



Dadivank Monastery

What Will Happen to Armenian Treasures under Azeri Control?

By Florence Avakian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — It was five years ago that I visited the crowning glory of Artsakh, the Dadivank Monastery. Inside the almost bare church, except for fresco paintings and numerous Armenian inscriptions, was an elderly woman lighting a candle. I approached and asked, “Mayrig Jan, what are you praying for?” She replied without hesitation, “Khaghaghoutiun” (Peace). Boldly I asked her age, thinking she was in her 90s. “Sixty-five,” she said, her beautiful face lined with wrinkles, reflecting the suffering she had endured for her family that she had lost in the first Karabakh war.

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The destruction of Armenian monuments in Nakhijevan

Armenian President Wants Government To Return \$100M Donation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — President Armen Sarkissian has criticized a pan-Armenian charity for donating to Armenia’s government most of \$170 million raised by it for Nagorno-Karabakh during the recent war.

Sarkissian said the unusual move undermined donors’ trust in the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund. He urged the government to release a detailed report on how it has used the economic and humanitarian aid to Karabakh.

Hayastan All-Armenian Fund launched an international fundraising campaign immediately after the outbreak of the war on September 27. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians from around the world responded to its appeal for urgent aid to Karabakh and its population severely affected by the fighting. They donated roughly \$170 million to the group within weeks.

It emerged afterwards that the charity, headquartered in Yerevan, redirected more than \$100 million of those proceeds to the government. The Armenian Finance Ministry said on November 24 that the hefty donation will finance the government’s “infrastructure, social and health-care expenditures” necessitated by the six-week war.

In a statement issued on Sunday, December 6, Sarkissian’s office revealed that he objected to the financial contribution approved by most members of



President Armen Sarkissian speaks during an official ceremony at the presidential palace in Yerevan.

Hayastan’s board of trustees headed by the Armenian president. It said he believes the decision left the fund’s donors suspecting that “their trust has been abused.”

According to the statement, Sarkissian has sent a letter to the board members arguing for “urgent steps” that should be taken before the donors’ “trust in the

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Talks to Start as Situation Stabilizes, Says Foreign Minister

MOSCOW (Tass) — Comprehensive talks on the settlement of the conflict around Karabakh will begin after the situation in the conflict zone stabilizes, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazyan said on December 7, after talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow.

“Key top priority matters remain for comprehensive talks that will begin immediately after the situation in the conflict zone stabilizes. I share Sergey Lavrov’s opinion that there is cautious optimism in that context. I think we all must do our utmost to prevent any recurrence of the tragedy that happened in the recent two months,” he said.

Evidence on Use of Chemical Weapons by Azerbaijan Unveiled

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia’s Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan has visited the National Burn Center and obtained new evidence of the use of weapons of mass destruction containing chemical elements (possibly white phosphorus munitions) by the Azerbaijani armed forces in Nagorno-Karabakh, it was reported on December 7.

Open-source evidence has proved that Azerbaijan used phosphorus and incendiary munitions to start large forest fires in Armenian-controlled areas in Karabakh. Videos of the use of white phosphorus started appearing on social media outlets in early November.

Doctors now report that injuries and swelling (especially of upper limbs) due to the use of chemical weapons, persist for a long time. Burn wounds are deep in some places, have charred edges, bleed at times and are difficult to treat. According to doctors, burns of varying severity in most people differed from those they encountered in their practice.

Two Charged For Attacks on Armenians

PARIS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The prosecutor’s office of Vienne on December 3 charged two ethnic Turks for attacking Armenian demonstrators in late October, Ermenihaber.am reported.

The Armenian community of France was rallying in Vienne to demand the recognition of Artsakh when several Turks attacked the peaceful Armenian demonstrators with knives, batons and hammers.

The two — father and son aged 45 and 21 — were arrested by the police but a court decided to release them on bail and ordered to not leave the territory of France.

The father and son are now charged with injuring two and three civilians each.

OSCE Minsk Group Foreign Ministers Issue Joint Statement

TIRANA — The heads of the delegation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chair countries — Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, Deputy Secretary of State of the United States Stephen E. Biegun, and Minister for European and Foreign Affairs of France Jean-Yves Le Drian — released a statement on December 3. The statement is reproduced in its entirety below. (See related editorial.)

We welcome the cessation of military activities in the area of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with the statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of

the Republic of Armenia, and President of the Russian Federation from November 9, 2020.

The Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group call upon Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue implementing fully their obligations under the November 9 statement, in Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts, as well as their previous ceasefire commitments. The Co-Chair countries highlight the significance of measures taken by the Russian Federation, in agreement with Azerbaijan and Armenia, to guarantee the non-renewal of hostilities. They also call for the full and prompt departure from the region of

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NE Patriots Showcase Armenian-Themed Sneakers, Call World Attention to Armenia

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES — If there is a silver lining to the dark clouds of the Artsakh defeat, it is the strong support for Armenia demonstrated publicly by prominent

Armenians and non-Armenians during this crisis. One unexpected arena for this in the US is that of professional football. The National Football League (NFL) conducts a My Cause My Cleats campaign, in which custom sneakers or cleats can be worn on the field before final auction for philanthropic purposes. Berj Najarian, director of football/head coach administration of the New England Patriots, has a pair of Armenian-themed shoes which were shown off on the field by quarterback Cam Newton after the December 6 Patriots-Chargers game in Los Angeles. Proceeds go to the Armenia Fund, and as of December 8, their auction price had surpassed that of all others in the campaign.

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Cam Newton with Berj Najarian’s custom shoes (photo courtesy of Maddie Mullin/NE Patriots)

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Authorities Expect First COVID-19 Vaccines in February

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian government has commissioned 600,000 doses of coronavirus vaccines from World Health Organization-backed COVAX Facility and hopes to receive their first batch in February, a senior official said on Friday, December 4.

They will be enough to vaccinate 300,000 people making up roughly 10 percent of Armenia's population.

According to Gayane Sahakyan, the deputy director of the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, medical and social workers, seniors and people suffering from chronic diseases will be the first to get vaccine shots free of charge.

COVAX is a global partnership which aims to finance COVID-19 vaccines to be distributed fairly to more than 180 countries that have joined it. It should give them access to several vaccine candidates in development globally. Vaccine manufacturers and suppliers will be chosen by the COVAX administration.

The Armenian government's supply contract with COVAX is worth \$6 million.

Late last month the Russian Ministry of Health donated several dozen doses of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V to Armenia. It emerged on Friday that Health Minister Arsen Torosyan and his deputy Artjom Smbatyan are among Armenian volunteers vaccinated with Sputnik.

"He is feeling well and waiting for the next inoculation because the Russian vaccine involves two shots," said Torosyan's spokesman, Alina Nikoghosyan.

Former and Current Presidents Meet

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — President Armen Sarkissian met with his predecessor Serzh Sargsyan on December 8 amid rising political tensions in Armenia.

A short statement released by the presidential press service said they discussed "the situation in the country." It gave no details.

Serzh Sargsyan's office and the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) headed by the former president issued no statements on the meeting.

The two men have rarely met since Sargsyan was toppled in a 2018 popular uprising that brought Nikol Pashinyan to power.

The protest movement known as the "Velvet Revolution" erupted just weeks after Armenia's former HHK-controlled parliament installed Armen Sarkissian as president. The latter was handpicked by Serzh Sargsyan to serve as head of state as the country completed its transition to a parliamentary system of government.

After the revolution Sarkissian was strongly criticized by senior HHK figures for rarely challenging Armenia's new government headed by Pashinyan. The president rejected the criticism.

Sarkissian publicly called on Pashinyan to resign as prime minister and pave the way for snap elections following the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia Coronavirus Infections, Death Toll Continue to Rise

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The number of confirmed coronavirus infections in Armenia grew by 407 to reach 142344 on Monday, December 7, according to information provided by the Health Ministry.

Fresh figures also revealed that 853 more people have recovered, 18 patients have died from Covid-19, while seven others carrying the virus have died from other causes in the past 24 hours.

A total of 1349 tests have been performed in the past day, the National Center For Disease Control and Prevention said.

So far, 117,649 people have recovered, 2344 have died from the coronavirus in the country, while 595 others carrying the virus have died from other causes.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and dignitaries lay flowers at the earthquake memorial

Armenia Commemorates 32nd Anniversary of Quake

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On December 7, Armenia marked the 32nd anniversary of the devastating earthquake that hit the northwestern regions of the country.

On that day in 1988, at 11:41 a.m. local time, northwestern Armenia was hit by a magnitude 6.9 earthquake, followed by a magnitude 5.8 aftershock four minutes later. In the epicenter — the village of Nalband — the tremors were reported to measure 10 on the Richter scale.

The earthquake leveled the cities of Spitak and Gyumri, as

well as about 60 villages, leaving at least 25,000 people dead, 100,000 wounded and 500,000 homeless.

All material, financial and labor opportunities of the USSR were mobilized for reconstruction work, as 45,000 builders from all the member states arrived to help reconstruct the areas destroyed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the restoration program was suspended.

A lot of families still live in impoverished conditions, spending cold winters in dilapidated buildings or metal containers.

2019 Aurora Prize Laureate Mirza Dinnayi Arrives in Armenia

YEREVAN — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative announced this week that Yazidi activist Mirza Dinnayi, the 2019 Aurora Prize Laureate and co-founder and director of Luftbrücke Irak (Air Bridge Iraq), has arrived in Yerevan.

Dinnayi was scheduled to remain in Armenia until December 11, 2020.

Mirza Dinnayi was named the 2019 Aurora Laureate on October 19, 2019, at the ceremony in Yerevan that was held during the Aurora Forum. Driven by his passion to save lives, this Yazidi activist has found a way to overcome numerous bureaucratic and logistic obstacles to help the most vulnerable members of the Yazidi community during numerous conflicts in Syria and Iraq. In the course of his visit to Armenia, Mr. Dinnayi will visit the Erebuni Medical Centre and Heratsi Hospital Complex to pay respect to those wounded during the war against Nagorno-Karabakh.

On December 8, after meeting with the representatives of the local Yazidi community, Mirza Dinnayi attended a special ceremony dedicated to the cancellation of a new international postage stamp created by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative in cooperation with HayPost. The annual tradition of issuing a fundraising stamp featuring the Aurora Prize Laureates was established in 2017 with the release of the first stamp depicting 2016 Aurora Prize Laureate Marguerite Barankitse. On December 9, Mirza Dinnayi went to Artsakh to meet with local officials and people affected by the war. This visit is a part of Aurora's international program of inviting world humanitarian leaders to Artsakh.

"This year has proven to be exceptionally hard for all of us, and it's now more important than ever that Aurora remains a shining beacon of hope for everyone in need," said Mirza Dinnayi. "I'm delighted with this long-anticipated opportunity to return to Armenia and personally express my solidarity

and support to the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative and everything it stands for. It's heartbreaking to see what Armenians, this courageous and ancient people, had to go through and are still going through. Our nations have so much in common, and it brings me exceptional joy to be here."



Mirza Dinnayi

In addition to launching the #AraratChallengeforArtsakh fundraising campaign, the Initiative has also called on its international community to share knowledge and provide support to ensure effective solutions on the ground in Armenia.

Armenian President Wants Government To Return \$100M Donation

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Government and the Fund has been finally lost."

"Consequently, according to the President, the Government must submit a clear, detailed, and transparent report on the expenditures made with the transferred sums of the Fund, and this must be done in the most public way," the presidential office said.

Sarkissian also called for an "urgent international audit" of Hayastan. He said that in case of "negative" findings" of the audit the government

should redefine the hefty donation as a "loan" and pledge to eventually reimburse the fund.

"The return of the funds, transferred by the Government to the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, can significantly change the situation and become a guarantee of restoring the confidence in the Fund," added the statement.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's office and the Hayastan management did not immediately react to Sarkissian's concerns and proposals.

Later in November, Hayastan raised in the United States and France \$26 million in fresh funds for Nagorno-Karabakh. It attracted the bulk of the donations pledges during an annual telethon broadcast from Los Angeles.

Hayastan has implemented \$370 million worth of various infrastructure projects in Karabakh and Armenia since being set up in 1992. Its board of trustees mostly comprises Armenia's political leaders and prominent Diaspora philanthropists.



ARMENIA

Opposition Protests Resume as Pashinyan Ignores Ultimatum to Resign on Dec. 8

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A coalition of 16 Armenian opposition parties urged supporters to again take to the streets after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan ignored their ultimatum to resign and pave the way for snap parliamentary elections on December 8.

The parties making up a “homeland salvation front” had initially issued the ultimatum at a rally in Yerevan on Friday, December 4. They gave Pashinyan until Tuesday noon to step down or face a nationwide campaign of “civil disobedience” over his handling of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh that resulted in heavy Armenian casualties and territorial losses.

The prime minister has continued to reject these demands through his aides and political allies. They have said that he is determined to stick to his six-month plan to “restore stability” in Armenia.

“As you can see, Nikol Pashinyan has not tendered his resignation,” Ishkhan Saghatelian, a leader of the opposition Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun), said in a video address to opposition supporters. “Therefore, from now on, until 5 p.m., Armenia’s citizens have a legitimate right to take peaceful civil disobedience actions to protest and make their demands heard.”

Saghatelian, whose party is a key driving force behind the protests, urged Armenian security forces not to “execute Nikol Pashinyan’s illegal orders and use force against the people.”

“Nikol, you will have to go in any case. Leave without upheavals ... Your departure is vital for our people and state,” he said.

Shortly afterwards, groups of opposition activists chanting “Nikol traitor!” and “Armenia without Nikol!” began blocking streets in various parts of Yerevan. Riot police intervened to unblock them and try to prevent further traffic disruptions.

They scuffled with protesters at some street intersections. Dozens of protesters were detained on the spot.

A small group of opposition activists picketed the National Security Service headquarters in the Armenian capital to condemn what they call politically motivated criminal investigations targeting opposition figures.

Other protesters paralyzed the work of Yerevan’s metro system for more than an hour.



Protests in Armenia on December 8

Similar protests were reported in Gyumri, Vanadzor and several other Armenian cities.

Alen Simonyan, a deputy parliament speaker and leading member of Pashinyan’s My Step bloc, denounced the protests as a coup attempt by the country’s former rulers keen to return to power.

Simonyan also scoffed at opposition calls for the fresh elections to be held within a year. “Why one year later? Let’s hold the elections now,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Asked why the ruling political team is not calling such a vote, Simonyan said: “Because there is no decision regarding it. I personally do not exclude it.”

President Armen Sarkissian, the Armenian Apostolic Church and a growing number of public figures have also called for the formation of an interim government and conduct of fresh elections. Sarkissian insisted late last week that Armenia is in a “deep crisis.”

Former President Levon Ter-Petrosian added his voice to calls for Pashinyan’s resignation while condemning what he called opposition threats of a violent overthrow of Armenia’s government.

In a weekend article posted on ilur.am, Ter-Petrosian said that both Pashinyan and opposition groups holding anti-government protests are putting the country at risk of “civil war” with

their radical stances.

Manukyan, whom the opposition forces want to take over as a caretaker prime minister, said Pashinyan should “realize that the sooner he willingly resigns the better it will be for him.” “If



Politician Vazgen Manukyan

this movement does not win, furious people will rip him apart,” he warned before thousands of opposition supporters marched to the prime minister’s residence guarded by security forces.

Ter-Petrosian said Manukyan’s speech amounted to a threat of violent regime change. He claimed that the radical opposition also demonstrated its “readiness for violence” by rallying supporters outside the government compound where Pashinyan lives

with his family.

The 75-year-old, who served as Armenia’s first president from 1991-1998, also hit out at Pashinyan, saying that the latter is ready for “any confrontation” to cling to power in the wake of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10.

“Given the shameful and humiliating defeat inflicted on Armenia and Artsakh, Pashinyan’s regime must definitely and immediately resign,” he said. “Not through internal clashes but a solely constitutional path ... I am therefore calling on the people not to participate in mass unrest provoked by both the current government and the opposition.”

Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, on December 8 added his voice to mounting calls for Pashinyan’s resignation and snap parliamentary elections.

In a televised address to the nation, he said Pashinyan lacks popular trust after the “disastrous” war in Nagorno-Karabakh and should step down to prevent violent unrest and end what he called a “deep political crisis” in Armenia. He said he made this clear at a face-to-face meeting with the embattled premier.

Karekin also called on the Armenian parliament dominated by Pashinyan’s allies to “elect a new prime minister and form an interim government of national unity.”

“Only a government trusted by the public and made up of professionals can settle issues facing our people, restore national unity and solidarity, and organize pre-term parliamentary elections representing an undisputed necessity,” he said.



OSCE Minsk Group Foreign Ministers Issue Joint Statement

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all foreign mercenaries, and call upon all parties to facilitate this departure.

The Co-Chair countries remind Armenia and Azerbaijan of their obligation to comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the exchange of prisoners of war and the repatriation of remains. They underline the importance of guaranteeing conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of people displaced by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including during the recent hostilities. They underscore the impor-

tance of protecting historical and religious heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. The Co-Chair countries call on Azerbaijan and Armenia to cooperate fully with the relevant international organizations to implement their obligations in these areas and ensure humanitarian access.

The Co-Chair countries appeal to the international community including ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross], UN institutions, and other appropriate structures as well as OSCE Minsk Group individual countries to take concrete steps to improve the humanitarian situation in

Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent areas in a coordinated way. The Co-Chairs also reiterate their strong support for the continuing work of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office (PRCiO) and his team.

The Co-Chair countries urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to take advantage of the current ceasefire to negotiate a lasting and sustainable peace agreement under the auspices of the Co-Chairs. In that context, the Co-Chair countries urge the parties to receive the Co-Chairs in the region at the earliest opportunity and to commit to substantive negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues in

accordance with an agreed timetable.

The Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group recall their firm commitment to the non-use or threat of force to settle disputes. They reiterate their consistent and united position in favor of a negotiated, comprehensive, and sustainable settlement of all remaining core substantive issues of the conflict in line with the basic principles and elements well-known to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Co-Chair countries remain fully committed to pursuing this objective in line with their long-standing efforts to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.



ARMENIA

Former and Current Presidents Discuss Situation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — President Armen Sarkissian met with his predecessor Serzh Sargsyan on December 8 amid rising political tensions in Armenia.

A short statement released by the presidential press service said they discussed “the situation in the country.”

It offered no further details.

Serzh Sargsyan’s office and the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) headed by the former president issued no statements on the meeting.

The two men have rarely met since Sargsyan

was toppled in a 2018 popular uprising that brought Nikol Pashinyan to power.

The protest movement known as the “Velvet Revolution” erupted just weeks after Armenia’s former HHK-controlled parliament installed Armen Sarkissian as president. The latter was handpicked by Serzh Sargsyan to serve as head of state as the country completed its transition to a parliamentary system of government.

After the revolution Sarkissian was strongly criticized by senior HHK figures for rarely challenging Armenia’s new government headed by

Pashinyan.

The president rejected the criticism.

Sarkissian publicly called on Pashinyan to resign as prime minister and pave the way for snap elections following the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armen Sarkissian, who has largely ceremonial powers, indicated late last month his desire to have a stronger influence on government policies and political processes. But he denied some government backers’ claims that he wants to run the government.

Yerevan Keeps Pressing For Ex-Soviet Common Energy Market

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan renewed on Friday his calls for the creation of a single energy market that would lower the cost of Russian natural gas imported by Armenia and other members of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

The gas price is currently significantly lower for consumers in Russia than other ex-Soviet states making up the trade bloc. Two of them, Armenia and Belarus, have said that this puts

their manufactures reliant on gas in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis their Russian competitors. They have pressed Moscow to agree to uniform EEU energy tariffs.

Pashinyan insisted on this idea during a video conference with the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan held in May.

Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected it, implying that Yerevan and Minsk should agree first to even deeper economic integration with

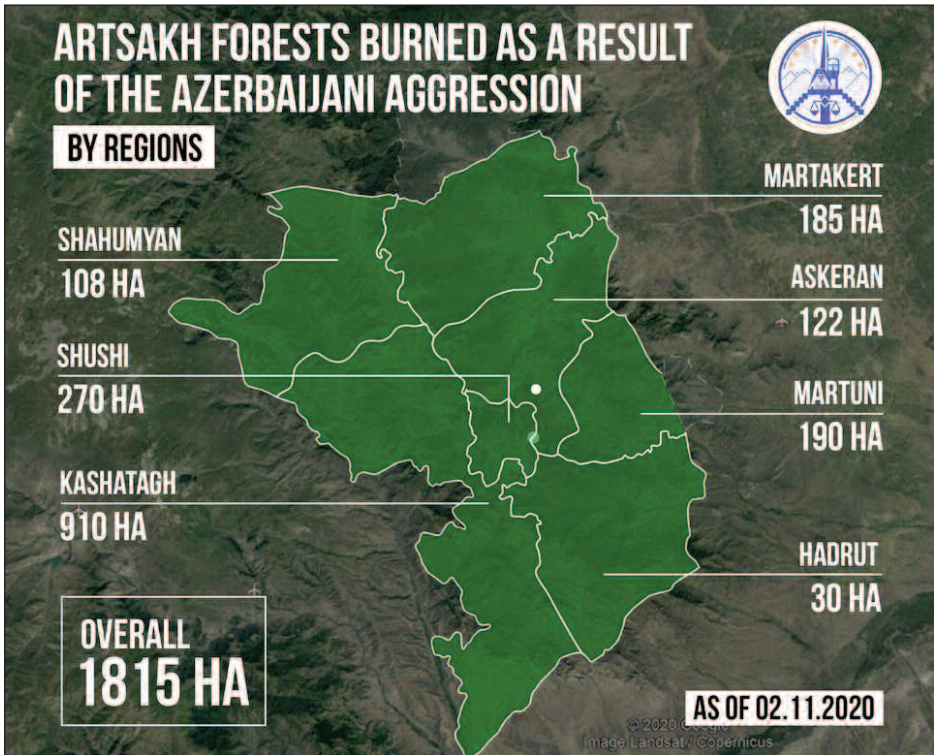
Moscow which would result in a “single budget and system of taxation” for all EEU member states. Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan indicated afterwards that Yerevan is not prepared for such integration.

Pashinyan again made a case for “the formation of common markets for oil, oil products and gas” on Friday when he spoke at a virtual meeting of the prime ministers of Russia and the four other EEU member states.

“We emphasize the need to look for a joint solution and final settlement of the issue of forming a common gas market,” he said.

Pashinyan’s government tried unsuccessfully this spring to get Russia’s Gazprom monopoly to cut the price of Russian gas delivered to Armenia. It pointed to a collapse in global energy prices resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

The gas prices for Armenian households and corporate consumers actually rose by an average of about 5 percent in July. Armenian utility regulators argued that they had remained unchanged since a Gazprom raised its wholesale price for Armenia by 10 percent in January 2019.



Armenia Tree Project Ready To Restore Artsakh’s Forests

YEREVAN — Armenia Tree Project stands ready to provide its expertise and assistance to help restore forests and surrounding areas in Artsakh, which were targeted and damaged by Azerbaijan during the war.

On October 30, Azerbaijan added to its list of war crimes the use of white phosphorus munitions to destroy Artsakh’s ancient forests. 1815 hectares / 4484 acres of lush green land were burned as a result, causing irreparable damage to the natural environment and rendering areas in and near the forests uninhabitable.

Before ATP can begin the replanting process, crucial steps must be taken by key stakeholders and necessary organizations to ensure the region is safe to work in. First, new maps must be drawn according to the ceasefire, and ATP will need to be granted access to these areas. Then, HALO Trust must ensure that all the areas are free of explosives and hazards. Lastly, the area’s soil and water levels will need to be tested for contamination levels.

The use of white phosphorus is not only a threat to Armenia’s rich biodiversity but to all life in the region. The chemical may remain within the deep soil for several years, contaminating underground waters and rivers, putting valuable ecosystems at risk.

“Even though a ceasefire now holds in Artsakh, it is not yet clear which forests we can and can’t work in,” says ATP operations manager Arthur Harutyunyan. “Once border demarcation is finalized, experts will map out the damaged areas and determine the extent of destruction. ATP can then identify areas for reforestation and provide our expertise and healthy native seedlings to help bring those lands back to life.”

The next issue that needs to be tackled is the remains of mines and other unexploded ordnances. The HALO Trust, a mine-clearing organization, is currently on the ground in Stepanakert, Martuni, and Martakert, clearing explosives and teaching civilians to avoid hazards.

“I maintain regular contact with the deputy mayor of Stepanakert. The demining organizations have much work to do there to ensure the safety of citizens, before we can continue greening community sites in the towns and villages,” continues Harutyunyan. “Demining activities must also be carried out in the forests.”

In the coming months ATP will produce a plan for the establishment of a new forest in Armenia as a living memorial for the heroes of the war. Communities will be able to come together to pay tribute to fallen soldiers and honor them by planting trees. More details about the memorial will be revealed as they unfold.

ECHR Upholds Applications of Armenian Lawyers To Protect Rights of Servicemen, Civilians Captured By Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on November 30, as well as on December 2, 4 and 7, upheld the applications of Armenian lawyers seeking protection for the rights of Armenian servicemen and civilians captured during the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to lawyers Siranush Sahakyan and Artak Zeynalyan, the ECHR was satisfied by their applications and made a decision to take urgent action against 23 Armenian captives.

It is said that Armenian servicemen captured during the war are Hrachya Gabrielyan, Erik Mkhitaryan, Khachatur Mikaelyan, Hrachya Meyradaryan, Artem Karapetyan, Liparit Tadevosyan, Ashot Yesayan, David Danielyan, Artsvik Chobanyan, Gegham Martirosyan, Mikael Mirzoyan, Mushegh Nurbekyan, Hovhannes Gabrielyan and Sergey Manukyan. The captured civilians are Kamo Manasyan, Borya Baghdasaryan, Maxim Grigoryan, Karen Petrosyan and Sedrak Petrosyan.

“The ECHR requested from the Azerbaijani government documented information on the capture of these citizens, their whereabouts, conditions of detention and medical support. The Court set deadlines for providing the required information until December 7, December 9, December 10, December 11 and December 14, respectively,” Zeynalyan wrote on his Facebook page.

According to him, the Azerbaijani government had provided formal, evasive and incomplete answers to the inquiries of the European Court on previous cases, in particular, did not provide facts regarding where and in what conditions the Armenian prisoners of war were being held, did not provide any evidence about their medical examination and possible treatment, stating that it will present information “in the future”.

There is no exact data on the number of Armenians who were captured or went missing during the hostilities in Artsakh. Videos appear on the Internet showing Armenian soldiers and civilians held captive in Azerbaijan who are being bullied and humiliated by Azerbaijani soldiers.

The Armenian representation to the ECHR is regularly submitting applications to the European Court with the requirement to request information from Baku on the number and condition of Armenian citizens held captive there.

From September 27 to November 9, Azerbaijani armed forces, backed by Turkey and foreign mercenaries and terrorists, attacked Nagorno-Karabakh along the entire front line using rocket and artillery weapons, heavy armored vehicles, military aircraft and prohibited types of weapons such as cluster bombs and phosphorus weapons.

On November 9, the leaders of the Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a statement on the cessation of all hostilities in Artsakh. According to the document, the parties stopped at where they were at that time. The town of Shushi, the districts of Aghdam, Kelbajar and Lachin are handed over to Azerbaijan, with the exception of a 5-kilometer corridor connecting Karabakh with Armenia.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Turkey's Armenians Fear For Their safety Even After Karabakh Deal

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Istanbul's Armenian community feared for its safety during the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, but Turkish-Armenians and Armenian workers are still concerned about their security, with hate speech against Armenians quickly escalating among Turkish society, political analyst and journalist Alin Ozinian wrote in an article published by Turkish Minute on December 5.

Turkey's "full support" for Azerbaijan, mentioned several times by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, also fed into the ultranationalist feelings of Turkish society. The situation has forced some Armenians to move abroad and start a new life for the safety of their children and the future of their families.

Anti-Armenian policy and sentiment served to renew hostility and hatred, which took its final shape in slogans and anger during protests in Turkey targeting Armenians in general and Istanbul-Armenians in particular.

Many Armenians still think demonstrations, during which Turks heaped curses on the Armenians and showed solidarity with Azerbaijan, were "messages" for the citizens of Armenia to leave Turkey.

Nearly 300 Armenian migrant workers, a favorite target of Turkish politicians angry with Armenian Genocide bills proposed in foreign parliaments, left Turkey in November.

"The fears of Turkey's Armenian community did not ease after the ceasefire. Many Armenians still believe the latest protests were attempts to frustrate the community and were provocative acts aimed at repressing the Armenians and giving them a hard time," Ozinian said. "The Turkish press continues to spread aggressive rhetoric full of hatred against Armenians."

Putin, Merkel Discuss Artsakh

MOSCOW (Armenpress) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the situation in Nagorno Karabakh and issues over the Russian peacekeepers on Monday, December 7, the official website of the Kremlin informed.

The two discussed the situation in Nagorno Karabakh in detail, among other issues. Putin spoke about the mediation efforts to end hostilities, as well as the activities of the Russian peacekeepers stationed along the line of contact and in the Lachin corridor at the request of Baku and Yerevan. It was stressed that the consistent implementation of the agreements enshrined in the declaration adopted by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia on November 9 contributes to the general stabilization of the regional situation. The importance of solving the vital problems of the population affected by the military conflict was also stressed.

Russia Sends Bomb Disposal Experts to Nagorno-Karabakh

MOSCOW (Tass) — Russia's Emergencies Ministry is increasing its task force carrying out a humanitarian mission in Nagorno-Karabakh and is sending bomb disposal experts, canine teams and psychologists, the Emergencies Ministry told TASS on Sunday.

"On December 6, an Il-76 aircraft of Russia's Emergencies Ministry took off from Moscow with another group of rescuers. The joint group was formed of canine teams, bomb disposal experts and mine-rescuers of the Leader center, communications personnel, specialists of the Noginsk rescue center and also psychologists," a spokesperson said.

The plane is bringing equipment and three passenger buses for carrying out the Russian rescuers' mission in Nagorno-Karabakh. The rescuers had passed tests for the coronavirus infection before their departure.



Sotheby's Auctions off 17th-Century Armenian Gospel for £69,300

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Sotheby's auctioned off an early 17th century illuminated Armenian Gospel manuscript for £69,300 (around \$93,000) on December 3.

The book, with a tooled calf binding, was initially estimated to fetch £7,000 - 10,000 by December 1 – the last day of bidding.

The 147 x 100mm 197-leaf book is believed to have been created in Amida, an ancient city in Mesopotamia located where modern Diyarbakır (Turkey) now stands.

A full-page miniature of an Evangel can be found at the start of each book, with the facing text written in gold with ornithomorphic illuminated letters and an illuminated headpiece. Written in bologir (cursive) in double columns with 27 lines, the manuscript contains numerous marginal illuminated vignettes and cartouches.

According to the description on the auction house's website, the iconography and decoration is remarkably similar to a manuscript in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, which was written by the scribe Melk'on and illustrated by Hovannes in the scriptorium of Amida in the early seventeenth century.

Armenian Group Calls for German Government to Recognize Artsakh

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — On November 25, the French Senate voted almost unanimously to recognize Artsakh, as reported in the Mirror-Spectator. The following day, the Central Council of Armenians in Germany (ZAD) issued a press release, thanking the French Senators for their action, and calling upon Germany's Bundestag (Parliament) to follow suit, and demand recognition on the part of the federal government.

The ZAD presents its case in three parts.

First, the trilateral declaration by Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan — "in fact a capitulation on the Armenian side" — though ending the fighting, has not eliminated the danger for Armenians. "The status of Nagorno-Karabakh remains unclear," which leaves open the option for Azerbaijan to move militarily against Armenians living there. Azerbaijan can reignite the war, since no peace agreement has been reached. Furthermore, with the reduction of the Lachin corridor to 5 km, defense of the region becomes impossible. Even with Russian troops stationed, there are no long-term guarantees for security of the Armenian population.

Thus the ZAD sees "the soonest possible regulation of the status of Nagorno-Karabakh" as the only means to guarantee this security. "In light of the aggression by Azerbaijan against the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, the only practicable solution appears to be international recognition of the independence of the Republic of Artsakh, together with a massive, long-term presence of international peacekeeping troops."

Secondly, the ZAD demands punishment of those responsible for human rights violations and war crimes, protection and return of hostages and protection of cultural property. The call lists a series of crimes, including torture, use of internationally prohibited weapons (cluster bombs and chemical weapons), targeting civilian sites and populations. Among the cultural assets attacked, the ZAD names the bell tower of the Sushik cathedral, khachkars and several churches, adding that videos of the destruction have been circulating in social media. "Approximately 100 monasteries and churches in Nagorno-Karabakh have fallen under Azerbaijan's control," the ZAD writes, adding that the experience of total destruction of Armenian *khachkars* in Nakhijevan is a forewarning of what dangers lie ahead.

The ZAD concludes with demands for international prosecution of documented war crimes committed by Azerbaijan and Turkey, immediate release of prisoners through the Red Cross and the protection of cultural assets. The most important cultural monuments should be declared as belonging to the world's cultural heritage, they note. And they conclude by adding that representatives of UNICEF and UNESCO should gain access to these monuments, and the most important should be protected by international observers and troops.

COVID Death Toll Rises in Istanbul Armenian Community

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) — The Coronavirus pandemic has cast a shadow on the Istanbul-Armenian community since March, when the first signs of the virus became evident.

On December 1, the head of the religious council, the Very Rev. Tatul Anushian, sent the monthly charts which detail the data of general deaths as well as deaths due to Coronavirus. The numbers for the last 2 months are very high and show that the second wave has taken a great toll in the Armenian community. Out of the recently deceased, practically half lost their lives to COVID.

In April there were 69 deaths in the Istanbul Armenian community, 23 percent due to COVID. In May, there were 36 deaths, 19.44 percent due to COVID. In September there were 34 deaths, 5.38 percent due to COVID (2 individuals). In October the second wave began. There were 65 deaths in that month in the Armenian community, 35.38 percent due to COVID. November marked a high for this whole period with 89 deaths in the community, 48.31% due to COVID. The total amount of deaths since the onset of the pandemic in the Istanbul Armenian community was 417; 22.06 percent have been due to COVID. This means that the community's death rate has gone up by nearly 30 percent due to COVID.



INTERNATIONAL

What Will Happen to Armenian Treasures under Azeri Control?

MONUMENTS, from page 1

This majestic and spiritual structure is one of hundreds of churches, monasteries, ancient cross stones, cemeteries, manuscripts and other sacred artifacts under the control of Azerbaijan now. The Dadivank Church complex (9th to 13 centuries), is located in the rugged Kelbajar region, replete with high peaks where wild horses roam, and dense forested slopes surrounding numerous Armenian villages. The complex includes two frescoed churches, a refectory, winepress, library and bell tower with delicately carved Khachkars (cross stones), and many medieval Armenian inscriptions.

On December 6, the Azerbaijanis sent to Dadivank an Albanian priest from Azerbaijan who claims that there are 300 churches in Artsakh of Albanian origin, a false assertion. For the time being, Russian peacekeepers are guarding Dadivank, and the Armenian abbot of the monastery, Fr. Hovhannes Hovhannissian, has vowed he will never leave the sacred church.

However, throughout the more than 50 percent of Karabakh now in the hands of the Azerbaijanis are hundreds of churches and thousands of sacred sites without Russian protection, including the Yeritsmankants monastery in Mardakert, the Katarovank, and the 13th century Gtichavank in the Hadrut region, the Tsitsernavank in the Kashatagh Province, the partially destroyed Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots (Holy Savior) in Shushi, bombed twice, and so many others.

The Azerbaijani flag has now been raised on Vankasar Church in the Aghdam district.

Even after the ceasefire, gangs of Azerbaijanis and terrorist mercenaries put swastikas and wrote the words “Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad” on the Holy Savior Cathedral, the cities in Azerbaijan where Armenians were hunted down and killed in 1988. There are also videos of Azerbaijanis in Kelbajar kicking down several gravestones in the Armenian cemetery, and desecrating khachkars.

Several international organizations have made statements for the protection of these sites, including Human Rights Watch, World Monuments Fund, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In addition, Russian President Putin has asked for the protection of those monuments. However enforcement of protection is another story.

One of the goodwill ambassadors of UNESCO is Mehriban Aliyeva, the vice president of Azerbaijan, as well as the wife of the president, Ilham Aliyev. Around the time she was appointed to the post for her efforts to preserve Azerbaijani culture, her country oversaw the systematic destruction of all traces of Armenian culture in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan. Dozens of churches, thousands of khachkars and tombstones were bulldozed and ground into dust in Nakhijevan.

Repeated efforts to get in touch with the UNESCO leadership were unsuccessful.

Efforts Continue

Former Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, now the Echmiadzin's Legate to the Vatican, has informed two clerical leaders of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi and Bishop Paul Tighe, about the current dangers threatening the Armenian Christian heritage, as well as measures by Echmiadzin to “thwart cultural genocide.” These include the establishment of a department to protect these sacred sites in Karabakh as a result of the recent war. Barsamian said in an interview this week that that Cardinal Ravasi has stated that the Pontifical Council for Culture is “following the developments very closely and is ready to offer its expertise and influence in support of these efforts. The Holy See will bring this preservation matter to the attention of UNESCO,” he said.

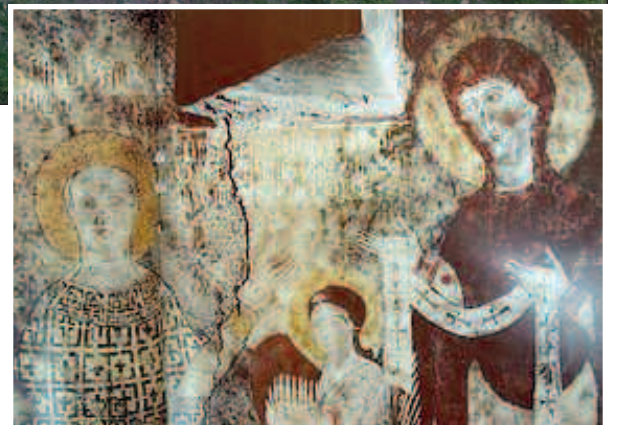
The Eastern Diocesan Primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, said this week that these sacred sites are “utterly unique creations of art and beauty, created by people who prayed, and have exist-



Dadivank Monastery

ed for thousands of years. They are significant not only for their historical value, but for the manifestations of a living faith. To desecrate a church is to kill the heart of the people who prayed there and poured out their souls thousands of years ago.”

Dr. Helen Evans, longtime Byzantine Curator and Armenian scholar at Museum of Art, and initiator and curator of several Armenian exhibitions at both the Metropolitan, and the Morgan Library in New York, was responsible for the statement of pro-



Naregatsi Arts Institute programs in Shushi

tection by the Met's president and director for the Armenian monuments in Karabakh. Currently, with a new exhibition at the Met marking the 150-year history of the museum, Evans, always pursuing Armenian art, revealed that there is a 15th-century Armenian gospel book on display. For several years, she has also put on permanent exhibit an exquisite khachkar which she personally chose during one of her travels to Armenia.

Christina Maranci, professor of art and architecture at Tufts University, added that “these monuments represent centuries of the incontrovertible Armenian presence in the region. They must be preserved.. Work has to be done to document this sacred ancient history.”

One of the most philanthropic families from New Jersey, brothers Saro and Nareg Hartounian, have been giving Armenia and Artsakh for many years in the name of their parents, Karapet and Knar. They have been responsible for building communities, and institutions. In Kelbajar, they spent millions constructing the Knaravan village with all the accretments. The village had been built to accommodate survivors of the first

Karabakh war. And in Shushi, they built the Naregatsi Art Institute for budding artists, and the Artists House, spending more than \$2 million. They unsuccessfully tried to retrieve the important documents from the institute before the Azerbaijanis took Shushi, but they were unsuccessful.

“Our national identity is infused in our religion, as evidenced through our churches, monasteries, khachkars, and the generations of Armenians who always kept their faith,” said Saro Hartounian. “This is why we survived. We will be back,” he declared with positive emphasis.



Nareg Hartounian, center, co-founder of the Naregatsi Arts Institute



The Azeri army in 2004 and 2005 systematically pulverized *khachkars* in the Armenian cemetery in Nakhijevan dating back to the 18th century.

Community News

Detroit Chapter of Knights of Vartan Ships \$503,000 Worth of Medical Supplies to Armenia

DETROIT – With the recent events taking place in Armenia and Artsakh, the Knights of Vartan Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge of Greater Detroit, in addition to their monetary donation to the Hayastan All Armenia Fund, felt it was necessary to do something more. Coincidentally, one of the Lodge's newest members, Greg Baise, approached Commander Kazar Terterian and proposed the idea of a possible donation of medical supplies from World Medical Relief (WMR) whose headquarters are located in Southfield, Mich.; Baise, a pharmacist by profession, is on the Board of Directors of the organization.

The Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge would be responsible for the cost of a 40-foot container and its passage to New York, then the fee to ship it to Poti, Georgia and finally transporting it from the port to Yerevan which would total nearly \$17,000. Terterian contacted Past Grand Commander (PGC) Dr. Gary Zamanigian who was tasked with raising the funds necessary to get the medical supplies to Yerevan. The lodge's commander then spoke to Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation, and requested that he communicate with Armenia's Minister of Health to determine the list of equipment needed and to facilitate the pickup and delivery of the container from Georgia to Armenia. The project proceeded covertly to assure safe delivery of the medical equipment which did in fact arrive in Yerevan on Thanksgiving Day.

Unaware that the container was going to Armenia, it was, within a few weeks, filled by WMR volunteers from St. John Armenian Church in Southfield with Ultrasound Machines, Centrifuges, Cardiac Monitors, Dialysis Machines, Wheelchairs, Surgical Instruments, Medications and because of the rising COVID 19 cases in Armenia, plenty of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) all provided through the generosity of WMR; the total shipment was valued at \$503,000.

Finding a benefactor would pose an almost



Medical supplies leave Detroit for Armenia

insurmountable problem because at this same time Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge was in the midst of another project to raise \$25,000 to complete the renovation of the Knights of Vartan School #106 in Yerevan. During a conversation with Past Commander Howard Atesian, Dr. Zamanigian mentioned the WMR project and without even asking how much it would cost, Atesian said he would donate the funds necessary to get the container to Armenia i.e. the entire \$17,000!

World Medical Relief is the ninth largest organization of its kind in the United States with an excellent rating. In addition to Baise, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge members would like to extend their sincere appreciation to Dr. George Sampson, President and CEO of World Medical Relief.

For more information on the group, visit kofv.org.



(courtesy of Ani Tatintsyan)

Eros: Repopulation and the Instinct of Self-Preservation

By Ani Tatintsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator



LOS ANGELES – From the early days of the Artsakh war, Armenian youth in Armenia and the diaspora had begun flooding the newsfeed on Twitter (or as some call it, “Armo Twitter”) with talk of repopulation. Amongst the shock, grief, and confusion, there it was: a plan, a way through. Although the tweets were meant to be seen in amusing and entertaining light, it was starting to become clear that there was a portion of the Armenian population (mostly Millennials and Gen Z), helping spread enthusiasm about the potential of having large families and repopulating Armenia.

Of course, one can begin by asking what they're planning to repopulate: Armenia the country? Armenia the diaspora? This is an important question to ask but one I will not be exploring at this time. Although the nature of the tweets, and the format of Twitter itself, could be dismissed as a mere joke, other questions arise, ones that I do intend to explore: What is the meaning of these jokes? Where do these jokes come from? In other words, what's the theory behind the impulse? As a perpetual student of philosophy, I can't help but look for theoretical answers to fundamental questions. My search delivered results. The answer was Eros.



According to Greek mythology, Eros was the god of love and sex. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud refers to the concept of Eros as the will to live, “the instinct of self-preservation.” This kind of instinct has always been present within Armenian communities. Armenians tend to put much value on family and an emphasis on continuing the traditions of those who came before them. This tendency of “self-preservation” is partly due to the years of existential threat we have faced. This year, that threat, already genetically ingrained in us, once again became real, and so this “will to live” intensified.

see EROS, page 9

Armenia Artsakh Fund Delivers \$15M of Aid to Armenia and Artsakh

GLENDALÉ – The Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF) delivered \$15 million of humanitarian assistance to Armenia and Artsakh during the last five challenging months. Of this amount, the AAF collected \$14.9 million of medicines and other supplies donated by Americares (\$7.1 million); Direct Relief (\$4.3 million) and MAP International (\$3.4 million).

Other organizations which contributed valuable goods during this period were Armenian Missionary Association of America (\$330,000); Project Agape (\$65,000); The Howard Karagheusian Comm. Corp. (\$57,000) and Dr. Albert Phillips of CA (\$9,500).

The medicines, medical supplies and hygiene products donated during this period were sent to the AGBU Claudia Nazarian Medical Center for Syrian Armenian Refugees in Yerevan, Aleppo Compatriotic Charity Organization, Arabkir United Children's Foundation, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Avak Medical Center, Fund for Armenian Relief, Metsn Nerces Charitable Organization, Muratsan Children's Endocrinology Center, National Hematology Center, St. Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center, and the health ministries of Armenia and Artsakh.

During the 11 months of 2020 AAF delivered much needed medicines and medical supplies for treatment of COVID-19 patients as well as emergency medicines and supplies to treat war injuries. In the past 31 years, including the shipments under its predecessor, the United Armenian Fund, the AAF has delivered to Armenia and Artsakh a grand total of \$913 million worth of relief supplies on board 158 air-lifts and 2,486 sea containers.

The AAF shipments from June to November included medicines for treatment of COVID-19 patients, war injuries, mental disorders, oncology, cardio vascular and gastrointestinal cases.

“The Armenia Artsakh Fund is regularly offered free-of-charge millions of dollars of life-saving medicines and medical supplies. All we have to do is pay for the shipping expenses. We welcome your generous donations to be able to continue delivering this valuable assistance to all medical centers in Armenia and Artsakh,” stated Harut Sassounian, the President of AAF.

For more information, email: sassoun@pacbell.net.

Armenian American Medical Association Hosts Blood Drive

WATERTOWN – On Sunday, December 20, the Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) is sponsoring a blood drive, at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC). The drive will be 11.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The blood will be obtained by the Kraft Family/Dana Farber bloodmobile. At this time of the COVID-19 crisis and with the holidays approaching, there is an even greater need for blood donations. The AAMA, Inc is sponsoring this drive to give back to our local community as well as to raise awareness of the humanitarian and medical relief work being done in Armenia and Artsakh.

You can donate any amount to the AAMA, Inc by writing a check to the AAMA, Inc and mailing it to P.O. Box 812641 Wellesley, MA 02482 or by PayPal on our website aamaboston.org. If you are writing a check please put the following in the memo: my name/blood drive. The goal is for each blood donor to try to raise \$1000 in support of this fund and the important work the AAMA, Inc is doing. For more information on the work of AAMA, Inc please go to their website at aamaboston.org.

The ACEC is located at 47 Nichols Ave. To ask questions regarding eligibility to donate blood, email BloodDonor@partners.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

SAS Awards Travel, Research Grants to Graduate Students for Fall 2020

FRESNO – The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) has selected its awardees for its Graduate Research and Conference Grants Program for MA and PhD students, as well as its inaugural Grant on Race, which seeks to support research that analyzes race as it relates to Armenian communities in the United States.

Established in 2019, the aim of the Grants Program is to provide resources for graduate students to conduct research and present papers at conferences. Grants of up to \$1000 are awarded semi-annually to eligible graduate students. The Fall 2020 group of applicants was chosen by a selection committee composed of members of the SAS Executive Council, with an eye towards helping students cover unexpected costs that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Lori Pirinjian

Lori Pirinjian, one of two recipients of the Grant on Race, is a PhD Student at UCLA in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. Her research examines decolonial reparations for the Armenian community, as well as historical comparisons of the Armenian and Native American communities.

"I am honored to receive the Society for Armenian Studies Fellowship on Race," stated Pirinjian. "This award allows me not only to further my studies in important topics such as critical race theory and decolonial reparations, but it also gives me the opportunity to bring Armenian Studies into these ongoing conversations. I look forward to continuing the dialogue thanks to this fellowship."



Bedros Torosian

Bedros Torosian, one of two recipients of the Grant on Race, is a Doctoral student in History at the University of California, Irvine. His research utilizes the understudied early Armenian-American press to explore the question of American whiteness as it relates to these early Armenian-American communities. In this way, he seeks to fill a lacuna in existing Armenian Studies scholarship on the issue of race and contested whiteness in the early Armenian American community.

"I am honored to be a recipient of the SAS Grant on Race," Torosian stated. "Receiving this fellowship truly means a lot for graduate students like myself who are ambitious to conduct research as part of their studies but can hardly find adequate financial means to do so. As a rising young scholar, I would like to thank you for this opportunity which will surely contribute to the unearthing of often muted and dreadfully studied episodes of modern Armenian history and hence the advancement of the field of Armenian studies."



Garine Palandjian

Garine Palandjian is a PhD Candidate in Educational Policy and Evaluation at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. She is working on a dissertation entitled "Rethinking Borders and Identities in Armenian Education." Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Garine did fieldwork for her dissertation by conducting 39 interviews with current and retired educators in Yerevan, Tavush, and Shirak regions, as well as the Istanbul Armenian community. She applied for an SAS grant to support her research on how borders – and memories of bordering practices and experiences – redefine education and identities.

"With the support of the Society of Armenian Studies fellowship," Palandjian stated, "I plan to stay on track with my university graduate requirements and deadlines... and contribute to the field of qualitative research, educational policy, and Armenian Studies."



Jennifer Manoukian

Jennifer Manoukian is a PhD candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is writing her dissertation on the formation of a

written standard for Ottoman Armenians in the nineteenth century.

"I am very grateful to the Society for Armenian Studies for awarding me this fellowship," commented Manoukian. "I will be putting it toward covering digitization costs at archives in South Carolina, Sweden, and London, all of which I had planned to visit in person before the pandemic. The Society's generosity has ensured that, despite the lockdown and travel restrictions, my doctoral research will proceed as planned."



Sose Grigoryan

Sose Grigoryan is a PhD student at the National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography. Her research, which is based on ethnographic fieldwork as well as archival research, explores the religious culture of Armenian Catholics and their everyday and cultural life in the South Caucasus, particularly in the Shirak, Tashir and Lori regions of Armenia and Georgia.

The SAS grant, stated Grigoryan, "is a great help and support for me, thanks to which I will be able to continue my field work in all Armenian Catholic villages, and finish my dissertation. Thanks to SAS financial support, I will be able to publish a comprehensive work on

the religious culture of Armenian Catholics, which will provide valuable information on this large group of forgotten Armenians in history, present unexplored historical, cultural, and ethnographic episodes of History, Culture, Armenian studies and ethnography for next generations."



Tatiana Anoushian

Tatiana Anoushian is a Master's Candidate in Cinema Studies at the School of Cinema at San Francisco State University. She is also the President of their Cinema Studies Graduate Student Association. Her master's thesis is inspired by questions around trauma and language in Armenian cinema, with a particular focus on the concept of untranslatability.

"This is a crucial time to support Armenian studies, Anoushian stated." "Now, more than ever, I am grateful that organizations like SAS exist. As a recipient of this fellowship, I look forward to continuing my work on Armenian cinema. I am both honored and humbled to be recognized by the committee."

"Despite COVID-19, we had a very good pool of applicants this year. The awardees are conducting novel research in the field of Armenian Studies in the general understanding. We are extremely happy that we are able to support

our graduate students in these difficult times" noted SAS President Bedross Der Matossian. "I would like to specifically thank the Armenian Chairs and Programs Directors and other Armenian Institutions for supporting us in fulfilling this objective. We hope to raise more money in the future in order to fund more graduate students."

The next application cycle will have a deadline of April 15, 2021.

The SAS Graduate and Research Grant was made possible through the generous institutional support of the Armenian Studies Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies, University of California, Irvine; the Hovannisian Chair of Modern Armenian History, University of California, Los Angeles; the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Chair of Armenian Art & Architecture, Tufts University; the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); the Armenian Communities Department, Gulbenkian Foundation; the Armenian Studies Program, California State University, Fresno; the Institute of Armenian Studies, University of Southern California; and AGBU Nubar Library, Paris.

For membership information or more information on the Society for Armenian Studies, please visit the SAS website, at societyforarmenianstudies.com.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Repopulation and the Instinct of Self-Preservation

EROS, from page 7

Alex, 24-years old, who is active on Armenian Twitter, said, “The whole repopulation meme started [as] a lot of Armenians were socializing together online due to the war,” but he makes a point to say that there is definitely an air of seriousness to the jokes. Shirak, 27, agrees that the repopulation discourse is a form of defense. “I think people finally realized the threat [of extinction] is real, hence the jokes, but I think there is something more primal to it as well.” This survival instinct has always been present within our people, and within people whose ancestors have survived existential threats and annihilation. Arax, 21, said, “I think the concept of repopulation initially was a way to boost our morale, especially the diaspora who felt so detached and useless. We lost so many young men and women that we all talked about repopulating to remind ourselves that we’ll get through this and through repopulation we’ll ensure our survival.”



Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* was a seminal work in psychoanalysis. He argued there are two forces that govern our lives: Eros and the death instinct. The effects of World War I would influence his ideas in creating the death drive theory, as the horrors of the time showed that man was capable of destruction just as much as creativity. “Besides repopulation [serving] as a defense instinct, I think it’s a form of defiance,” Arax said. If we were to attribute the repopulation conversation to the psychoanalytic theories of Eros, then it is safe to say that it reacts to the destruction of its counterpart, the death drive. Both drives inevitably influence one another, and Eros, according to Freud, “makes an effort to assert itself in the struggle” – what better protest than the will to live.

Plato talks about Eros in *The Symposium*. In the famous text, the character Diotima’s speech describes Eros as connected to the truth and the divine. Eros becomes the last stage of eternal contemplation where creativity takes place. In Plato’s text, Eros is a universal force that moves all things towards peace, perfection, and divinity. Having seen so much horror, the Armenian people have preached the value of preservation for centuries. “Armenians have experienced so much pain, tragedy, and loss, the fact that we’re still here and we’re actively aware of our culture is a privilege and so many of us understand that and want to contribute in continuing that,” Arax said.



One of the criticisms about the repopulation discourse is that it’s exclusionary. Not everyone can nor wants to have children. This is a fair argument but what if we thought about this call for repopulation not just in terms of human bodies? In *Wounded Heroes: Vulnerability as a Virtue in Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy*, Marina Berzins McCoy writes about Eros and its affinity for reproduction, but she argues that this applies to all aspects of creation. She writes, “Reproduction in not only a physical, but also intellectual and creative sense, is part of the human response to our own need and lack, as we strive for but cannot yet reach the eternal.” Perhaps this talk of repopulation extends beyond just the human factor, and touches on something about the continued production of culture, especially at a time where many of our monuments and places of worship are being destroyed as a result of the transfer of land. Arpine, 20, said that the lack of compassion from the rest of the world made her see how alone Armenians were, “it made me realize no one will be there for us but us and the only way to be able to stay away from

extinction is to have a huge, powerful future generation that doesn’t allow the world to forget us.”

In *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis writes, “Eros wants the beloved” and it is “ready for every sacrifice except renunciation.” Perhaps the beloved in the case of Armenian youth is not so much one other as it is the nation and culture itself. “Repopulating makes up for the lost lives and ensures that no matter what hatred is thrown at our people, we will be able to overcome,” said Arpine.

The final piece in William Saroyan’s collection of short stories, *Inhale & Exhale*, is called “The Armenian and the Armenian.” In it he writes: “Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is again 1915. There is war in the world. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and their churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again. See if the race will not live again when two of them meet in a beer parlor, twenty years after, and laugh, and speak in their tongue.”

Although he never actually wrote “see if they will not create a new Armenia,” (this is a popular misquotation), in a way this is implied by Saroyan’s emphasis on the continued existence of the Armenians. With this passage, I like to think Saroyan was invoking Eros as well.

In the face of annihilation, violence, and destruction; Armenian people strive to create the new on a foundation of the old. Standing on the pedestal of ancestral wisdom, our people keep going. This is the way that we know how to survive. Saroyan’s famous quote is prescient here. Armenians’ defense against destruction comes from their unions as well as their creative and productive ambitions. We know all too well the real fears of extermination, and through these seemingly youthful “jokes,” we see something very real for our communities: the belief that our ultimate victory lies in our continued existence.

Ani Tatintsyan, born in Goris, Armenia, is a Los Angeles-based writer and filmmaker. She is the author of two books of poetry, *Letters to Strangers* (2013) and *Everything is Magic* (2016). She holds a B.A. in Political Science and English Literature from the University of Southern California and a graduate degree in Aesthetics and Politics from California Institute of the Arts. She writes about politics, popular culture, and philosophy. You can follow her on Twitter.

Hagopian Rugs and the College for Creative Studies Announce Winners of 31st Annual Student Rug Design Competition

BIRMINGHAM, Mich. – This past February, at the Hagopian Birmingham showroom, judges and interior designers Michelle Mio (Rariden, Schumacher, Mio) and Krista Nye Nicholas (Cloth and Kind) along with Suzanne Hagopian reviewed a field of entries from the College for Creative Studies for the 31st Annual Student Rug Design Competition. Wanting to use ideas that are thought provoking and that will require students to do some research the 2019-20 design criteria was “Color, Culture, Design” to create a design using the psychology of color and culture.

Joining Suzanne Hagopian and the judges for the evening were Edmond Hagopian and Angela Hagopian Snow (a family affair), Don Tuski, President, CCS, Don Kilpatrick, CCS Chair of Illustration, Jeremy Noonan, CCS, Head, Fiber & Textiles, and Matt Chung, CCS Institutional Advancement.

After collectively reading the student rationales that accompanied their artwork and much deliberation, five talented students were winners! Junior Alore Niemi won first place for a design cleverly inspired by Detroit’s subculture of nightclubs; Mahsa Banadaki was second for a design based on “the Iranian sky” and third was senior Lauren Bullard for her design

based on the “Blue Buddha.” In addition, three designs were recognized for Honorable Mention; Senior Kaitlyn Krueger; Senior Ashley Waddell; and Freshman Jenna Wyly.

The competition and favored project is a collaboration between the College for Creative Studies and Hagopian World of Rugs that offers students a chance to submit their designs based on specific criteria and compete for scholarship moneys funded by Hagopian (\$1,500 first, \$1,000 second, \$500 third + a \$1,000 donation to the school annually). The first place design is made into a rug and displayed at the annual CCS Student Exhibition. The competition originally conceived by Edgar Hagopian to mentor students and encourage interest in the textile arts and support the school is now mentored by daughter Suzanne Hagopian.

The Hagopian Family of Companies are long-time enthusiastic supporters of the cultural arts in metro Detroit. In addition to this competition they host the Detroit Chamber Winds “Night Notes” series in their Birmingham showroom bringing fine music to local venues at an affordable cost; and, Hagopian World of Rugs / Hagopian Cleaning Services is a Major Benefactor to the Detroit Institute of Arts.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Society for Armenian Studies Elects New Officers for 2021

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) Executive Council held a meeting on November 11, to choose its new Executive officers for 2021. Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) was re-elected as SAS president. Also elected were Vice-President Dzovinar Derderian (American University of Armenia); Secretary Nora Lessersohn (University College London); Treasurer Barlow Der Mugrdechian (California State University, Fresno); and advisors Vartan Matiossian (Executive Director of the Eastern Prelacy), Christopher Sheklian (Zohrab Information Center) and Varak Ketsemanian (Princeton University). Tamar Boyadjian (Michigan State University), the editor of the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS), serves as an ex-officio officer.

On behalf of the SAS, Der Matossian thanked outgoing Vice-President Alison Vacca (University of Tennessee-Knoxville) for her work in advancing the mission of SAS.

“It is a great honor to have been re-elected as the President of the SAS,” stated Der Matossian. “In the past two years we have realized all of the major goals we have set forward beginning in 2018. Our membership has increased by 40 percent; we have produced 45 interviews in our Podcast Series; we have given more than 15 research grants to Graduate Students in the field; we have published two volumes in the SAS Publication Series; innovative articles have been published in our electronic journal E-SAS under the editorship of Dzovinar Derderian; and the first volume of the Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies (JSAS) has been published by the prestigious Brill publishing house under the energetic editorship of Tamar Boyadjian.”

“The SAS is continuing its academic mis-

sion by organizing and co-sponsoring conferences, the largest of which was the SAS 45th anniversary conference dedicated to the Armenian Diaspora which took place at the

University of California, Los Angeles in October 2019. Due to the COVID pandemic, SAS adapted itself to alternative ways of disseminating knowledge through Zoom webinars. As a result of the Artsakh war, SAS is raising awareness about the situation through conferences and symposia. As an

academic organization our top priority is to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh. We are currently partnering with different organizations to fulfill this task,”

added Der Matossian.

The Executive Council would like to engage more members in activities and encourages anyone who is interested in Armenian Studies to contact the Executive Council with suggestions, concerns, and feedback.

The SAS, founded in 1974, is the interna-

tional professional association representing scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. The aim of the SAS is to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, includ-

ing history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions.

Information about the SAS can be found on its website at societyforarmenianstudies.com or by following the SAS on its Facebook page, @societyforarmenianstudies.



Top row, left to right, Bedross Der Matossian, Dzovinar Derderian, Nora Lessersohn, Barlow Der Mugrdechian. Bottom row, left to right: Varak Ketsemanian, Vartan Matiossian, Christopher Sheklian, and Tamar Boyadjian.

Merry Christmas!

To Our Readers

This year has been an unusual one for all who are concerned about Armenian affairs, and it has put extra demands on many Armenian institutions, including the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. As you know, the Mirror is the first English-language Armenian weekly published in the US, and for some 88 years, it has served the community. Readers can learn of the most important developments in Armenia, as well as international politics, art and culture throughout the world in a convenient and concise format.

The crises for Armenian communities in Lebanon and now in Artsakh have led us to increase the frequency of our online coverage, while we have secured new young correspondents in Armenia and the US. We continue our agreement with Artsakh Public TV to periodically subtitle in English and condense some of its video broadcasts, while our video correspondent in Washington, DC posts reports. Send us your email if you wish to regularly receive links to articles and videos.

Demands for humanitarian assistance abroad from our sponsoring organizations and friends, and a decrease in events and advertising due to COVID19 have led to decreased revenues for the Mirror, while its expenses have increased.

While some things in the Armenian world have changed, we continue with our annual tradition of publishing your Christmas and New Year’s wishes, and greetings to relatives and friends in the final issue of the year. In case you wish to give gift subscriptions of the Mirror-Spectator for Christmas, for your convenience, we are placing a gift subscription form in this issue at the right.

Sincerely,

Alin K. Gregorian
Editor

Aram Arkun
Assistant Editor

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Harry Toufayan, Founder of Toufayan Bakeries, Named to the Baking Hall of Fame

RIDGEFIELD, N.J. — Harry Toufayan, founder of Toufayan Bakeries, will be inducted into the Baking Hall of Fame by the American Society of Baking. Toufayan has been widely recognized for taking pita and flatbreads from the Middle East to mainstream popularity across the U.S. through tireless innovative commercialization in baking and marketing.

“For 2021, the Baking Hall of Fame committee selected innovators who have earned the respect of their customers, suppliers, communities and industry,” said Rowdy Brixey, chair of the A.S.B. Baking Hall of Fame Evaluation Committee and president of Brixey Engineering, Inc., Holt, Mo. “It is our honor to recognize individuals who have contributed strongly to the industry and gratifying to see consumers drawn to baked goods during these stressful times.”

The Toufayan family has been baking since 1926, initially in Egypt where the family lived before immigrating to America in the 1960s. Harry and his father began in a bakery below their two-bedroom apartment baking the pitas and other products by hand. One day, while standing in line at a supermarket deli counter in New Jersey, Harry Toufayan realized American consumers might love the pocketed pita bread his family had been making for decades. He packed up some fresh pitas and began the task of introducing deli, supermarket and health food store buyers to this new, previously unknown bread, changing the baked breads category in the process. And as demand grew, Harry thrived at working with OEMs to design and build never-before built equipment to automate the process of making the bread of his childhood in order to keep up with demand.

“We are beyond proud of our father and what he has accomplished,” said Greg, Kristine and Karen Toufayan who head Operations, Finance and Marketing within the organization. “He has taught us the value of hard work, the true meaning of integrity and everything we know



Harry Toufayan and his children

and love about bread. Of course, we still have a lot to learn, which is just fine, because Harry is still very much at work every day, still striving for perfection in all the products we bake. We are thrilled to celebrate this honor with him, the entire team at Toufayan, and our cherished retail and restaurant partners nationwide.”

Those who know him best celebrate not only his ingenuity, but his philanthropic dedication. Toufayan built and actively supports a church youth center in Armenia, and as a proud American citizen, has funded the expansion of local non-profits, schools and local charities and regularly steps in to help those in need nation-

wide. For example, in April 2020 Toufayan donated \$100,000 to two different food banks to help those facing job loss due to COVID 19.

The company, which Harry Toufayan runs with his three adult children, produces more than 100 varieties of baked goods including naan, tandoori, bagels and wraps as well as innovations such as lower carb Smart Pockets™, an award-winning line of Gluten-Free wraps, and many different types of national brand equivalent cookies.

Toufayan will be inducted during special ceremonies at BakingTech 2021, a virtual conference to be held February 16-18, 2021.

Armenian Cultural Association of Maine Hosts Lecture On Artsakh Crisis By Theriault

PORTLAND, Maine — The Armenian Cultural Association of Maine will host a virtual lecture with Professor Henry C. Theriault titled “The Legacy of Hate: 1915 to 2020, Asia Minor to Artsakh,” on December 12 at 9:30 a.m. (EST). The lecture is open to the public and will offer an insightful and informed presentation into the roots of the crisis in Artsakh. To register for the lecture visit:

<https://www.armeniansofmaine.com/a-lecture-from-professor-henry-c-theriault-president-of-the-international-association-of-genocide-scholars-iags-entitled/>

Theriault is the President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and currently the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Worcester State University, following his tenure in the Philosophy Department. Between 1999 and 2007, he coordinated the University's Center for the Study of Human Rights.

Theriault's research focuses on genocide denial, genocide prevention, post-genocide victim-perpetrator relations, reparations,



Prof. Henry Theriault

and mass violence against women and girls. He has lectured and presented panel papers around the world. Since 2007, he has chaired the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group and is the lead author of its March 2015 final report Resolution with Justice. He has published numerous journal articles and chapters, including co-authoring with Samuel Totten, *The United Nations Genocide Convention: An Introduction* (University of Toronto Press, 2019).

Theriault was elected president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) in 2017, and re-elected in 2019. He is also the founding co-editor of the peer-reviewed *Genocide Studies International*. From 2007 to 2012 he served as co-editor of the International Association of Genocide Scholars' peer-reviewed *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, and has guest-edited for the *International Criminal Law Review* and the *Armenian Review*.

The Armenian Cultural Association of Maine (ACAM) was founded in 2003 by a group of Mainers who wished to preserve the history and culture of a unique branch of the Armenian diaspora. Maine's Armenian community is one of the oldest in America. The first immigrants arrived here in the late 19th century to escape growing persecution in Turkey. Hundreds more would arrive by the time of the Armenian Genocide in 1915. Successive waves of new immigrants and their descendants now make Maine their home.



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Arts & Living

Eastern Diocese’s Second Annual ‘Sacred Music Festival’ Meets Online

By Gevik Anbarchian

NEW YORK – On October 23-24, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held its second annual Sacred Music Festival: a gathering of choir singers, directors, instrumentalists, and Armenian sacred music aficionados from across the Diocese. Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over the two-day virtual festival.

The festival was open to all who love Armenian liturgical music and wish to elevate their understanding and improve their performance. It featured instructional workshops, educational seminars, and recitals led by experts.

Conceived by the Diocese’s Sacred Music Council, the festival was organized by a sub-committee consisting of Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian (Diocesan Instructor of Sacred Music), Dn. Rubik Mailian (Director of Music at St. John Church, Southfield, MI), Dn. Michael Sabounjian (pastoral intern at Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church, Providence, RI), and Dn. Ari Terjanian (St. Gregory of Narek Church, Richmond Heights, OH).

The festival began on Friday evening with a vespers service, followed by Bishop Daniel’s welcoming message in which he stressed the importance of the annual festival. “The sacred music of our church is unbelievably rich, but sadly unknown,” he said. “What we hear in our parishes from week to week represents maybe one percent of our marvelous musical tradition. The Sacred Music Festival aims to recover that music and teach it to our people to enhance the power and beauty of our worship and to attract many more people to our church, from young people to accomplished musicians.”

Dn. Rubik concluded the evening with Looys Zuvart (“Joyous Light”), a lecture-recital focused on this ancient hymn retained in various liturgical traditions. (To watch a recording of Dn. Rubik’s presentation, click here.)

Saturday began with morning service and Bishop Daniel’s presentation “Praise for the Light: The Armenian Evening Hour Prayer.” (To watch a recording, click here.)

Morning breakout sessions included workshops for singers and organists on such topics as vocal and posture maintenance through nutrition and exercise, young adult instruction, and hymns of the Evening Service and Badarak, led by Dn. Varuzhan Margaryan, Louise Yardumian, Solange Merdinian, Sevag Derderian, and Linda Bullock.

An afternoon practice session provided an opportunity for attendees to work in small groups on the skills highlighted during the morning workshops. A vespers service, Geeragamdeets (“Entering the Day of the Lord”), concluded the two-day virtual celebration of Armenian Church music and musicians.

Dn. Michael Sabounjian was excited to participate in the festival for the first time in spite of the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic. “When we began to make plans for this event, it was well before the pandemic, and along the way the committee needed to make some difficult choices to adapt the weekend given the unexpected limitations,” he explained. “I commend the members of the Sacred Music Council for their creativity and dedication in adapting this event from an in-person to a virtual event.”

“Rather than canceling the event, the organizing subcommittee decided to switch to an online format,” said Fr. Hovhan Khoja-Eynatyan, pastor of the St. James of Nisibis

DIocese, page 17



Detroit Filmmaker Oksana Mirzoyan Tries to Heal Scars of Karabakh War

DETROIT – Great art often emerges from conflict, hardship, or pain. Oksana Mirzoyan has known these perhaps more than most. As a child refugee fleeing

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Baku in the late 1980s and again in the early 1990s due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, she knows firsthand the world that war creates, both outside and inside of us. A perceptive and sensitive artist, she channels her inner and

outer world, along with a good dose of inspiration from classical painting, into a body of artwork, film in her case, that could not be more relevant for Armenians, and all people, today.

Based in Metro Detroit where she grew up, Mirzoyan begun to make her mark for several years with her work being screened at film festivals internationally. Her short film, “140 Drams,” took top prize as Best Short Film at the Izmir Film Festival (Turkey), received an Emerging Cinematographer Award from the Cinematographers Guild of America, and was selected by Atom Egoyan for his curated selection: “Diaspora: Atom Egoyan and Armenia” at the Fribourg Film Festival (Switzerland).

Already well-known in the artistic circles of Detroit, as well as the local Armenian community here, she holds a Kresge Arts Fellowship, has had her films exhibited by the DIA (Detroit Institute of Arts, one of the most prestigious art museums in the country), and has had work commissioned by the MOCAD (Museum of Contemporary Art of Detroit). Her life and work inextricably tied up with the Karabakh conflict, she has now begun work on a feature-length film on the subject, to be titled “Absym.”

Mirzoyan was born in Baku, Soviet Azerbaijan. As a young child, her life changed forever. She was only 4 years old in 1988 when “everything started to happen,” in her words. Karabakh voted for independence, which led to massacres that took place in Baku and Sumgait. The Soviet Union was crumbling. Her family, along with 500,000 other Armenians, fled Azerbaijan. It wasn’t a choice – it was a matter of survival.

“We fled and came to Yerevan. I have my memories, the images from that time, but more so I remember the feeling. I remember the tension. I was very young and at that age, you only understand the feeling of events. I’ve been trying to find the language around what happened since then.”

The Baku pogroms, as any Armenian knows, were not the only catastrophe in 1988.

“We came to Yerevan 6 days before the earthquake happened. One of my earliest memories is that earthquake. Standing in the doorway of a bathroom in a Soviet apartment building. The tub full of water. They used to fill up the tubs because you never knew when the water would be shut off. And then suddenly, everything started to sway. And the water started to crash against the opposite wall. I will never forget it. After that, we knew we couldn’t stay. The country was dealing with refugees, a war and now a natural disaster. We fled again.”

Mirzoyan’s father went to Moscow to try to start a business there, so that the

see FILMMAKER, page 13

BOOKS

Meet the Girl From Cairo

The Girl from Cairo is a memoir of Peggy Hinaekian’s early life in Cairo, Montreal, Boston and Manhattan, from 1940 to 1960.

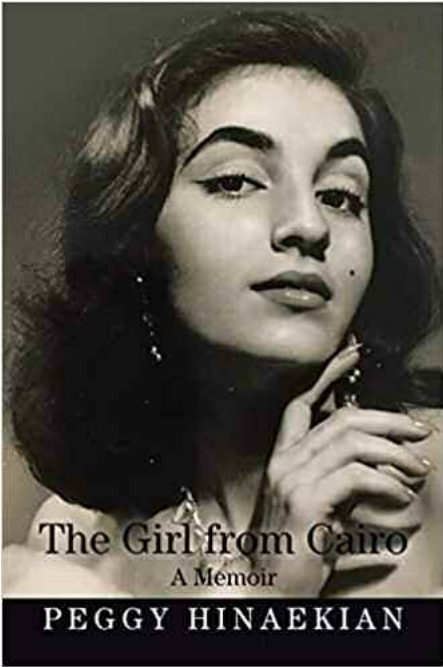
It is a riveting story of an Armenian girl born and raised in Egypt, her trials and tribulations, her anxieties and desires. She describes her life in Cairo through WWII and two Middle Eastern wars that brought uncertainty and insecurity to her cushy life.

Her father having worked with the U.S. Army during WWII, Peggy was accustomed to meeting Americans and reading American comics and magazines as a child. American movies were the biggest entertainment of the family and this ignited a desire in her to go to the U.S. She focuses wholeheartedly on this venture and strives to make it happen.

In her boy-crazy youth, she yearns for a fairy tale life of marrying the man of her dreams. She finally meets K – as he is called in the memoir –her first boyfriend, and they plan to get married against his parents’ will, who think he is too young, only nineteen, and she eighteen.

They finally get married and go to the U.S. as university students with no financial means of support as that was the only way out of Egypt. Their future is nebulous but they are both young, naive and full of dreams.

Married life has its ups and downs. Peggy is restless. She has confused feelings about mar-



riage. She falls out of love with her husband and looks at other pastures.

How does a young woman from Egypt, where working women were looked down upon, avoid becoming a hausfrau, dependent on a man for her support?

This is the story of a young rebel, trapped in age-old cultural stereotypes, who escaped the life planned for her. The story of a young woman creating her own world and achieving an impossible dream.

Peggy Hinaekian was born and raised in Cairo. She owes her love of books to her paternal grandfather who owned the largest private library in Egypt and she was introduced to books in three languages (English, French and Armenian) at a very young age. Peggy grew up in a cosmopolitan environment and was an avid reader and kept a diary since age twelve.

Her first book, an erotic romance novel – *Of Julia and Men* – appeared in the *New York Times Book Review Magazine*. Peggy designed the cover illustration and the 26 interior images.

Peggy is also an internationally recognized artist and lives and works in the United States and Switzerland where she exhibits her paintings regularly.

see CAIRO, page 14

ARTS & LIVING

Filmmaker Tries to Heal Scars of Karabakh War

FILMMAKER, from page 12
family could relocate. In a moment of levity, Mirzoyan shared that the business her father opened was a blue jeans factory. Everyone wanted blue jeans when the Soviet Union fell, I commented. “Everyone!” Mirzoyan replied, laughing. After her father started the blue jeans factory, “he was kidnapped for a few hours and held for ransom!” Mirzoyan told me, almost incredulous of the events of her own life, as she waved it off with her hand in a familiar Armenian gesture. As for growing up in Moscow around 1990-91, “It was waiting in bread lines, the end of the Soviet Union, but also the grandeur and beauty of Moscow too.”

She spoke of the highly impactful nature of painful childhood memories, in her case around the pogroms and the poverty of the immediate post-Soviet era: “People often dismiss a child’s memory.” In Mirzoyan’s words, parents will assume that “Oh, they’ll forget.” She brings up a quotation attributed to Franciscan monks: “You give me a boy at 4 and I’ll give you a man at 7.” She continues, telling me that this age bracket is a “crucial time for how you see the world. It gets locked into your system.” Mirzoyan strongly believes the seemingly indelible memories of this stage of life, become the lens through which one views life.

How did all of this affect her filmmaking artistry? “For a long time I was really confused as to what happened,” she says. “It’s when I started going to the front line of the conflict, in 2011 that something shifted. I sat with the soldiers and looked out over no-man’s-land and I saw what would be my feature.” [i.e. the feature film about the conflict, “Abysm,” that Mirzoyan is currently working on] “I didn’t understand why I kept going back to the front line to be with the soldiers and to sit with them and to photograph them and to talk to them... about death. I was very much obsessed with this idea, because I think as a child [refugee] I was always made aware of the fact that there [was] something after us. You’re always waiting for a catastrophe to happen, and you’re always in that state of ... something could happen at any second, that will be the end. In Artsakh, on the front line, you always feel at any moment, the war will begin again. It was a familiar feeling.”

For Mirzoyan, in other words, the lens or filter through which she sees the world is in fact the Karabakh conflict, because it played such a pivotal role in her formative years. Indeed, in correlation with the Franciscan theory about childhood, her family first fled Baku when she was 4, and at the age of 7 her family finally made it to the United States. During that time, she experienced the conflict, massacres, and uprooting of the Armenian community of Azerbaijan.

When she made it to America, it wasn’t quite the “promised land” she had been expecting; though her family was granted asylum and sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit as Christian refugees, they were resettled in the enclave municipality of Hamtramck, an immigrant-dominated area entirely surrounded by the city of Detroit. “We landed in ’91,” Mirzoyan tells me, “and we had 50 dollars to our name. It’s such a crazy typical immigrant story. The 50 dollars was hidden in my shoe. Because we weren’t sure how much we can bring over, what was allowed. And Hamtramck and Detroit in ’91. You know it also went through its own war experience. I really felt like we had arrived in another war zone.”

The year the Mirzoyans arrived, 1991, was the year when crime rates in the already-notorious “murder capital” Detroit peaked – an era when one could strike fear and awe into the hearts of fellow travelers on an out of state trip merely by telling them “I’m from Detroit” (something that suburbanites up until then would still casually mention as a regional reference point). “Now I understand it because I studied it at university. Back then, I just saw decay. These huge abandoned structures, all those factories, in ruins. I spent a lot of time in my teenage years running around those space and taking time to watch nature taking back those structures. Reclaiming them.”

Mirzoyan also found challenges as well as blessings at the AGBU Manoogian School in Southfield, where her parents sent her during



A scene from the film

her elementary school years. “That was quite challenging...a lot of the students were...maybe not ‘well off’ but much more comfortable and much more secure than my family was during that time.”

Mirzoyan was comforted by the fact that there were other refugees from Baku who came at the same time and attended the school. Nevertheless, “My experience at the Armenian school was quite nurtured and I understand and appreciate my Armenian identity because of it... I loved Armenian history. This was my favorite class. And Digin Toumajan and Baron [Toumajan], oh my God, we were so fortunate to have the two of them. They were so amazing.” [Mr. and Mrs. Toumajan are longtime Armenian history and language teachers at the school]

One of the reasons that Baku Armenians felt isolated from the community was the fact that they spoke Russian and not Armenian. I mentioned this point and Mirzoyan replied “My mom did [speak Armenian], my father didn’t. My dad learned because he started working with an Armenian tailor from Lebanon who he really got along well with, and he taught him Western Armenian. And I understand Western too, because I went to AGBU. Western is easier to understand because the dialect, it doesn’t change. Eastern Armenian is...constantly evolving, because it’s lived, it’s spoken all the time.”

While Mirzoyan went to AGBU Manoogian when she was younger, she later attended Kimball High School in Royal Oak, which introduced her to the broader American experience: “I went to a public high school in Royal Oak, because at that point we had moved, and so I

acting for them. Then I went to university for art history, and that gave me a really broad knowledge of what it means to...to look at images and to understand how to read images and sculptures, and movement, and composition, and lighting. All of my education came from there.”

The Female Gaze

Mirzoyan attended the University of Michigan – Dearborn where she majored in Art History. Classical Western art – especially Baroque-era painting, became her love, and her heroes included Van Gogh, Caravaggio, and Artemisia Gentileschi, a female Italian baroque-era painter very close to her heart. Gentileschi, though little known for many years, brought a woman’s touch to the world of painting. While the Baroque era followed the Renaissance in artistic openness, allowing for depictions of the naked female (and male) form, especially in mythological and Biblical paintings, much of this was depicted through the perspective of male painters. Gentileschi’s “female gaze” offered a different perspective that captivated Mirzoyan. Mirzoyan’s short film “Susanna” is actually based on the Gentileschi Painting “Susanna and the Elders.” In regard to the Baroque painters and Western Classical Art in general, Mirzoyan remarked: “They taught me how to speak in a visual language.”

Although having 17th-19th century painters as a role model rather than 20th century fellow filmmakers is a bit unusual for someone like Mirzoyan, she sticks to her guns. “I do love films. I constantly watch films and have a deep

auto shows. “What I loved about it was that I got to travel all over the US and I would use the opportunity to go to museums and galleries. I’ve seen most of the museums in the US. It was a chance to take my art history education further.”

When Mirzoyan finished school, she had a decision to make. At first she thought she was going to be a professor, an art historian, or even enter the financial side of art – investment, auctions, etc. But, she says, “when I graduated I just missed making things so much, and I always felt like I wanted to go back to film, so then I moved to Italy for a few months.”

Spending time in the small city of Siena, which “lost the battle [with Florence] for who was going to be the city of the Renaissance,” in Mirzoyan’s words, she grappled with what for her was an important and life-changing decision: whether or not she wanted to seriously dedicate herself to filmmaking. “When I made this decision to go into this world I knew that I had a lot to live to up. Live up to those artists who I really loved and who taught me how to be true. And I knew in making this decision to become a writer-director there would be no turning back from it.” She adds that she felt she would have to “answer” artistically to her favorite directors and even to the artists of the past.

And so, Mirzoyan moved back to Detroit and began making films: “A short, and then another short, and then I moved to Armenia, and started living there, making films there.” Her time in Armenia, from 2011 to 2014 was crucial for her. She gained a better knowledge of what was going on in the homeland; she visited



A still from the film

went to a super all-American high school and there I got the American experience...Led Zeppelin, and the Doors, and Dave Matthews...” It’s very rock’n’roll over in Royal Oak, I comment. “Exactly! It’s rock’n’roll, it’s bonfires with guys playing on the guitar, *Stairway to Heaven*, things like that,” Mirzoyan laughs.

Mirzoyan’s creative side was already budding while she was at Manoogian, and started to blossom during her high school years in Royal Oak: “I started writing plays when I was about 10-12 years old. I was acting in theatre from a young age. And then in high school we had a great program at Kimball. I had friends who were making films in high school and I started

reference of them. But for me, painting will always be the foundation. Even if we don’t recognize it, we have, as humans, a deep subconscious knowledge when it comes to images that’s been shaped throughout centuries. It’s so important to understand that history. In my films, I’m speaking in a visual language. I’m speaking with those dream-like images which are going to evoke something visceral and primal in you. Hopefully primal.”

Mirzoyan worked her way through school, interestingly enough, as a spokesperson for Ford and Chrysler. She travelled around the country as one of the gracefully dressed young women who would demonstrate new cars at

Artsakh and the front lines; she worked with humanitarian organizations. For her, the recent war has been painful to witness. Not only did it bring up her childhood memories, but she had friends that served on the front lines. “Just last year I went to Artsakh to teach a filmmaking workshop for five weeks with Tumo. And now one of my students is serving on the front line. I check every day to make sure his name is not on the list of soldiers who died.”

Mirzoyan was heavily involved in the non-profit world while in Armenia. She helped start OneArmenia, a “global community of change-makers” who “collaborate with grassroots

see FILMMAKER page 16



ARTS & LIVING

Books

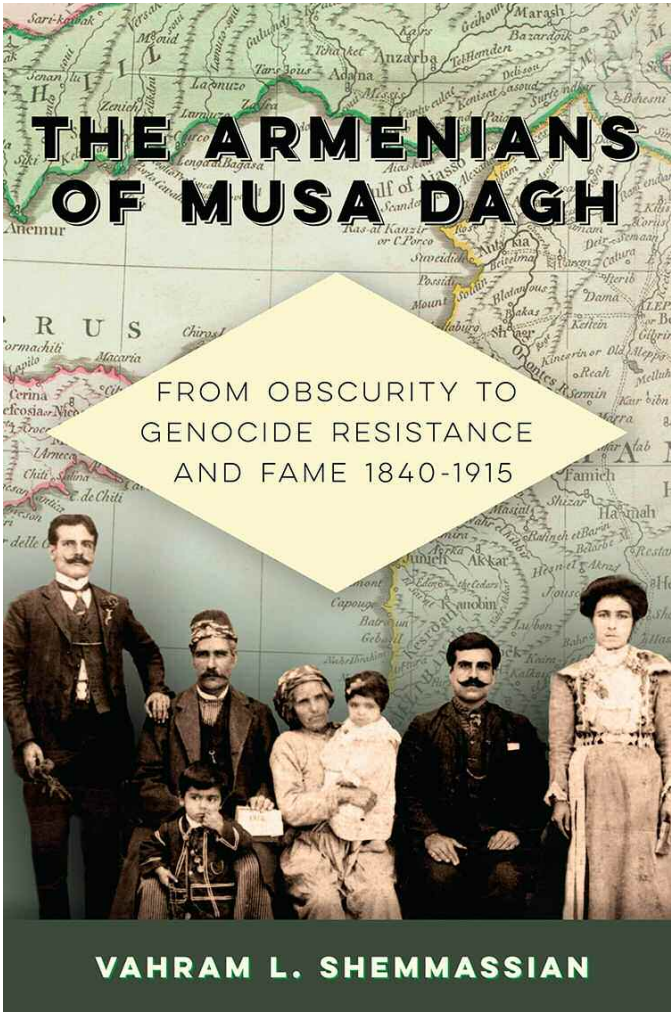
Fresno State Armenian Series Publishes Shemmassian’s Book on Musa Dagh

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

The Armenians of Musa Dagh is a comprehensive history of the people of Musa Dagh, who rose to prominence with their resistance to the Genocide in 1915.

Shemmassian, has presented a thorough analysis of the social, economic, religious, educational and political history of the six villages which constituted Armenian Musa Dagh. His work focuses on the important period of the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, offering the reader a previously unavailable insight into the people whose courage and persistence ultimately led to their successful self-defense.

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



Copies of *The Armenians of Musa Dagh* are available for purchase from: Abril Bookstore, <http://abrilbooks.com> or the National Association for Armenian Studies & Research (NAASR) Bookstore, <https://naasr.org/collections/naasr-bookstore>.

century.”

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

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

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

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

Meet the Girl From Cairo

CAIRO, from page 12

In 2020, Peggy’s life as an author and as an artist was featured on “Living Your Dreams” (Mara Brown) airing on Los Angeles TV. During that same year, she won an award from the Writer’s Workshop in Asheville, N.C. for a 5000-word memoir, describing her life in Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s.

“For many of us in the disconnected 21st century, it is time to speak about our heritage. This memoir creates a whole world bridging memory and narrative. It has a sense of longevity, no so much in the number of years, but with the depth and range of felt experiences. The writer is an artist who brings to the page an astute eye for the meaning of belonging and identity as she shifts between her many selves. There’s a real sense of looking at people in the Middle Eastern world through the lens of her mixed ethnicity – Egyptian, British, Armenian.



“The memoir finds humor in dark places like a childhood spent in trauma, cowering from overhead bombing raids during WWII, telling how entire families were able to find resilience to survive constant danger. Following WWII, Peggy’s fascination with American GIs stationed in Cairo sets her off on a life path. When the Suez Canal political upheaval after “Black Saturday” happens, it catapults her to leave Egypt.

“The author’s coming of age story is composed of her education in a Catholic Girls’ School, her sexual awakening, her first love, and her childhood daydreams of becoming a film star or a fashion designer that sets her on a journey through several countries: Canada, Switzerland and the US. The narrative plays on the reader’s question of ‘what’s next?’ as the writer weaves her family story with compassion, finding inspiration in the ‘showing’ of ordinary people living their lives against an exotic and, often, foreign backdrop.”

Visit: www.peggyhinaekian.com (for books) – www.peggyhinaekian.artspan.com (for art)

The sense of tension with her characters, particularly her roguish, bon-vivant father, who gambled away the family fortune, and her strong-willed, fashionable but secretive mother ever vigilant about neighbors gossiping as they lived in gentile poverty. Nevertheless, she maintained a sense of normalcy while railing in her “headstrong” daughter.

Together for Artsakh

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

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

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

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

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

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

We also need the following technical experts:

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

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

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.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Students of Armenian Descent

Having Completed One Year of College by June, 2021

Applications and other information may be obtained from

**ARMENIAN STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION
Scholarship Committee
333 Atlantic Avenue • Warwick, RI 02888
Tel. 401 461-6114 • Fax 401 461-6112**

e-mail: headasa@aol.com

**Deadline for returning completed Applications:
March 15, 2021**





ARTS & LIVING

Goodnight Moon Translation Project Aims to Form Stronger Bridge between Armenia and Diaspora

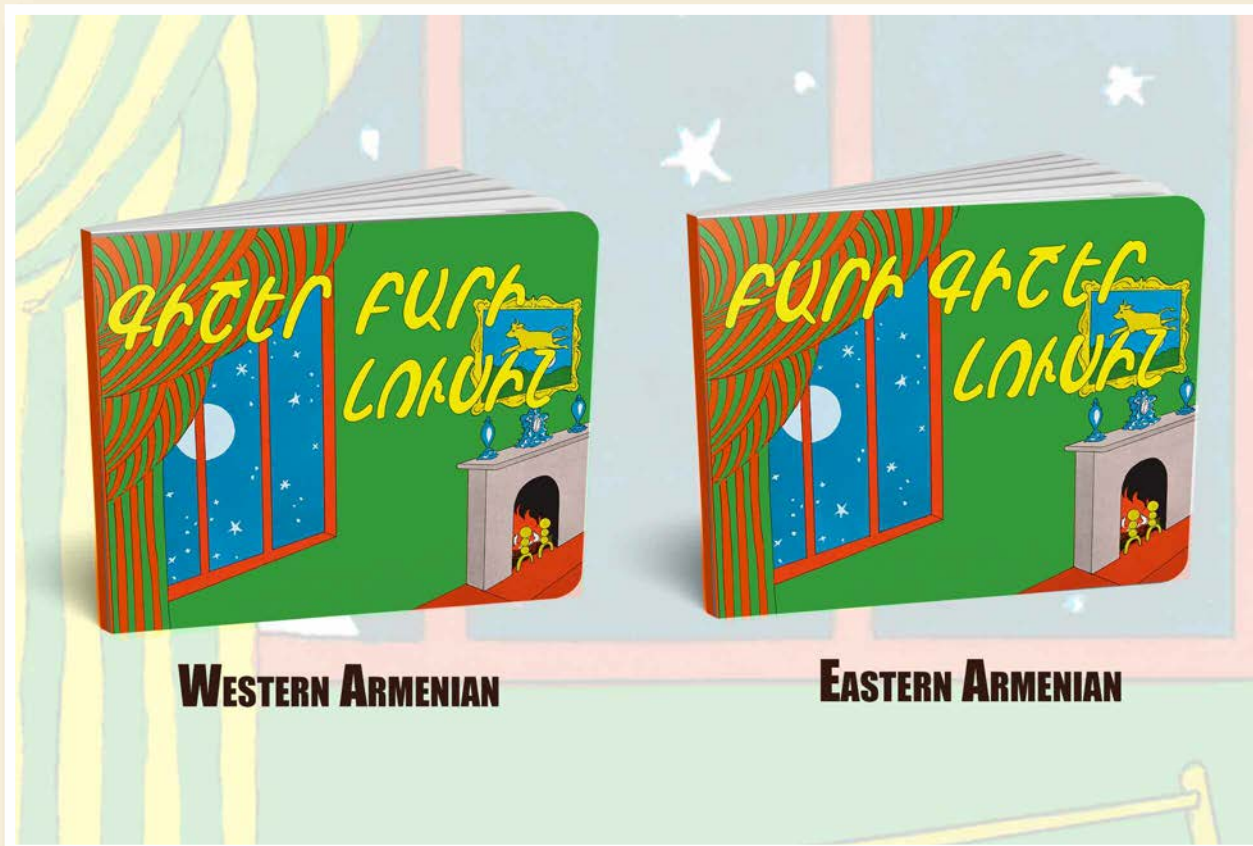
FAIR LAWN, N.J. — Here in the U.S. Diaspora, no children's book collection is complete without at least one copy of *Goodnight Moon*. In this timeless bedtime story, a whimsical series of illustrations capture the essence of falling asleep. A young rabbit tosses and turns as his grandmother watches over him. His final waking moments are consumed with astute observations of the objects across the room. Deceptively simple, the story takes a deep dive into the fine line that separates the real world and our dreams.

Although translated into over 13 languages, Armenian has not been one of them until now. Cascade Press, publisher of the Armenian edition of the *Frog and Toad* series, has taken on the initiative to publish *Goodnight Moon* into Armenian (both the Eastern and Western dialects).

Intended to set the stage for a night of sweet dreams, the Armenian edition of *Goodnight Moon* is now more relevant than ever for the children of Armenia and Artsakh. Forced to leave their homes after a heart-wrenching war, these children have lost everything — their homes, their sense of security, and their way of life. No child should have to endure such torment. No child should be deprived of a night of sweet dreams.

And so, the latest attacks on Armenia and Artsakh have given this translation campaign a new sense of urgency. Regardless of whether we hit our target goal, we will print at least 500 copies for the young children who have been displaced from their homes in Artsakh as well as for the maternity ward in Stepanakert. A fundraising campaign has been launched to help fund the printing of these books in Yerevan.

In the midst of uncertainty, the simplicity and calmness of *Goodnight Moon* will send a



powerful message of relief to the children of the Diaspora, Armenia, and most importantly Artsakh. We hope that this book will bring together Armenian children across the globe — all peering out to the same moon in the night sky.

For more information, visit cascade.press.



HELP Us Rebuild

The Tekeyan School of Beirut

The Vahan Tekeyan School, founded in 1951, was damaged by the August 4 explosion in Beirut. It primarily serves a low-income segment of the Armenian community and already was struggling due to Lebanon's economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Now it is trying to reopen for the fall semester.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada is sending aid and asks your assistance too. Make your donations by credit card at <https://givebutter.com/bXn8Lm> or as checks mailed to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (memo: Beirut Tekeyan School), at its headquarters (755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472). All administrative costs for this campaign will be borne by the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada.

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4455.



ARTS & LIVING

Filmmaker Tries to Heal Scars of Karabakh War

FILMMAKER, from page 13

organizations to implement innovative projects that accelerate job creation in agriculture, tech, tourism, and made in Armenia products.” Mirzoyan helped see the organization through the first year of its creation. She has also worked with COAF (Children of Armenia Fund), with whom she did a six-month photography workshop in 2011, as well as numerous other organizations in Armenia, including accompanying the US Embassy on an archaeological dig, a favorite memory for her.

Since returning to the Detroit area, she has continued an artist's life, dedicated to her craft. Mirzoyan's films, including “Susanna,” “140 Drams” and “Sonnet,” are artistic, yet accessible. Some of her pieces are squarely in the realm of “art film,” others more mainstream-friendly, but all of them are challenging and make you think, without, for the most part, using jarring imagery often seen in avant-garde film. Assuming that one wants to view an artistic film and not standard-issue Hollywood material, the viewer is not shocked or made uncomfortable in the first moments of footage, as is the case with many art films. Instead Mirzoyan's visual approach is captivating. Rather than the imagery causing one to feel uncomfortable, the subject matter, storyline, or message of the film challenges the viewer. In this way, the degree to which one accepts or rejects the film reflects the viewer more than it does the filmmaker.

When I told Mirzoyan that within the spectrum of art film, I found her work rather accessible, her (audibly pleased) response was: “I don't want to make people feel excluded from my work. The goal is for you to come inside this space and to talk to me...art is the one thing that's supposed to be accessible.” In the opinion of this writer, the captivating visual approach taken by Mirzoyan is an outgrowth of her background in classical art. At the same time the lack of nihilistic, Dadaistic imagery and themes sometimes found in art film and the replacement of these with (sometimes uncomfortable) “real” issues and ideas, is a reflection of Mirzoyan's harsh real-life experiences. When you spend your childhood as a refugee fleeing a warzone, you don't have the luxury and the privilege to say that art and life is meaningless, as the Dadaists did.

Perhaps her most accessible and successful film so far has been “140 Drams,” which is told through the eyes of a young boy in Armenia from a struggling family, whose mother gives him 140 drams to buy milk. When the money isn't enough, the boy must decide what to do. The short and touching film has moved many viewers around the world and become Mirzoyan's most popular work thus far.

Mirzoyan says: “‘140’ came from my work with COAF when I was teaching a 6-month photography workshop. I worked with children. Each got a camera and the goal was to help them open up their critical thinking skills through photography. We would have so many discussions about what they were capturing and it helped me understand how children in Armenia were perceiving their reality. I wanted to tell a story that was true to it.”

When asked how the Karabakh conflict has shaped her work, Mirzoyan replies: “This conflict, it's shaped my whole perspective of reality. I don't know how to distinguish it from anything that I do, or who I am, because it is my perception of reality” She added, “This is why I want to bring peace around it.”

Bringing peace, catharsis, and closure to the events of her childhood, is the impetus behind her current project, “Abysm.” But it's also intended for everyone who has experienced grief, loss, or any traumatic experience. “I want to bring catharsis; I think we've all experienced these things, maybe not everyone with war like I have, but all of us carry trauma, and I want to give people some kind of relief... I love cinema because I am tapping into our emotional nature. And human emotion hasn't changed throughout history... emotions don't have borders which divide us. It's a way of tapping into the universal.”

I asked Mirzoyan to give some more details on her current work. “‘Abysm’ is my first feature, it's a narrative film. It's about how we put the past to rest. I'm asking myself, how do we

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian



Mediterranean Shepherd's Pie

from *Feast in the Middle East*

Blanche Shaheen is an Arab American and network television host and reporter in both entertainment and news. She reported on the ABC entertainment program called “View from the Bay,” hosted the independent film show “Video I” for PBS for 10 years, reported live news daily for the Tech TV show called “Tech Live,” and hosted news and political programs for Link Media. In 2010, Blanche began hosting her own cooking show, and sharing hundreds of years of treasured recipes preserved by her mother and grandmother. These are heirloom recipes handed word of mouth from one generation to the next, recipes that even many culinary schools lacked - however, there were no written measurements. With her solid journalism background, Blanche decided to document her family recipes in an ongoing cookbook, and *Feast in the Middle East* was born.

Blanche launched her popular YouTube cooking show called *Feast in the Middle East* to not only share these recipes with her family, but with the world. Her videos were featured on the inflight entertainment on Virgin America Airlines, where over 1 million passengers a month could watch her cooking program. She has gained recognition in the press, featured on NBC's “California Live,” BBC World News, KQED's “Check Please” program, NPR radio, the Palo Alto Weekly, the Los Altos Crier, the Mountain View Voice, the San Jose Mercury News, and the Rumi Awards show that she hosted for an international audience. Go to: <https://www.youtube.com/user/blanchetv>

It's time to make the appealing Mediterranean Shepherd's Pie that Blanche created while her family was in quarantine the last several months at their home in the San Francisco Bay Area. “You won't miss the meat with this shepherd's pie, with a rich ragout of lentils, and Middle Eastern spices. I developed this recipe after being fed up from not finding what I needed at the grocery store, so I used shelf-stable pantry ingredients like root vegetables and lentils to make this hearty dish. These potatoes are fluffy and creamy - a perfect balance for the rustic lentils,” adds Blanche.

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon olive or avocado oil, to taste
1 small yellow onion, peeled and diced small
1 large carrot, peeled and diced small
2 stalks celery, diced small
1 teaspoon garlic powder or 1-2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 teaspoon za'atar (or thyme if you don't have za'atar)
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 cup green lentils, rinsed
1/3 cup tomato paste
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
6 medium red-skin potatoes, peeled and chopped
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
Vegetable broth or water
1/4 cup regular or plant milk (unsweetened)
Fresh chives or parsley for garnish



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FEAST IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

PREPARATION:

Add the potatoes to a medium saucepan and add enough water to cover. Bring the pot to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, covered, until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, add 1 tablespoon oil, and the onion, carrot, and celery in a large saucepan, and sauté over medium heat for 10 minutes. Add water, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time, if needed, to keep the vegetables from sticking to the pan.

Stir in the cumin, za'atar, garlic powder (or garlic), lentils, and enough water or vegetable broth to cover the lentils by 3 inches. Bring the pot to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, covered, for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Add the tomato paste to the saucepan and cook for another 15 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove from the heat, and pour the lentils into a 9 X 13-inch baking dish. Remove the potatoes from the heat and drain. Mash vegetables until smooth and creamy, then add oil, milk, and Parmesan cheese, and season with additional salt. After mashing with a fork, whip using a hand mixer, and spread the mixture evenly over the lentils. Bake for 25 minutes or until bubbly, and let sit for 10 minutes before serving.

Serves 6.



For this recipe:

<https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress.com/2020/04/23/lentil-shepherds-pie-quarantine-eats-part-3/>

Enjoy Blanche's series on YouTube and at Curious.com. See her amazing 3-part series on an “Armenian Food Festival” at St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic, San Francisco, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bwBULakjGw&t=558s&ab_channel=BlancheTV

break the cycle of war? What is the masculine side of war, what is the feminine side? I'm also greatly exploring the 40 days of Armenian mourning tradition. The project is based on the Classical Greek story of Antigone, the narrative follows a set of twins - brother and sister - caught up in the Karabakh conflict. The brother dies in battle and his body is left across enemy lines. The sister goes on a quest to get her brother's body back and perform his last burial rituals.

“The first image came to me when I visited

the front line and sat with the soldiers. That's how it happens. First, I explore. When I indulge my curiosity for life, and I'm deeply absorbed in a place, a single image comes. It's so clear in my mind, and so true. It cannot be denied and it must come out. The narrative follows,” Mirzoyan says. “And it's been a very long process. The writing process, it's won some international awards for its development in Switzerland, which was really quite exciting, from the Locarno Film Festival.”

“But for so long I just wasn't ready to let go

of the past. I kept delaying the project. But now, with everything that's happened over the last few months in Artsakh, it's time. It's time to tell the truth of my experience. And I hope in revealing what I've seen, and what I know to be true, I claim my humanity in a history of war we all share.”

To see a bit of her films, visit:
<https://vimeo.com/55182690>
<http://dailyrush.us/s02/v04>



ARTS & LIVING

Arsène Jiroyan

“I would like to perform in a play or a film in Armenian...”

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/CANNES — Arsène Jiroyan, a French stage and screen actor of Armenian descent, was born in 1962 in Istanbul. He has acted in about 20 films and nearly 40 TV projects. Both on the small screen and the silver screen, he has worked with several well-known directors, including Luc Besson, Yves Boisset and Patrice Leconte, covering an extensive genre of films.

But two TV series brought him most recognition: “Fantômette” and “Extrême Limite.” On stage, Jiroyan starred in a one-man show entitled “Arsène fait son seed.” He received several prizes for his acting. In 1991, “La Revue du cinema” characterized him as a promising actor with an “excellent technique and amazing presence.”

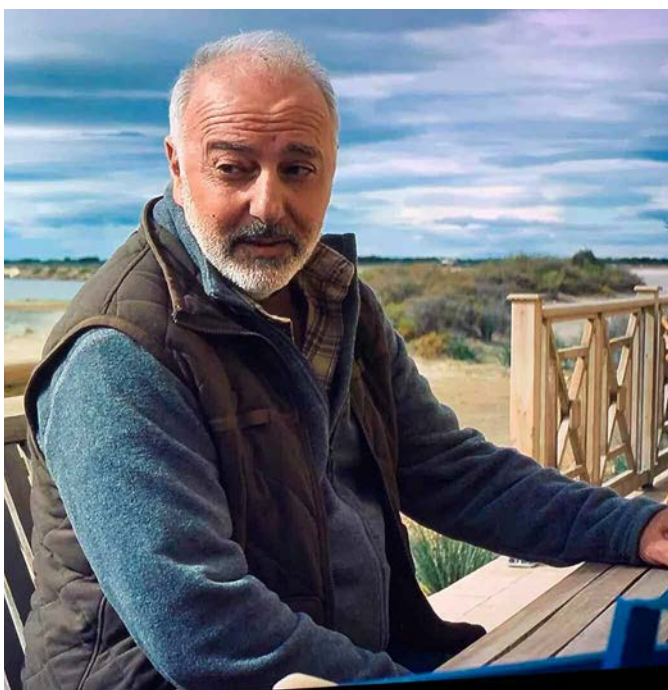
Arsène lives in Cannes and continues his career in acting.

“We have known him with a gun in his hand and sinister face in the costume of an Armenian mafia boss, for the Braquo series. Or more recently in a priest’s cassock for an episode of Joséphine Guardian Angel. But with Arsène Jiroyan, from the dramatic to the comical register, we are never at the end of our surprises!” (*Nice Matin*, March 2, 2020).

Arsène, in Armenia we heard about you back in 1996, when the Russian TV broadcasted “Extrême Limite” series under the title “Challengers.”

“Extreme limit” is very French as an expression, for sales abroad, “challengers” was better. Just like “Sous le soleil” sold better abroad like “Saint Tropez.”

We Armenians are sensitive regarding com-



patriots in various fields, therefore friends knowing about my interest in Armenian-born actors were telling me about you. How did your acting career start?

I started my career as a professional actor in 1991, in 2 series at the same time “The Destiny of Doctor Calvet” and “FDM,” after graduating from my theater course, the Viriot course, where I won the medal, awarded by Patrice Leconte and Yves Boisset who were the sponsors of this promotion. It was Tuesday, June 25, 1991. I will remember it all my life. I felt that

Having a not so typical European face, are you confined to mostly ethnic roles?

For the French, I am not at all typical, they even say that I have a “normal” face, which allowed me to play all the “normal” characters. I have never felt this difference, just the opposite. The proof is that it took me 25 years to play an Armenian.

You mean “Braquo” series you play Atom Parajanov, godfather of the Armenian Mafia. Whose idea was to combine the first and second names of two renowned Armenian film-

night that I was made to be an actor.

I assume it should be difficult to be pursue acting career in a country like France.

Let’s say that in France, it’s complicated if you don’t speak English very well, which I do.

Film vs TV – is there any “struggle” among them?

For a long time, TV was the ugly duckling. Those who did TV were punished and didn’t act too much in movies. Today the opposite is true, almost all movie stars want to have a lead role in a TV series.

makers in a character of a Mafiosi? As far as I know there is no Armenian mafia in France, but this is for the second time in the French film we have a character of an Armenian criminal with the name of an Armenian film director – I mean “Le Premier Cercle,” where Jean Reno acted as gang leader Milo Malakian...

It was the screenwriter of “Braquo,” Abdel Raouf Dafri, who had this idea to associate the two names of Atom Egoyan and Sergey Parajanov. And when he knew that I was born in Istanbul he also made me speak Turkish in season 3.

Please tell us about your family and if you have any connections with your birthplace and French-Armenian community.

I arrived in France at the age of 2 and never returned to Turkey. My parents passed away 25 years ago. I have very few memories. My mother’s name was Silva Bagdassarian. I hesitated for a long time to take her name to start my career. Arsène Bagdassarian, that would have been nice. but certainly more Armenian than Jiroyan. In France, there is a town called Royan. Maybe that’s why my name does not sound very Armenian in France

Are there some family traditions you preserve?

Apart from a few culinary traditions, very few. But I would like to perform in a play or a film in Armenian.

What do you want to say to Armenian readers?

That even though I am happy and grateful to be French, my heart is Armenian and I am proud to be Armenian. I hope one day to obtain Armenian nationality. And also to discover the land of my ancestors.

Eastern Diocese’s Second Annual ‘Sacred Music Festival’ Meets Online

DIOCESE, from page 12

Church (Evanston, IL), an accomplished professional musician who also leads the Diocese’s Sacred Music Council. “We adjusted the schedule and some programs, and eventually everything worked out well. Dn. Michael was instrumental in working out all of the logistical and technical issues and ensuring a smooth experience for everyone. Hopefully, in the future the pandemic will be behind us, and the Sacred Music Festival will resume in-person.”

“It’s inspiring that so many people attended our second Sacred Music Festival in spite

of the limitations of Zoom. We had more than 70 enthusiastic participants!” Dn. Rubik Mailian said.

A New Role for Virtual Gatherings

Given the positive reaction to this year’s event, Dn. Michael sees a future for virtual instruction to complement the annual in-person gathering. “It’s important to bring together Armenian Church musicians in prayer, education, and fellowship on a regular basis. It raises us all up in our appreciation and performance of our sacred music tradition, and inspires us as we continue our music ministries in our parishes. In many

ways, this virtual festival far exceeded our expectations and has invited us to consider regular virtual gatherings going forward even after the pandemic has passed.”

The Sacred Music Council forwarded the proceeds from registration fees to the Armenia Fund for Artsakh. Presenters also made donations to this fund on the occasion of the festival, as did many generous supporters of the now annual event from across the Diocese.

Next year’s Sacred Music Festival is scheduled for April 16-17. The theme, format, and schedule will be announced soon.

Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

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 13 – Sunday, "Armenian Museum of America to Host Virtual Christmas Concert with Yerevan State Chamber Choir." 2 pm Join us for the second in our Online Concert Series, sponsored by the Dadourian Foundation. The concert will air on the Museum YouTube channel, and links to the video will also be shared on our Facebook page and website. This month we are featuring a holiday concert recorded exclusively for the Armenian Museum! Recorded in Armenia, we are honored to “host” the Yerevan State Chamber Choir, founded by the late Harutyun Topikyan, and recognized as one of the most distinguished ensembles in Armenia. The performance was led by Kristina Voskanyan, chief choirmaster and William Weiner, choir director. Special thanks to Maestro Konstantin Petrossian for curating this series, and to the continued support of the Dadourian Foundation. Join our Facebook event page for updates and set your calendar reminders and take some time to celebrate this Christmas season with the Armenian Museum. FREE to all.

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 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 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

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.

December 11 – World Renowned “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

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OSCE Minsk Group Misreads Its Own Principles

By Edmond Y. Azadian

After 44 days of intensive warfare, exacting tremendous human as well as territorial losses, finally a tenuous peace has been restored in Armenia and Karabakh.

Peacetime recovery for Armenia is as perilous as the war had been. There is a shattered army at hand, incapable of protecting the borders, economic collapse and unbearable human misery.

The first priority should be for grieving families to recover the remains of their loved ones to have a chance for closure.

Azerbaijan is dragging its feet regarding the return of bodies as well as prisoners of war to cause more grief for the families.

The political impact of this devastating defeat is more than Armenian society can sustain at the moment, as it is combined with the ravages of COVID-19.

Questions are abuzz about whether the war could have been avoided or if Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is capable of steering the country toward a road to recovery, after proving his incompetence.

But what is more important is that the political landscape has been changed in the Caucasus region and Armenia's viability as a sovereign state has come into question.

The main players in the region, Russia and Turkey, are well entrenched. It is apparent that the war was a necessary tool for both parties to pursue and attain their strategic objectives. Now it remains to the Armenian leadership to chart its course for survival along the sidelines of the rivalry of the two major powers. Unfortunately, maneuvering space has become extremely limited. Two reasons are that over the three decades, Armenia has not only built up its defensive forces adequately, but it has also squandered diplomatic opportunities to build alliances.

Throughout the tragic and bloody war launched by Azerbaijan, nothing more than lip service was offered by the international community. Now comes the cure from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which had been sidelined by Russia and Turkey during the war.

But it turns out that the cure is worse than the disease itself.

Russia and Turkey, after instigating the "necessary" war, have dumped the responsibility for picking up the pieces to the OSCE, which has issued a joint statement (See Page 1) this week, signed by the foreign ministries of the Minsk Group co-chairing countries, the US, France and Russia.

While Armenia is left with the challenges of interpreting and implementing the document signed on November 9 to end the war, the OSCE statement injects more mystification into the political situation. The document has to be taken apart to analyze every premise and presumption.

The co-chairs, in their statement, welcome the ceasefire and indirectly give credit to the Russian Federation for its initiative. They further call upon the signatories to meet their obligations diligently while recognizing the participation in the war of foreign mercenaries.

They also call for full and total departure from the region of all mercenaries and call upon all parties to facilitate this departure. This statement is one of the most cynical aspects of the document, because it fails to name the party – Turkey – that illegally brought the mercenaries to the battlefield and then, in a more cynical tone, dumps the responsibility "upon all the parties to facilitate this departure."

It is the duty of the Armenian government to vigorously protest this unfair political burden assigned to it.

The next issue is "international humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the exchange of prisoners of war and repatriation of the remains."

None of the appeals by the International Red Cross and the Armenian government have met any responses from Baku. What is the recourse or the remedy that the co-chairs intend to bring to this blatant case of non-compliance?

The parties also "underscore the importance of protecting historical and religious heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh."

On this issue we learned about President Putin's firm commitment that those cultural and religious assets would enjoy his personal protection. Yet President Aliyev has rendered all those statement a mockery by assigning a phony priest from the Udi sect as the guardian of Dadivank, one of the most historical

Armenian monasteries, which is located in Kelbajar.

Whatever is contained in the statement is outrageous enough. However, what is not contained is even more disastrous, because it undermines the very values the Minsk Group has supported thus far – we refer to the issue of Karabakh's legal status.

Throughout the years since the end of the previous war over the liberation of Karabakh, the group was continuing its negotiations based on specific principles. Those principles were derived from the Final Act of Helsinki Declarations – the non-use of force, territorial integrity and the right for self-determination.

This document fails to make any reference to those principles, let alone lack of condemnation of the violator of the principles. Azerbaijan has violated the first principle by using force to resolve the conflict.

One would be at a loss to find any reference to the violation of the Minsk Group's first principle.

By violating the first principle, Azerbaijan has achieved its goal of restoring its territorial integrity, although in the process, it has delegitimized the second principle.

Therefore, if Azerbaijan has already "implemented" the first two principles, the only principle which remains for the OSCE to salvage is the last one: defining the legal status of Nagorno Karabakh through the application of the third principle, that of self-determination. Since there is no mention of the third principle, the question arises as to why return to the negotiation process within the framework of the OSCE, when two of the principles have been violated and the third one is apparently nullified?

It is important to realize which one of the three co-chairs must have objected to the inclusion of the status issue on the group's agenda. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have recently stated that the status issue has not been resolved and has to be addressed at some time down the road.

It is also interesting that the positions of France and the United States have not been reflected in the document. The Upper and Lower Chambers in France voted overwhelmingly in favor of recognizing Karabakh's independence, while President Emmanuel Macron himself criticized Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for having introduced mercenaries in Karabakh.

Similarly, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had a bitter exchange with Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu during the NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting over Turkey's destabilizing activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and introducing foreign mercenaries in Karabakh.

None of these political stands appear in the recent statement. Meanwhile President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan stated in his BBC interview that the Armenians missed the opportunity to settle the issue of status and now it is too late to take it up. Karabakh Armenians will be given Azerbaijani citizenship and they will enjoy higher wages and retirement benefits that are not available in Armenia, he said. Similar statements were reiterated by Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jayhoon Bayramov.

The fact that Moscow is soft-peddling the legal status issue is because of ulterior motives; Russia wants to offer its citizenship to Armenians using the same maneuver as in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to always maintain the legal right to protect its lawful citizens in case Azerbaijan moves to remove Russian forces from its territory. In an article in the publication of the Russian International Affairs Council, Pietro Shakarian states: "In the ideal Russian scenario, the final status of Karabakh itself would be determined in a neutral manner. If the Kremlin genuinely seeks a just and lasting solution to this protracted problem, it could maintain it as an independent entity controlled by Russian peacekeepers, allowing Armenians and Azerbaijanis to co-exist and live together."

Armenians not only lost the war, but they face a dismal prospect in the settlement of peace.

Despite all the denials, Turkey declares itself part and parcel of the peacekeeping force. It already intends to show up in the territories recovered from the Karabakh forces. This means that the Turkish presence is not confined to the so-called "monitoring center." What is more alarming is that Russia has also consented to such a monitoring center for Crimea. The question arises that if Russia is so weak and accommodating, how reliable can its peace guarantees be.

If the Minsk Group is reentering a new negotiation process, using this document as a guideline, then it is stepping on the wrong foot and pummeling its very own principles.





COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan's Six-Month Roadmap: What's Included and What is Left out?

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan presented on his Facebook page on Nov. 18, 2020 his six-month roadmap of actions he plans to take after the devastating defeat Armenia suffered against Azerbaijan, Turkey and imported mercenary terrorists.

These are the steps Pashinyan intends to take, assuming he stays in power. He has rejected persistent popular demands for his resignation. These are his 15-point plans:

Pashinyan began by stating that “it is time to talk about the ways, methods and programs to overcome the current situation.” He admitted that he is “the main responsible for the current situation” and “responsible for overcoming the situation and establishing stability and security in the country.”

The Prime Minister stated that his first priority is the “resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, emphasizing the status of Artsakh and the priority of the return of the people of Artsakh to their places of residence.” By negotiating the ending of the Artsakh War with Russia, Pashinyan had left out the two other members of the Minsk Group of negotiators, France and the United States.

In his second point, Pashinyan repeated the importance of the return of the people of Artsakh to their homes. He added that their damaged houses, apartments and infrastructure should be restored. Thousands of refugees from Artsakh have already returned to their homes not occupied by Azerbaijan. The Armenian Government has paid a negligible amount of compensation to the returnees.

The third point: the “provision of social guarantees for the families of killed servicemen and citizens.”

The fourth point: “restoration of residential and public structures and infrastructure damaged during the war in the territo-

ry of the Republic of Armenia.”

The fifth point: “providing social guarantees, prosthetics and professional training for servicemen with disabilities.”

The sixth point: “soonest return of captured soldiers and civilians. Provision of social guarantees for their families. Quick clarification of the fate of the missing and provision of social guarantees for their families.” This should have been priority number one.

The seventh point: “formation of a system of psychological rehabilitation of the individuals who took part in the war and society in general.”

The eighth point: “approval of the Armed Forces Reform Program and launch of reforms.” I hope this includes the modernization of the military by providing it with the latest drones and missiles and establishing an “air shield” or “Iron Dome” over Armenia and Artsakh to protect them from Israeli and Turkish advanced drones acquired by Azerbaijan.

The ninth point: “overcoming the coronavirus pandemic and eliminating its consequences.”

The tenth point: “restoration of the environment for economic activity.”

The eleventh point: “revitalization of programs for solving demographic problems.” This probably refers to a plan to provide incentives for the growth of the population, something Armenia desperately needs, particularly after the sacrifice of thousands of its young men.

The twelfth point: “amendments to the Electoral Code and adoption of a new law on [political] parties.”

The thirteenth point: “introduction of the institute of professional judges as the first step in establishing an anti-corruption court. Implementation of the law on confiscation of illegal property.” This step has already been initiated.

The fourteenth point: “holding regular thematic consultations with representatives of the Armenian political community and civil society.” This step is desperately needed to unify the nation.

The fifteenth point: “conducting regular thematic consultations with Armenian organizations and individuals of the Diaspora. Involvement of Diaspora individuals and structures in the above-mentioned processes.” Regrettably, the Diaspora has been ignored for far too long except when it comes to fundraising. Besides consulting with the Diaspora, there is a need to establish an institutional structure to deal with the Diaspora in a comprehensive and inclusive manner.

In addition, Pashinyan mentioned that he will make changes in the structure of his government. Indeed, several Ministers have either quit or have been removed since this announcement. It is not likely that their removal is going to satisfy those have

been calling for Pashinyan's resignation.

In conclusion, Pashinyan stated that in six months, until June 2021, he will report to the nation about the implementation of these 15 points and “make a decision on what to do next, taking into account public opinion and reaction.” This could mean that Pashinyan is trying to buy himself time to stay in power and calm the public's grief and frustration. It remains to be seen if he lasts that long and what the results of his plans will be.

I would like to mention now several important points that Pashinyan left out of his roadmap.

The first immediate priority should be the clarification of the vague provisions of the “Statement” that Pashinyan signed with Aliyev and Putin. This should be an opportunity to minimize the losses and eliminate some of the harshest concessions, such as permitting a road through Armenia's South to connect Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan.

The second priority should be to take all necessary steps to protect the independent status of Artsakh. Otherwise, we risk losing the remainder of Artsakh.

The third priority is the establishment of an investigative committee to review everything that went wrong in the war and to identify those responsible for the grave errors. There have been a lot of accusations of treason or desertion by Armenia's political and military leaders. However, not a single individual has been charged with any wrongdoing. It is important that this committee or tribunal be composed of non-partisan and highly respected individuals to avoid any cover-up by the government. Due to national security secrets, it may not be possible to invite impartial foreign investigators.

The fourth missing point is the elimination of the regrettable division of Armenians into “blacks” and “whites,” meaning pro-regime and opposition factions. The prevailing atmosphere of hatred and acrimony is tearing the Armenian society apart. All sides should condemn the use of hostile and vulgar language to describe fellow Armenians who disagree with them.

Finally, a provisional government of technocrats should be established to oversee some of the outlined points and others to return Armenian society to normalcy. Plans should also be made to disband the Parliament and schedule new parliamentary elections in six to 12 months. Before the election, however, a new constitution should be prepared and a referendum held to adopt its amended provisions which may include electing the President rather than appointing him by Parliament.

All of these steps should be undertaken in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance, regardless of our individual differences, respecting the rule of law and excluding the commitment of violence.

Intellectuals and the National Interest: Parallel Worlds or Worlds Apart?



By Asbed Kotchikian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On October 21, an open letter addressed to Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (see below) was sent to more than 110 academics and scholars in Armenia, North and South America, Middle East and Europe. The main concern of this initiative was that the military solution of the Karabakh war was not in favor of Armenia, and that a diplomatic solution (even with major concessions) was better than war where the human and territorial losses would be devastating for Armenia and Artsakh.

The operating logic of initiating the open letter was that if PM Pashinyan was made aware that there are those who support such diplomatic solution (even with concessions), he might view such support as a lifeline to counterbalance the “fight till the end” rhetoric that was prevalent in Armenia and the diaspora. This was based on information that in fact the PM was seriously considering such a path and that if he felt that there was at least a significant segment of Armenian scholars and intellectuals who would support a negotiated settlement, he would be in a better position to choose that route. Furthermore, the timing of the open letter coincided with a similar initiative taken by the three former presidents of Armenia who offered Pashinyan public support if he were to take the diplomatic route, thus sharing the burden of such an action.

Out of the 116 individuals who received the letter via email, only 15 endorsed it. Several individuals responded by questioning the prudence of such a move, and even the sanity and ethics of such a campaign. The overwhelming majority did not respond.

The letter was to be published on October 21 in a Yerevan-based Armenian language newspaper, but was retracted from circulation because the news from Yerevan on the same morning carried a public statement from the prime minister in which he announced that “the Karabakh issue, at least at this stage, has no diplomatic solution.”

It would be pretentious to think that had such a letter been signed by 116 scholars and academics in Armenia and the diaspora the outcome of the conflict would have been different. Nor is this failed initiative being brought up now to put forward a “we-told-you-so” argument. Rather, the initiative and the tepid response it received highlights several key points: the paucity of strategic thinking not only among political elites in the Armenian world but also among academics and scholars; the disconnect between this segment of our society and the larger issues that the Armenian nation faces; and the inability or unwillingness of academics and intellectuals to take an active, public role in shaping the future of Armenia and the diaspora.

The need to not only recognize and identify prevalent ideologies and belief systems, but to also, and subject them to serious critique is a task which is usually performed by the academic and intellectual segments of a society. We need that critical intervention now as we did before.

We lack the kind of thinking – critical, bold, and forward-looking – that was, and still is, needed to break existing stereotypes, question “undeniable truths” and speak rationally against the rhetoric of invulnerability, justice, and victimhood. We have an impressive array of academics and scholars, but few of them desire to be public intellectuals who can challenge conventional wisdom, articulate arguments that go against the mainstream mentality and groupthink, and develop concepts that are grounded in the present and future rather than enslaved to the past.

The introductory text (with some stylistic edits) is below.

We are all aware of the critical times Armenia and Artsakh are going through. What we say or don't say today may make a difference in the policies that are being pursued for their defense and their future.

Many of us believe that we should contribute to the intense debate that is currently underway regarding the various paths forward.

We, a number of colleagues have thought it appropriate, may be necessary, to provide Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, the Prime Minister of Armenia, with support for one of the paths that could and possibly, should, be adopted: To pursue diplomatic tactics toward the solution to the conflict based on compromises and avoid worse disconcerting scenarios.

We are asking you, therefore, to join me in signing the attached Open Letter to the Prime Minister, urging him to find a way to end the bloodshed.

The full text of the proposed open letter is below

OPEN LETTER

To the

HONORABLE NIKOL PASHINYAN

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA and
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF ARMENIA'S ARMED FORCES

Your Honor,

We, the undersigned scholars in different parts of the world concerned with the current and future well-being of Armenia and Artsakh, salute your exemplary leadership in these critical times and the formidable resistance you have inspired the Armenian armed forces to manifest against the massive and dangerous aggression against Artsakh and Armenia.

This war has tested, once more, the will, dedication and patriotism of our people that has shown an admirable sense of unity and purposefulness under your leadership.

At the same time, we believe that the time has come to seek a more durable peace, when we must extract the most from the current situation. We think that our main objective must be the preservation of Artsakh. We believe, therefore, that we need to recognize the necessity to replace the security provided by Armenian control of districts outside of Artsakh Republic proper with other measures, including the interposition of international peacekeeping forces that can constitute a new and effective line of separation.

We are confident the people of Armenia and Artsakh, who have shown both exceptional courage and deep wisdom in moments of crises, will fully appreciate the historical significance and benefits of such a strategy, placing you among those leaders in the long history of Armenia known not only for their courage and patriotism but also as one of the wise statesmen who, in addition to having restored democracy and placed the well-being of the people above all else, created the possibilities of peace and prosperity in these ancient and cherished lands of ours.

We are also cognizant of the difficulty in adopting such a policy. A courageous step is now necessary in order for Armenia and Artsakh to resolve the current crisis with minimal damage and maximum possibilities. This possibility still exists because of the thousands of brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives and limbs. We believe, that such forward-looking policies based on circumspection will add the name of a statesman leader to shine in history for his wisdom as well as for their courage.

We, the undersigned, will publicly support this step should you decide to adopt it. And we are sure all others equally concerned and mindful of the current situation will join us. We also do not have any doubt that, under conditions of public discipline imposed by martial law, you will be able to secure the agreement of the people, because you will have taken a major step toward ending the bloodshed that has lasted decades, while ensuring the security of the people.

NE Patriots Showcase Armenian-Themed Sneakers, Call World Attention to Armenia

CLEATS, from page 1

The Patriots have shown support to Armenia and the Armenians on multiple occasion. Coach Bill Belichick wore an Armenian flag pin and Najarian was able to bring up the Armenian Genocide with President Barack Obama during a White House visit in 2015. During the recent Karabakh war, Belichick issued an encouraging statement to Armenians and on November 18, declared he hoped the US would take action against Turkey and Azerbaijan for their deadly attacks on Armenians. Several Patriots players have made their own statements, including Devin McCourty and Matthew Slater. They can be seen on Najarian's Instagram account. The fact that these players have large numbers of followers and their friends, like Tom Brady, visit Najarian's Instagram postings, gives their statements great visibility.

Najarian filled in the context for this activism. He said, "Honestly, I think a lot of it goes back to the fact that our players are very socially conscious. They do a lot of work in the community, which has especially intensified this year. This goes back to the spring, when a lot of things were happening around the country in terms of social justice and racism." The Patriots, he said, became very organized in terms of talking about such issues within the team. Starting in March, team meetings began to be held regularly for discussions.



Berj Najarian

When the attacks on Artsakh began this September, Najarian said, "It really hit me, seeing everything." Though he normally is not a big social media follower, he said he started to get more information, and it just kept coming, to the point that it was practically real time coverage. Najarian normally is not the kind of person to wear his Armenian identity on his sleeve, but this war really changed things.

He put up an Armenian flag for the first time in his office and people, he said, must have understood that this was something important. Najarian said, "My office is right by the front door, so people see it and they know why it is there. It wasn't there 3-4 months ago. It went up when the war started."

Najarian pointed out that the Patriots are not just football players. "They are very intelligent, socially conscious and aware. They care about things even when they are not directly affected," he explained. Consequently, he was able to talk to some players to let them know what was happening, and they were interested.

Roughly a month ago, approximately midway

through the football season, one of the players asked Najarian whether he would like to address the whole team about the situation in Armenia at one of the social justice meetings. Najarian said, "That was the opportunity I was given. I was blown away to stand in front of these men, whom I respect so much, to be able to spread awareness about things that are so important and, honestly, relatively few people know about." This was the first time that Najarian had spoken at one of these occasions. The meeting took place on a Monday several weeks ago, and over 100 people, players, coaches and staff, were present. Najarian had 40 minutes. He said he had to pack in a lot in that time, starting with where and what Armenia is, and a little bit of its history. He touched on the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and how history seemed to be repeating itself now. He showed images of what was happening.

Najarian said, "If you explain it to people, they can make up their minds on how they feel about it. I got the sense that they were willing to help and be a voice for people who are not being heard." In turn, that gave him the confidence to ask whether they might speak up publicly.

Slater and McCourty indeed ended up doing so, speaking in a completely unscripted fashion about their takeaways and messages to the Armenians. Najarian said they spoke from the heart in one take.

As for Belichick and his Armenian statements, Najarian said that as they knew each other a long time, they had many conversations on the Genocide and other Armenian issues, plus he knew Najarian's father. Whenever something notable happened during the Artsakh war, Najarian said he would bring Belichick up to speed. On November 18, Belichick commented only because the newly appointed acting US secretary of defense had quoted Belichick a day or two before in a memo to his employees. Najarian said he doubted the coach otherwise would have reacted.

The Shoes

The shoes were Najarian's idea, though some on social media apparently misinterpreted a post by his wife on Facebook. Right when he started to become active concerning Armenia and Artsakh, the NFL had its deadline for registering for the My Cause My Cleats campaign for this season. Najarian said, "I had never done this. I had never worn shoes for any cause before. I am more of a background person, but this was different now. I thought I should do something."

He decided to do this to raise awareness, though of course some money would also end up being donated to Armenia Fund. He said, "There is far too little awareness about what is happening and without that, we are not going to have the action that is needed. That is where I figured I could maybe move the nee-



The Armenian-themed shoes (photo: Eric Adler/New England Patriots)

dle a little bit."

He tried to have the shoes tell a story, and talked to a lot of people to prepare. He chose things that he thought were relevant and meaningful and worked with a designer who makes a lot of the players' shoes. It took several versions to get the shoes done. Najarian explained that it was not a coincidence that Recognize Artsakh and Armenia Fund and Amaras Monastery are on one shoe, while Ararat, which is in a different part of historical Armenia, and Peace for Armenia, are on the other one, which is in a way the more general shoe thematically speaking.

When Cam Newton showed the shoes off, Najarian said, "it was extremely organic and spontaneous – it was not anything planned." Najarian was standing on the field in Los Angeles and there were maybe less than two minutes left in the game. The Patriots were winning the game 45-0 so everything was relaxed, Najarian said. Newton came up to him so Najarian, after congratulating him on a great game, said that CBS wants to interview Newton on the field afterwards. Newton happened to look down and see the shoes Najarian was wearing and said he liked them.

Najarian had spoken with Newton a few times previously about Armenia, and Newton was also present at the team discussion, so he knew what the shoes represented. He said, "I am going to take these," and Najarian happily agreed. After seeing a few players on the other team when the game ended, he came back and took the shoes. They tied the laces together and Najarian stood in his socks in the field, while Newton put the shoes around his neck.

It all was unplanned, because if CBS had chosen another player to interview, it would not have happened. Najarian again stressed that "a lot goes back to our players opening themselves to learning and wanting to help, and being about humanity. It is a special kind of environment within our team."

The Chargers' game was the first time people

could wear their special shoes on the field. Najarian said he will have the shoes on again at the December 10 game against the LA Rams.

Family

Najarian is closely connected with the Armenian heritage and his past through his family. His maternal grandfather, Papken Kechichian, was alive until Najarian was in his early 20s. Kechichian's life story left a great impression on Najarian. He was a Genocide survivor from Chemisgezsek (in the Dersim region), who was 10 years old when he lost his parents. He made it to an orphanage in Aleppo, then went to Paris and eventually the US.

Najarian's father's parents were born in the US. His father, Dr. Louis Najarian, is a psychiatrist based in Manhasset, NY, who began helping Armenia after the earthquake of 1988 and continues to this day. Although Najarian says that he was pretty assimilated as an American Armenian, his own community involvement throughout his life, as well as his inspirational actions now, belie that.

He was married in Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, Mass., baptized in St. Illuminator's Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in New York City, and active in the Armenian Youth Federation and Camp Haiastan as a child. As Najarian himself said, his Armenian identity was there all the way through.

Bidding on the unique Armenian shoes continues until January 6. Najarian has written that this date being Armenian Christmas is no coincidence. For those who want to bid, go to <https://bit.ly/3mICUwY>



armenian museum of america art culture eternity

WISHING YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND GOOD HEALTH, PEACE, AND JOY IN THE NEW YEAR

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DETAIL: This memorial altar plaque was inscribed by tradesmen in the Galatia district of Constantinople and donated to the St. Astvatsatsin Church in Sebastia in 1848. It is a magnificent bas-relief featuring a central image of the Coronation of the Holy Mother Mary, with the Child Jesus holding the Globus Cruciger.

