a statement issued right after his sacking, Tonoyan said: "Am I satisfied with my performance during the war and the run-up to it? I think that some conceptual directions, which I did not have enough time to complete, need a revision. In this sense, I am ready to bear my share of responsibility."

Tonoyan indicated at the same time that he believes now is not the right time to evaluate his track record. "The existing situation needs to be defused," he said.

Pashinyan appointed Tonoyan as defense minister after he swept to power in May 2018. Tonoyan, who will turn 53 next week, had served as deputy defense minister from 2010-2017, during former President Serzh Sargsyan's rule.

Pashinyan on November 24 appeared poised to replace a sixth member of his cabinet following the resignation of Economy Minister Tigran Khachatryan announced on Tuesday.

Khachatryan took up the ministerial post six months after the "Velvet Revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power in May 2018. The 49-year-old



New Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan

technocrat served as deputy minister of economy in Armenia's former government toppled by the popular uprising.

Pashinyan's 15-point action plan promises, among other things, government efforts to stimulate business activity and improve the economic situation that has worsened significantly since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Armenian economy is now projected to shrink by about 7 percent this year after three consecutive years of robust growth. The government forecast a less drastic GDP contraction before the war with Azerbaijan that broke out on September 27 and was stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10.

In its budget bill submitted to the Armenian parliament early this month, the government said economic growth will resume and reach a 4.8 percent rate already next year.

The International Monetary Fund offered on November 18 a less optimistic outlook for the Armenian economy.

"Real GDP is now expected to decline by over 7 percent in 2020," the IMF said in a statement. "While uncertainty about the recovery is high, growth is projected to remain modest in 2021 and then pick-up as the economy gradually adapts to, and moves past, the impact of these shocks and associated economic scarring."

Protests Continue to Demand Pashinyan's Resignation

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Armenian-Azerbaijani statement cannot represent Armenian interests in the agreement signed as a result of that statement," Artur Vanetsian, a former head of the National Security Service (NSS), told the crowd that gathered in the city's Liberty Square.

Vanetsian's Hayrenik (Fatherland) party is one of the 16 opposition groups that launched anti-government protests following the announcement of the truce accord strongly condemned by them.

The groups also include the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) and the former ruling Republican Party (HHK). Vanetsian insisted that they are not seeking to restart the war or bring Armenia's former rulers back to power.

Pashinyan and his political allies have rejected the opposition demands. The prime minister pledged instead on November 18 to

reshuffle his cabinet to implement over the next six months a plan of actions designed to "establish stability and security in the country." He replaced his ministers of defense, foreign affairs, labor and emergency situations in the following days.

Speakers at Saturday's opposition rally dismissed the cabinet shakeup and Pashinyan's 15-point action plan envisaging, among other things, a major reform of Armenia's armed forces, continued fight against corruption and government efforts to stimulate economic activity.

"In order to stall for time, [Pashinyan] opted for sacrificing his allies and friends," said Dashnaktsutyun's Gegham Manukyan.

An alternative "roadmap" presented by the 16 opposition forces calls for the formation of an interim government and conduct of snap parliamentary elections.

Pashinyan's associates say that the

opposition demands are not backed by most Armenians. They argue that only a few thousand people have attended the anti-government rallies. They also accuse the opposition of exploiting the Karabakh war in a bid to come to power.

"We are not seeking to take power at any cost," Artsvik Minasyan, another Dashnaktsutyun leader, said on Sunday.

"What we are saying is: 'Nikol Pashinyan, you must go, you have betrayed all those aims with which you came to power two and a half years ago, and, having led the country to a defeat, you must give way to someone who can effectively protect Armenian interests at this stage,'" he said.

Minasyan said that Armenia's government-controlled parliament must elect a new and politically neutral prime minister who will improve relations with Russia and hold the elections within six months.



ARMENIA

Young Diasporans Start Artsakh Relocation Project To Aid Refugees

By Harry Kezelian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — “A year from now, they might not remember you, or even remember your face, but they will remember for the rest of their lives that act of kindness,” says Alex Ouzounian, one of the organizers of the Artsakh Relocation Project. Ouzounian is part of a team of 8 young diasporans, all in their 20s and 30s, living in Armenia and the United States, who have started an initiative to fulfill the immediate needs of some of the many thousands of refugees who have poured into Armenia proper from Artsakh.

Ouzounian, a third-generation Armenian-American from Racine, Wis., who has been living in Armenia for about two years, temporarily left his teaching position in Yerevan to spend all his time on the Artsakh Relocation Project. In only a couple of weeks, they have already reached some 20 families, supplying them with food, groceries, cleaning supplies, clothing, and even paying for rent and utilities.

It all started before the war was even over, when Ouzounian opened his own GoFundMe page to raise money for refugees. The page, which is still active, states that the proceeds will be divided equally between three projects: the Homeland Development Initiative Foundation, through which women in rural areas of Armenia will be paid to make winter clothing that will be distributed to Artsakh families; the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) to buy essential items for Artsakh refugee families, and for Ouzounian and his small team to distribute personally to refugee families.

Ouzounian’s reason for taking matters into his own hands was that “politically speaking, NGOs might have to work slower,” in order to fulfill certain legal requirements. Larger NGOs cannot handle the amount of refugees entering the country. As an example, Ouzounian says, “Today we got food and clothing to four families. One of them called us and said we have nine people in the house.”

Some of these families have needs so immediate that they might otherwise starve. Team member Avetis Chekmeyan delivered food to a family taking refuge in the village of Masis, comprising a mother, grandmother, and six kids. The woman told Chekmeyan, “I’m so thankful for what you’re doing, because we haven’t eaten today.” It was 7:00 pm.

An International Diasporan Team

Ouzounian soon realized that his project needed to expand from a simple personal GoFundMe page to a full-fledged nonprofit. He contacted a good friend whom he had met years prior in the Birthright Armenia Program, Hagop Bedrosian, of Los Angeles, a native of Damascus.

Bedrosian loved the idea, and enlisted his wife Ellen Oganessian. Oganessian is originally from L.A. and met her husband in Armenia. They moved back to L.A. where Oganessian works as a lawyer. Oganessian teamed up with a friend, Gohar Dulbandzhyan, originally from L.A. and now living in Grand Rapids, Mich., to create the back-end infrastructure of the fledgling nonprofit. The two women look for donors, take care of much of the financial side of things, maintain the social media and online presence, and find families that are in need.

Ouzounian, who credits Oganessian and Dulbandzhyan with much of the important work, took a leave of absence from teaching in order to be the boots on the ground of the new organization. He is assisted by three other young diasporan friends now living in Armenia. Anahit Setaghaian, originally from Texas, is a psychiatrist who is training to work with soldiers that have PTSD. She has been in Armenia about 10 years. Avetis “Avo” Chekmeyan was born in Armenia but raised in Boston. He is a music producer and also plays professional basketball in Armenia, where he has been living for the past two years. Steve Sinanian, born in Limassol, Cyprus and raised in Lebanon, has an HR background and has been in Armenia for about 9 months. Together, the four take the money that has been donated, buy the food, groceries, clothing, or other supplies, and hand deliver them to the needy families.

Group Expands Operations

To expand the group from Ouzounian’s original GoFundMe page, the name “Artsakh Relocation Project” was adopted and a new website was set up by Oganessian and Dulbandzhyan. The group is trying to be as transparent as possible. The new format enables donors to “sponsor a family.” The format allows the donor to choose how many months of giving they want to commit to, and what dollar amount per month they want to give. They can also do a one-time donation.

The team is itemizing all the expenses and showing how the money is being spent and on how many families. This information is shared with the donors.



There is also a “pen-pal” type program that is being put into place. Donors are asked whether they want to be able to keep in touch with the recipient family through cell phone apps like Viber, video chats like Zoom, or social media. (They are also asked to specify what languages they are able to speak!) According to Ouzounian, this serves a twofold purpose of keeping the project transparent as well as creating a connection between the donors and recipients to make this project one of true human connection.

Oganessian and Dulbandzhyan have set up bank accounts, the website, sponsoring system, and “pen-pal” system, and are working on improving transparency. Ouzounian also contacted longtime friend from their days in the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), Jonathan Pelaez, as a consultant. Pelaez, a third-generation New Jersey Dikranagerdtsi (Puerto Rican on his father’s side), and former chairman of the ACYOA Central Council, is assisting the group with his professional financial expertise as well as general organizational knowledge.

Ouzounian presented the initiative over Zoom at the ACYOA’s Annual Fall Retreat on Saturday, November 14, in order to spread the word among Armenian-American youth. He is also in the process of getting the ACYOA — and the Eastern Diocese as a whole — involved in the project; at the time I spoke to him he had a call scheduled for the following day with current ACYOA Central Council members Melissa Mardoian of Chicago and Alina Grigorian of Racine, two more longtime friends, in order to do just that. (Ouzounian himself is a former member of the ACYOA’s Central Council.)

The personal connections that make the Armenian community such a small world, especially due to the increased relationships and travel between homeland and Diaspora in the last 20 years, are propelling the project. Every member of the group might have a few people they know in Artsakh, but more importantly, can spread the word through their network of Armenian friends and acquaintances to find names and numbers of families that are in need.

Just as one example, Ouzounian shared that Yeretzgin Anna Demerjian of St. Petersburg, Fla., had been calling him with names of families and their contact information. The wife of local St. Hagop’s parish priest Fr. Hovnan Demerjian, she is a native of Armenia who met her husband, a native of Massachusetts, when he was volunteering in Armenia years ago. The couple has long been involved with the youth of the Eastern Diocese. Yeretzgin, Anna naturally has many contacts there, bridging what many years ago was a gap between Diaspora and Homeland. This is just one example; every member of the team probably has more than one contact like this who can supply them with names of families that need help, and every time the team visits a family, they also ask for names of other refugee families who can use a helping hand.

Getting to the Families in Need

Through these diasporan connections, they started with a list of 10 families; most of them within 30 minutes of Yerevan. “Once we get to them,” Ouzounian says, “we ask them if they know another family,” which they always do. Birthright Armenia has a list of families from Artsakh that have acted as host families in the past; they are using that list as well. Ouzounian’s list is up to about 50 families now, though he is making sure to screen them. They don’t give money to the fam-

ilies, but only buy the items and give donations in kind. It is tedious work to do the shopping and get to the families, he says, especially if they are outside the city. They typically buy things like dish soap and clothing in bulk, in the beginning. Going forward they won’t need to keep buying those supplies, but they will need to keep buying food. Also, as winter is approaching, they will need to purchase heaters, blankets, etc. They are also paying for utilities and rent. The refugees have been finding places to stay wherever they can; one family is living in a summer home in the country which has no heat. One woman even lives in an unused sauna.

Donations from abroad are coming in the form of money, and sometimes clothes. They are looking for as many people as they can to donate clothes from Armenia and abroad. They have donated about 20 pounds of clothes so far to needy families. Everyone has been very gracious, Ouzounian says. “You bring them things, and they offer to give you coffee or tea, and I always say no. I realize it’s part of the culture here to do that, but it’s also so touching how people who have literally nothing are willing to offer you the only thing they have.”

At each visit, families are given enough food and groceries for about two weeks. The team tells the family they will contact them in about a week and a half to follow up and see what else they need. Although there are a lot of other groups and people doing similar work, the team feels their role is necessary. There is a disconnect between the large nonprofits and these refugee families, Ouzounian says. The nonprofits might not know where all these families are, and families might not know that there are services offered by nonprofits to take care of these needs. The Artsakh Relocation Project fills in the gaps and is attempting to hold over as many families as they can get to, until the large nonprofits can step in and help the refugees in a larger way. Nevertheless, the project is working with an NGO in Armenia to gain official nonprofit status.

Emotional Responses

“You can see the weight of the war on their faces,” says Ouzounian, “but we can take their mind off of it for a few minutes. We can’t stay long due to health concerns around Covid, but it’s refreshing for these families to see other people, and they have a lot to say to us.”

There are also social problems the refugees face when they get to Armenia. Ouzounian says he met one older woman with a middle aged daughter and son, who felt that there are some people who discriminate against them because they are from Artsakh. When Ouzounian brought them their supplies, the woman was crying and said “It’s been difficult here and it’s just nice to know there are Armenians who still care.” She kissed Ouzounian’s hand, saying “God bless you, we’ll never forget that.”

Ouzounian says, “I wish I didn’t have to do this [that these people didn’t have to be refugees] but at the same time, we are doing our best to assist as many people as we can, and it feels great because we can take some of the worry away from them of having to think about where they are getting their next meal from.” He continues, “I know we can’t change their lives and have it go back to what it was, bring back their father, husband, or son, but we can alleviate some of the day to day problems.”

When the team members visit families, Ouzounian says “They can tell we are from Lebanon, or from the US. They say ‘It’s inspiring that diasporans are getting to us first. And care too, and are willing to help.’”



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Pompeo Raises Concerns About Turkey

PARIS (Reuters) — The US administration and Europe need to work jointly on addressing actions led by Turkey in the Middle East over the past few months, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told French daily newspaper *Le Figaro* on November 17.

“France’s President Emmanuel Macron and I agree that Turkey’s recent actions have been very aggressive,” Pompeo said, citing Turkey’s recent support to Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia as well as military moves in Libya and the Mediterranean.

“Europe and the US must work together to convince Erdogan such actions are not in the interest of his people,” Pompeo said, referring to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan.

Pompeo said increased use of Turkey’s military capability was a concern, but he did not say whether the country, which hosts US military forces at its Incirlik Air Base, should stay in or quit the North Atlantic Alliance.

Pompeo told *Le Figaro* the US administration had still work to do to maintain pressure on Iran.

EU Agrees Coronavirus Vaccine Deal with Moderna

BRUSSELS (Panorama.am) — The European Union has reached a deal with US pharmaceutical firm Moderna to secure doses of its coronavirus vaccine candidate, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen announced on Tuesday, according to Deutsche Well.

Last week, Moderna said its experimental vaccine was 94.5% effective in preventing the virus that has killed almost 1.5 million people and devastated the global economy.

Von der Leyen said: “I am happy to announce that tomorrow we will approve a new contract to secure another COVID-19 vaccine.” She added the deal will include up to 160 million doses.

In August, the EU’s executive branch said early discussions with Moderna had been concluded with the aim of signing a contract for the supply of 80 million doses, with the option of acquiring a further 80 million at a later stage.

It is the sixth deal of its kind the EU has negotiated with vaccine developers, the source said.

Pompeo’s surprise Tbilisi tour

TBILISI — An unexpected and rather brief visit by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Tbilisi came in the wake of the Moscow-brokered Nagorno-Karabakh agreement signed by Azerbaijan and Armenia, Izvestia reports. Pompeo did not make any official statements, with the US State Department noting that all official announcements will be made after Pompeo concludes his regional tour and returns to the US.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili stated that Pompeo’s visit highlights the importance of Georgia, the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region for the US, especially in light of the recent events in the region.

Georgian security expert Vakhtang Maisaia told Izvestia that Pompeo’s surprise visit to Georgia, as well as his tour of Europe and the Middle East were timed to coincide with a number of events in the US and in the region.

“Mike Pompeo is due to address the Senate with a foreign policy report in December. Next, the unexpected turn of events in the region has prompted the US administration to act. Trump decided to activate [his] foreign policy after a lost election, primarily setting his sights on introducing tougher sanctions against Iran. Some even predicted that he might start a war with Iran,” the pundit said. He also noted that the Trump administration decided to pull US troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, the security expert pointed to the events in Nagorno-Karabakh as the final factor.

According to Maisaia, Georgia was included on Pompeo’s tour, since it has a direct or indirect connection to these key aspects of Washington’s policy.

Putin in Interview Details Russia’s Approach to War, Post-War Aid

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin has responded to questions from the media on Tuesday, November 17, regarding developments around Nagorno Karabakh. It has been shortened for space considerations.

He touched on several points, including the lack of recognition by Armenia of the independence of Karabakh

The following questions and answers were published by official Kremlin.

Question: Mr President, a week has passed since the signing of a most important statement by Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia. How do you assess the implementation now?

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: The most important achievement was stopping the bloodshed. I have already said that according to official figures alone, over 4,000 people have died. I think that in reality the figures are higher. Tens of thousands are wounded and mutilated. Look, this is not a movie. This is a tragedy that has befallen real people, real families. Therefore, stopping the bloodshed is the main result.

However, to understand what is happening we will still have to go back into history, literally in a few words. I have to recall that it all started in the already remote year of 1988, when ethnic clashes took place in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Armenian civilians fell victim to these events, and later it spread to Nagorno-Karabakh.

And since the Soviet Union’s leaders did not react duly to these events... let me say it again: these are sensitive issues, and I do not want to side with anyone or decide who was right or wrong. It is no longer possible to determine this now, but it was necessary to put things in order and protect civilians, and this was not done. At that point, the Armenians themselves took up arms, and this protracted conflict, a conflict building for many years, broke out. Eventually, it led to a declaration of independence, sovereignty and self-reliance by Karabakh in 1991. The Bishkek agreements were signed in 1994 and this Bishkek memorandum stopped the hostilities at that time.

What happened as a result? Karabakh declared independence, as I have said, and another seven adjacent regions came under the control of the Armenians, that is, Armenia. This is basically what we inherited from the past and this is the problem we had to resolve.

I believe the fact that hostilities have stopped and, importantly, the parties agreed to unblock the roads and to restore economic ties is critically important and creates a good basis for normalizing relations for the long term.

No one recognized it then or later. By the way, Armenia itself did not recognize it.

Question: Does the problem of Karabakh’s status still exist at all?

Vladimir Putin: Yes, there is this problem, since Karabakh’s final status has not been settled. We have agreed to maintain the status quo. What happens next will be decided eventually by the future leaders and the future participants in this process. I think if proper conditions are created for normal life and relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, between people in everyday life, especially in the conflict zone, are restored, it will create an environment for determining Karabakh’s status.

With regard to recognizing or not recognizing Karabakh as an independent state, there may be different approaches, but this undoubtedly was a significant factor, including in the course of the bloody conflict that I hope has ended. Because the very fact of the non-recognition of Karabakh, including by Armenia, has left a deep imprint on the course of events and the way it is perceived.

To put it bluntly, after the former Georgian leaders’ undoubtedly criminal moves, I mean the attacks against our peacekeepers in South Ossetia, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We recognized the expression of the will of the people living in Crimea to reunite with Russia as just, and we met the people halfway, we did so openly. Some people may like it, others may not like it, but we did it in the interests of the people who live there and in the interests of Russia, and we are not ashamed to speak about it openly.

This did not happen with Karabakh, and this, of course, has significantly influenced the developments there.

Question: The Armenians who fled from Karabakh during the hostilities are returning. How safe is this?

Vladimir Putin: This is a very important, a very sensitive issue. It is to ensure the safety of these people that the Russian peacekeeping force has been deployed there. As you can see, this document bears the signatures of the Prime Minister of Armenia, the President of Azerbaijan and me. All of us are aware that, given the gravity of the conflict, the wounds are still raw; they have not healed yet because there were very many casualties. As I have said, suffering has come to very many homes and families, both in Azerbaijan and in Armenia, as it is. Therefore, it will take time for the situation to settle down, so that people feel peace return to their hearts and souls, which is the main thing. Until then, we must ensure the real safety of the people, including refugees, who are returning to their homes on both sides. This is the mission of the Russian peacekeepers.

Question: That night, immediately after the agreement was signed, news came from Yerevan barely within an hour. Passions flared up there, and we can see that they are still running high. The opposition is accusing Prime Minister Pashinyan of treason, of betraying the nation. But Pashinyan had said, literally the day before, that



Armenia could have avoided the war had it ceded seven districts and Shusha to Azerbaijan, but they rejected the idea, rose to the challenge and fought to the bitter end. Was that possibility discussed during the negotiations?

Vladimir Putin: The return to Azerbaijan of five and later two more districts, which were under control (in fact under control of Armenia, let’s put it straight), was discussed for a very long time. Back in 2013, Russia, acting within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, formulated the conditions which could help launch a peace process, as we saw it. Incidentally, all parties of the Minsk process, the OSCE Minsk Group, including the co-chairs — Russia, France and the United States — accepted and supported our idea.

The fundamental ideas of these proposals included the return of five districts controlled by Armenia at the first stage, to be followed by the return of two more districts, the creation of a corridor connecting Karabakh and Armenia in Azerbaijan’s Lachin district (this is why it was tentatively called the Lachin Corridor), and the recognition of the status quo in Karabakh without the formalization of its final status.

Indeed, I was telling our Armenian and Azerbaijani friends about this all the time; in my opinion, this would have resolved the matter. Unfortunately, we approached a final solution on this basis several times ... By the way, there was a mandatory condition, namely, the return of refugees on both sides, including Azerbaijani refugees and also Armenian refugees, to their homes. This, too, is an unconditional requirement of international humanitarian law. To my mind, there would have been no war, if we had managed to accomplish this and reached agreement on this basis. This is true, and I remain absolutely convinced of this.

Unfortunately, when we approached this, and it seemed that the matter would be resolved on this basis, obstacles emerged on both sides, and we were unable to overcome them. In the long run, the situation escalated into this bloody armed conflict that we just witnessed.

Speaking of Shusha, the issue of its transfer was never raised. I repeat, the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh was to be resolved in the future, and everyone was expected to agree that its status quo as an unrecognized state would be retained.

As for Shusha, this issue emerged during this conflict and continued on next page

INTERNATIONAL

France Sends Aid to Karabakh

AID, from page 1

Finally, local governments, some of which are already actively supporting projects in Armenia, have been invited to contribute to these three areas of focus.

This mechanism for providing humanitarian assistance comes in response to the emergency situation created by the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in recent weeks.

Ambassador of France to Armenia Jonathan Lacôte posted the following on his Facebook page on November 22:

“The first plane carrying humanitarian aid announced by the President of France has arrived in Yerevan.

This plane, which was leased by the Crisis Center of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, has carried medical equipment and medicine to build the capacities of the healthcare system in Armenia, as well as first necessity items for those who were displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and are currently in Armenia.

Macron Calls for Protection in Karabakh

In fresh calls with the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, French President Emmanuel Macron has stressed the need to protect

Nagorno-Karabakh’s population and cultural heritage following the Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Macron’s office said he discussed with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Aliyev late on Thursday, November 19, France’s “priorities” regarding the Karabakh conflict.

“The end of the fighting should now allow the resumption of good faith negotiations in order to protect the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and ensure the return of tens of thousands of people, who have fled their homes in recent weeks, in good security conditions,” the Elysee Palace said in a statement.

Macron also called for “strong measures to protect the religious and cultural heritage of this region,” added the statement.

“The guns fell silent in Nagorno-Karabakh,” Macron wrote on his Twitter page. “We are now working for a heritage and cultural ceasefire with Armenia and Azerbaijan and our partners in the Minsk Group to preserve and restore the treasure of diversity and wealth of the whole region.”

“France is ready to provide, within the framework of the UNESCO, with the Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflicts, its expertise and full support for the protection of the cul-

tural and religious heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh and its surroundings,” he said in a separate tweet.

The French leader appeared to refer to Armenian churches on territory regained by Azerbaijan during and after the war. Armenia has already accused Azerbaijani troops of vandalizing two such churches located in the Karabakh town of Shushi (Shusha).

Yerevan has also expressed serious concern about the fate of the medieval Dadivank monastery located in the Kelbajar district, which is due to be handed over to Azerbaijan on November 25. Russian peacekeeping forces set up a post at Dadivank late last week to protect its Armenian clergymen who plan to stay there after the handover.

France co-chairs the Minsk Group together with Russia and the United States. The three world powers tried hard to halt the war in and around Karabakh that broke out on September 27. The hostilities stopped only after Moscow brokered a fresh Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire agreement on November 9.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed the deal’s implementation with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian on Thursday. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Lavrov “explained the parameters” of

Russia’s peacekeeping operation in the conflict zone envisaged by the deal.

“The ministers agreed that the main priorities now are the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people, unblocking of all economic and transport links in the region, provision of humanitarian aid and reconstruction of civilian infrastructure,” read a statement released by the ministry.

It said Lavrov and Le Drian also discussed “further steps for a long-term and full-fledged settlement” of the Karabakh conflict.

Reuters reported, meanwhile, that Paris is seeking international supervision of the ceasefire because it is worried that Russia and Turkey could strike a deal to cut out Western powers from future peace talks

“We understand that the Russians are talking to the Turks regarding a possible formula, which we don’t want, that would replicate the Astana (process) to divide their roles in this sensitive region,” the news agency quoted a French presidential official as saying.

“We can’t have on one side Minsk and the other Astana. At one point the Russians have to make a choice,” added the unnamed official.

The Astana forum enabled Russia and Turkey to discuss between them how to handle the Syrian conflict and brush aside Western powers.

from previous page

this crisis. Indeed, this happened, but in what context? On October 19–20, I had a series of telephone conversations with President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan. At that time, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan regained control over an insignificant part of Nagorno-Karabakh, namely, its southern section.

On the whole, I managed to convince President Aliyev that it was possible to end hostilities, but the return of refugees, including to Shusha, was a mandatory condition on his part.

Unexpectedly for me, the position of our Armenian partners was that they perceived this as something unacceptable. Prime Minister Pashinyan told me openly that he viewed this as a threat to the interests of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. I do not quite understand the essence of this hypothetical threat, I mean, it was about the return of civilians to their homes, while the Armenian side was to have retained control over this section of Nagorno-Karabakh, including Shusha, and meaning that our peacekeepers were there, which we have agreed upon both with Armenia and Azerbaijan. At that point, the Prime Minister told me that his country could not agree to this, and that it would struggle and fight. Therefore, these accusations of treason against him are absolutely groundless. On the other hand, it remains unclear whether this was right or wrong. This is a different matter, but there was certainly no treason here.

Question: You mentioned the OSCE Minsk Group. Earlier, France and the US as the group’s co-chairs asked Russia to clarify Turkey’s role in the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. Overall, there are many questions regarding the joint center for monitoring the ceasefire, established together with Turkey. President Erdogan and Turkey’s Foreign Minister claimed that Turkey would take part in the peacekeeping mission with Russia. Is this the case? What will the center do? Of most interest, where will it be headquartered?

Vladimir Putin: Regarding Turkey and its role, it is well known, as Azerbaijan has explained on numerous occasions. Turkey has never made any secret that Azerbaijan has its unilateral support.

What can I tell you? These are the geopolitical ramifications of the breakdown of the Soviet Union. So far we have been discussing this topic in broad terms, but the developments we are currently witnessing are the specific manifestations of these consequences. What am I talking about here? Well, Azerbaijan is an independent sovereign state, and has every right to choose allies as it deems fit. Who can deny it this right? This is my first point.

Second, as I have already mentioned, nobody has recognized Karabakh’s independence, even Armenia. What does this mean in terms of international law? It means that Azerbaijan sought to recover territories which Azerbaijan, and the entire international community, view as Azerbaijani territory. In this context, it had the right to choose any ally who could assist it in this endeavor.

By the way, Turkey was originally a member of the OSCE Minsk Group for the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. This means that it was part of the international institution, the international mechanism designed to facilitate the settlement. Turkey was not a co-chair though. There were three co-chairs: France, Russia and the United States. Turkey was not part of this group. Still, it was a member, one of the 11 states.

You can assess Turkey’s actions any way you want, but it can hardly be accused of violating international law. There may be varying subjective assessments, but what I have just described is the actual state of affairs.

As for the peacekeeping mission, it is true that Azerbaijan and Turkey kept speaking about the possibility of Turkish involvement in peacekeeping operations. I believe I eventually managed to convince our Turkish partners and our Azerbaijani colleagues that we should not create conditions or motives for undermining our agreements, which could provoke one of the parties to take extreme measures or actions.

I am referring to the bitter legacy of the past, the tragic and bloody events that took place during the First World War, the genocide. This is a factor that can be recognized or rejected; some people do and others don’t recognize it.

This is not a problem for Russia; we have long recognized it. But why provoke the Armenian side by the presence of Turkish military personnel on the contact line? I believe that President Erdogan was and is fully aware of this.

We had no problems with that. We agreed that Turkey, acting at the request of Azerbaijan, would take part in monitoring compliance with the ceasefire conditions. We will do this together with Turkey. What I mean is that we have positive experience of collaboration in the Middle East, including in Syria, where we are working together with Turkey to organize joint patrols and convoys in the Idlib zone and on the Syrian-Turkish border.

Question: I am referring to subjective assessments. There is much talk about Turkey’s role in this region. What is your general assessment of its role in what has happened over the past few months?

Vladimir Putin: I think that assessing Turkey’s role is not part of my duties. Different people, different countries are assessed differently. As of now, there are different relations shaping up between this or that state and Turkey. We know the history, often-dramatic history of relations between Turkey and Russia over the centuries.

But do you know what I would like to focus on? The fact that many European nations had, let us say, an equally difficult and tragic history of relations with each other. France and Germany are a case in point. How many wars did they have with each other? Today they are jointly performing their NATO defense and security duties the way they think fit and are cooperating within the European Economic Community. They have overcome all this and stepped over it, and they are moving forward in the interests of their nations’ future. Why cannot we do the same here, in the Black Sea region?

Question: There is a feeling that France and the United States resent not being invited to participate in the agreement. Does the OSCE Minsk Group format have a future?

Vladimir Putin: Well, I don’t know about them resenting anything. There is nothing to resent or hold a grudge, where problems are dealt with at so high a level and in such a context, and where the issues at stake are the health, lives and fates of millions of people for a long time to come. Some totally different categories are taken into consideration here. I think that, in fact, this is a hyperbole, an exaggeration – that someone resents something.

Regarding the role of France and the United States, I have a very high opinion of it because France and the United States

have always been in the know, and they have always looked for various options to resolve this problem.

Regarding the signing ceremony and the signatories themselves, please note that, as I have said, I had a series of telephone conversations with President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan on October 19–20. On the whole, I got the impression that we had almost reached agreements on ending hostilities. Unfortunately, this did not work out.

[Regarding aid from the Collective Security Treaty Organization] The CSTO treaty on collective security stipulates mutual assistance in the event of an aggression against the territory of CSTO member states. Nobody attempted to invade the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Therefore, we had no right to become directly involved in these hostilities.

As for whether Armenia felt abandoned, I can assure you that the Russian Federation honored all of its commitments within the framework of multilateral and bilateral obligations, including in the area of military technical cooperation, for which the Armenian authorities, including Prime Minister Pashinyan, expressed gratitude on numerous occasions, pointing out that Russia was fully complying with its obligations in keeping with its obligations in this sphere – sorry for using the same word.

Incidentally, we proceeded from the assumption – you have mentioned the role of Turkey and unofficial armed groups – that a balance of forces should be respected even in the event of such a serious clash. I can assure you that Armenia did not feel abandoned or forgotten. And Russia did everything it could to prevent this. But whatever happened on the battlefield, happened, as Prime Minister Pashinyan openly and honestly said in his address to the nation, in his yesterday’s statement.

Question: Back to the domestic political situation in Armenia, which is very dramatic. The Armenian President is urging new parliamentary elections and a transfer of power to a government of national accord. The country is, in fact, on the boil. Is there a danger that power will eventually fall into the hands of people who will simply refuse to implement what has been signed?

Vladimir Putin: That would be suicidal.

Let me repeat it once again: Prime Minister Pashinyan – he is finding it tough, of course, – but he has drawn the true picture of the state of affairs as it is now, as it was at the moment when we were signing our trilateral statement, and as it is today. I have nothing to add. He told the whole truth in a truthful and absolutely honest manner; I repeat, there is nothing to add here. So, it is up to each side whether it complies or not with the agreements that have been reached, but, I repeat, it would be a huge mistake [not to comply]. I hope that this will not happen. This is my first point.

Second, where the domestic political situation is concerned, this is no business of ours, this is Armenia’s business. Armenia is an independent and sovereign state. This state has the right to address its internal affairs as it sees fit. But if you want to hear my assessment, a country at war or threatened with a resumption of hostilities cannot afford, as was always the case over years past, to behave, including in the area of power organization, in a way that splits society from within. I think this is absolutely inadmissible, counterproductive and highly dangerous. As I see it, we are witnessing, at least in part, what has been happening in recent period.



INTERNATIONAL

President Sarkissian Pays Working Visit to Jordan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian arrived in Jordan on Monday, November 23.

His office reported that Sarkissian was to meet with the heads of different Arab states to reaffirm Armenia's readiness for friendship and cooperation.

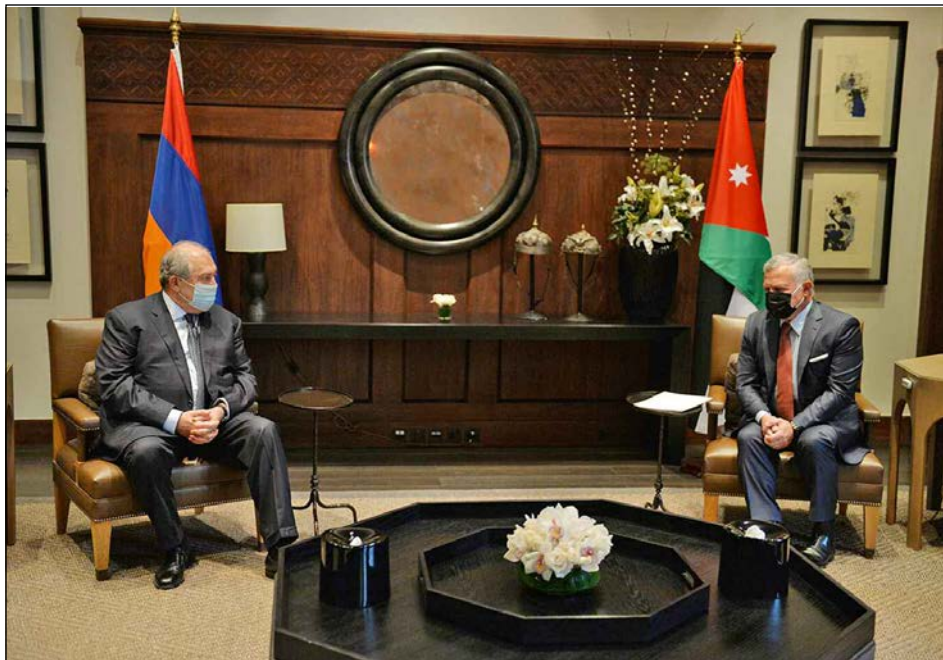
Following the welcoming ceremony, Sarkissian had a private conversation with King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan, followed by an extended-format meeting.

Saluting the Armenian president's visit, the King of Jordan said that the two countries are linked with firm friendship and historical ties. The King recalled with warmth his official visit to Armenia in February of this year.

Sarkissian thanked for warm reception and words of support, as well as the readiness to further develop the relations between the two countries. "There is mutual trust and we can work for the future," Sarkissian said, adding that difficult periods show who are one's sin-



President Armen Sarkissian with King Abdullah of Jordan



President Armen Sarkissian with King Abdullah of Jordan

cere friends.

Referring to the opportunities for deepening bilateral relations and using the existing potential more effectively, the President of Armenia and the King of Jordan expressed readiness to give new impetus to bilateral cooperation. According to them, the two countries have a lot in common, they are the bearers of ancient civilizations, highlight and value human resources. Jordan, like Armenia, has made human potential its main driver of development.

The interlocutors shared the opinion that Armenia and Jordan can successfully cooperate particularly in the fields of the modern

technologies, education, science, health, food security, tourism, and Jordan's experience in working with IDPs can be instructive for Armenia.

During the meeting the sides also referred to the joint efforts in the struggle against coronavirus.

Sarkissian briefed the King of Jordan on the consequences of the Azerbaijani-Turkish military aggression against Artsakh and the situation in that context. The Jordanian side noted that it used its ties and reputation in the international arena to contribute to the peace efforts.

Russian Peacekeeper Wounded in Mine Explosion in Karabakh

MOSCOW (Tass) — An officer of the Russian peacekeeping contingent was wounded in a mine explosion in Nagorno-Karabakh on November 23 during the search for those killed in the armed conflict, Russia's Defense Ministry reported on Monday.

In addition, an Azerbaijani officer was killed and four representatives of the Emergencies Ministry of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic were wounded in the mine explosion, the ministry specified.

On November 23, a joint group for the exchange of the bodies of dead servicemen composed of representatives of the Russian peacekeepers, the Azerbaijani armed forces, the Emergencies Ministry of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and the International Committee of the Red Cross was searching for those killed in the Tartar district, the ministry said.

"In the area of the community of Madagiz, a mine exploded during the search. As a result of the mine explosion, an officer of the Russian peacekeeping contingent was wounded. An officer of the Azerbaijani armed forces died. Four members of the Emergencies Ministry of

Nagorno-Karabakh received wounds of various gravity," Russia's Defense Ministry said.

"The Russian serviceman was transported to a hospital in Baku where he is receiving all the necessary medical assistance. His condition is not life-threatening," the ministry said.

The joint groups established on the initiative of the Russian peacekeepers' command to search for and transfer the bodies of those killed during the armed conflict have been operating coherently and effectively for more than a week now. The bodies of those killed found as a result of this work are handed over to the parties for burial, the Defense Ministry said.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh is composed of units from the 15th separate motor rifle (peacekeeping) brigade of the Central Military District.

The Russian peacekeepers have set up observation posts along the engagement line in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor that connects Armenia with the enclave to exercise control of the ceasefire agreement observance. The peacekeeping mission's command is stationed in the area of Stepanakert in Nagorno-Karabakh. The situation is being monitored around the clock.

In addition, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is working on emergency deployment in Nagorno-Karabakh and plans to launch a mission to assess the needs in early December, a spokesperson for UN Peacekeeping said on Monday.

"The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is working on an emergency deployment within the context of UN assistance requested by the parties, in coordination with other UN entities and the country team on the ground," the spokesperson said. "It will likely start with a needs assessment mission in early December."

Former Dutch Envoy Exposes Azeri Vandalism on Armenian Church

AMSTERDAM (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Former Dutch ambassador to Azerbaijan Steinar Gil has responded to a post by Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Culture Anar Karimov about the restoration of what he described an Albanian church in the country.

Azerbaijan, in particular, "restored" the church by replacing its Armenian inscription with glass art in a settlement called Nij.

According to Gil, the church was built in 1823 and belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church. It was restored in the beginning of the century with the financial assistance of the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise.

"In December 2004, before the restoration was finished, Armenian inscriptions on the tympanum and on tombstones outside the church were erased. At a later stage a cross was placed on the tympanum. The authorities were informed about the erasure of the inscriptions, but nobody has been brought to account for this vandalism," Gil added.

Jon Ramberg, who was Gil's successor as Norway's ambassador to Azerbaijan, said in the comments of Gil's post that he also made several visits to the Udi community and their church in Nij.

"Their representatives readily admitted to the vandalism, and at least some regretted it," he said.

"Neither Steinar nor I have any other interest than trying to establish some truth in these matters. We also share the hope that the time will come when people across the borders in South Caucasus will be able to view their common history as what it is - one of constant interaction, peacefully at times, violent at others."

Azerbaijanis have a record of destroying



The changed Armenian inscription in the Nij Church

and vandalizing Armenian heritage, and if an Armenian place of worship is preserved, it is usually because they present it as a "Christian Albanian church."

The ancient Armenian monastery of Davivank, the ruins and the archeological site of Tigranakert, Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi and hundreds of other historic monuments will be left to Azerbaijan, under a statement on the cessation of hostilities in Karabakh. At the moment, Russian peacekeepers have been deployed to the area near Davivank to ensure the safety of both the church and the perisoners. Azerbaijanis, meanwhile, have already destroyed the domes of Saint John the Baptist Church in the city of Shushi, which has come under Azerbaijan's control as a result of the war.

Turkey, Russia at Odds Over Turkish Military Post in Azerbaijan - Source

MILITARY, from page 1

involves the deployment of some 2,000 Russian peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian and Turkish officials have still to agree on the parameters of the monitoring mechanism, but Turkey, a staunch ally of Azerbaijan, also wants its own independent observation post to boost its influence in a region it sees as key to its own security.

"The biggest difference of opinion right now is the observation post Turkey will establish on Azerbaijan's lands," the Turkish source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Russia thinks it is unnecessary for Turkey to establish an observation post in the region independent of the joint center. However, this is necessary for Turkey."

The source said talks would continue in Moscow and that Turkey expected eventually to reach a compromise with Russia.

There was no immediate comment on the matter from Russia, Armenia or Azerbaijan.

Turkey has backed Azerbaijan, with which it has close ethnic and cultural ties, since the start of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict nearly 30 years ago and has demanded the withdrawal of Armenian forces from all Azeri territory.

France said last week it wanted international supervision to implement the ceasefire, concerned that Russia and Turkey could strike a deal to cut out Western powers from future peace talks.

Community News

2020 TCA Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund Awards

WATERTOWN – The management of Tekeyan Cultural Association's Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund has announced the names of Armenian students awarded in 2020 for their academic studies. They are:



Nelli Petrosyan from Yerevan, Armenia, University of Geneva, Switzerland, Faculty of Social Sciences, Master Degree In Political Science, 2019-2021, Graduating March 2021.



Lily Arslanian from Boston. Boston University, Bachelor of Arts in International Relations – Focus on Security Studies in the Middle East. Graduating May 2021.



Noted journalist and Armenian activist Dr. Nubar Berberian passed away on November 23, 2016. His estate has bequeathed to the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.. The Board of Directors of TCA decided to establish the irrevocable “Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund” and accomplish his will by publishing a book of his Armenian language articles and editorials and use yearly interests to give awards to college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science. This year is the third award.

To apply for 2021 awards, email your request to TCADirector@aol.com.

TCA Central Board of Directors,
November 23, 2020



Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, fourth from left, and Artsakh Representative Robert Avetisyan, second from right, with Nevada Armenian activists

Nevada State Clark County Recognizes Independence of Artsakh

LAS VEGAS – On November 17, Nevada State's Clark County Commission adopted a Proclamation recognizing the independence of the Republic of Artsakh and its right to self-determination and freedom.

The session held at the Clark County Government building was attended by the Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian and the Permanent Representative of Artsakh to the U.S. Robert Avetisyan. The authors of the proclamation were Clark County Commissioners Michael Naft and Justin Jones, who made a statement about the humanitarian crisis that the Armenians of Artsakh are subjected to as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression supported by Turkey.

The Proclamation was presented to the Honorary Consul of Armenia in Las Vegas Adroushan Andy Armenian and to Lenna Hovanesian Esq., Co-Chair of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Nevada.

Amongst the attendees were the Armenian clergy and representatives of the community. However, due to Covid-19, restrictions the number of people in the Government Building was limited, therefore community activists and supporters were gathered outside to welcome the presentation of the Proclamation and to show their appreciation to the Clark County Board of Commissioners.

Baibourtian expressed his appreciation to Armenian and to Hovanesian for their efforts.

Baibourtian had weeks ago written a letter to the elected officials of the State of Nevada calling for the recognition of the Republic of Artsakh, presenting relevant argumentation.

On the same day, Baibourtian and Avetisyan met with the Armenian community of Las Vegas.

The program took place at St. Geragos Church and was hosted by Very Rev. Sasoun Zmrughlyan.

During the meeting that lasted for about three hours, Baibourtian and Avetisyan presented the situation in Artsakh due to the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression, and also touched upon issues related to Armenia. The meeting was attended by the pastor of St. Garabed Church in Las Vegas, Father Vahan Gosdanian, Rev. Sam Agulian of the Armenian Evangelical Church, representatives of the Armenian community of Las Vegas, members of community organizations.



St. Garabed Church in Las Vegas,

Middlesex Sheriff's Office Awarded \$1.15 Million Federal Grant to Address Opioid Use Disorder

MEDFORD, Mass. – The Middlesex Sheriff's Office has been awarded a \$1.15 million federal grant to help support justice-involved individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and their families, Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian announced during a virtual press conference on Tuesday, November 17, 2020.

The Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSS-AP) grant was awarded to the Middlesex Sheriff's Office (MSO) by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The funding will be used to launch the Involving Families in Treatment of Inmates with Opioid Use Disorder Project.

“This grant will help us enhance and expand our nationally recognized Medication Assisted Treatment And Directed Opioid Recovery (MATADOR) Program by supporting efforts to directly engage families of incarcerated individuals with Opioid Use Disorder,” said Sheriff Koutoujian. “Families are critical supports for individuals with Opioid Use and all Substance Use Disorders. By providing loved ones with crucial information, tools and even counseling, we believe we can improve outcomes for individuals, families and our communities.”

In addition to building off the existing MATA-



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian

DOR program, the project will also build on the MSO's Family Resource and Outreach Coordinator initiative. The Family Resource and Outreach Coordinator position was established earlier this year to engage families through outreach and education, as well work with correctional staff to respond to inquiries, requests and concerns raised by family members of individuals in the custody of the MSO.

As part of the Involving Families in Treatment of Inmates with Opioid Use Disorder Project, the MSO will:

Develop and implement naloxone trainings and naloxone distribution for family members of incarcerated individuals with OUD.

Establish a comprehensive family services program for incarcerated individuals with Substance Use Disorder (SUD). This includes outreach to families, educational programs on SUD, family counseling and support groups.

The project will be advised and evaluated by Dr. Andrew Kolodny and Gail Strickler of Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

“Involving families in addiction treatment is a best practice supported by strong evidence,” said Kolodny. “Opioid addiction is a life-threatening disease and improving outcomes means saving lives.”

Since its launch in 2015, over 900 individuals have participated in MATADOR. There are currently nearly 420 active MATADOR participants, 340 of whom are receiving post-release care, while approximately 80 are presently receiving care at the Middlesex Jail & House of Correction. Of all those who completed six months of post-release MATADOR services, just 13 percent recidivated within one year.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

Rita Sargsyan, Former First Lady Of Armenia, Dies of COVID-19

YEREVAN – Rita Sargsyan, the wife of former leader of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, died on November 20 due to complications from COVID-19. She was 58.

She was born Rita Aleksandri Dadayan in Stepanakert, Artsakh, on March 6, 1962.

She had been hospitalized in critical condition on November 16 at the Nairi Medical Center in Yerevan.



She was a music teacher by training.

In 1983, she married her husband, Serzh. They have two daughters, Anush and Satenik and four grandchildren, Mariam, Rita, Ara, and Serzh.

Rita Sargsyan sponsored the Donate Life charity foundation, which assists children suffering from blood cancer and other severe diseases, as well as the Autism and Aragil national foundations.

In addition, she oversaw the Aram Khachaturian International Contest of Classical Music and the Yerevan International Music Festival hosted by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan offered his condolences, noting that she "led valuable social and public activities aimed at fostering cultural life in the country."

President Armen Sarkissian personally visited Serzh Sargsyan to express his condolences.

Speaker of Parliament of



Rita and Serzh Sargsyan

Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan sent a letter of condolences in which he wrote, "Rita Sargsyan has had a great investment in saving lives of many Armenian children, recovering the health con-

dition of military disabled, as well as implemented important social programs. I extend my condolences to you, your family members and relatives."

Archbishop Sebouh Chouldjian Passes Away from Covid-19



YEREVAN (Combined sources) – On the morning of Thursday, November 19, Archbishop Sebouh Chouldjian, Primate of the Diocese of Gougark (headquartered in Vanadzor, Armenia), died of Covid-19.

The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin released the following statement: "The death of His Holiness is a great loss for the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Diocese of Gougark and its faithful children."

Archbishop Chouldjian, who was born in Malatya, Turkey, in 1959, received his primary education as Istanbul's Nersesian School before his family resettled in Armenia in 1969. As a native of Turkey and former Istanbul resident, the archbishop had a special place in the hearts of Istanbul-Armenians. Meanwhile, he was the Primate of Gougark, a mostly rural area in northern Armenia which includes the city of Vanadzor and the region of Lori.

The Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos* wrote the following: "The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin related the sad news, which caused deep grief for the multitudes of people that loved him. Archbishop Sebouh Chouldjian, especially in Vanadzor where he held office, produced fruitful labor, above all in organizing a children's camp, which housed hundreds of kids in the summer months, ensuring them happy times along with patriotic and spiritual education."

"Archbishop Sebouh Chouldjian put forth his candidacy in the Istanbul Patriarchal elections [in 2010], but the dark circles that forbade Archbishop Karekin Bekjian's locum-tenancy also, by treachery, blocked Chouldjian *Srpazan's* candidacy."

Agos further editorialized that "The Armenian Apostolic Church, with the death of Archbishop Sebouh Chouldjian, loses one who was truly sworn and dedicated to it, reminding us of the words Barouyr Sevag wrote about Gomidas Vartabed: 'A Biblical staff, which turns whatever it touches into a spring of water.'"

According to Istanbul's *Jamanak* newspaper, Patriarch of Istanbul Sahag II Mashalyan also sent his condolences to Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, and released a lengthy statement in the press, as well as requesting all Istanbul churches to hold a memorial service for Archbishop Chouldjian on Sunday, November 22.

Dr. Hratch Manoukian

MOONACHIE, N.J. – The family of Dr. Hratch Manoukian of New Jersey announce the sad news of his death.

A devoted patriot and philanthropist, Hratch was a Vanetsi at heart, always following news of Armenia and supporting numerous efforts in the homeland. Hratch always believed in strengthening Armenia and Artsakh, rebuilding and improving the lives of Armenians.

He leaves his wife Shoghig (Azirian) of Essex Fells, NJ, sons Viken and Shahe, daughter Lara, as well as grandchildren, extended family and friends from all corners of the Armenian diaspora.

The the Manoukian family has asked that donations in lieu of flowers be made to the Tufenkian Foundation, 20 Capitol Drive, Moonachie, NJ 07074. All donations will go toward Artsakh relief, and will be matched by the Manoukian family.



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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARIES

Prof. Samvel S. Jeshmaridian

Dedicated Teacher, Prolific Scholar

NEW YORK — Prof. Samvel Sergei Jeshmaridian passed away suddenly of a massive stroke on October 14, 2020 at his home in Manhattan, at age 67. Professor Jeshmaridian was known internationally as a multilingual scholar, prolific author, popular teacher, and gracious gentleman whose psychological science career spanned four decades.

Jeshmaridian was born on December 10, 1952 in Yerevan, Armenia, the youngest child of Arpine (Parsadanyan) and Sergey Jeshmaridian. His family name Jeshmaridian is translated as “Truth.” Before the 1917 Revolution, his grandfather Samson bek Meliq-Parsadanyan owned the Kapan Copper Mine, which helped finance the defence of Zangezur province in those early years.

Jeshmaridian earned his degree in linguistics at Yerevan State University in 1974, and taught languages in Yerevan for years, before earning his doctorate in psychology from the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia (1990), where he rose to Senior Researcher and Scientific Secretary in the Academy’s Institute of Philosophy and Law (1983-1994), and developed “psychology in English” classes in Yerevan.

In 1993 Jeshmaridian was selected as an IREX Scholar, for one year in New York City at St. Francis College, with Professor Uwe Gielen’s Institute for International and Cross-Cultural Psychology (IICCP).

In 1996 Jeshmaridian was selected as a Senior Fulbright, to serve at Fordham University with Prof. Harold Takooshian. In 2005, he was appointed a Kennan Scholar with the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington DC.

Following a near-fatal stroke in 2006, Jeshmaridian remained in the US, teaching and researching as an adjunct professor at three schools in New York City: Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), Technical Career Institute (TCI) with Dean Michael Meir, and Saint Francis College. As a teacher, Jeshmaridian enjoyed a reputation as a



in research conferences.

With Professor Rivka Meir, Jeshmaridian co-founded at TCI in 2011 a chapter of Psi Beta, the National Honor Society in Psychology. He was later elected the Psi Beta Vice President for Eastern US.

As a multilingual scholar, Jeshmaridian published more than 100 articles in five languages, on diverse topics in history, cross-cultural, and social psychology.

He was elected a Fellow of the American Psychological Association in 2011, based on his “unusual and outstanding” contribution to psychological science.

Jeshmaridian was known for his work with diverse scientific organizations, collaborating with noted leaders like Doctors Ani Kalayjian, Jerry Rudmann of Psi Beta, and Artemis Pipinelli of the NYS Psychological Association.

In 2020, after 15 years of being away from his family in Yerevan and Moscow, Jeshmaridian had an airline ticket for this October 23, to finally reunite with his wife Arevik, children Arpine and Aram, grandchildren German and Karen, and two grandsons he had never met – Samvel and Erik. With his unexpected death on October 14, his ashes now will be sent to his family.

Since Jeshmaridian was beloved by many on both sides of the Atlantic, a global Zoom webinar will be hosted in late November, where friends can share their oral or written memories of this gracious scholar. For details, contact: takoosh@aol.com

versatile and innovative instructor who taught a wide array of courses. He was a popular instructor who filled classrooms, and was known for bringing a large entourage of motivated students when participating

Mardiros (Martik) Petrossian

Dedicated to Family, Community

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 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 & Kate, Taleen, Michael, Armen, Bobby, Natalie, Patrick, Alex, Phillip, Christina, Ella, Lia, great grandchildren: Declan and Sloane, nephews, nieces and friends.

Martik was born in Rostov-on-Don in Russia, the son of Mihran and Vartanoush Petrossian, and eldest brother of Mano, Onnik and Raffik. After the Russian revolution, they moved from Russia to Tabriz, Iran, and subsequently to Tehran.

Martik completed high school and entered the engineering school at Tehran University, where he graduated at the top of his class and earned a full scholarship, from the government, to attend Cornell University and University of Maryland to complete his Master of Science in civil engineering in 1952. Then, he joined the JE Greiner Consulting firm as a senior engineer on the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Maryland for two years. After completing this project, he continued to work with Greiner for another year.

In 1955, upon receiving news of his father’s illness in Tehran, Martik returned home for what was supposed to be a short visit. While back in Tehran, Martik fell in love with his future wife, Elik, and decided to stay and start their family there.

He started working as Chief Civil Engineer

for the US engineering consulting firm Lichfield Panere. After a few years, he founded his own engineering consulting firm, Honar, with two partners focusing on infrastructure and urban development projects including highways and power stations and airports throughout Iran.

At the onset of the Iranian revolution, he formally moved back to the US with his wife and youngest son and settled in Belmont, joining three of his children who were already studying in the US, while his eldest daughter and her family stayed back. As he gradually adjusted to a slower pace in life, he increased his involvement in the Armenian community and cultural activities including serving on the board of the St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School. He also supported schools in Armenia.

Martik played the violin during his younger years, loved classical music, exercised regularly, enjoyed both playing and watching tennis. He loved attending his grandchildren’s events.

Martik was a man of faith. He was kind and loving, generous, intelligent, positive, honest, supportive, dedicated to his family, grounded, and had a great sense of humor and was ultimately an exemplary role model.

Martik lived a full and dignified life. His last moments at home were calm and peaceful. He will be dearly missed.

Due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, private funeral services were held at Saint Stephen’s Armenian Church in Watertown. We will have a memorial celebration of Martik’s life 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 or St. Stephen’s Armenian Apostolic Church, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown, MA 02472. Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.



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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
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- 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.

We look forward to receiving your offers. Let’s stay strong for Artsakh!

For more information, please contact us at: Americans4Artsakh@gmail.com

Subject: Stay Strong with Artsakh!

In your message, please indicate the time you can dedicate to this project, and kindly include a link to your portfolio, CV, or website.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Memorial Church Hosts Drive-Thru Breakfast for Artsakh Fundraiser

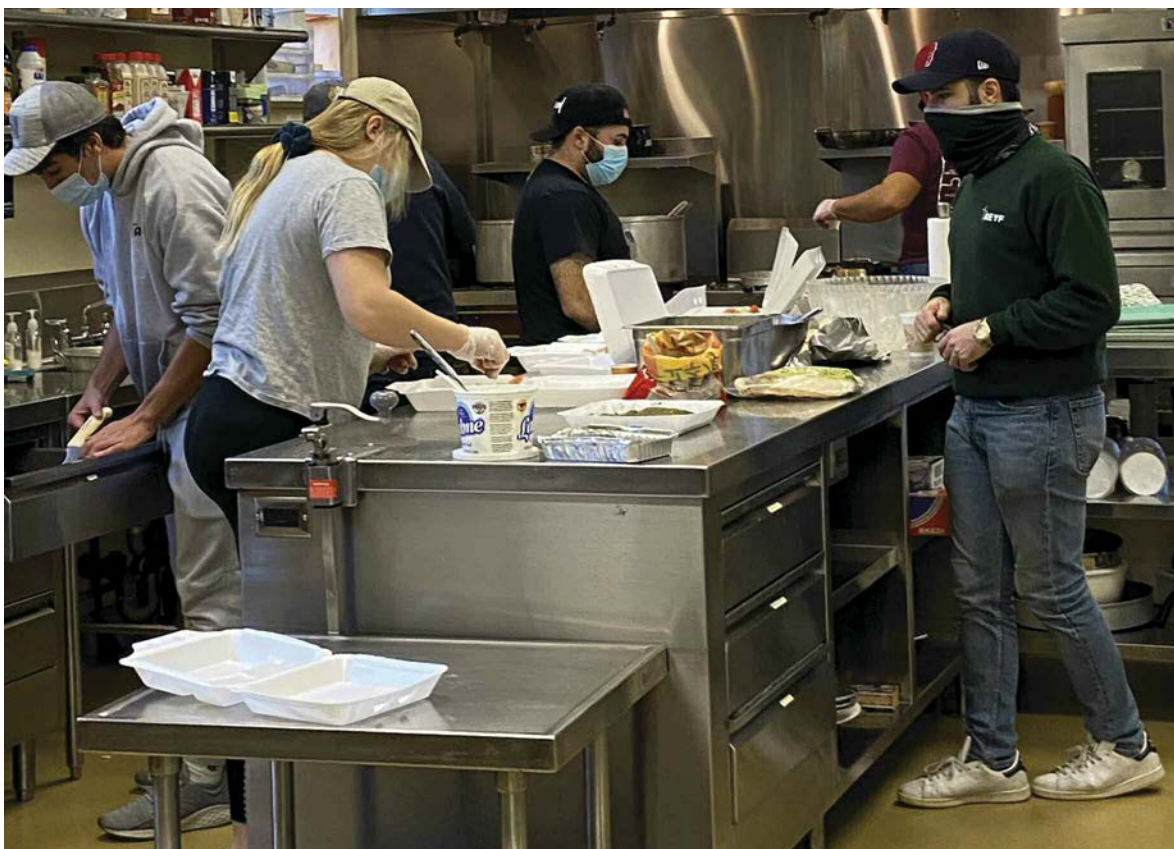
WATERTOWN – On Saturday November 14, the parishioners of the Armenian Memorial Church hosted the “Drive-Thru Breakfast for Artsakh” fundraiser at the church. Volunteers served more than 120 plates of breakfast, 78 orders of mammounia and 28 orders of coffee. In total, the event raised more than \$4,500 between food orders and general donations. All of the money collected went to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) for its All for Artsakh campaign.

These donations will go to feed, clothe and house those Armenians that were displaced by the recent Azeri aggression. To provide reference, \$10 can feed a family for a week in Armenia. Thousands of displaced Armenians will be served through these donations.

Hundreds of families were in attendance of the event in Watertown.

The event was staffed by many volunteers who cooked, cleaned and delivered meals all while following the strictest COVID-19 guidelines.

The church thanks all who donated, along with Aram Shishmanian, Arie and Norayr Orchanian, Arpi Sarian and Arpi and Badveli Avedis Boynerian who extensively helped with the planning of the event. Volunteers who served selflessly for many hours included: Alex Heghinian, Antranig Boynerian, Ara Jizmejian, Araz Asjian, Cedric Jizmejian, Hagop Ashjian, Megan Kaloukian, Sylvia Jizmejian, Shant Orchanian and Vrej Ashjian.



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

Watertown Candlelight Vigil for Peace Remembers And Honors Fallen Soldiers of Artsakh

By Kenneth Martin

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN — Sadness and hope marked a very special event held on Artsakh Street in East Watertown, late Sunday afternoon, November 22. Greater Boston area Armenians gathered in front of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church for a program sponsored by Eva Medzorian. The recent war between the Artsakh Republic and the combined forces of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Israel, Pakistan, and ISIS, ended in a ceasefire and large loss of life and territory in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). The President of Armenia and the Catholicos of All Armenians in Echmiadzin declared November 22 to be the day of remembrance throughout the world of the fallen heroes. Consequently, to remember and honor the loss of more than 2,500 Armenian soldiers, mostly young men, who defended the region, including the cities of Shushi and Stepanakert, event organizers produced a multimedia event on the front steps of the church.

Father Antranig Baljian led the clergy in prayers for the martyred soldiers. The other Armenian priests participating, all from Boston-area Armenian churches, included Frs. Vasken Kouzouian, Arakel Aljalian, Khachatur Vazgen Kesablian, and Vart Gyozyan.

Images flashed from a large display screen of the fallen young men and recorded music accompanied the pictures with a standing board of their portraits nearby for visitors to see. Master of ceremonies Arminé Manukyan, principal of the Erebuni Armenian School, welcomed the more than 200 attendees, most in family groups, to the event and spoke in Armenian.

She said: "We are gathered today to honor our fallen soldiers. Today, Armenians feel frustrated, defeated, confused and angry. We carry pain and we feel helpless, but we our spirits cannot be broken. In these last 45 days, I have never seen my people so united. And I hope that the unity will last forever and we stay together. Armenia needs us. We cannot afford to divide and weaken."

"The diaspora is the backbone of our homeland. We are not in Armenia physically but we have a lot to do. I am telling this particularly to the young generation: use your knowledge, use your professional connections to impact our homeland's prosperity and contribute to Armenia's development. A thriving economy is key to Armenia's future — and so is security. Helping Armenia develop democratically, advance economically, and establish a strong and secure country are the keys to a strong Armenia."

"Tonight we are praying for our fallen soldiers who died defending Artsakh. We want to tell the parents of our brave soldiers that we are mourning with them, we hear them, we feel their pain, and they are in our prayers. We want to tell them that their children are heroes, and because they gave their lives, others are able to live. Eternal glory to our martyrs."

Arman Manoukian spoke about the great losses of Armenians throughout history including ancient defeats and destruction of armies by great powers, massacres leading to the Genocide of 1915 and even the loss of a whole country, the first independent Republic of Armenia in 1920. Throughout it all Armenians maintained presence on their ancient lands. This time even though there was defeat and loss of territory some of Artsakh was preserved and the borders of Armenia are intact. Armenians will recover and rebuild and that's the positive part of what has happened. Armenians will recover once again.

A haunting rendition of Gomidas' Groong [Stork], was performed by vocalist Lucia Papikian and several duduk (reed pipes) performances by Zori Babroudi and Mher Mnatsakanyan transfixed the audience and the entire neighborhood into a meditative state as everyone placed candles on the stairs of the church. The gathering slowly separated as Martin Haroutunian played a shvi flute, ending the evening.

The organizers of the memorial event, one sure to become part of local Armenian-American lore, included Eva Medzorian, Anahid Hovhannisyan, Mary Kyuregyan, Rubina Simikyan, Natalie Gevorgyan, Ani Pepanyan,



Julie Der-Torossian, Anahid Ohanyan, Zara Kuzelian, and Arminé Manukyan. According to

the online event invitation, the youth of the local community, of "no political affiliation," organized

the vigil "to bring the community together to heal and to unite as one body."

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Tekeyan Cultural Association Thanks Donors for Artsakh/Armenia Fund “We are Our Borders” Program

The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) wishes to thank the following donors who stepped up in a time of humanitarian need to raise money for Artsakh through the Armenia Fund, as well as its various chapters, individual members and supporters.

As more challenging times lie ahead, with COVID19 and the destructive aftermath of the Artsakh war, the entire diaspora must be mobilized to help Armenia and Artsakh. We have no other choice and no other hope. Consequently, Tekeyan will continue its fundraising efforts.

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Hagop and Kevork Iradian	\$2,640
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Arts & Living



John Kachoyan: *'I Feel Armenian in My Art'*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/MELBOURNE – John Kachoyan (born in Oatley, New South Wales, Australia) is a multi-award-winning freelance director, writer, script developer and teacher who works internationally in theatre, opera and screen. He's skilled at conceiving, developing and realising stories across multiple genres and formats especially new work and adaptations from or for live performance.

He is currently literary manager at Australian Plays, on Film Victoria's Key Talent Register, the Australian Writer's Guild's Pathways Programme and recently completed an advanced diploma in script editing and development at Australian Film Television and Radio School. He was formerly Co-Creative Director and CEO of multi-Green Room Award winning MKA: Theatre of New Writing and Director in Residence for Bell Shakespeare. John holds an MA (Advanced Theatre Practice) from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSND) and originally trained at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

He was a member of the Australia Council's 2015 Emerging Leaders Development Programme and the inaugural Melbourne Lincoln Centre Director's Lab. He spent 2007-2012 working with leading new writing theatres in London where he co-founded IronBark – producing the best Australian writing for UK audiences. After returning home, he founded Pub Plays with Currency Press presenting neglected Australian classics and was a Critical Stages Resident in 2013 before moving to Melbourne where he lives with his partner, son and Roxy the Staffy.

John is an accomplished public speaker and his writing has been published in Cream, Filmink and Dwell. He has taught at RSCSD, University of Sydney, Victorian College of the Arts, NIDA & Monash University and is currently developing an adaptation of Joan London's critically acclaimed novel, 'Gilgamesh' for stage and screen.

John is privileged to work primarily on the lands of the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation and the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

Dear John, I assume the world is mostly not aware with Australian dramaturgy. Do Australian playwrights limit themselves in Australian topics or also in universal subjects?

Australia has a rich (though sometimes not well-remembered) playwrighting tradition. Dramaturgically, Australia mainly floats
see KACHOYAN, page 14



Janet Saghatelian

A Holiday Tradition In Good Taste at Fresno's Valley Lahvosh Baking Co.



By Christine
Vartanian
Datian

FRESNO – In the late 1800s, early 1900s, Fresno had a thriving Armenian community in the southern part of the city known as Old Armenian Town. This was the center of Armenian life in which the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, playwright, and short story writer William Saroyan, born in 1908, grew up and where he gleaned many of his early stories. Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. was founded in 1922 by Armenian immigrant and master baker Gazair Saghatelian, and is one of the oldest, most recognized Armenian landmarks in Fresno. Gazair was an original member of this community of hard-working and industrious immigrants who settled in Fresno with his young family and worked to create his own business.

"It was a wonderful, flourishing Armenian neighborhood," says current president and granddaughter Agnes Saghatelian. "Our family, we had the bakery and lived right next to it. So, the family lived and worked right here in Downtown Fresno and my mom and her siblings grew up here."

Originally named the California Baking Company, the bakery started when Gazair began baking his authentic breads for the community. Gazair became famous for his original soft "Peda Bread," and other breads he skillfully baked, and in the 1930's, he showcased his fleet of trucks that delivered his fresh "Peda Bread" locally, adds Agnes.

The bakery continues to be operated by the Saghatelian family, and still occupies its original historic location across the street from the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church. The Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church is the oldest Armenian Apostolic church in the Western United States.



Gazair Saghatelian

see TRADITION, page 15

Belmont Filmmaker Hopes to Raise Funds for Original TV Series

BELMONT, Mass. – Belmont author and filmmaker Sharisse Zeroonian recently wrapped up post-production of a pilot episode of an original television program, "One Plus One Is Two." The show, which takes place and was mostly filmed in Massachusetts, is a drama that mostly focuses on Marielle Morin, a woman with a learning disability who began working as a special education advocate in the 1960s. The show goes back and forth in time, but is mostly set in the present day and chronicles her husband and daughter's process of writing a book about her life and career. It also focuses on the characters' families, and primarily explores the theme of parenting: what it means to be a parent, people vowing never to turn into their parents and then doing so, etc.

According to a social media post by Zeroonian, "One Plus One Is Two" is unique because it "centers around an activist who is not completely sympathetic," "its characters makes the same mistakes over and over again.....and while some of the characters do



Sharisse Zeroonian

change their behavior for a bit, they often find themselves falling into the same ruts they were in before," and "features a main character with a disability without making it their only defining characteristic."

The series is an adaptation of a stage play by the same name written by Zeroonian in 2014. The pilot episode, which was accepted into the Lonely Seal International Film, Screenplay, and Music Festival this year, is now available to watch on Amazon Prime. However, the cast and crew is currently seeking donations to finance the production of the remaining seven episodes.

To watch the program, visit Amazon's Prime Video section. To donate to the project, visit Zeroonian's Facebook page or the "One Plus One Is Two" page.



The older Marielle in "One Plus One Is Two"



Still from "One Plus One"



ARTS & LIVING

Karapents' *Book of Adam* Is Published in Farsi

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Last week the Khazé Publishing of Tehran announced the release in Farsi of Hakob Karapents' *Adami girke* [The Book of Adam], his second and most celebrated novel published.

Titled *Ketabé Adam*, it has been translated by Andranik Khechoumian, a celebrated Armenian writer, playwright, and translator.

The book includes a preface and brief biography by Ara Ghazarians, curator of the Armenian Cultural Foundation of Arlington, and a commentary by Abbas Jahangirian, a prominent Iranian writer and literary critique.

This is the first major work of Karapents published in Farsi in the country of his birth. It will provide the first opportunity for Farsi-speaking people to become acquainted with the unique literary legacy of Karapents.

Prior to this release of *Ketabé Adam* only a smattering of his essays and sketches about his life and literary legacy had been published in the Farsi-language *Armenian Payman Cultural Quarterly* (no. 9/10, no. 53). The book is published on the occasion of his 95th birth anniversary.

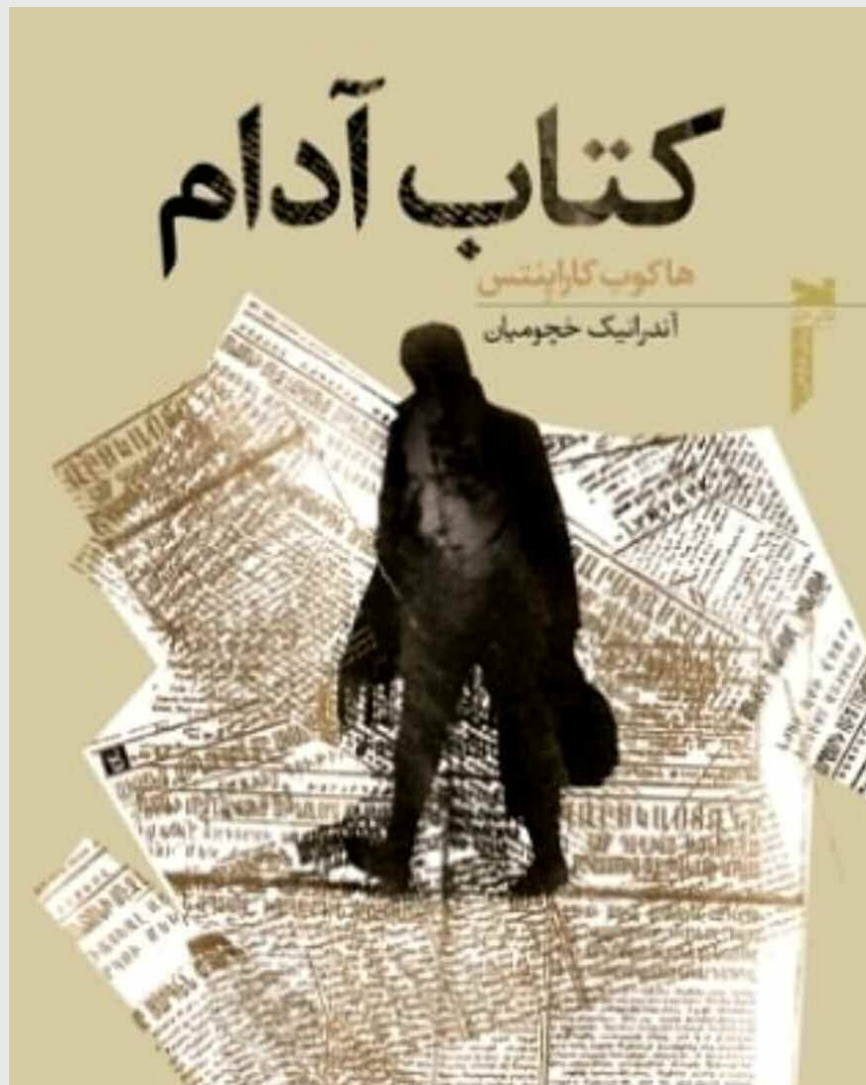
Many years ago in answer to an interviewer's question about writing in English Hakob Karapents had responded "Many encourage me to write in English. . . in order to partake in the American literature, one has to be an American. I am an Armenian, a Diaspora-Armenian, which is a unique creature in the history of mankind . . . I have lived for many years in America, however I do not consider myself an American. Despite all, my Armenianness is my identity, my license to walk among the crowds and feel that I am different."

This conviction, to which Karapents remained loyal for his entire literary career, unfortunately, for decades, deprived the non-Armenian speaking readers, English in particular, of a rich literary treasure. Karapents' works were not fully appreciated among his people either as he wrote in Eastern Armenian in a Western-Armenian-speaking reality. Furthermore, his works sadly, falling victim to Cold War politics, remained inaccessible to his compatriot in Soviet Armenia, thus depriving his compatriots from a unique literary genre and scope of contemporary Armenian literature.

In the final years of his life, Karapents was finally persuaded to make some of his works available in English. He finally agreed to have some of his short stories translated into English. *Return and Tiger*, a collection of short stories, translated by Tatul Sonentz, was released a few of months after his passing in 1994. This was followed by the *Widening Circle and Other Early Short Stories*, released in 2007, a collection of seven short stories by Karapents written in 1950s.

The novel is constructed on three levels: the state of the American social order in the final decades (1980s) of the century; the current crisis of the Diaspora Armenian; and the crisis of man finding himself at the end of the twentieth century. The characters and plot serve as the means of linking this triad of knots together and reaching a certain truth. "Aside from flashback," as observed by the late editor, writer and translator, Aris Sevag, "the book is written to understand life by the return trip and to live life by the road ahead, the metaphysical with the real, sometimes relying on non-existent realities which are more powerful than the real; therefore, from tie to tie, there surfaces a dry journalistic style to produce a clash between tangible and intangible realities. From this standpoint, the Book of Adam enters the self-contained current of contemporary American literature, which is a sad and nondescript visit to solitary persons and solitary communities."

Karapents wrote *The Book of Adam* a little more than a decade after his first novel,



Daughter of Carthage. He began writing it in mid-1980 and completed in less than a year. The book is dedicated to his wife, Alice. The second edition was released in Armenia in 2012. The book has also been adapted for the stage twice by two young Armenian dramatists, actors, and cinematographer: in Tehran (2005) under the direction of Seto Gojamenian titled "Where are we to be buried," and in Los Angeles (2017) by Armen Sarvar titled "Yes, Adam Nourian."

Karapents was born in Tabriz, Iran in 1925. He moved to the United States in 1947 and studied at Kansas City University, majoring in journalism, and later attended the Columbia University where he studied psychology. For over a quarter of a century, he worked and served as the chief of the Armenian Service of Voice of America. After his retirement in 1979, he moved first to Connecticut and later in 1989 to Watertown, where he lived until his death in 1994. He is the author of more than 900 articles in Armenian and English, short stories, novel, essays commentaries, book reviews.

— Ara Ghazarians

John Kachoyan: 'I Feel Armenian in My Art'

KACHOYAN, from page 13

between of the European, UK and North American styles and our writers, when they have the budget and support to, tackle global or universal ideas. Australian play righting is bold, inventive and increasingly appreciated internationally. We are connecting more with Asia and diverse voices to de-colonize our theatre. The arts are in crisis here, with a hostile government and an indifferent public — so it can be a struggle to tell stories that are complex or difficult — but I think that's changing — recognizing the diversity of the voices here. Of course also we also have a deep First Nations dramaturgy, that precedes all European presence by tens of thousands of years.

Your biography says that you love neglected classics.

The opposite actually, one aspect of my work involves directing and reviving "neglected" classics — I think it's easy for the canon to become staid and set — I love finding a work that has meaning and power and impact but may have been forgotten or under-appreciated and breathing life back into them.

Please tell us about Iron Bark Theatre Company you co-founded in London and specializing in new Australian plays. Is it common for Australian theater professionals to found similar companies in English-speaking countries aiming to propagandize the national dramaturgy?

IronBark was an amazing confluence of my other co-founders and fellow Australians, Zöe

Caldwell, Nicola Samer and Tim Knightley — who were all in London at the same time I studied and then lived there for five years. We met and discovered a passion for our own stories and wanted to bring all these brilliant Australian works to a UK audience. We loved being able to connect the cutting edge work that was emerging out of Australia with London and often we able to welcome traveling writers to the city and expand everyone's knowledge of what was happening in plays then — and yes, some national pride was involved!

Does it continue its activities?

No sadly not, we all moved on to other work and I moved back to Australia to work for the Bell Shakespeare Company as Director In Residence.

The Australian-Armenian community seems to be less known in the Armenian Diaspora. Please tell us about your family.

My father was born in Egypt and emigrated to Australia with his family aged 6. It was his father, my grandfather Aram Kachoyan, initially who continued some connection — telling us about the Genocide, but most other details have been hard to come by, lost in the fog of diaspora — and either unknown or unspoken. My father has done a lot of research in later years, reconnecting with relatives around the globe and expanding the family tree but it sadly still does not reach back more than two or three generations.

Because of my background, we maintain a suite of traditions borrowed from Egyptian,

Irish, Greek and Armenian traditions. I speak very little Armenian, to my continuing sadness. Culturally, I felt I discovered my own Armenianness, in music and song and image later in life — I think because as the second generation kid, the child of an immigrant, you have the luxury to ask about the old world, the old places. Perhaps my father and grandfather did not — but the cooking, food is what connected me mainly to Armenia as a child — and that's one of my father's talents.

Have you ever had any cultural or other contacts with the Armenians in the countries you lived — Australia, United Kingdom or Canada?

Yes, I always think of Saroyan's idea about Armenians finding each other around the world. My grandfather's side is mostly scattered around the world — and it was a joy to reconnect with them (in France, Canada and elsewhere) during previous travels. I have been supported in my studies and productions by other Armenians and shown more about my background because of these small adoptions — it seems to happen in every city I visit. I am in LA semi-regularly and 'Armenia' is more present there than Australia for sure — though obviously a complex idea.

Does having an Armenian family name seems something special to you?

Yes. It is a legacy and connection to something rich and deep — also a sadness perhaps that Armenians might carry with them — and it is always (especially in Australia) a conversation starter; "Oh where's your name from?" For

more as I have grown as an artist an increasing part of my work is concerned with memory, truth and trauma — so there are inheritances there. I feel Armenian in my art.

You made an adaptation of Joan London's novel, *Gilgamesh*, which traverses from Australia to Soviet-era Armenia. It will be interesting to learn more about this project and also if you have had other Armenian inspirations.

Yes. I adore this novel, my version is currently being adapted for television. It traces an Australian girl who falls pregnant in 1930s Australia to an Armenian traveler, Aram Sinanien, and after having his baby out of wedlock, she decides to leave Australia to try and find him all in the lead up to the outbreak of World War II. Aram lost his entire family in the Genocide and the work traces the strings of grief, inheritances between child and parent and the search for a response to death. Australia and Armenia — so perfect for me. I also love the lead character, Edith, this 'simple' country girl from rural Australia who finds herself in a strange and foreign Armenia — it appeals to my wanderlust and yearning for an unknown homeland.

Armenia is again at the attacks of his terroristic neighbors and mercenaries... how was Australia's and Australian Armenians' response to it?

Australia's response has been sporadic. There are some news reports — but very much a "both sides" style of reporting. We have had one or two Armenians on the news explaining the situation and some fundraising support. It feels so distant, which can be hard. I had to call into a major radio station last week to correct their pronunciation of "Armenia"!



ARTS & LIVING

Major Museums Ask For Protection Of Artsakh Cultural Sites

NEW YORK — This past week, two major cultural institutions in the US, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the J. Paul Getty Trust, issued statements urging the protection of cultural sites in Artsakh.

Dan Weiss, President and CEO, and Max Hollein, Director of the Metropolitan museum, in a statement wrote:

“The recent bloodshed and destruction in the Nagorno-Karabakh region is a global tragedy of grave concern to us all. In addition to our plea and hope for the violence to stop, as museum leaders we urge that cultural heritage sites be protected.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is dedicated to preserving and exhibiting human creativity of over 5,000 years from across the globe. As the organizer and host of the Armenia! exhibition in 2018—which was the first major exhibition to explore the remarkable artistic and cultural achievements of the Armenian people in a global context over fourteen centuries—we have watched in horror and sadness at the recent violence and bloodshed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

We implore all those involved to respect these international cultural heritage sites, which enrich our world and have sur-



Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi before and after Azeri attacks

vived for thousands of years. The loss of cultural heritage sites is permanent, and is a grievous theft from future generations.”

In addition, the J. Paul Getty Trust in a statement put the preservation in a historic context, noting:

“Deliberate physical attacks on cultural heritage are often figurative assaults on the people who identify with that heritage. This was true in Syria, Bamiyan, Bosnia, and Timbuktu. And it is true in Armenia, where Azerbaijani forces recently attacked the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi, the cultural capital of Artsakh, Armenia,” the statement reads.



“Ancient cultural heritage is common to us all and must be protected. We call upon the international community to support the work of UNESCO, Blue Shield, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, and all international organizations in the safe-keeping of cultural heritage as vital to the well-being of populations at risk.”

According to the Getty Trust, which through its Getty Conservation Institute has long advanced the conservation of cultural heritage, the organization draws attention to such issues in a series of Occasional Papers in Cultural Heritage Policy, written by authors long involved in the formulation and implementation of the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect.

The ancient Armenian monastery of Dadivank, the ruins and the archeological site of Tigranakert, Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi and hundreds of other historic monuments will be left to Azerbaijan, under a statement on the cessation of hostilities in Karabakh.



Tigranakert in Artsakh

A Holiday Tradition In Good Taste at Fresno's Valley Lahvosh Baking Co.

TRADITION, from page 13

This prominent church has stood tall in what was once the heart of Old Armenian Town since 1914, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The late Janet Saghatelian marched into restaurant kitchens and talked to chefs with a business card in hand. “Taste my bread, I’ll send you samples, here’s my card.”

Janet was born in Fresno, and was the youngest child of Gazair and Hayganous Saghatelian. She carried on her father’s hard work and dedication to the Fresno community for many years. She started working at the bakery at a very young age. She was devoted to her bakery and was extremely proud of the business her father and family had built. In fact, Janet created the bakery’s Heart-shaped lahvosh crackers. The cutter arrived in 1983, and these popular lahvosh crackers have been produced ever since. (They are called “Janet Saghatelian’s Hearts” on the package, too.) Janet received great pleasure sharing her fresh lahvosh and “Peda Bread” products with others...no one ever left the bakery empty handed. Janet’s daughter Agnes continues the bakery’s commitment to Gazair’s tradition in good taste and customer service. “Our lahvosh crackers

are popular at wine tastings, as snacks and appetizers on hors d’oeuvre and charcuterie boards at parties, weddings, graduations, and as personal and professional gifts,” adds Agnes.

“Our lahvosh crackers are also low in fat and have no cholesterol: all that taste, versatility and wholesomeness, and still low in fat and cholesterol-free. Food has always been a sanctuary for many people, and today more than ever before. Everyone can create some joy by making these beautiful displays for celebrating the special occasions and events to come in their lives.”

The bakery’s original “Peda Bread” and other traditional breads have been featured at family dinners, celebrations, weddings, at local restaurants, church functions, and picnics in Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. The bakery bakes their lahvosh to crisp perfection. What better way to celebrate the upcoming holidays, parties, and special celebrations than creating a festive charcuterie tray or appetizer board featuring Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. lahvosh crackers available in signature Hearts, Rounds, Stars and Christmas Trees shapes. It’s not difficult to prepare a meat and cheese tray or appetizer board that everyone will rave about. Adding various flavors from simple everyday

ingredients takes very little prep time and just minutes to create and enjoy.

It’s easy to make your own charcuterie trays and appetizer boards that can include: sliced cured meats and cheeses, fresh or dried fruits and nuts, cured olives, marinated peppers, jams, mustards, pickles, sprigs of mint, basil, or rosemary, sliced breads, and fresh lahvosh crackers baked at Valley Lahvosh Baking Co.

Another great holiday entertaining idea from Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. is creating a delicious thin crust pizza with their famous 15” Rounds lahvosh. “Make it a fun family activity and let everyone create their own lahvosh pizza using our versatile 15” Rounds,” says Agnes. “This product is available for purchase at the bakery, at local supermarkets, or online through the company website.” For pizza recipes, go to: <https://www.valleylahvosh.com/recipes>

“Gazair’s fresh baked “Peda Bread” is still hand-crafted from scratch,” says Agnes. “And customers can easily pick-up Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. lahvosh crackers in our signature Hearts, Rounds, Stars and Christmas Trees shapes. (The Hearts also come in a cinnamon flavor that make a tasty snack or dessert treat.)

Make your holiday celebrations and parties shine every season with traditional cracker bread and lahvosh crackers that add a cheerful touch to mezze platters, charcuterie trays or boards, hors d’oeuvres, dips and spreads.”

Valley Lahvosh Baking Co. is listed on Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources, and will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in 2022.

For creative charcuterie photos and design ideas from long-time Valley Lahvosh customers, go to:

https://www.facebook.com/ValleyLahvosh/?tn-str=k*F

502 M. Street, Fresno, CA 93721

Phone: (559) 485-2700

Fax: (559) 485-0173

<https://www.valleylahvosh.com/>

<http://historicfresno.org/lrhr/237.htm>

ARTS & LIVING

Critical Exclusive:

Mistletoe, Moussaka and Murder by Tina Kashian

Reviewed by Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Kashian grew up on the Jersey Shore where her parents owned an Armenian restaurant. Her inside jacket picture shows a smiling dark Armenian with curls, the type of girl you might have stayed up with chatting past bedtime at Armenian camp. A former attorney, Kashian is the author of the *Kebab Kitchen Mysteries*, published by Kensington books.

The mysteries come with deliciously witty and self-referential titles such as *Hummus and Homicide*, *Stabbed in the Baklava*, *On the Lamb* and my favorite: *One Feta in the Grave*. They

all star restaurant owner and sleuth extraordinaire Lucy Berberian, who like Kashian gave up a career in the law to run a Mediterranean restaurant on the beach. Berberian is engaged to the restaurant's muscly hunk of a chef, named Azad, who once broke her heart, and she must deal with prototypically meddling Armenian parents who want her hitched and bearing children as quickly as possible. There's also a cat called *gadoo* and all sorts of ethnic references, but you don't have to be Armenian to enjoy these mysteries.

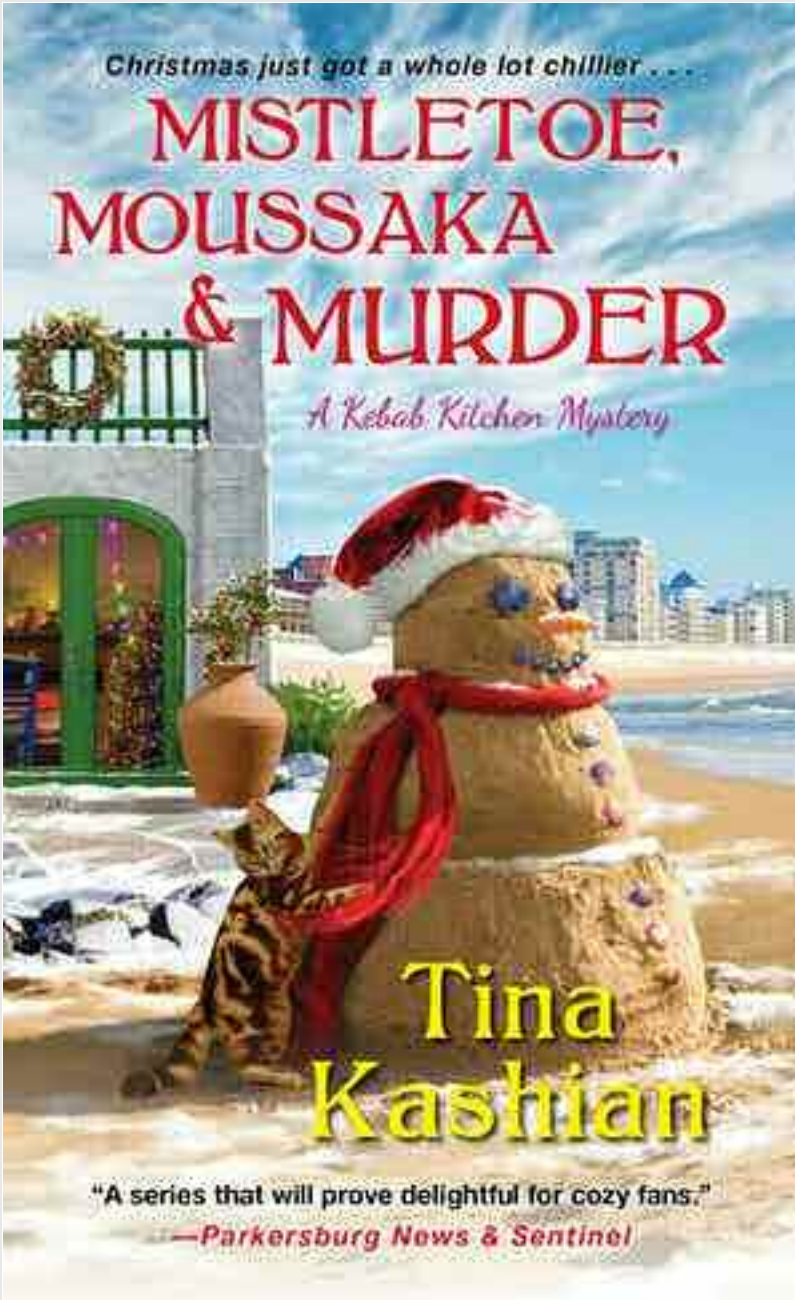
In *Mistletoe, Moussaka and Murder*, local retiree Mr. Spooner is murdered during a frigid dip in the ocean. All eyes focus on the local baker Susan, but we have an inkling that she may not be the guilty party. The exact details of the plot are not important – fingers get pointed at most of the protagonists at one point or another though the ending is quite a surprise. Kashian is not trying to reinvent the murder mystery wheel and her style is conversational in nature and unassuming. There's a lot of detail about family relationships and you get a good idea of what s mall town on the shore looks and feels

like – including the gossip and stereotypes involved. Personally I cared less for the scenes where Berberian tries on bridal outfits, but they add flavor to the proceedings as well.

Kashian's series of mysteries would make fun surprise stocking stuffers since Christmas is on its way. And the book at hand – her latest effort – *Mistletoe, Moussaka and Murder*, is a fun read. My biggest quibble is that at 320 pages, it could be shorter and not suffer in the process. A plus: the story is followed by recipes for "Angela's perfect pilaf," "Azad's moussaka" and "Susan Cutie's lemon meringue pie." And if you're headed out to the Jersey Shore this summer, why not pack a few of Kashian's books along with some khorovats, dolma and other favorites? Just be careful when you go in the water. As poor Mr. Spooner will testify, you never know who may be standing next to you!



Tina Kashian



Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 2 – Wednesday at 10 am, Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Indian Cuisine Madhu Gadia, Cookbook author, The Indian Vegan Kitchen, and New Indian Home Cooking; founder, Cuisine of India

DECEMBER 5-6 – SAVE THE DATE Trinity's 2020 "Grab and Go" Christmas Bazaar Saturday, December 5 & Sunday December 6, 2020 Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 02138 Pre-Order, Pre-Pay ONLY! WWW.TRINITYCHRISTMAS-BAZAAR.ORG

DECEMBER 5-6 – SAVE THE DATE. Trinity's 2020 Christmas Bazaar. Saturday, December 5 & Sunday December 6, 2020. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 02138. Questions? 617 354-0632

DECEMBER 13 – Sunday at 4pm. Candlelit Labyrinth Virtual Walk: In Peace & Harmony. Let's Meet & Greet enjoying hot chocolate and cookies, Virtually Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth, Share Wishes for the Wishing Tree ; Music From Far & Near. For details, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org
December 16 - Wednesday at 10 am, Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Desserts! Chef Nathan Kibarian Pastry Chef, Island Creek Oyster Bar Chef/Owner, Desserts by Nathan

DECEMBER 16 - Wednesday at 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org. Desserts! Chef Nathan Kibarian Pastry Chef, Island Creek Oyster Bar Chef/Owner, Desserts by Nathan

JANUARY 13 – Wednesday at 10am. Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org French Dinner Party! Catherine Katz Founder, Cuisinicity

JANUARY 27 – Wednesday at 4pm Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series,

a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Haley House Bakery Café Signature Dishes Chefs Brie Garner and Alima Mbabzi

FEBRUARY 10 – Wednesday at 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org French Cuisine Chef Tyler Stout Executive Chef, Troquet on South

MARCH 24 – Wednesday at 10am Celebrating What Unites Us! A virtual cooking series, a collaboration of City of Boston Age-Friendly Boston, OLDWAYS and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to keep us connected, coming together. To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org Seafood! Executive Chef Kathy Sidell Owner, Sidell Hospitality, Saltie Girl, Met Back Bay, Stephanie's on Newbury

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 3 – Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island (AHARI) presents "The Missing Pages" - Lecture with Dr. A Lecture by Dr. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, Professor of Art History, University of California, Davis on Thursday, at 7 pm EST. The Missing Pages is the story of the Zeytun Gospels, a manuscript illuminated by the greatest medieval Armenian artist, Toros Roslin, and which is a truly a sacred object and cultural heritage. Follow the manuscript's foot journeying, seven centuries, from medieval Armenia to the killing fields of 1915, the refugee camps of Aleppo, Ellis Island, Soviet Armenia, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and ultimately to a Los Angeles courtroom. A story of genocide and survival, of unimaginable loss and of inspiring resilience. Virtual-Zoom and Facebook Live streamed here on our Facebook page, For Zoom link, contact AHARI at info@armenianhistorical-ri.org

The Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church of Providence hosts the following Armenian Cultural Hour programs virtually every Friday at 7:30 pm. For information on how to watch or participate in the programs, contact the church office or check the church's Facebook Watch page.

November 27 – "Nor Serund" Youth Talents from Armenia Armenian folk music and songs
December 4 – Renown Armenian Bass & Songwriter Ruben Telunts in Concert "Karotee Kanch"

December 11 – World Renown "Cadance" Ensemble from Armenia

December 18 – Christmas Concert, featuring "Yerevan" Chorale &Orchestra, Boston, MA

December 27 (Sunday) – Memorial Concert "David Ayriyan", Virtuozo Kamancha player



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

A Race Against the Challenges of Destiny and History

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Watching the news about and from Armenia has become a real source of trauma for all Armenians around the world. Armenia, as a nation, lost a piece of historic land in Karabakh, while many families have lost their young sons and daughters, many between the ages of 19 and 22.

Russian President Vladimir Putin put the number of casualties in Armenia at 4,000, with many more thousands wounded.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is charged with overseeing the exchange of POWs and returning the dead, but the Azerbaijani side is interfering with their mission, most probably to hide the war crimes committed by Baku during the hostilities. Many Azerbaijani soldiers have proudly posted videos in which they kill Armenian soldiers at point-blank range or mutilate their bodies. Russian President Vladimir Putin himself referred to mutilations, in addition to deaths caused by phosphorus and cluster bombs used against civilians during the war.

Understandably, the shameful document ending the war signed on November 9 by Putin, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has touched off a political crisis in Armenia, which is compounded by the raging of the uncontrollable pandemic.

It is no coincidence that the first Azerbaijani aggression took place during the Gyumri earthquake, which killed 25,000 citizens along with the devastation of the city. The current war took place during another natural disaster, namely the COVID-19 pandemic. With both Armenia and Artsakh weakened by the pandemic, Azerbaijan was met by a weaker response.

The despair caused by the defeat and the staggering number of young lives lost has made the recovery of Armenia challenging. Even if the most diehard patriot considers leaving the homeland, it will be understood, if not justified.

Debates, rallies and discussions will serve as a catharsis for the population before hopefully it charts a course of recovery.

But before the recovery efforts begin, cool heads have to prevail to save what is salvageable from the haphazardly drafted peace declaration.

The military doctrine of occupying seven regions around Karabakh as a security buffer proved to be wrong in the new configuration of forces in the region, particularly with the active participation of the Turkish army. Not only were those seven regions ceded as a result of the agreement signed but the destiny of Karabakh itself in question while the sovereignty of a segment of Armenia's territory in the south, namely the construction of a road connecting Baku to Nakhichevan, has been compromised.

Incidentally, the road to the Nakhichevan enclave was first proposed by Azerbaijani apologist and one-time CIA operative Paul Goble. At that time, the idea was considered outrageous, even though the deal was proposed in terms of a land swap between Armenia and Azerbaijan with Armenia gaining Karabakh in return for Azerbaijani access through Armenian territory.

With the current agreement Azerbaijan refuses even to discuss Karabakh's status. Paul Goble himself has emerged from obscurity to publish an article in the November 24 issue of *Eurasia Review*, jubilantly hailing Azerbaijan's victory and discussing the very issue of the status, stating: "Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has made very clear that any special status for Nagorno-Karabakh is unacceptable, a position overwhelmingly supported not only by more than 90 percent of the population of Azerbaijanis who are ethnic Azerbaijanis but also by the remainder who are members of various groups."

Then, Mr. Goble diligently reaches out to some members of the ethnic groups, namely Lezgis, Avars, Tsakhurs, Talishes,

Kynalyglis and Kurds to conclude, "How could the Karabakh Armenians, who massively fought on the side of Armenia for the disintegration of Azerbaijan, receive special rights?"

In order to reach that conclusion, Mr. Goble has relied on the potential ignorance of his readers who may not be aware that many of the leaders of those ethnic groups have been languishing in Aliyev's prisons and are denied the right to make any such statement.

Now that Russia has been encouraging Armenians to return to Karabakh, the issue of determining the future status of the enclave becomes even more pressing. After all, the current agreement is for five years. It is apparent that Baku will be the first party to terminate the stationing of Russian forces before the terms of the peace agreement expire. And that will be at the instigation of the Turkish side, which is also participating in the peacekeeping program, despite the denials from Moscow.

President Putin, in his long interview on November 17, touched on the issue of Turkey participating, saying: "As for peacekeeping mission, it is true that Azerbaijan and Turkey kept speaking about the possibility of Turkish involvement in peacekeeping operations. I believe I eventually managed to convince our Azerbaijani colleagues that we should not create conditions or motives for undermining our agreements, which could provoke the parties to take extreme measures or actions. I am referring to the bitter legacy of the past, the tragic and bloody events that took place during the First World War, the Genocide."

As we can see, Putin has recognized the political power of the Genocide issue and he has put it to good use in his diplomacy, while Armenia has often failed to do so in its diplomatic discourse.

However, genocide or no genocide, President Erdogan has already introduced its armed forces in Azerbaijan, in addition to its troop concentration on Armenia's border near Igdir.

Extrapolating from Russia's previous behavior in Syria and Libya against Turkish assertiveness, we can safely assume that Moscow will eventually acquiesce to Turkish demands.

Moscow has been expediting massive humanitarian aid to Karabakh to entice the Armenian population to return to their homes. However, temporary guarantees will not be sufficient to gain the confidence of Karabakh Armenians.

During all previous negotiations, when package deals or step-by-step solutions were placed on the table, Azerbaijan always relegated the determination of the status issue to an undetermined point in the future while Armenia prioritized it, cognizant that Azerbaijan may renege on discussing the status issue once it attains its goals.

Both Putin and Lavrov have stated that the status issue has not been settled yet and it can be taken up when normal relations between the two adversaries are restored. That is certainly a long haul.

Russia rushed to have this agreement signed outside the framework of the OSCE, which was proposing Scandinavian forces to perform peacekeeping duties. Russia had lost its Gabala listening post in Azerbaijan about eight years ago and thus its returning to Azerbaijan with full force.

The West will not sit idly by in view of Moscow enhancing its position in the South Caucasus, after stationing based in Armenia and Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and now moving back into Azerbaijan. It will react in two ways: one, by encouraging Turkey to confront Russia, and secondly, by reactivating the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group process where France and the US can have a say as co-chairs. The first method is contrary to Armenian interests, while the second must be welcome by Yerevan, particularly when Mr. Lavrov has indicated that the peace agreement

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COMMENTARY

Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum

By Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian

AT TIMES like these my limited knowledge of Latin proves to be useful as there are numerous quotations and adages that can have a serious impact on the subject matter under consideration. If you want peace, prepare for war.

In a recent article I drew an analogy between Haig and Bel and the recent war by Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh, hoping that it will end in the victory of Haig. In the event, Haig, the underdog, lost the battle. Nevertheless, we went on to survive for thousands of years on our ancestral homeland through a Genocide and loss of swathes of our homeland to aggressors in particular Turkey. Then as now, our march goes on. The Armenian nation lost a battle but now need to be engaged in a new kind of warfare which does not involve only soldiers but the entire nation in order to win the peace.

Any observer of the Armenian predicament today might describe it as chaotic, at best. The internet and the social media are awash with news (fake and real), advice by armchair strategists (I risk being one), political analysts and generals who with the benefit of hind sight apportion blame. The unsubstantiated news floats about everywhere from Armenia to the Diaspora; invitations to sign various petitions; accusations targeting most political personalities from the President of the Republic to the Prime Minister – past and former; to the military leadership, to ministers; there are accusations of treachery and the witch hunt goes on. There can be no doubt that many of these allegations or accusations could be real and justified, however, this is not the time for a witch hunt. We need the dust to settle and cool heads to prevail to take nation forward. Our heroic soldiers who gave their lives deserve better otherwise their sacrifice would have been in vain.

For now this new battle for peace should be fought on many fronts in order to metamorphose the “loss” into “victory”. All sectors of society should be mobilised: mothers, health workers, teachers, housewives, municipal workers etc. Everybody should share in this collective effort in order to change the mood of the nation. Keeping busy is palliative. The country needs a face lift. Schools need to reorganise themselves by facing the refugee crises, and the health of the nation should be a priority. Refugees should be cared and conditions for their safe return to Armenian Artsakh should be created. The school year should be salvaged if we do not want a lost generation.

There were many mistakes by the current government. Some were avoidable and others calculated. Armenia should now realise who the true friends are in this battle against the Azeri-Turkic axis. We have paid a heavy price for this adventurism of distancing ourselves from our traditional friends in search of “greener pastures”. Staffing of government senior posts and ministries by inexperienced people and NGOs with a western tilt has not helped Armenia. The various internal issues concerning the judiciary or the proposed changes to the school curricula, the anti church postures have been detrimental and

have compounded the difficulties and isolated the leadership from the people. One should not forget that the latest document that ushered in the truce and stopped the carnage is the result of very serious discussions and political manoeuvrings. It is not an easy pill for Armenia to swallow, but also it is difficult for Russia. In having this document signed, the President of the Russian Federation now has to choose between two equally toxic pills to swallow. On one hand seeking accommodation with USA at the expense of military bases in Georgia or Azerbaijan, thus completing the encirclement of Russia by NATO, or seeking accommodation with the Turkey-Azerbaijan axis and thus opening the floodgates to the Caucasus and beyond into Russia and the far east into the Islamic world eventually. These are difficult choices and yet Russia succeeded in bringing in this temporary truce albeit with some conditions that are deemed unacceptable.

There are now two opportunities for Armenia to exploit. The first is the pursuit of active diplomacy with Arab countries, particularly the Gulf States since they have now anti-Turkey outlook in order to solicit political backing for Armenia and Artsakh, and secondly the development of trade talks with these countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran, because these countries are now boycotting anything Turkish. It is easy to say we should do this or that, but without the necessary funds and a resurgent economy we shall at best be engaging in futile talk. Armenia should define its position between East and West. Over twenty years ago I assisted a talk show on one of the Armenian TV channels about exactly this issue. I think it was composer Tigran Mansurian who very wisely and poignantly pointed out that Armenia belongs in both camps East and West. The examples given were Aram Khatchadourian and Avedik Isahagian. We certainly have friends in both camps like Minsk group countries in particular France, Iran, India and even China.

What about the Prime Minister Pashinian – an unavoidable question that begs an urgent answer. Where does he fit in this equation? Staying away from conspiracy theories and fake news, Pashinian is now needed in order to start the gear shift for the beginning of the healing process, and to focus on matters of vital importance to the nation. He should rise above his personal issues and vendettas with past leaders and prime the government institutions to function and importantly organise new legislative and parliamentary election. In a country which has become bi-polar, neither he nor the opposition can muster enough support to move the country forward. On the contrary, in the unlikely event of one of these two camps taking over the reins of power, the result will be a chaotic situation since the faction that loses the elections will turn to be a disastrous opposition. The danger of civil strife is omnipresent. For the now and the immediate, the current Prime Minister Pashinian should rise above petty politics by rising to the challenges and put some order in the country and organise the elections for a new legislature and parliament, which should result hopefully in some kind of a stable coalition government with the involvement of capable and experienced individuals from all parties. This, in my humble opinion will be how he could save the country from collapse and at the same time preserve his legacy. It will then be to the new government to learn the lessons and navigate in what will continue to be a stormy sea. The influence of the highly experienced titular head of the Republic, the President, will have to be the catalyst and the facilitator. For now let us leave the future outside of the realm of speculation.

If we want to win this new war for peace and get ready for defining the future of Armenian Artsakh, we should all be mobilised and ready.

(Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian lives in London.)

A Race Against The Challenges Of Destiny and History

EDITORIAL, from page 17
is only a document which should be finalized through negotiations by the Minsk Group.

We have to remember that the OSCE negotiations hinged on three principles: non-use of force to settle the crisis; territorial integrity and self-determination.

Azerbaijan violated the first principle by launching a military attack. It attained its so-called territorial integrity and refuses to consider the third principle. President Macron and France have been more assertive, even considering bringing the recognition of Karabakh independence to the agenda of its Senate. The US is surviving the last episode of its election circus and therefore may try to catch up with the rest of the other co-chairs. Once the co-chairs meet, they will realize that their two principles have been met, contrary to their will. Therefore, they have to concentrate on the last principle, that of self-determination.

Armenia lost this war painfully but the big winner is not Azerbaijan. The first winner is Russia, which introduced its army into Azerbaijan, albeit temporarily. The other winner is Turkey, which is in Azerbaijan in full force. And there is a third winner: Israel. All the conscientious calls by Israeli intellectuals and human rights activists were overruled by realpolitik interests. Israel not only bilked Azerbaijan by selling \$5 billion worth of military hardware, but it received broader access to Iran's territory with the removal of Armenian forces in Karabakh. Now it can expand its surveillance activities and preemptive strike plans with more convenience. We can see Israeli and Turkish military objectives converge, while Erdogan spouts empty rhetoric defending the Palestinian cause.

When the dust settles and the Azerbaijani public learns about its true war losses, Aliyev's arrogant status will evaporate, when they also discover that Russian forces are there and Turkey has reduced Azerbaijan to the status of the puppet regime in Northern Cyprus, as described by Michael Rubin in a recent article in National Interest.

With Turkey's Ottoman ambitions and Russia's control of its “near abroad,” the turbulence in the region will not clam down soon. Armenia cannot survive and will not survive, unless it attains a super weapon or its nuclear deterrence. It is believed that Israel clandestinely conducted its nuclear tests in South Africa. Pakistan bought plans for its nuclear arsenal from North Korea. Armenia cannot act as the most honest citizen of the world community when its very existence is on the line.

Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs Once More

By Christina Maranci

Active combat in the 2020 Azerbaijani war against Nagorno-Karabakh (known as Artsakh to Armenians) may have recently ended, but Azeri aggression against the rich and irreplaceable cultural heritage of its indigenous Armenian people has only just begun.

For 20 years, I have studied the medieval Armenian architecture of Eastern Turkey (historically part of Armenia), including Ani, which was once an Armenian royal capital. Both Azerbaijan and Turkey have continuous, well-documented policies of destroying the Armenian cultural heritage found in their territories. Between 1997 and 2006, as a decade-long investigation revealed last year, Azerbaijan deliberately wiped Nakhichevan clean of its Armenian culture, destroying more than 89 medieval churches, 5,840 khachkars (carved cross-stones), and 22,000 historical tombstones. The video of Azerbaijan's December 2005 destruction of Djulf, which once was the world's largest medieval Armenian cemetery and at its height housed 10,000 cross-stones, haunts Armenians to this day.

Now a critical moment in Armenian history confronts us. Ancient national treasures in Artsakh are at risk of complete erasure. Like its Turkish ally, Azerbaijan has eliminated hallmarks of native Armenian culture, destroying any monuments that might undermine the false narrative of ancient and exclusively Azerbaijani presence in the region.

While Russia may just have brought the war to a sudden end, the intentions of Azerbaijan and Turkey have been clear since they began it on Sept. 27. Continuous shelling with cluster bombs and other artillery laid waste to homes, hospitals and schools. The aggression also targeted heritage sites, with the

goal of demoralizing the Armenian people during battles in the short term and erasing their physical and cultural existence in the long.

As a clear example, just one month ago, Azerbaijani forces launched two intentional assaults on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, causing significant damage. Located in Shushi, the cultural capital of Artsakh, the cathedral is a masterpiece of 19th-century Armenian architecture and a landmark of Armenian cultural and religious identity. Under the Russian deal, Shushi, along with many other regions of Artsakh, will fall under the control of Azerbaijan.

Because of this, thousands of monuments in Artsakh, most of which are much older than Holy Savior, will be vulnerable to the cultural erasure for which Azerbaijan is known. Some of the monuments date to as early as the fourth century, when Armenia became the first nation to establish Christianity as a state religion. These extraordinary architectural monuments feature ancient inscriptions, wall paintings, and sculpture. They are not only artistic and historic treasures, but also material proof of the long history of Armenians throughout the region. The bombings had also targeted pre-Christian archaeological sites and their precious artifacts.

What will happen to Amaras, which preserves a fifth-century mausoleum to an Armenian saint, the grandson of St. Gregory, the evangelizer of Armenia? What about the medieval khachkars of Artsakh, testimony to Armenia's ancient Christian religion? With their carved inscriptions, they are veritable history books of Armenian settlement in the region. Or the church of Tzitzernavank, a rare intact Christian basilica from the fifth or sixth century? Or the many churches in the region of Hadrut, such as 13th-century Gtichavank? Will these be destroyed outright or, after scraping off the Armenian inscriptions, proclaimed “ancient Caucasian Albanian” monuments,

as many Azerbaijani websites contend?

What will become of Dadivank, a large, picturesque monastery of the ninth to 13th centuries? Its conical roofs rise above surrounding woods, punctuating an extensive complex including a kitchen, refectory, winepress, library, a belltower housing exquisitely carved khachkars, and over 100 Armenian inscriptions. The cathedral, with its delicate exterior arcades, features sculpted portraits of princely donors, while the interior frescoes, recently renovated, show deep knowledge of Byzantine painting styles. Will the Russian peacekeepers currently occupying the site ensure Dadivank's long-term protection?

Sites across Artsakh are now vulnerable to intentional destruction; once gone, they are gone forever. The loss of any single culture constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world. It is imperative that Unesco, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the Blue Shield, World Monuments Fund and other international organizations committed to the conservation and protection of cultural heritage sites immediately help safeguard and monitor these monuments while documenting them for posterity. Such a mission may require a United Nations Security Council resolution, as Azerbaijan is unlikely to agree voluntarily.

Every day that the international community stays silent and passive increases the likelihood that the world will lose these treasures—irreplaceable links to our common human past.

(Maranci is a professor of Armenian art and architecture at Tufts University and consulted on the recent “Armenia!” exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The commentary appeared in the November 19, 2020, print edition of the *Wall Street Journal*.)



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Putin: Armenia Not Recognizing Artsakh was ‘a Significant Factor’

President Vladimir Putin of Russia made several important comments in his response to journalists on Nov. 17, 2020, regarding the recent Artsakh War ceasefire that he brokered between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Russian leader started by providing the background of the Artsakh conflict: “It all started in the already remote year of 1988, when ethnic clashes took place in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Armenian civilians fell victim to these events, and later it spread to Nagorno-Karabakh. And since Soviet Union’s leaders did not react duly to these events... let me say it again: these are sensitive issues, and I do not want to side with anyone or decide who was right or wrong. It is no longer possible to determine this now, but it was necessary to put things in order and protect civilians, and this was not done. At that point, the Armenians themselves took up arms, and this protracted conflict, a conflict building for many years broke out. Eventually, it led to a declaration of independence, sovereignty and self-reliance by Karabakh in 1991. The Bishkek agreements were signed in 1994 and this Bishkek memorandum stopped the hostilities at that time. What happened as a result? Karabakh declared independence, as I have said, and another seven adjacent regions came under the control of Armenians, that is, Armenia.”

In response to a journalist’s comment that “no one recognized Karabakh’s status,” Putin stated: “That is true: no one recognized it then or later. By the way, Armenia itself did not recognize it. ...With regard to recognizing or not recognizing Karabakh as an independent state, there may be different approaches, but this undoubtedly was a significant factor, including in the course of the bloody conflict that I hope has ended. Because the very fact of the non-recognition of Karabakh, including by Armenia, has left a deep imprint on the course of events and the way it is perceived. To put it bluntly, after the former Georgian leaders’ undoubtedly criminal moves, I mean the attacks against our peacekeepers in South Ossetia, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We recognized the expression of the will of the people living in Crimea to reunite with Russia as just, and we met the people halfway, we did so openly. Some people may like it, others may not like it, but we did it in the interests of the people who live there and in the interests of Russia,

and we are not ashamed to speak about it openly. This did not happen with Karabakh, and this, of course, has significantly influenced the developments there.” Later in the interview, Putin added: “Armenia did not recognize the independence and sovereignty of Nagorno-Karabakh. In terms of international law, it meant that Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjoining districts were an inalienable part of the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

This is an important declaration by President Putin. Armenia has been reluctant to recognize Artsakh’s independence out of a concern of a backlash from the international community. It was feared that such a move would have disrupted the peaceful negotiations and could have possibly resulted in war or at least rejection and sanctions against Armenia by the United Nations.

Armenia’s leaders, up until Putin’s above comments, had no idea that not recognizing Artsakh’s independence was viewed by the Russian leader as a mistake, negatively affecting Russia’s support. During the past decades of negotiations with the Minsk Group of mediators, including Russia, one wonders if any of Armenia’s leaders ever asked Putin or his predecessors for their reaction to Armenia’s possible recognition of Artsakh. If Armenia’s leaders did not raise this issue, it was a major mistake. Had Armenia known that Russia would have welcomed its recognition of Artsakh, the subsequent events, including the recent war, would have turned out much different. Some Armenians had suggested that if Artsakh had been united with Armenia, that would have compelled Russia to defend Artsakh from any foreign attacks based on the mutual defense treaty between Russia and Armenia. As I suggested previously, maybe at this late stage, Armenia would finally listen to Putin’s advice and recognize Artsakh’s independence or unify it with Armenia in order to have a bargaining chip in the negotiations with Azerbaijan.

In response to another question regarding the status of Artsakh, Putin stated: “Yes, there is this problem since Karabakh’s final status has not been settled. We have agreed to maintain the status quo. What happens next will be decided eventually by future leaders and future participants in this process. I think if proper conditions are created for normal life and relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, between people in everyday life, especially in the conflict zone, are restored, it will create an environment for determining Karabakh’s status.” This response provides a ray of hope that with time, Artsakh may be able to attain its goal of securing an independent status. Interestingly, President Putin left such a decision to “future leaders and future participants in this process.”

Another question was regarding the territories surrounding Artsakh and the status of Shushi prior to its occupation by Azerbaijan. President Putin explained that the return of the territories surrounding Artsakh to Azerbaijan was first suggested by Russia in 2013 and supported by France and the United States. He said that this would have preserved Artsakh’s status quo “as an unrecognized state,” and its final status to be resolved in the future. Putin stated that there would have been no war if

Armenia had agreed to the return of refugees of both sides to their previous homes.

Regarding the City of Shushi, Putin confirmed that its transfer to Azerbaijan was never raised. Putin recalled that 20 days before the end of the war, while Azerbaijan had only conquered “an insignificant part” of Artsakh, he had managed to convince President Aliyev to end the hostilities on condition that Azeri refugees would be able to return to Shushi, under Armenian control in the presence of Russian peacekeepers. However, Prime Minister Pashinyan told Putin that this condition is unacceptable to Armenia and continued the fighting, resulting in the loss of Shushi. President Putin added that there was no “treason” on the part of Pashinyan.

President Putin also made several important deferential remarks regarding Turkey. The Russian leader acknowledged that “Azerbaijan is an independent sovereign state, and has every right to choose allies as it deems fit. Who can deny it this right? This is my first point. Second, as I have already mentioned, nobody has recognized Karabakh’s independence, [not] even Armenia. What does this mean in terms of international law? It means that Azerbaijan sought to recover territories which Azerbaijan and the entire international community view as Azerbaijani territory. In this context, it had the right to choose any ally who could assist it in this endeavor.... You can assess Turkey’s actions any way you want, but it can hardly be accused of violating international law.”

It is noteworthy that Putin did not mention Turkey’s violations of international law by recruiting terrorists from Northern Syria and transporting them to Azerbaijan to fight against Artsakh. Given Russia’s multiple interests in cooperating with Turkey, it is not surprising that he ignored Turkey’s crimes.

President Putin gave an unexpected reason for blocking Turkish peacekeepers from joining Russians in Artsakh. He stated that it was because of “the bitter legacy of the past, the tragic and bloody events that took place during the First World War, the genocide. This is a factor that can be recognized or rejected; some people do and others don’t recognize it. This is not a problem for Russia; we have long recognized it. But why provoke the Armenian side by the presence of Turkish military personnel on the contact line? I believe that President Erdogan was and is fully aware of this.”

Finally, President Putin justified Prime Minister Pashinyan’s agreement to cease the hostilities. He added that any rejection of the signed agreement would be “suicidal” for Armenia.... “It would be a huge mistake.” Putin also acknowledged that even though he had good relations with Armenia’s previous leaders, Russia’s relationship with Armenia did not change after Pashinyan came to power. This statement could be explained by the fact that since the Armenian opposition is critical of Pashinyan signing the ceasefire agreement, Putin is reluctant to criticize him because his opponents, should they come to power, would reject the agreement which could possibly restart the war with Azerbaijan.

For Armenian Strategic Thought: Part I

By Varoujan Sirapian

We are healing our wounds after this defeat in the Artsakh war, endorsed by a trilateral ceasefire among Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. However, we have not stopped thinking about the future, which is part of our work at the Tchobanian Institute.

We lost 29 years after independence. It is high time to get out of our victim mentality and draft a short- and medium-term strategy instead of looking for scapegoats. We continue to work on our plan to publish a collectively-authored book on “Armenian Strategic Thought” that we launched a few months ago.

With this in mind, we believe that the mission of the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund (AF) must also be reoriented. Of course we have given and we will continue to give these days, since, once again, we are in a hurry. The situation has not been anticipated and its consequences, probably very serious, cannot be measured for a long time.

The money raised by the AF is invested at the end according to the decisions taken by the Himnatram of Armenia (except perhaps for some specific dedicated projects). The political confusion created in the aftermath of the ceasefire will not facilitate the design of a medium-term strategy for the country. It is up to us, the diaspora leaders, to provide all our vigilant help and our capacity for proposals.

About ten years ago, we asked the question of the safety (and therefore the sustainability) of projects in Artsakh (especially outside the oblast). Today, however, we see that many investments will have served no purpose, after falling into the hands of the Azerbaijanis. Without guaranteeing the security and sustainability of a territory, building there is like building on sand.

Without a safeguarded Armenia and Artsakh, the financial aid provided by the AF will fall into a barrel with holes at the bottom.

The Diaspora has an important economic power, and the AF is a vehicle for using this power as a lever to enforce compliance with certain rules. We are thinking, for example, of the statutes of the UFAR (French University in Armenia) drawn up under the aegis of Ambassador Henry Cuny in the 2000s. It had established a solid foundation that for 20 years has ensured its proper functioning, preventing, among other things, corruption and any breach of academic ethics. Thus it has permitted granting credible and rewarding degrees, presenting to Armenia to date more than 2000 high-level executives who are the best assets for its future.

In the same way, the AF already has a strong statutory basis, inspiring confidence, and efficiency, particularly in

the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, we believe that the AF lacks a geopolitical component to support it in its economic or humanitarian projects. As we often say, whether we like it or not, politics and diplomacy take precedence over everything. It will therefore not be possible to ignore the evolution of the political situation in the country and the continuation of the democratic deepening that was taking place before the military aggression.

Without interfering in domestic politics, it is necessary to realize that it cannot introduce a glass ceiling above any associative action, at the risk of rendering it inoperative.

The AF has a significant advantage in this regard: being independent of political parties, it can assemble a geopolitical platform (scientific, unpolluted by ideologies of the past) to participate in reflection on guidelines for the future of Armenia in the medium and long term. We have been suggesting this to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia since the creation of the Tchobanian Institute 16 years ago. It seems more topical than ever.

We must stop blaming others and understand why among the two people who suffered genocide in the 20th century there is one who has gained territory (now super protected) and the other who has lost territory and if this continues even risks (yet again) being wiped off the map. Diagnose, find remedies, and apply them. Here, we think, is the trail to explore. Otherwise, like Sisyphus, we will be forced to constantly build what will be destroyed by our hereditary enemies. It may also affect the money raised by the AF in the future, a resigned attitude of “what is all this for” sowing doubt in the minds of donors.

Let us act now, so that we do not have to react in the future in urgency.

November 18, 2020

Varoujan Sirapian is the founding president of the Institut Tchobanian (Alfortville, France).



High-Level Russian Delegation Visits Armenia

VISIT, from page 1

"This is a very important factor that ensures the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. But there are issues that have not been resolved and remain open: how will we ensure the exercise of the right of return of the residents of several regions in the future, who will ensure the security of our compatriots, how will it be implemented? These, of course, are issues that are on our agenda. We must discuss and make decisions in that regard," PM Pashinyan said.

Sergey Lavrov, in turn, thanked the Armenian leaders for the welcome and noted that the Russian delegation arrived in Yerevan within the framework of Pashinyan's agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, in order to fully address all areas of cooperation, the allied, strategic relations.

"The November 9 statement provides an opportunity to resolve issues in Nagorno Karabakh on the basis of agreements reached in a document signed by the three leaders. First of all, it refers to the return of refugees, the solution of all humanitarian issues of the current situation," Lavrov said.

He thanked PM Pashinyan for his appreciation of the role played by the Russian peacekeepers, which is important not only in terms of security as a key component of their mandate, but also in terms of ongoing support for the returning people who need humanitarian assistance.

"And in addition to the role of peacekeepers,



Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

the interdepartmental center, which is being established by President Putin's order, is already starting its work, and will also deal specifically with all these issues. We actively involve the international organizations of the UN system, we encourage them to use their opportunities in a more active, more proactive way for the people of that region. We actively support the International Committee of the Red Cross, which works, including in Karabakh," the Russian Foreign Minister said.

According to Lavrov, the ceasefire agreement is an uncontested way of resolving the situation in the region, and attempts to question it are unacceptable.

Closer Relations with Russia

The Armenian leadership reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening allied relations with Russia, Lavrov said on Saturday following the visit of the Russian interdepartmental delegation to Armenia.

"The Armenian leadership has confirmed the course towards developing and deepening allied relations with the Russian Federation," he said.

Russia expects that trade and economic ties between Moscow and Yerevan will build up positive dynamics, Lavrov added. "Of course, we very much hope that our trade, economic, investment ties, which, by the way, were minimally affected during coronavirus pandemic, will build up positive dynamics," he said.

In addition to Lavrov and Shoygu, the delegation from Russia included Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko, and Head of Rosпотrebnadzor Anna Popova.

Baku Visit

The Russian delegation went on to Baku after its meetings in Yerevan for similar consultations with Azerbaijani officials.

During the visit, Lavrov said Azerbaijan and Armenia are sovereign states that have the right to choose their foreign policy partners.

"Turkey is a real factor in the region, and not only in this particular region. Turkey is our partner in many fields," he pointed out. "As a sovereign state, Azerbaijan clearly has the right to choose its foreign policy partners, as well as Armenia," Lavrov added.

According to the Russian top diplomat, "the art of politics is to take all factors that impact the situation in a region into account when promoting various initiatives."



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in combat on or after January 1st, 2017.

Every employed person in Armenia, gives 1000 drams (\$2) monthly from their salary to the Foundation, which will be raised to 3000 (\$6) drams in July 2021

Please encourage everyone to stand alongside the brave servicemen of Armenia by making a small donation for their insurance.

The Foundation operates on the principle of complete transparency. In enactment of this principle this website provides the possibility to see both your donations from overseas and every employed person's contribution month to month in Armenia.

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