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Relatives of soldiers killed during the war in Nagorno-Karabakh stand near graves at the Yerablur Military Cemetery in Yerevan

Armenia Mourns Karabakh War Dead

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia began on Saturday, December 19, an official three-day mourning period for thousands of Armenian soldiers and several dozen civilians killed during the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire.

All flags on public buildings across the country were lowered to half-mast and memorial services will be held in all Armenian churches on Sunday to pay tribute to victims of the six-week war during which the Armenian side suffered massive territorial losses in and around Karabakh. see MOURNING, page 3

The End of the Tekeyan Berdzor School

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BERDZOR, Artsakh — The Tekeyan School of Berdzor now lies in ruins. It lies in the narrow corridor in Kashatagh or Lachin province that is not under

Azerbaijani control. During the war it was used as a barracks for Armenian soldiers. At the end of the war, the Armenian population was evacuated and Russian peace-keeping forces control this area, except for around 100 or so remaining Armenians. These are permitted to stay in order to serve the Russian troops in various capacities, such as running



shops or doing other supportive work.

The principal and teachers of the school are now either in Yerevan or various villages with relatives. The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada is attempting to assist them and help them find them new teaching jobs in Armenia's provinces through the Ministry of Education.

Pashinyan Cuts Short Visit to Armenian Border Amid Protests

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan faced protests by angry residents of Armenia's southeastern Syunik province as he visited it on Monday, December 21, following further Armenian troop withdrawals resulting from the Russian-brokered ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The protests forced Pashinyan to cut short his visit.

Syunik borders the Zangelan and Kubatli districts southwest of Karabakh which were mostly recaptured by Azerbaijan during the war. Parts of the districts close to the provincial capital Kapan and other communities remained under Armenian control until last week.

Armenian army units and local militias completed their withdrawal from those areas at the weekend despite protests staged by many local residents. The latter say that they can no longer feel safe because Azerbaijani forces will now be stationed dangerously close to their communities.

The troop redeployments also raised questions about the safety of a road connecting Kapan to another provincial town, Goris. Some of its sections straddle the Soviet-era Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Armenia's Defense Ministry and National Security Service (NSS) insisted over the weekend that the road, which is also part of the country's vital transport link with Iran, will remain open for traffic.

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Beirut Tekeyan School Continues Operations Despite Obstacles

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BEIRUT — Despite the damages from a great explosion in August, the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut is operational and repairs continue to be carried out. However, Covid-19 and the poor economy in Lebanon continue to cause great difficulties, while the political situation remains uncertain and a new government has yet to be formed.

see SCHOOL, page 4



NEWS IN BRIEF

Mirror Closing One Week for Christmas

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for its traditional winter break after next week.

The issue of December 26 will be our last of 2020. We will start back with the January 9, 2021 issue. The online portal, www.mirrorspectator.com, will continue updating if there are major events.

Belgian Parliament Res. Calls for Measures to Help Karabakh, Find War Criminals

BRUSSELS (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Belgian House of Representatives passed a resolution on December 18 the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and its aftermath with 130 votes in favor and 12 abstentions, the Armenian National Committee of Belgium reports.

The resolution condemns the resumption of hostilities by Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, and calls on the government to take a number of measures aimed at alleviating the plight of the war-affected population, identifying those responsible for war crimes, bringing them to justice, maintaining the ceasefire and negotiating a peaceful agreement respecting the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh, and its people's the right of its people to self-determination.

Among other things, the Parliament condemns the harmful role that Turkey has played in this war, demands that it "cease military intervention in this conflict" and "refrain from destabilizing roles in the region."

The Armenian National Committee of Belgium welcomed the fact that the Parliament has adopted a clear, constructive position on this issue, and thanks the parliamentarians who have contributed to it.

Russian Officer Killed By Mine in Karabakh

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian military officer was killed by an explosion while working to clear mines leftover from six weeks of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Karabakh, officials said Friday, December 18.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the mine-clearing expert died on December 17 on the way to a hospital after hitting a mine on a road near the town of Shusha (Shushi).

Russian peacekeepers were deployed to the region under a Moscow-brokered peace agreement that took force November 10, ending 44 days of fierce fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces over Nagorno-Karabakh. The officer's death marks the first casualty among the Russian forces.

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Christmas Greetings

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Artsakh Human Rights Defender Resigns

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Artak Beglaryan has resigned from the post of Human Rights Defender of Artsakh. On December 22 Beglaryan submitted his resignation to the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Artsakh. The ombudsman's resignation is conditioned by the offer to transfer to another position in the government system, based on the existing challenges and needs.

Authorities Retrieve More Bodies from Battlefield

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Artsakh authorities have retrieved 1039 bodies from the battle zones since the end of the war, the State Service of Emergency Situations of Artsakh said on December 21.

“Since November 13, 2020, the rescue detachments of the State Service of Emergency Situations are carrying out search and rescue operations in areas where military operations have taken place. As a result of these works, 1039 remains including remains of civilians have been discovered as of December 20,” the State Service of Emergency Situations said in a statement. The search for the bodies continues in the mountainous forest terrains of the Shushi region, as well as in Martuni, Hadrut and Fizuli.

Deputy Commander of Armenia's Special Police Forces Resigns

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The deputy commander of Armenia's special police forces, known as “Red Berets,” Khachik Tovmasyan, tendered his resignation on December 22.

“Khachik Tovmasyan submitted a resignation letter today due to circumstances concerning his family,” police told Panorama.am.

The 3rd special battalion of the Police Patrol Service is known as the “Red Berets.”

Russian Peacekeepers Clear 248 Hectares from Mines

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Engineering units of the Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno Karabakh have cleared 248 hectares of terrain, 95.3 kilometers of roads, and 423 buildings, the Russian Defense Ministry reports.

Since the deployment of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh, over 8300 explosive objects have been discovered and neutralized.

“Explosive objects and unexploded ammunition are removed and destroyed at a specially equipped landfill. Ammunition that cannot be evacuated is destroyed on site,” the Ministry said.

“With the assistance of Russian peacekeepers, the restoration of vital engineering infrastructure in areas affected by the war is underway.”

Six Missing Soldiers Return from War

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — As a result of search operations carried out in the Azerbaijani-controlled areas, six conscripts, who fought heroically in obscurity for more than 70 days have returned home due to the efforts of the Artsakh Emergency Situations Service, the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Artsakh's President Arayik Harutyunyan announced on December 20. He expressed his gratitude to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“I express my special gratitude to Rustam Muradov, the commander of the Russian peacekeeping mission in Artsakh, Arthur Baghdasaryan and Temur Arzumanyan, who accompanied the rescuers to the location and the entire staff of the State Emergency Service of Artsakh, whose heroic work I will have an opportunity to refer to, Harutyunyan said.



Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutiunian (R) visits a new Armenian army post set up in Syunik province, December 18, 2020.

Pashinyan Cuts Short Visit to Armenian Border Amid Protests

PASHINYAN, from page 1

A Defense Ministry statement said Russian border guards deployed in Syunik will guarantee its security. Pashinyan announced, meanwhile, that he will tour Syunik on Monday and try to personally reassure the region's population.

In an extraordinary move, Goris Mayor Arush Arushanyan, urged supporters late on Sunday to block the main regional highway and bar Pashinyan from entering the mountainous region bordering Iran.

“This is not a political orientation or a partisan initiative. This is a fight for the dignity, security and physical existence of the people of Syunik,” he said in an appeal posted on Facebook.

Arushanyan was arrested overnight. (See related story on Page ...)

This did not prevent hundreds of his supporters from gathering in Goris early in the morning. A convoy of vehicles carrying them was stopped just outside Goris riot police units sent from Yerevan. Some protesters and police officers briefly clashed at the scene.

Hundreds of other protesters blocked a highway section more than a dozen kilometers northwest of Goris.

Arushanyan was among the heads of more than a dozen Syunik communities who issued earlier this month statements condemning Pashinyan's handling of the war with Azerbaijan and demanding his resignation.

Pashinyan condemned the road blockade as a “provocation” when he began his tour of Syunik in another provincial town, Sisian, in the morning.

With the protesters refusing to unblock the roads, Pashinyan

that he is ready to answer “tough questions” from the region's population. “I admit that there are question to which we have no answers now,” he added.

With the protesters refusing to unblock the roads, Pashinyan



Vehicles at a blocked section of a road outside Goris, December 21, 2020.

Addressing several hundred supporters that gathered in Sisian's main square, he claimed that organizers of the protests want to prevent similar gatherings in Goris and Kapan which he said would expose continuing popular support for him.

The embattled prime minister insisted

announced early in the afternoon that he will not travel to Goris, Kapan and other Syunik towns.

“We will not resort to the use of force especially during this mourning period [for Armenian victims of the war,]” he wrote on Facebook. “We are returning to Yerevan.”

Sarkissian Still Awaiting Government Report on \$100 Million Donation

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — President Armen Sarkissian has still not received a financial report on the use of \$100 million raised by a pan-Armenian charity for Nagorno-Karabakh and controversially donated to Armenia's government.

The Hayastan All-Armenian Fund launched an international fundraising campaign immediately after the outbreak of the war in Karabakh on September 27. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians from around the world responded to its appeal for urgent aid to Karabakh and its population, donating roughly \$170 million within weeks.

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 sum will finance the government's “infrastructure, social and healthcare expenditures” necessitated by the six-week war.

Sarkissian publicly criticized the donation, saying that it undermined donors' trust in Hayastan. In a

December 6 statement issued by his office, he said the government should consider redefining the hefty contribution as a “loan” and eventually reimbursing the fund.

Sarkissian also urged the government to release a detailed report on how it has used the economic and humanitarian aid to Karabakh. The president is still awaiting such a report.

Hayastan's executive director, Haykak Arshamyan, said on Friday, December 18, that he has asked the Ministry of Finance to specify in writing about “how that money has been used and will be used.” He said the fund has not yet received an adequate response that can be forwarded to President Sarkissian.

Arshamyan at the same time defended the \$100 million donation to the government, saying that it was authorized by most members of Hayastan's board of trustees headed by Sarkissian.

Arshamyan also argued that later in November Hayastan raised in the United States and France \$26 million in fresh



President Armen Sarkissian

funds for Karabakh. “Does this testify to [donor] trust or distrust?” he said.

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

Aurora Doubles Artsakh Aid Program

\$400,000 to Support 46 Local and International Humanitarian Projects

YEREVAN – The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has doubled its humanitarian aid program for Artsakh, adding numerous local and international projects to the list in phase two.

After the war, the people of Artsakh face a grave humanitarian crisis that continues to unfold amidst a global pandemic, and Aurora stepped up to bring them immediate relief. Aurora’s humanitarian aid program for Artsakh has since doubled, with a total budget of \$400,000 allocated to support 46 projects listed below. Among them are the initiatives run by the HALO Trust and the Near East Foundation (NEF) – with contributions to both matched – reflecting further development of Aurora’s global cooperation with international partner organizations possessing relevant expertise.

In addition, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative also continues to run the global #AraratChallenge4Artsakh crowd-funding campaign, which encourages people worldwide to express their Gratitude in Action by offering a second chance to people in need, and invites world humanitarian leaders to Artsakh where their expertise helps maximize the impact of the Initiative’s aid program in the region.

Urgent Humanitarian Aid to Families and Children

1. Assisting in resettlement of displaced persons from Shushi in Stepanakert and other Artsakh localities (in cooperation with the Shushi “Narekatsi” Art Union and the “Hrant Matevosyan” Foundation) – \$12,500
2. Providing urgent humanitarian assistance to the population of 7 villages in Martakert Province (Nor Maraga, Nor Aygestan, Nor Seysulan, Nor Karmraavan, Nor Haykajur, Nor Jraber, Hovtashen) – \$10,000
3. Providing 1,000 bedding sets to the temporarily displaced people from Artsakh relocated to Armenia – \$12,700
4. Making 450 warm jackets for the people of Artsakh at the Stepanakert Clothing Factory – \$12,000
5. Humanitarian aid program assistance for 600 Artsakh residents affected by the war (in cooperation with the Bari Mama Foundation) – \$10,000
6. Providing 210 heaters to the temporarily displaced Artsakh families – \$2,500
7. Supporting the development of an online platform that engages Diaspora’s resources to mitigate the humanitarian crisis and boost local economy (in cooperation with AMIA) – \$5,000
8. Assisting in the creation of job opportunities for war widows in textile industry (in cooperation with Bari Mama) – \$7,000
9. Assisting in providing urgent humanitarian support to displaced people in Artsakh (in cooperation with Street Workout Armenia) – \$10,000
10. Educational and psychological support program for the displaced people from Artsakh in Vayots Dzor (in cooperation with the Vayots Dzor Regional Youth Center) – \$2,800
11. Supporting professional trainings and job opportunities creation for displaced women from Artsakh (in cooperation with Hay Mayrer Charity Organization) – \$2,885
12. Creating safe spaces for young women and children to participate in sport and educational programs in Artsakh (in cooperation with GOALS Armenia) – \$4,800
13. Supporting emergency cluster munitions and other explosives clearance operations in civilian areas to allow the safe return of displaced people to Artsakh (in cooperation with HALO Trust; the organization will also match Aurora’s funding) – \$25,000
14. Supporting the Made in Artsakh program to create job opportunities in Artsakh (in cooperation with Support Market) – \$5,000
15. Supporting the underprivileged people affected by war via a grant to the Artsakh Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Housing – \$10,000
16. Providing 425 bedding sets to the temporarily displaced people from Artsakh relocated to Armenia – \$5,500
17. Supporting providing shelter and food to

- 83 Artsakh families affected by the war (in cooperation with Mission Armenia Charitable Foundation) – \$4,700
18. Creating new job opportunities for the displaced people from Artsakh relocated to the Syunik Region of Armenia (in cooperation with NEF; the foundation will also match Aurora’s funding) – \$15,000

Healthcare Services

19. Assisting in the repairs of X-ray equipment of the Republican Hospital of Stepanakert – \$10,500
20. Assisting the Traveling Doctors of Armenia Foundation in organizing at-home medical services for the wounded (with limited mobility) in the hard-to-reach regions of Artsakh and Armenia – \$10,000
21. Contributing to the acquisition of ambulances for Artsakh (in cooperation with Support Our Heroes Foundation) – \$20,000
22. Purchasing vital medication for senior citizens residing in Artsakh (in cooperation with Miasin Foundation) – \$2,000
23. Purchasing 55 folding beds for the forcibly displaced people from Artsakh (in cooperation with the VIVA Foundation) – \$3,000
24. Supporting the production of post-coma recovery equipment, designed and manufactured in Armenia during the war (in cooperation with QaylTech) – \$7,000
25. Providing orthopedic items to injured soldiers (in cooperation with VIVA Foundation) – \$7,000
26. Providing support to wounded soldiers with mobility issues from Artsakh and Armenia (in cooperation with Arites Tour Team) – \$2,000
27. Supporting a training program for locals in Artsakh dedicated to using acupuncture for pain relief and mental health care in war and post-war context (in cooperation with EliseCare NGO) – \$5,000
28. Supporting building a mobile clinic to provide the health care services necessary for the rehabilitation of the wounded soldiers and civilians in Artsakh (in cooperation with EliseCare NGO) – \$5,000
29. Supporting the rehabilitation of the children and adults affected by the war via a grant to the Rehabilitation Center named after

Caroline Cox in Stepanakert – \$10,000

30. Providing 500 heaters for temporarily displaced Artsakh families – \$5,300 (2,756,000?)

Restoration / Equipment

31. Assisting in restoring secondary school ?1 in Martakert (in cooperation with Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Artsakh) – \$20,000
32. Assisting the Martuni City Administration in restoring school ?2 named after Mesrop Mashtots hit by aerial bombardment – \$20,000
33. Assistance in founding a bakery in Stepanakert for the purpose of free distribution of bread for 6 months and for providing new jobs (in cooperation with Tikoonq Initiative Group) – \$10,000
34. Contributing to the fitting out of temporary shelters in Stepanakert for the displaced people from Artsakh – \$10,000
35. Assisting the Stepanakert City Administration in restoring local civil infrastructure – \$10,000
36. Supporting housing and renovation in Artsakh for the people affected by the war (in cooperation with We Are Armenians Charity Foundation) – \$5,000
37. Assisting in the restoration of a hospital in Martakert (in cooperation with the Support Our Heroes Foundation) – \$15,000
38. Providing an electric generator(120kw) to Martuni City Administration to secure drinking water delivery – \$20,000
39. Providing 2 electric generators to a school and a kindergarten in Askeran and 4 more units to Martuni villages (in cooperation with the Artsakh Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) – \$5,200

Food

40. Contributing to providing meals for 166 people currently housed in Sevan, Dilijan, Yerevan for 15 days (in cooperation with Victory-2020 Foundation) – \$10,000
41. Contributing to providing meals for 65 children and adults from Artsakh currently housed in Holy Mother of Armenia Catholic Center (Gyumri) for 30 days – \$9,750
42. Supporting food delivery to 300 people in the border village of Nor Shin (in cooperation with Dilijan Nor Shin Initiative Group) – \$5,000

Essentials

43. Purchasing essentials for 200 Artsakh fam-

- ilies temporarily relocated to Armenia (in cooperation with House of Hope Foundation) – \$3,000
44. Providing 50 kits with essentials to the children forced to relocate from Artsakh to Armenia (in cooperation with Global Shapers) – \$2,050
45. Providing 20 tires for Artsakh ambulance cars – \$1,631
46. Supporting providing essentials’ kits to 85 newborn children from Artsakh (in cooperation with Prolife) – \$10,000

About the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, is transforming this experience into a global movement based on the universal concept of Gratitude in Action. By addressing real, on-the-ground challenges, the Initiative provides a second chance to those who need it the most. We believe that even in the darkest times, a brighter future is in the hands of those who are committed to giving others help and hope, and Aurora welcomes all who embrace this philosophy.

This eight-year commitment (2015 to 2023, in remembrance of the eight years of the Armenian Genocide 1915-1923) aims to promote global projects and support people who tackle the needs of the most helpless and destitute and do so at great risk. This is achieved through the Initiative’s various programs: Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, Aurora Dialogues, Aurora Grants, Aurora Community, Aurora Index, 100 LIVES Initiative and #AraratChallenge.

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is the vision of philanthropists Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan who have been joined by thousands of supporters and partners. Our Chair, Dr. Tom Catena, draws on his experience is a surgeon, veteran, humanitarian and the 2017 Aurora Prize laureate to spread the message of Gratitude in Action to a global audience.

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is represented by three organizations – the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Foundation, Inc. (New York, USA), the 100 Lives Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland) and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Charitable Foundation (Yerevan, Armenia).

Armenia Mourns Karabakh War Dead

MOURNING, from page 1

Thousands of people led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan marched to the Yerablur military cemetery in Yerevan where many of the Armenian soldiers killed during the hostilities were buried.

In a televised address to the nation aired earlier in the day, Pashinyan urged Armenians to join the procession and demonstrate that “we are going to live on” despite the “severe consequences” of the war.

Thousands of other Armenians walked to Yerablur late on Friday. The march was organized by a coalition of opposition parties that blame Pashinyan for Azerbaijan’s victory and demand his resignation.

The precise number of Armenian and Karabakh Armenian soldiers killed in action remains unknown. The Armenian Ministry of Health confirmed earlier this month over 2,800 combat deaths.

Hundreds of other Armenian soldiers remain unaccounted for more than one month after Russian President Vladimir Putin brokered the Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire agreement. Armenian and Karabakh rescue have been looking for them or their remains in various areas seized by the Azerbaijani army. Russian peacekeepers and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross are also involved in the effort.

A Karabakh official said on Friday that the

bodies of 969 Armenians have been recovered since November 13. According to the Ministry of Health, only about 300 of them have so far been identified through DNA tests conducted in Yerevan.

In his televised remarks, Pashinyan reiterated that he accepts, in his capacity as prime minister, “full responsibility” for the Armenian side’s defeat and resulting heavy casualties. At the same time, he sought to deflect blame at Armenia’s former leaders.

“We need a more in-depth analysis of the reality because what happened could not have been the consequence of mistakes committed by one or several persons or over several years,” he said. “We need to ... admit that we made mistakes for many years and our mistakes were of systemic, conceptual and substantive character.”

All three former presidents who had ruled Armenia since independence have strongly condemned Pashinyan’s handling of the war. One of them, Robert Kocharyan, has said that Pashinyan’s government made the hostilities inevitable with reckless diplomacy and miscalculations of Armenia’s military potential and needs.

The Armenian opposition also blames Pashinyan for the outcome of the war. Virtually all opposition groups want him to resign and hand over power to an interim government that would hold snap parliamentary elections within a year.

The opposition demands have been backed

by President Armen Sarkissian, the Armenian Apostolic Church and many prominent public figures.

The prime minister again made clear on Saturday that he has no intention to step down and will not bow to the pressure from “elite circles.”

There were chaotic scenes at Yerablur when the crowd led by Pashinyan, his close political associates and security detail reached the military pantheon in the afternoon. It was confronted by several hundred angry protesters chanting “Nikol traitor!” and trying to stop Pashinyan from laying flowers at soldiers’ graves. “Nikol prime minister!” shouted back some Pashinyan loyalists.

Riot police pushed back the protesters. They also intervened to stop scuffles that broke out between some protesters and Pashinyan backers.

Opposition leaders claimed ahead of the ceremony that the embattled premier will turn it into a pro-government rally as part of his efforts to hold on to power in the aftermath of the war. Pashinyan denied any political motives behind the “mourning march” to Yerablur.

“The entire nation has been through and is going through a nightmare,” Pashinyan said in a video message before the march. “Sometimes it seems that all of our dreams have been dashed and our optimism destroyed.”



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Dink Family Lawyers Slam Court after Quick Sentencing Review

ISTANBUL (DuvarEnglish.com) — The Istanbul chief public prosecutor's office presented a 68-page sentencing opinion to the court regarding the murder case of Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink. But the court gave only two days to Dink family's lawyers to prepare their review of the prosecutors' legal assessments.

Lawyers for Dink's family slammed the court's decision, saying that they needed two months to file their opinion with regards to such a high-profile case, in which police officers and intelligence agents stand trial.

Thirteen years after Dink was assassinated in Istanbul, the trial of several people accused of involvement in the murder, including government security officials, is still dragging on.

A 2017 indictment accused the police officers and intelligent agency now on trial of neglect of duty, destroying evidence and other offenses. A total of 77 suspects are on trial as part of the case.

During the hearing on December 14, the chief public prosecutor's office presented its final sentencing opinion to the court.

A day later, on December 15, the court asked the Dink family's lawyers to present their review of this opinion of the prosecutors but gave only two days to submit their answer, i.e. until the next scheduled hearing on December 17.

Dink family's lawyers criticized the court's decision, saying that they need two months to prepare their opinion with regards to such a high-profile case.

Ogün Samast, then a 17-year old jobless high school dropout, confessed to the killing and was sentenced to almost 23 years in jail back in 2011.

The case grew into a wider scandal after it emerged that security forces had been aware of a plot to kill Dink but failed to take action against it.

Dink's relatives and followers of the case have long claimed that government officials, police, military personnel and members of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had played a role in Dink's murder by neglecting their duty to protect the journalist.

Turkey Has Evacuated Seven Syrian Military Posts - Source

ANKARA (Reuters) — Turkey has evacuated seven military observation posts in northwest Syria, pulling back troops from territory controlled by the Syrian government to areas held by insurgents and Turkey-backed rebels, a Turkish source said on Friday.

Turkey had set up a dozen military posts in the region in 2018 as part of an ill-fated deal it reached with Russia and Iran to calm fighting between Syrian government troops and rebels. Ankara backs the forces fighting Bashar al-Assad, while Moscow and Tehran back the Syrian president.

Several Turkish military posts were surrounded last year by the Russian-backed Syrian government forces. Turkey vowed at the time to maintain its presence at all of them but it started withdrawing in October.

The source, who requested anonymity, said the last of the evacuations was completed on Thursday night, and the forces were being redeployed within territory controlled by the Ankara-backed forces under an understanding reached with Russia.

"It is not in the form of troop withdrawal or reducing their numbers. The situation is just about changing location," the source said.

Syrian rebels say Turkey retains between 10,000 and 15,000 troops in northwest Syria, alongside rebel fighters backed by Turkey and jihadist forces it has committed to disarm and contain.

Already home to nearly 4 million Syrian refugees, Turkey is determined to prevent further influx of people fleeing fighting. The United Nations says there are about 4 million people in northwest Syria outside Syrian government control, of which 2.7 million have been displaced during the nine-year conflict.

Beirut Tekeyan School Continues Operations Despite Obstacles

SCHOOL, from page 1

The Tekeyan Center in the Gemmayze district, up until the last few years, has been the most important financial source of support for the Tekeyan School in Beirut. Various businesses rent offices at the Center, which also hosts Armenian cultural activities and Armenian organizations. The economic crisis in Lebanon and political instability affected its operations greatly. Upon this came the Covid-19 crisis, and then the explosion which destroyed much of the building. Finally, most recently a further fall in the value of the Lebanese currency adversely affected its rental income.

Chairman of the TCA Founders Body Hagop Kasarjian said that while fundraising for repair of the Tekeyan School was fairly successful, it was much harder for the Tekeyan Center. He said, "People don't understand that the revenue from the center is what will support the school in the future." Some money has been raised through non-Armenian Lebanese sources, but not sufficient to do all of the necessary repairs. The building has been secured from the elements but only some of the sections have been able to be restored. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be necessary to fully repair the building.

The Tekeyan School in Bourj Hammoud, a municipality which is part of Greater Beirut, has received \$110,000 of aid through the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada. Many generous donors contributed along with the TCA itself. The Armenian General Benevolent Union has contributed \$51,000, of which the majority was in-kind repairs. European and various non-profit Armenian and non-Armenian organizations have provided smaller sums. Most recently, Sam and Silva Simonian promised a major personal donation of \$100,000, which helps ensure the operations of the school in 2021. Sam Simonian attended the school as a child and has been an important supporter of the school in the past.

The school is providing free tuition this academic year (2020-21). There are 100 students enrolled at present, with 25 teachers and staff.

According to Berge Arabian, who is in charge of the physical reconstruction, many repairs have been completed, including that of damaged walls on two floors and the roof. In the kindergarten, 14 windows have been repaired along with various internal ones, while 66 destroyed windows of the building have been replaced by new ones. Nearly all wooden doors have been either replaced or repaired along with curtains. Bathrooms are in the process of repair. Air conditioning, outside walls or fences, the vinyl flooring and stage for the third-floor hall, water fountains, an outside iron fence, equipment in the kindergarten play area and vinyl flooring for the kindergarten corridor are among the items remaining to be fixed or replaced, along with the computers, printers and other equipment destroyed in the explosion.

The principal of the Tekeyan School, Galina Shememian Nadjarian, said that the fall session was conducted remotely, due to Covid-19 restrictions, until November 29. Six daily classes were livestreamed online while two sessions were provided to students in the form of PowerPoint lessons. Testing, homework submission and grading were all done online.

There were periodic remote access issues due to electricity issues in Beirut, but in general Nadjarian said the first to ninth grades were managing satisfactorily in this system. It was more difficult for the youngest students, aged three to five years old. It was not possible to keep them in front of computers, iPads or phones for six classes, so instead limited livestreaming was done [for language and mathematics], followed by assessment sessions. This allowed maintaining the connection between student and teacher, Nadjarian said. On remaining days, PowerPoint lessons were sent on all topics.

Unfortunately, very few of the children

possess laptops or iPads at home, and so many join via telephone. Most of the parents had not used computers in their daily lives so it initially took some time in October and November to train them how to do things. The computer room in the Tekeyan School had been destroyed in the explosion and still is not repaired. There were still a few families without the means to participate in the internet lessons, but most parents have found ways to help their children do so.

While the classes were being conducted remotely, the principal and the administration all worked in the school building. The teachers worked from home. Nadjarian said that she had tried for a period to have all teachers in the school also, but the internet connection was not strong enough and the expense of changing to a different internet system would have been too great.

Starting on November 29, the students were allowed to have physical classes in a hybrid system. Six out of eight sessions daily were in-person, and two more sessions were via PowerPoint lessons provided to the students. However, due to a suspected case of coronavirus, as a precaution the school was again temporarily shut down starting on December 15. After the holidays, on January 11, when the students can hopefully physically return, examinations will be held.

Despite all the aforementioned difficulties, the school's teachers and administrators are doing their utmost to make sure the children continue to receive their education in a safe fashion. Their dedication and industriousness are to be commended.

Those who wish to help the school financially can send their donations online by credit card at <https://givebuter.com/bXn8Lm> or by check to the Tekeyan Cultural Association (memo: Beirut Tekeyan School), at its headquarters (755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472). For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com or call 617 924-4455.

Azerbaijani Government Is Delaying UNESCO Mission Visit to Karabakh

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan is delaying its approval for a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) mission to Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) to assess damage to cultural and religious sites, according to a statement published by the organization on Monday, December 21.

Ernesto Ottone, assistant UNESCO director-general for culture, said: "Only the response of Azerbaijan is still awaited for UNESCO to proceed with the sending of a mission to the field. The authorities of Azerbaijan have been approached several times without success so far. Every passing week makes the assessment of the situation concerning cultural property more difficult, not least due to the weather which is expected to become harsher in the coming weeks. The window of opportunity that was opened by the ceasefire must not be closed again. The safeguarding of heritage is an important condition for the establishment of lasting peace. We are therefore expecting Baku to respond without delay so that the constructive discussions held over recent weeks can be turned into action."

Back in November, UNESCO reiterat-

ed countries' obligation to protect cultural heritage in terms of the 1954 Convention for the Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict to which both Armenia and Azerbaijan are parties. The Organization proposed to carry out an independent mission of experts to draw a preliminary inventory of significant cultural properties as a first step towards the effective safeguarding of the region's heritage.

The proposal received the full support of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group and the agreement in principle of the representatives of both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Meeting at UNESCO on and December 10 and 11, the members of the intergovernmental Committee of The Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Second Protocol (1999), welcomed the initiative and confirmed the need for a mission to take stock of the situation regarding cultural properties in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. The Committee requested each of the parties to render the mission possible.

Since November, UNESCO made

proposals and led in-depth consultations with a view to organizing the mission which, in the terms of the Convention, requires the agreement of both parties.

Concerns about the preservation of cultural sites in Nagorno-Karabakh are made all the more urgent by the Azerbaijani government's history of systematically destroying indigenous Armenian heritage—acts of both warfare and historical revisionism. The Azerbaijani government has secretly destroyed a striking number of cultural and religious artifacts in the late 20th century. Within Nakhichevan alone, a historically Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani forces destroyed at least 89 medieval churches, 5,840 khachkars (Armenian cross stones) and 22,000 historical tombstones between 1997 and 2006.

During the recent military hostilities, Azerbaijani forces launched two targeted attacks on the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi. After taking control of the city, they destroyed the domes of Saint John the Baptist Church. Azerbaijan earlier "restored" a church by replacing its Armenian inscription with glass art.

Community News

Armenian Cultural Foundation Marks 75th Anniversary

ARLINGTON, Mass. — This year marks a milestone in the history of the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF). Seventy-five years ago this November, “an unknown and modest resident of Boston,” one Vahan Topalian from Dikranakert (Diyarbakir), Western Armenia, made an invaluable gift to the Armenian community of Boston and the city of Boston in general. Hailed as “a shrine for culture,” the Armenian Cultural Foundation opened its doors to the public and lay the foundation for a proud legacy. A singular entity in its scope and depth, the ACF for three-quarters of a century has preserved and promoted the Armenian cultural heritage in North America.

The official dedication of ACF took place on November 6, 1947, at 18 Somerset St., the original site of the library. With the presence of a capacity crowd of book enthusiasts in an audience representing all segments of the Armenian community, including numerous guests from outside of Boston, Topalian (1886-1983), a bibliophile, a tailor by profession, prefaced his remarks with the statement that “no immediate menace threatened the physical survival of the Armenian people, but a definite danger existed to Armenian cultural values,” a statement that unfortunately remains true to this day.

Topalian continued by striking a very proud and independent note that “no one shall be able to become a charter member of this institution by monetary gifts . . . no financial gifts or contributions by Armenian organizations will be accepted We shall feel ourselves amply rewarded if lovers of Armenian books avail themselves of these facilities from a sincere motive of preservation and extension of Armenian spiritual values.”

The ACF library, named after Armenian poet, writer, philosopher, lexicographer and mystic Eghia Demirjibashian (1858-1908), whom Topalian adored, is the result of Topalian's forty years of “tender, compassionate and fastidious labor, searching, purchasing, and collecting” rare specimens of world literature and rare, inaccessible Armenian originals or periodical literature dating back to as early as 1860. Today, three quarters of a century later, the library collection has grown from 25,000 to about 45,000 items, including rare Armenian periodicals.

New Headquarters, New Period

With the takeover in 1961 of the Foundation under eminent domain of the City of Boston, the ACF with the generous help of John Mirak (1893-2000), an entrepreneur, businessman, and philanthropist, as well as fellow Armenian immigrant, moved to its present location by enchanting Mystic Lake in Arlington. The care of the ACF's valuable collection was trusted to its curator Hagop Atamian (1915-2002) beginning in the 1960s. He continued to serve with utmost dedication even after the passing of Topalian in 1983, under the supervision of the five-member Board of Trustees. A man of letters himself, during his long tenure and with the support of the Mirak family, Atamian, for close to four decades, maintained and cataloged the library's collection with meticulous detail, making it accessible to the public.

1997 marked the beginning of a new period in ACF's history. John Mirak retired from the Foundation at the age of 90, turning the reins to his son, Dr. Robert Mirak, and a new Board, which with a new curator, Dr. Ara Ghazarians, charted a new course in the life of the institution. Whereas John Mirak and Vahan Topalian kept the Cultural Foundation under wraps, pleading for more time to “renovate this or see ANNIVERSARY, page 8



Computer donations in Armenia

Hye Hopes Virtual Telethon Raises \$60,000 for Displaced Students of Artsakh

BURBANK, Calif. — On Friday, December 18, the non-profit organization Hye Hopes hosted a special evening of performances by singers Sebu Simonian of Capital Cities, Onnik and Ara Dinkjian, Greg Hosharian, and Ara Dabandjian along with special performances from Armenia, Boston, San Francisco, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. The evening raised \$60,000.

The virtual telethon was hosted by Greg Krikorian, Glendale Unified School District (GUSD) Board Member and Dr. Armina Gharpetian, GUSD Board President.

The hosts brought to light the current situation in the Syunik Region and the urgency of raising funds to fulfill the immediate needs of the students of Artsakh.



The evening also included a special appearance by FOX 11's “Good Day LA” news anchor, Araksya Karapetyan, who described her experience as a child living in Leninakan during the Earthquake of 1988. She urged everyone to support the students who have been displaced by the deadly, large scale attack launched on the region of Artsakh by the Azerbaijan and Turkish governments in September 2020.

Among the community leaders present were Principal Kevin Welsh, Hoover High School, Dr. Katherine Fundukian Thorossian, Monrovia School District Superintendent, Dr. Vivian Ekchian, Glendale Unified Superintendent, Armen Hovannisian, Esq., Hon. Jack Hadjinian, community leaders and special performances by students from the Glendale Unified School District and surrounding areas. The highlights of the evening were messages and moving performances from the displaced Armenian students now living in the Syunik region.

The evening concluded with an emotional video created by Filmmaker Ani Hovannisian, documenting the current situation in the Artsakh region.

Hye Hopes, Inc. reached its goal for Phase I raising \$60,000 in donations from throughout the country. Donations to Hye Hopes will equip classrooms with laptops, software and projectors for students in the towns of Kapan, Goris, Meghri and Sisyan. Hye Hopes is preparing to launch the first six-week module on January 11, 2021.

Hye Hope's goal is to raise \$100,000 to complete Phase Two and create a sustainable model for adaptable, versatile education to meet the changing needs of the displaced students of Artsakh.

For more information about Hye Hopes, volunteer opportunities, or to donate visit HyeHopes.org or contact info@hyehopes.org

Year-end Appropriations Bill Reaffirms Section 907

WASHINGTON — The final version of the Fiscal Year 2021 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill includes language requiring an assessment as to who initiated the war against Artsakh, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly). The bill is included as part of a year-end package that wraps up the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations process.

The language put forward by House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA) requires, among other provisions, assessments by the Director of National Intelligence as to who initiated the attack on Artsakh, as well as on the impact of U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan and its ramifications on the regional balance of power.

The bill also reinstates Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which restricts U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan due to its hostile and offensive actions against Armenia and Artsakh. Earlier this year, the Administration waived Section 907, which lifts certain restrictions contained in the original language of the bill. The Assembly has



Rep. Adam Schiff

repeatedly urged the Administration to fully enforce this principled provision of law.

“We appreciate the efforts of Chairman Schiff and the assessment requirements in the bill. Azerbaijan must be held accountable for its attack against the Armenian people and its egregious human rights violations,” stated Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan on December 21.

Despite calls for robust humanitarian aid for the Armenian people, the final bill did not specifically allocate additional funding. In an impassioned speech last month on the floor of the United States Senate, Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) called for \$100 million in aid to help the Armenian people. In the aftermath of the six-week war, the Armenian Assembly also called for \$100 million in urgent U.S. humanitarian assistance for the people of Artsakh and Armenia.

“With a new Congress and Administration at the helm in two weeks, the Assembly will continue to advocate for robust aid to help the Armenian people recover and rebuild,”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Lusine Yeghiazaryan Appointed AUAC Trustee

LOS ANGELES/YEREVAN — The American University of Armenia (AUA) announced this week that Vice President of Finance, Chief Audit Executive (CAE) at GoPro, Inc., Lusine Yeghiazaryan, was appointed as AUA Corporation Trustee by the Board of Trustees for a four-year term ending in November 2024.



Yeghiazaryan is a financial executive with more than 20 years of experience in the high-tech and medical technology industries.

Throughout her career, she has been critical to the growth and success of various companies in both consulting and in-house operational roles. She spent ten years in management advisory roles at Deloitte & Touche, LLP. Yeghiazaryan then joined GoPro, Inc., where she was integral to the company's growth.

In 2019, Yeghiazaryan joined the Board of Directors of SADA Systems, which was Google

Cloud's Global Partner of the Year in 2018 and 2019.

Yeghiazaryan holds an MBA in finance and strategy from UC Berkeley and is currently an advisor at Berkeley SkyDeck, one of the largest global startup accelerators and incubator programs. She focuses on the needs and opportunities of startups originating from Armenia and the broader Eastern European region.

Yeghiazaryan serves on the Board of Armenian International Women Association and moderated AUA's "Yes, Armenian Women Can" Los Angeles fundraising event in December 2019. She was also a speaker at the WCIT-19 IT Congress in Armenia.

As a supporter of AUA's vision and mission in Armenia for more than 27 years, Yeghiazaryan will focus on development strategy, provide industry insights, offer her extensive network, aid the Open Centers of Excellence, and explore regional collaboration opportunities.

OBITUARY

Haig Chekenian

Attorney, Former Mayor of Nissequogue

NISSEQUOGUE, N.Y. — Haig Chekenian, a Suffolk County lawyer for more than 50 years, and a former mayor of Nissequogue from 1973 to 1977, died on December 12th after a long battle with cancer.

While attending City College/City University he worked as a reporter for Newsday where he met his late wife, Jane Chekenian, author of Shellfish Cookery.

At night he earned his law degree from Brooklyn Law School.

Although starting out in 1961 in the partnership of Weissman & Chekenian, he later worked as a solo practitioner specializing in

real estate and estate planning.

As mayor of Nissequogue, while living on beachfront property overlooking the Long Island Sound with Jane and two children, he founded the Nissequogue Fire Department when the local town's fire department refused to serve the village without paying a hefty fee. Of historical note, the fire department included women, for the first time in New York State.

He was the son of the late well-known Armenian author, Aram Chekenian and is survived by his daughter, Karen Chekenian and sister, Iris Chekenian.

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Insurance Foundation for Servicemen in Armenia

The Insurance Foundation for Servicemen in Armenia was created in January 2017 to insure the social wellbeing of soldiers injured while on active duty as well as that of the families of soldiers who died while performing their duties. The insurance Foundation for Servicemen will provide monetary compensation to the families of soldiers as well as to soldiers injured or fallen

in combat on or after January 1st, 2017.

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

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

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

At any given time it is possible to see the total funds of the Foundation as well as the total amount of compensations.

<https://www.1000plus.am/en/>





COMMUNITY NEWS

Merry Christmas



Nishan and Margrit Atinizian, Winchester, MA \$1,000
 Carolyn Atinizian and John Yardemian, Winchester, MA \$1,000
 Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian, Boston, MA \$1,000
 Tekeyan Cultural Association, Detroit Chapter, \$500,
 Avedis and Houry Boyamian, Winchester, MA \$500
 Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, Lynnfield, MA \$500
 Margaret A. Gattis, Concord, NH \$500
 Annie Simonian Totah, Potomac, MD \$500
 Sarkis A. Satian, McLean, VA \$500
 Yervant Chekijian, Watertown, MA \$500
 K. George and Dr. Carolann S. Najarian, Orleans, MA \$500
 Nancy R. Kolligian, Watertown, MA \$500
 Peter Balakian, Hamilton, NY \$340
 Kevork Atinizian, Belmont, MA \$300
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 Harry and Mary Hintlian, Gloucester, MA \$300
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 Marilyn Woloochojian, North Palm Beach, FL \$300
 Rosine Patterson, Lexington, MA \$300
 Dr. Ernest M. Barsamian and Sonig Kradjian, Boca Raton, FL \$250
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 Saro and Hilda Hartounian, Franklin Lakes, NJ, \$200
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 James and Paula Tashjian, Westborough, MA \$100
 Hagop Vartivarian, Mahwah, NJ \$100
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 Paul Chilian, East Providence, RI \$100
 Adrienne P. Dodakian, Old Lyme, CT \$100
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 Stephen and Dorothy Masoian, Cranston, RI \$50
 Simon Valedi, Burlington, MA \$50
 Sona M. Kazanjian, Tewksbury, MA \$50
 Richard E. Mikaelian, D.D.S., New York, NY \$50
 Berc and Armine Araz, Wanaque, NJ \$50
 Karen Demirdjian, Skoke, IL \$50
 Karen and Mihran Aroian, Austin, TX \$40
 Hayg Boyadjian, Lexington, MA \$30
 Naomi K. Kuzoian, Cranston, RI \$25
 Lusin Arakelyan, Bayside, NY \$25
 Mary Aroian, Worcester, MA \$25
 Vincetta Costello, Hammonton, NJ \$25
 Dorothy Piranian, Boston, MA \$20





COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Cultural Foundation Marks 75th Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY, from page 5
repair that,” but in fact avoiding a public face and fearful perhaps of too much publicity, the new Board, while adhering to the mission of “promoting culture in general and Armenian culture in particular,” broadened its goals: first, to encourage and be a center for the study of Armenian music, especially in the Armenian Diaspora, and second, to encourage and be a center for the history of Armenian women in Armenia and abroad.

In the former direction, the foundation established the Komitas Vardapet Room for the collection of Armenian music. Compositions, recordings, correspondence, and memorabilia of the outstanding Persian-Armenian-American composer and conductor Rouben Gregorian (1915-1991), world-renowned composer and Arlington-born Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000), conductor Arsen S. Sayan (1925-2018), composers Hayg Boyadjian (1938-), Koharik Ghazarosian (1907-1967), and Diane Goolkasian Rahbee (1938-) fill this room. In 2017 the foundation launched the Mirak Chamber Music Series, named in memory of John Mirak, the sole benefactor for decades and late president of the ACF, to showcase the world’s finest classical music, the works of Armenian composers, “with an emphasis on introducing works by Armenian women composers in Armenia and Diaspora.”

With respect to Armenian women’s issues, the foundation is closely affiliated with the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA), founded in 1990, and houses AIWA’s archives in the Alice Kanlian Mirak (1940-2000) Memorial Room.

The Collection and Accomplishments

The foundation has a collection unique not just in North America, but in the Western hemisphere, specializing in Armenian-language works, both modern and classical. However, the ACF is also an international library, holding large numbers of volumes in English and French as well as in German,

Italian, Russian, Farsi, Greek, and Turkish. Many are priceless first editions containing original letters and signatures of their authors. The library’s holdings in the past decade have expanded to 45,000 items. Concerned with the age and condition of its rare Armenian periodicals collection, the foundation in 2002 launched a major Armenian Periodicals Microfilming Project.



The Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington, Mass.

With more than 145 old-world Armenian periodical titles dating back to 1860, the foundation has microfilmed over 45 major titles, in 53 volumes, amounting to 204 reels.

The original scholarly, cultural and literary endeavors of the foundation have not been neglected, however. Over 150 events, i.e.

hosting delegations from Armenia, book signings, lectures, musical events, exhibitions, literary and cultural events, and symposia, have been frequently organized, such as the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia (2001), an important exhibit on the life and career of Armenia’s first woman diplomat (to Japan) Diana A. Apcar (1859-1937) organized

and published more than 10 titles, among them the important eyewitness account of the Genocide, *Armenia 1915* (2006) by Heinrich Vierbücher; two titles by prolific Diaspora Armenian writer Hakob Karapents, *The Widening Circle and other Early Short Stories* (2007) and *Mtorumner* [Ruminations] (in Armenian) in 2009; *In the Land of Blood and Tears* (2007) by Swiss missionary Jakob Künzler; *President Calvin Coolidge and the Armenian Orphan Rug* (2013) by Dr. H. Martin Deranian; *The Astrologer of Karabagh* by Platon P. Zubov, (2012), and *Collections of the of the Armenian Cultural Foundation: Letters and Autographs* (2007).

In 1999, the foundation initiated the *Foundation Papers*, a periodical publication, dedicated to documenting select major events and sharing their proceeding with the public. Furthermore, the Foundation has also produced and co-sponsored the production of three music CDs and a number of booklets and pamphlets.

In the spirit of cooperation between Diaspora Armenian institutions with their counterparts in Armenia, as well as in the United States both nationally and locally, ACF has participated in two International Conferences of Armenian Libraries, under the auspices of the Holy See of Echmiadzin and the National Library of Armenia (NLA). Over the past decade, the foundation has helped enrich and expand resources and collections in the NLA as well as Central Public library in Shushi and other major academic and research institutions both in Armenia and the United States.

To make its collections more readily available to the community, ACF is preparing a refurbished and expanded website, scheduled for launch in January 2021. With the passage of years, the preservation of the Armenian cultural heritage is becoming ever more important. Today, after three-quarters of century, ACF, with the ongoing support of the Mirak family, continues to thrive as one of the cultural jewels of the Armenian Diaspora.

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 the newspaper as well as one below.

Sincerely,

Alin K. Gregorian
Editor

Aram Arkun
Assistant Editor

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Please make checks payable to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator and mail this voucher in the enclosed envelope. The deadline for receiving the messages is Jan. 2, 2021. For gift subscriptions fill out the credit card information above, OR send a check, for: __ \$80 US __ \$125 Canada __ \$200 International and write: _____ Yes, I/We would like to gift a subscription to:

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Merry Christmas!



In memory of my parents,
Charles and Vincetta
Betchakjian

Vincetta Costello
Hammonton, NJ



Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year to all our friends
and family

Edmond and Nora Azadian
West Bloomfield, MIJ



Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year with Peace and Unity
For Artsakh and Armenia

Robert P. Proodian
Lynn, MA



For Good Health and Peace in
the World and especially to
Armenia and Karabakh

The Pattersons
Lexington, MA



Wishing for a safe and Merry
Christmas and a peaceful
New Year!

Dr. Parnag and Nancy Kasarjian
Newton Center, MA



May you all have many, many
Healthy Happy Christmases
and New Years

Dr. and Mrs. Myron Allukian Jr.
Boston, MA



Greetings and Best Wishes for
Christmas and the New Year

Hagop Vartivarian
Mahwah, NJ



Wishing all a Merry Christmas
and a Healthy 2021!

Dr. and Mrs. Gary Zamanigian
Bloomfield Hills, MI



Remember the Heroes of
Artsakh

David Onanian
Houston, TX



Wish you a very Merry
Christmas and a Happy New
Year! We appreciate all that
you do for the AMAA and the
community at large!

Zaven Khanjian
Paramus, NJ



With Christmas blessings to
favor all with good health and
to help mankind to bring peace
among all the nations of the
world

Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian
Wyckoff, NJ



A Healthy and Happy New Year
is wished to all our friends in
the *Mirror-Spectator* family.
Keep up the good work at
the Mirror!

John and Roxie Maljanian
Newington, CT



Few things are valued as one's
perception of the world and its
people. So be it, with us that
what is perceived is also felt
and cherished. May the spirit of
the Holidays continue beyond
them to our lives, to everyday
and to everyone we touch.

Jack Sarmanian
Wells, ME



May the New Year bring us
peace and justice as we
will never forget 1915's history
repeating itself today.
Our hearts are with all who
were lost and our prayers
are with all those here
today.

The Medzorian Family
Winchester, MA



May harmony and unity
prevail in our Homeland,
so that we can move forward
to strengthen Armenia ASAP!
Time is of the Essence!
Happy Holidays to
you all!!

Annie Simonian Totah
Potomac, MD



Merry Christmas and God willing may New Year 2021 be a better one all over the world

Marilyn Woloohojian
North Palm Beach, FL



Here is hoping we celebrate next Christmas in peaceful Armenian Artsakh

Dr. Ernest M. Barsamian and Sonig Kradjian
Boca Raton, FL



Merry Christmas



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for all

Anna Marie Norehad
Glenview, IL



Peace on Earth, Good Health to all!

The Dodakian Family
Old Lyme, CT



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, stay well

Edward Derkazarian
Watertown, MA



Wishing all a Merry Christmas and a Healthy 2021!

Dr. and Mrs. Gary Zamanigian
Bloomfield Hills, MI



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Saro and Hilda Hartounian and Family
Franklin Lakes, NJ



Best wishes at Christmas and throughout the year

Harry and Janice Mazadoorian
Kensington, CT



Peace for Armenia and Artsakh

Paul Chilian
E. Providence, RI



Holiday Greetings

Drs. Paul and Joyce Barsam
Belmont, MA



Merry Christmas

Ruth and Will Swisher
Newington, CT



In Memory of father Tony, brother Gregory

Richard E. Mikaelian
New York, NY



Season's Greetings to One and All

Detroit Chapter of Tekeyan Cultural Association
Detroit, MI



Merry Christmas, Happy, Healthy New Year to all

Agnes Killabian
Cranston, RI



Keep up the great work!

Bob Mirak
Winchester, MA



Merry Christmas

Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros
Lynnfield, MA



A Healthy, Happy 2021

Lucy Simonian
New Britain, CT



Wishing All a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy PEACEFUL New Year. Shnorhavor Nor Dari yev Sourp Dznunt

Simon Javizian Family
Boca Raton, FL



Best Wishes to all our family and friends for the Holidays and Good Health and Happiness for the New Year

Stephen and Dorothy Masoian
Cranston, RI



Wishing you the joy of family, the gift of friends, Health and Happiness in the New Year. Merry Christmas

Charleen and Peter Onanian
Weston, MA



Health, Love and Peace for
2021. In loving memory of
Hrachia Janikian

Margaret Janikian
Nutley, NJ \$100



Sharing the blessings of
Christmas and praying for
peace in the New Year!

Mary Papazian
San Jose, CA



May the blessing of Christmas
be upon all of us

Andy and Rose Torigian
Paramus, NJ



Good news for the US, but bad
news for Armenia

Hayg Boyadjian
Lexington, MA



Merry Christmas and Happy
New Year!

Roxanne Etmekjian and Nerses Joubanian
West Newton, MA



Happy Holidays to my relatives
and friends

George W. Haroutunian
Stoneham, MA



Have a safe Christmas and
New Year

Dorothy Piranian
Boston, MA



May good things come to
Armenia in the years ahead

Ed Shooshanian
Boynton Beach, FL



Season's Greetings, stay warm!

Jeffrey Barasatian
West Chester, PA



Peace and Prosperity

Hagop J. Isnar
Haworth, NJ



Wish for a peaceful New Year

Berc and Armine Araz
Wanaque, NJ



May 2021 be a year of Peace,
Joy and Good Health

Kimberly C. Bardakian
Oakland, CA



Very appreciative of all you do
for the Armenian Community

Lusin Arakelyan
Bayside, NY



Thank you for your important
work and first-rate journalism

Peter Balakian
Hamilton, NY



Peace to the world

Maral Voskian
Northridge, CA



Thanks for keeping us informed

Ara Asadourian
Plattsburgh, NY



Best Wishes for a Wonderful
2021!

Richard and Gail O'Reilly
Winchester, MA



Wishing our Family and Friends
Near and Far a Merry
Christmas and Good Health &
Peace in the New Year

Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian
Boston, MA



We wish that 2021 will be a
healthier, happier and a more
peaceful Year for all our sisters
and brothers around the world.

Mr. Osep and Dr. Nadya Sarafian
Northville, MI



May your hearts and homes be
filled with all of the joys the
Christmas season brings!

Carolyn Atinizian and John Yardemian
Winchester, MA



Arts & Living

Two Book by Hagop Karapents Published in Farsi

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Coinciding with the 95th birth anniversary of prolific Diaspora Armenian writer Hakob Karapents, two publishing houses in Iran have announced the release in Farsi of his works: *Ketabeh Adam* [The Book of Adam], the writer's most celebrated and popular novel by Khazé Publishing, and *Yek mard va yek sarzamin* [A Man and a Land], an anthology of 15 short stories and essays by Siyamak Book (Ketab-E-Siyamak). This is the first time that works of Karapents are published in the country of his birth. These publications will provide the first opportunity for the Farsi-speaking community and literary circles in Iran to become acquainted with Karapents and his unique literary legacy as well as his Armenian compatriots who will read his works in Farsi for the first time.

The first title, *Ketabeh Adam*, is translated by Andranik Khechoumian, celebrated Iranian Armenian writer, playwright, and translator. The book includes an introduction and a brief biographical sketch of the writer by Ara Ghazarians, curator of the Armenian Cultural Foundation, and a preface by Abbas Jahangirian, prominent Iranian writer and literary critique.

The Book of Adam is Karapents' second novel. He wrote it after a little more than a decade since his first novel, *Daughter of Carthage* (1972). He began writing it in mid-1980 and completed in less than a year's time. The book is dedicated to his wife, Alice. It received rave reviews from several Diaspora Armenian literary critics. It is the winner of the Armenian General Benevolent Union's (AGBU) Alex Manoogian Literary Award, and French-Armenian Writers Society's Eliz Kavookjian-Ayvazian Literary Award. The second edition of the novel was released in Armenia in 2012.

The novel has also been adapted for the stage twice by two young Armenian dramatists, actor, and cinematographer in Tehran (2005) dedicated to Karapents' 80th birth anniversary under the direction of Seto Gojamenian titled "Where Are We to Be buried," and in Los Angeles (2017) by Armen Sarvar titled "Yes, Adam Nourian."

The Book of Adam is constructed on three levels: the state of the American social order in the final decades (1980s) of the 20th century; the current crisis of the Diaspora Armenian; and the crisis of man finding himself at the end of the twentieth century. The characters and plot serve as the means of linking this triad of knots together and reaching a certain truth. "Aside from flashback," as observed by the late editor, writer and translator, Aris Sevag, "the book is written to understand life by the return trip and to live life by the road ahead, the meta-physical with the real, sometimes relying on non-existent realities which are more powerful than the real; therefore, from tie to tie, there surfaces a dry journalistic style to produce a clash between tangible and intangible realities. From this standpoint, *The Book of Adam* enters the self-contained current of contemporary American literature, which is a sad and non-descript visit to solitary persons and solitary communities."

The second book, *Yek mard va yek sarzamin* [A Man and a Land] is divided into five sections, includes 12 short stories and three essays, selected from Karapents' following titles *Mijnarar* [Interlude] (2), *Amerikyan shurjpar* [American Rondo] (3), *Ankatar* [Incomplete] (4), *Mi mard u mi erkir* [A Man and a Country] (3), and *Erku ashkharh* [Two Worlds] (3). Dedicated to her mother, the compiler, translator, Armenoush Arakelian presents a tastefully written preface in three languages (Armenian, Farsi, French), as well as a brief biography of Karapents and his literary legacy. The selected pieces represent diverse aspects and dimensions of Karapents' work, unique linguistic see KARAPENTS, page 14



Andrew Hagopian

For Andrew Hagopian, Music Is in His Blood

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

FRESNO — One of the most promising young musicians in the realm of Armenian dance and folk music in the United States is a 21-year-old third-generation Armenian-

American college student: Andrew Hagopian of Fresno.

Andrew recently spoke about how he, along with his older brother ,Phillip, is carrying on the traditions handed down to them from their grandfather, legendary *oud* player, singer, and folklorist Richard Hagopian.

This writer first met the Hagopian brothers in Chicago, at the Poon Paregentan dance of 2018. We, the attendees, knew that Richard Hagopian's grandsons were going to be performing. Two young guys appeared on the stage who could not have been much more than 20. As the attendees went to order drinks the improvisation of an *oud* taksim began to fill the room. We smiled and felt contented, relaxed in the familiar strains of our music. Yes, it even sounded like Richard's *oud*. It was Phillip Hagopian playing. Then a powerful, vibrant, and deep voice filled the air. "Who's singing?" we asked each other, astounded. It couldn't be "the boys"...

It was, indeed. They could sing like their grandfather, too. At that moment I felt I had been transported back in time to a Fresno ACYO Dance in 1956 at one of Richard Hagopian's first gigs. At that moment, I knew that I was witnessing a special moment in time, the first gig "Back East" of the grandsons of Richard Hagopian, the inheritors of his special legacy in music.

About his beginnings in music, Andrew Hagopian says: "I was born into a traditional Armenian household. Music and family were crucial to me and my brother's upbringing. Ever since I can remember, my parents always played Armenian music in the house, when we travelled, or had a family gathering. My brother Phillip and I became mesmerized by it. We embraced the music any chance that we could get. All of the inspiration came from our grandfather, Richard Hagopian, who was always someone my brother and I looked up to, not because he was Richard Hagopian the Armenian *oud* player, but because he was our grandfather. We knew how well known and respected he was in the community, but we always saw him as Grandpa. We didn't see him as other Armenians viewed him within the community."

A Storied Legacy

Richard Hagopian, born outside of Fresno in 1937, son of a Genocide survivor from Erzurum, has long been one of the premier oudists, singers, and entertainers in the Armenian-American community.

Known for his *oud* mastery and authentic interpretation of Armenian and Anatolian music, singing in Armenian and Turkish, "*Oudi Richard*" was the only student in the US of master musician "Karoni" Garbis Bakirjian. Bakirjian was a kanon player and singer who had been renowned in pre-WWI Constantinople (Istanbul) for his mastery of the system of modes that governs Armenian liturgical music and Ottoman classical music. He had been a deacon at the Patriarchal Cathedral as well as a musician at the Sultan's court.

continued on next page

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian

How to Make Garlic Paste (*Toum*) by Chef Kamal Al-Faqih

In 1986, Chef Kamal Al Faqih made his debut as the owner and head chef of Med Catering, Inc., the first exclusively Mediterranean catering company in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Born in the United States, Chef Kamal grew up watching his mother and aunts prepare traditional regional dishes, providing him a natural authenticity and palate for Lebanese and Mediterranean cuisine. He has catered events at the Smithsonian Museums, the White House, and at numerous private homes, hosting such notables as Queen Noor of Jordan and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. He led cooking demonstrations at the Middle East Institute and Georgetown University, and continues to present in Southern California and on YouTube. Chef Kamal is one of 39 Arab Americans featured in the PBS series, Arab American Stories.

His celebrated cookbook, *Classic Lebanese Cuisine: 170 Fresh and Healthy Mediterranean Favorites* (2009), combines tradition with innovation. Here is Chef Kamal's prized Garlic Paste, or *Toum*, a bold, creamy garlic spread.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup fresh garlic cloves
- 4 cups canola oil (or corn or vegetable oil)
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons salt
- Makes 2 cups.

PREPARATION:

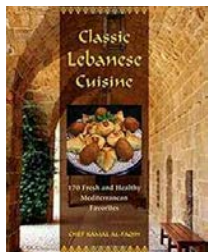
Place the garlic and salt in the bowl of a food processor, and pulse until it is finely minced, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl between pulses.

In a very thin, slow stream that is so slow it stops to a dribble at times, pour about 1/2 cup of oil into the running processor with the garlic.

Then add slowly add about two teaspoons of lemon juice while the processor is running. Turn off the processor and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Continue in this manner, alternating oil and lemon juice in very slow, steady streams and stopping occasionally to scrape down the bowl. The mixture will turn fluffy and white.

Scrape into a bowl or container with an airtight lid, but don't put the lid on yet. Cover *toum* with a paper towel and refrigerate for about 12 hours, chilling the sauce completely and removing some of the moisture which would cause the *toum* to separate if covered immediately with the airtight lid. Then cover with the airtight lid and refrigerate for up to one month. If your *toum* tastes too 'hot' from the garlic, let it rest for a few days in the refrigerator, which will soften the flavor.

Serve *toum* as a sauce or dip with grilled meat, shish kebobs, grilled vegetables or warm pita bread or lavash. Because this sauce is all about the garlic, avoid pre-peeled cloves, and always stick with fresh heads for the best flavor.



ORDER TODAY:
Classic Lebanese Cuisine: 170 Fresh And Healthy Mediterranean Favorites, Hardcover – September 1, 2009 by Kamal Al-Faqih.



ARTS & LIVING

For Andrew Hagopian, Music Is in His Blood

from previous page

The famed blind master “*Oudi*” Hrant Kenkulian of Istanbul, a Genocide survivor from Adapazar haled by many as the greatest Armenian *oud* player of all time, also took the young Richard under his wing when he toured the US throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Gaining the title “*Oudi*” from Kenkulian in 1969, a year after his breakthrough album, “Kef Time Las Vegas,” Hagopian followed up with three more “Kef Time” albums with the team of Hachig Kazarian on clarinet, Buddy Sarkissian on percussion, and Jack Chalikian on kanon. The group played at the annual “Kef Time” events in Hartford and Cape Cod for some 35 years, and countless other engagements, inspiring a generation of musicians.

The elder Hagopian also taught his music to his sons, including Phillip and Andrew’s father, Armen (a clarinetist), who perform frequently in Fresno, most notably the famous annual Grape Blessing Picnic on the Armenian Apostolic feast day of Asdvadzadzin (Assumption of the Mother of God). It’s a special holiday for the Fresno Armenians, many of whom still make their living in agriculture, and treated as a festival with music and shurch bar (traditional line dances).

Despite all this family history, Andrew Hagopian says “I was not pushed or pressured into learning Armenian music by my parents or grandfather. I took interest in it purely out of the joy and happiness it brings me and others who enjoy it. I started banging on a small dumbeg at the age of 3 alongside my brother who would sing and strum on the *oud*. We

watching the dancers dance.”

Getting Serious at a Young Age

After getting all of this music ingrained in his head, the younger Hagopian says, “At the age of 7, I wanted to take my music to a higher level. My parents, seeing that I was serious, convinced me to learn the piano as a basis for music theory and basic musical training. When I was 11 years old (2010), I became an Alliance for California Traditional Arts Apprenticeship member under the guidance and instruction of my Grandfather, Richard Hagopian. The first instrument I learned with him was the *kanun*. He taught me the Armenian Modal System, *kanun* technique, and performance posture. He did not teach me songs. He strictly had me go home, select songs I was interested in, identify the mode they were in, and learn them by ear by the time our next lesson the following week. After completing my training on the *kanun* in 2013, I wanted to learn more about Armenian music and became interested in the *oud*. Because I had already learned *kanun* and the Armenian Modal System, learning the *oud* was a quick process for me. My grandfather taught me *Oud Technique* (fingering and picking), *Oud Maintenance*, and *History*. It was a must that I study and learn classical Ottoman music including Longas, Pesrevs, and Saz Semais because they strengthen an artist’s playing. I also was taught the art of Taksim (Improvisation) which is important in relaying or expressing my emotion in my music and in order to be successful at it, you must know the modal systems and the proper format of constructing a taksim.”

“My goal is to make my mark in the Armenian community just as my grandfather did and serve as a cultural outlet for Armenians to socialize, connect to the culture, and continue the culture. Through performing at large Armenian affairs, I get to witness Armenians come together, meet one another, and eventually end up playing for their wedding. It is truly an amazing feeling that I play a small role in bringing Armenians together. As an Armenian, I feel that it is my duty to continue a part of my culture. My connection just so happens to be through the music which I can express to others,” said Hagopian.

Making a Mark ‘Back East’

Indeed, Hagopian has been making his mark in last few years. One of his first out-of-town gigs was at Chicago’s Poon Paregentan (Armenian Mardi Gras) dance in 2018, already mentioned. This is the biggest social event of the year in the Chicago Armenian community, and Andrew performed on guitar and vocals with his brother Phillip on *oud* and vocals,

Michael Kazarian of Detroit on dumbeg (son of grandfather Richard’s trusty bandmate, clarinetist Hachig Kazarian) and father Armen Hagopian on clarinet. Along with his older brother Phillip, an impressive oudist himself, the 18-year-old Andrew made a big impression on the local Armenians who had attended from around the Midwest region. Even though he wasn’t playing his now-signature *oud*, his impassioned vocals and enthusiasm for the music garnered attention. From there, he was invited to play at the startup event Kef Time Lake Michigan that summer in the beach town of New Buffalo, MI, halfway between Detroit and Chicago, creating a memorable night for those who attended. There he was joined by the young Michael Kamalian of Milwaukee on clarinet, along with Shant Paklaian of Chicago on dumbeg and veteran Detroit area musician George Nigosian on guitar. Clearly gaining traction in the region, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America’s (ACYOA) Racine, Wisconsin St. Mesrob Chapter invited Phillip and Andrew Hagopian, along with Kamalian and Paklaian to perform at the annual ACYOA General Assembly and Sports Weekend on Memorial Day of 2019 giving him exposure to the wider East Coast Armenian youth. Hagopian says, “Over the past few years, I have been trying to grow a name for myself here in California as well as across the Mid-West and



Andrew Hagopian with his band mates, with from left, George Nigosian, clarinetist Michael Kamalian, Hagopian and Shant Paklaian

Back East. I have always enjoyed performing for ACYO events because I enjoy watching my fellow peers my age engaging in our culture and having a good time. It is a good feeling to see a group of 300 Armenian youth all dancing together under one roof, dancing traditional Armenian folk dances that were danced in the villages of Classical Armenia.”

Covid Makes Social Media New Venue

A number of picnic appearances, restaurant shows, and a second Kef Time Lake Michigan followed before Covid shut down the Armenian community’s vivid social life and schedule of dances. Hagopian was not daunted. He soon became known for his “Facebook Live” concerts playing *oud* and singing, as well as prepared videos, spread through social media, of himself singing and playing all the instruments in the arrangement, overdubbed. Both the live concerts as well as the permanent videos include Turkish-language songs, which have always been a part of his repertoire as well as his grandfather’s. This repertoire, which was quite typical for Armenian musicians before the 1960s, has become controversial in recent decades.

“During the pandemic, I have taken this opportunity to educate my listening audience on traditional Armenian folk songs as well as expose them to songs that were composed and or performed by Armenian artists in Turkish.”

“I have received some backlash because of the Turkish music but what many people do not realize is that these songs were sung and danced to by many of our Armenian ancestors even after the Armenian Genocide of 1915. When migrating out of their homeland, they did not have [many] possessions or loads of wealth. They only had memories, customs, and traditions that they brought with them to wherever they settled and built for themselves a new Armenia, continuing all these traditions.”

“The way I see it is that it is my way of bringing peace between two cultures and trying to bring them closer through cultural similarities. Music is an expressive Art form which shouldn’t be criticized or shunned but accepted and understood. Most of all these folk songs were about love and peace. The music does not represent a negative influence. For the most part, my music has been accepted and has served to tear down some barriers and hostile aggression. I have gained a huge Turkish audience online that sees and appreciates me as an Armenian and accepts me for who I am because I am demonstrating peace and expressing my emotion through song.”

Style and Influences

When asked whether Hagopian sticks to the style passed down from his grandfather, or tries to put his own imprint on the music, he replied: “I try to make my own mark by expressing my style and twist on traditional Armenian music while I remain to exhibit the style and techniques of musicians prior. As I think it is impor-

tant to modify and create new music, it is just as important to keep alive the old. It’s like saying we don’t need those ancient manuscripts that Armenians created thousands of years ago, we just wrote a new book with better information. I will leave it to other colleagues of mine in this industry to create new influence. It is my role, and anyone else who wishes to preserve our ancestors’ image, to do so by educating themselves about where they come from and who they are.”

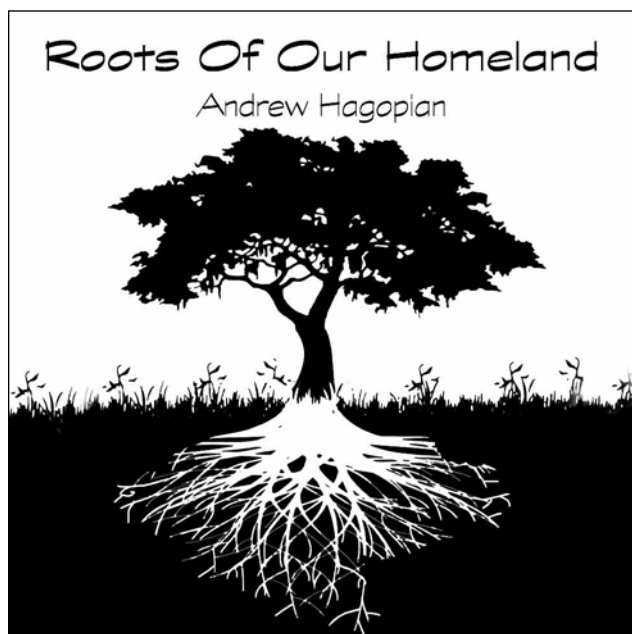
Who are the musicians prior that he emulates? Hagopian mentions his great-grandparents (Richard Hagopian’s parents), Angel, who played piano and her husband, Khosroff, who loved to sing. He names *oud* greats John Berberian and the late Harry Minassian.

“As they are different in their ways or performing and entertaining, they both have the spirit and the drive to give their all to the music. They dedicated themselves to the music and let it speak through them.” Hagopian notes that as he was trained to play by his grandfather, “I listened closely to these musicians, taking what I liked from each of their styles and created my own by combining their skill. To anyone wanting to be their own musician, you must listen to everyone and everything to create your own sound. You take a little from everything you hear, you practice it, and execute it.” Hagopian also named the *Oudi* Hrant, *Kanoni* Garbis, the Istanbul Greek oudist Yorgo Bacanos, and the well-known Armenian immigrant *oud* player Marko Melkon (Alemsharian), a native of Izmir who made his career in New York. These last four, of course, are from the generation of Hagopian’s great-grandparents – the last generation born before the Genocide.

While the verdict seems to be clear that Hagopian considers himself a traditionalist, he also adds, “I enjoy listening to jazz music and American vocalists such as Frank Sinatra and Billy Joel. All the music I listen to I try to incorporate in either my style or arrangements. I like to experiment with different tones and melodic riffs in my Armenian music. Listening to Chick Ganimian [Charles Ganimian, the noted New York oudist of the 1950s-1980s] has definitely expanded my view on our music as it has done for many other *oud* players. Chick was revolutionary not only to Armenian music but also Jazz artists during his day. There are certain techniques which they call ‘Chick Licks’ which I enjoy to play from time to time which make the music unique and interesting to listen to. I enjoy playing different styles because it is a way I can connect to my audience because someone may register it with their favorite *oud* or *kanun* player.”

As to what the special draw of the *oud* is, he replied, “The *oud* is an excellent instrument because it is completely based on free will and is extremely expressive. What do I mean by free will? I can place my finger down on the fingerboard of an *oud* and not have a fret tell me what note or even tone I want unlike a guitar. I can

see MUSIC, page 14



would spend ours pounding out tunes and having a good time together. That was our form of entertainment growing up.”

At a young age, Hagopian had access to material that most Armenian kids just didn’t have. He was captivated by the music of his grandfather and his bandmates. “My brother and I would sit in front of the television watching old VHS recordings of our grandfather performing at huge functions across the United States. We would try to imitate all the musicians’ movements and techniques of playing the instruments. Buddy Sarkissian was famous for playing multiple drums and getting caught up in the music by exhibiting his excitement through various head jerks and hand motions as he played. As I got older and was studying [him], I realized that he wasn’t ... shaking his head just because he felt like it, but because he was an entertainer and he also used that as a way of indicating what drumming pattern he was to do next, and keep rhythm. I did the same thing for all the musicians who inspired my playing. Everyone I studied exhibited the same traits, they were not just playing the music, they were entertaining, they were connecting to it, and they were expressing it in their fashion.”

Naturally, Hagopian also attended his grandfather’s live performances: “I would sit alongside my grandfather’s band at local affairs where I would hit a def (tambourine) and enjoy



ARTS & LIVING

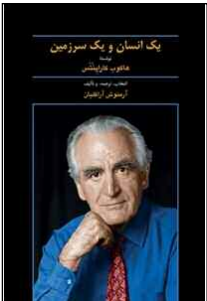
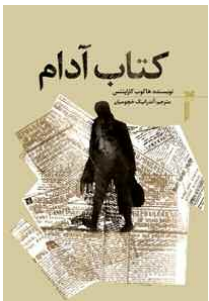
Two Book by Hagop Karapents Published in Farsi

KARAPENTS, from page 12

character and literary style, which according to the Arakelian even has “poetical resonance.” Arakelian, translator, editor, also born in Tabriz, Iran, is a graduate of the Sorbonne University, majoring in French. She has been active on the Armenian cultural and literary scene in her country of birth. She has collaborated with *Alik* daily, *Payman Quarterly*, and *Ararat Bulletin* and has co-edited and translated six books.

In Arakelian’s words “Karapents ushers the reader to the multilayered and multifaceted world of his characters, their lives and events. The heroes of his works are alive, vibrant and not restrained by the rules of the world in which they live. He penetrates into the inner world of the man, probes their souls and reflects their feelings and dreams.” For Karapents life, a mix of bitter episodes and cycles of happiness, is always incomplete and that man is in perpetual search of happiness and perfection.

According to Arakelian, Karapents’ stories are “captivating and filled with delicate feelings of love as well as the spirit of eternal struggle.” His stories are also replete with expressions of criticism and protest against tyranny, injustice and sham slogans



of human rights. In Karapets’ words, “Even in wisdom there is white wrath, which emanates from the unjust’s ever-present fixation.”

This is the first time that Karapents’ works in general and short stories in particular are presented in Farsi in one volume. Prior to the release of *Yek mard va yek sarzamin* only a couple of his essays and biographical sketches about his life and literary legacy had been published in the Farsi-language *Armenian Payman Cultural Quarterly* (no. 9/10, no. 53) and *Mirza* magazine. Hopefully, the above titles will inspire other scholars and literary figures to undertake similar projects and make Karapents’ rich and unique literary legacy available to wider audiences in Farsi-speaking communities worldwide.

Many years ago in answer to an interviewer’s question about writing in English Hakob Karapents had responded “Many encourage me to write in English. . . in order to partake in the American literature, one has to be an American. I am an Armenian, a Diaspora-Armenian, which

is a unique creature in the history of mankind. . . I have lived for many years in America, however I do not consider myself an American. Despite all, my Armenianness is my identity, my license to walk among the crowds and feel that I am different.”

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

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

Karapents was born in Tabriz, Iran in 1925 to Armenian parents with roots deep in historic Artsakh (Karabakh). He moved to the United

States in 1947 and studied in Kansas City University, majoring in journalism. Later he attended the Columbia University where he studied psychology. He joined the Voice of America, Armenian Section in 1954, where he served over a quarter of a century and served as the Chief of the Armenian Service. After his retirement in 1979, Karapents moved first to Connecticut and later in 1989, after a decade of self-imposed seclusion, to Watertown, where he lived until his death in 1994.

Karapents is the author of over nine hundred articles in Armenian and English, ninety short stories, two novels, as well as essays, commentaries, book reviews, etc. In accordance with his wishes, his library, publications, personal effects and memorabilia were donated to the Armenian Cultural Foundation, where an entire room is dedicated to his collection and papers. In 1995, the Yerevan City Council dedicated No. 6 high school to Karapents, where a small museum was also established in recent years. In the final days of his life Karapents expressed his wish to establish a scholarship under the auspices of the Hamazkayin Cutural and Educational Society, Armenia to support promising youth persuing careers in journalism, literature, and philology. Since 2000 over one-hundred-thirty deserving students from various higher academic institutions have received annual scholarships. The Scholarship Fund in the United States is managed by the Amaras Art Alliance, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

For Andrew Hagopian Music Is in His Blood

MUSIC, from page 13

use differing techniques to convey feelings such as sadness, happiness, fear, suffering, love, pride, and a lot more. The *oud* connects me with my audience and most importantly connects me to myself. This music has become a part of who I am and I hope that people get inspired by my music to want to be more connected to the culture themselves.”

The *oud*, however, is not Hagopian’s only instrument: “Besides the *oud*, I can play the *kanun*, piano, guitar, 6 string bass guitar, and percussion (dumbegs/drums). The *kanun* is such a beautiful sounding instrument and adds to any Armenian ensemble. The thing that makes the *kanun* so special is that it embellishes the music and brings the mood to a whole new level of emotion and feeling. It can express extreme sadness or happiness depending on the nature of the player and or song. But besides the *oud* and *kanun*, I enjoy playing the guitar because I can use my knowledge of musical theory to form beautiful chord progressions which just tie the music together. The guitar in our music not only serves to fill in the bottom frequencies which the *oud*, clarinet, and *kanun* have difficulty doing, but it also helps drive the music and motivate the dancers to get into their sense of Kef.”

Emotions of Armenian Music

For Hagopian, the twin loves of Armenian culture and music compel him to delve deep into this music.

“I am driven to play by my love for the music. I think if I did not love the music, it would definitely be a challenge to entertain. I personally strive to make my music have greater impact on others. By doing my research into the music and learning more specifics of a certain piece, it makes my performance of those songs that much greater.... When I play our music, I wish to be seen as someone who is truly serious and passionate about the music. I want my audience to know how I am feeling, what I am feeling at that very moment when they look into my eyes and hear the mood I am conveying. What inspires me most when playing is looking up from the *oud* and seeing everyone I know and everyone in the room bonding over their culture, appreciating their unique identity as an Armenian.”

Hagopian certainly has favorite compositions to which he goes back again and again.

“One of my favorite Armenian songs is a chant composed by blind *oud* master Hrant

Kenkulian, *Ghurjeet* (Cottage), which was a love song dedicated to his wife Aghavni. [it says] ‘You are my sole need. I am satisfied with a piece of dry bread and water. Humbly, we shall eat and I will watch and hope that you will be mine forever.’ Hrant’s compositions expressed tragedy or love from his own life. When playing his works, I feel his sorrow, I feel his pain, and I allow that emotion to sound its voice through the *oud*. You have to truly feel that emotion in your heart in order to convey that message to your listening audience. Another one of my favorites is another Hrant selection, *Hastayim Ya iyorum*. [sung in Turkish] ‘I am ill but living because of your memory. I wait with hope that someday you will return. My poor heart is decaying with longing for your love. I wait with hope that someday you will return.’ The most inspirational albums in my life have been the Buddy Sarkissian and Richard Hagopian’s “Kef Time Las Vegas,” John Berberian’s “Echoes of Armenia,” Harry Minassian’s “Exciting Moods of the Middle East,” Onnik Dinkjian’s “Inner Feelings of Onnik,” and Joe Kouyoumjian’s “Harpoot to Istanbul” [note: the last album was produced by, with vocals and arrangements by Eddie Mekjian of Worcester, MA].

Concert For Artsakh

On December 12, a unique concert took place sponsored by the Knights of Vartan “Arax” Lodge of Providence, RI. The Artsakh-Armenia Relief Concert was a virtual event livestreamed over Facebook and Youtube. The goal was to raise money for displaced families of Artsakh through the performance of an “Armenian New England Ensemble” consisting of some of that region’s well known “kef musicians” and the “Richard Hagopian Ensemble” streaming in from the Hagopian ranch in Fresno, and consisting of grandfather, Richard Hagopian on *oud* and vocals, son, Armen Hagopian on clarinet, and grandsons, Phillip Hagopian (*dumbeg*) and Andrew Hagopian (*kanun*). Andrew’s *kanun* performance in this event was outstanding, as well as his singing on the last selection. The New England group also did an excellent job, with veteran virtuoso oudist and clarinetist Mal Barsamian, as well as young duduk player Mher Mnatsakanyan, standing out. The concert, set up in the style of telethon, included speakers from the Knights of Vartan and local clergy from all Rhode Island Armenian churches. The concert was emceed by Sonya

Gasparian

Taraian, host of the Armenian Radio Hour of Providence, the longest running ethnic radio program in the United States.

Hagopian views the music that he plays and that he learned from his grandfather as an important part of the Armenian historical legacy:

“It is important that the origins of our ancestral music remain alive in order to not lose a very important part of our identity. The songs are not just random words put to melodic tones but written history of our ancestry. The majority of Armenian songs are about a great love or loss in a person’s life, but there are also songs of everyday life, historical occupations, social customs and more. It is another form of our history which is not written... It is an art form or “history book” that can be passed from generation to generation through vocal expression. Music is our past, present, and future. It shows us where we came from, where we are, and most importantly where we are going.”

He continues, stating that aside from being a way to document the history of the Armenians, the music is “a dedication and honor to our ancestors. This type of music is extremely expressive and yet very simple. The music conveys a sense of love, peace, friendship, and deep sorrow. It is a part of our culture which shouldn’t be discarded and forgotten.”

Working On New Album

Hagopian is currently working on his first album, to be entitled “Roots of Our Homeland,” which will be a collection of tra-

ditional folk songs from the villages of Historic Armenia. The album will be compiled predominantly of traditional shourchbar dance songs, as well as other historical compositions. Hagopian has done all the arrangements after consulting various versions of the songs and will perform all the instruments on the album himself, which will include *oud*, *kanun*, *dumbeg*, guitar, bass, and other percussion. He is also including some friends in an interesting twist: “I will also be including my closest friends on this album as background ‘Kef Gees’ as I find it important that I include those who are closest to me in this production. I want to convey a sense of cultural heritage as well as friendship. The music should pull us all that much closer and that is the goal of this album. I hope that my listening audience will receive that message and interact with the album by dancing and singing along. These songs are of great importance to the Armenians and should be preserved for generations to come.”

Hagopian, who is studying marketing in college, has undertaken to design the unique album cover as well: “On the front of the cover will be a walnut tree with deep roots in the shape of Classical Armenia and all around the tree is new growths of “offspring.” The offspring represent the Armenian Diaspora and the will to survive, start a new Armenia wherever Armenians settle.” Why a walnut tree? “I selected a walnut tree because of its deep roots and because a lot of Armenian instruments are made from the wood of Walnut trees because of their abundance in Armenia.”

“I am very excited for this album to be released as it is my first and hopefully not my last,” Hagopian tells us. The album will be available for purchase or streaming online through Amazon, Spotify, Pandora, and Apple Music.

Donations

The Ajemian Foundation donated \$1,000 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

Peter Dorian of Fresno donated \$100 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

The Detroit Chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association donated \$500 to the Tekeyan Cultural Association of US and Canada.



COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Farewell to a Year of Perils

By Edmond Y. Azadian

If there were any way possible, many people would certainly like to wipe the year 2020 off the calendar and delete it forever from the sequence of chronology in time.

This year has brought so much misery and trauma to the population of the planet. Armenia and Armenians not only shared the pain of the global family but received an additional dose of suffering.

Global pandemics happen regularly every hundred or so years. Therefore, it was the luck of our generation to witness the horrors about which we had only read in history books.

Precedents of global pandemics have been recorded dating back to the 14th century, when the world population was afflicted by the Black Death, as the bubonic plague was known, and which eventually took 50 million lives.

In earlier times in history, pandemics hit the population of a certain region, but did not spread to other areas of the world because populations were sedentary and could generally not travel beyond a certain distance.

Anthropologists and historians, for example, have not been able to pinpoint the exact cause of the extinction of the Maya population in Mexico. Scarcity of water, overpopulation and wars are cited as probable causes. However, it may also have been the result of a localized pandemic which the Mayans were unable to spread further.

The global impact of the Black Death in the 14th century is attributed to the activities of the Silk Road, which extended from China to Europe, through the Middle East. It was an active trade route for people and goods traveling long distances and along with their goods, the travelers brought this disease with them.

The Spanish Flu, which plagued the world between 1918 and 1920, was certainly exacerbated by the mobility of people. It is reported that it infected 500,000,000 people globally, taking the lives of 50 million. During that pandemic, the US lost 675,000 citizens.

In the age of jet travel, the COVID-19 pandemic took less than six months to cover the entire world. Already, it has cost 1.6 million deaths, with more than 300,000 in the US.

The spread of the virus brought with it death, confusion and fear, because no known cure or treatment has been available. Only containment was used for prevention; masks, social distancing and washing hands were recommended. And those measures became politicized.

President Donald Trump challenged that advice and that challenge took immediately the form of a political stand. It is believed that cautionary measures were ignored to spare businesses and the economy and above all, to achieve herd immunity. After ruining the lives of many families, it looks like the disease may subside thanks to a wave of vaccines that were approved recently.

Many countries have developed vaccines, the first being the one produced by Pfizer and BioNTech. Just approved by the FDA is the vaccine by Moderna. Although scientists claim they are both similar, I put my faith in the second one because of national pride, as the company's board is chaired by Dr. Noubar Afeyan.

In addition to the pandemic, in 2020, the US experienced another spectacle during the presidential election.

In elections, more often than not, the incumbent is favored to win. However, during President Trump's administration, the country has become so polarized that a record number of voters went to the polls. It would be a disservice to the truth to state that Mr. Trump did not enjoy popularity. An unprecedented number of devoted fans – 74 million, to be exact – have an undying devotion to him and cast their ballots for him. In this polarized mood, his opponent got a record amount, 81 million.

Trump has yet to concede losing the election and congratulate President-Elect Joseph Biden, for the simple reason that Mr. Trump does not believe in losing. Further drama is ahead of us until (and perhaps after) the inauguration on

January 20.

Back in Armenia, the healthcare system has been overloaded to the point of collapse, because of the rampant pandemic. This situation now is compounded by the outcome of the Karabakh war, which sent to the hospitals 10,000 wounded soldiers. A total of 5000 Armenian soldiers lost their lives, leaving mayhem behind. This has been the worst catastrophe to hit Armenia since the Genocide, because the loss of lives has also been coupled with the loss of territory.

As tremendous as the losses are, perhaps they pale against the uncertain future that awaits Armenia now.

Armenia has become mortally wounded in the process of Russia and Turkey settling scores. Many pundits who had discounted Turkey's Pan-Turanian designs as fiction have suddenly realized that Turkish forces are at Armenia's borders, demanding access through Armenia to the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan.

The resulting turmoil is too challenging for the Pashinyan regime to handle. The ensuing confusion, the acrimonious debates and finger pointing have not left any room for a compromise. Armenia's political chaos has become a laughing-stock for the leadership in Baku and Ankara.

The opposition labels Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as a traitor. But certainly he is not; he is indeed a patriot, but he is an incompetent leader. His Velvet Revolution failed to deliver on its promises. Of course, the uncontrollable pandemic was responsible for the economic collapse there but over and above the pandemic, his team failed miserably in terms of diplomacy and in improving the economy prior to COVID.



Through an ill-advised campaign to seize illegally acquired wealth from the oligarchs, he effectively drove the entrepreneurs out of the country along with their capital, while on the other hand failing to attract new investments from abroad.

The parliamentary opposition, comprising Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia, are far from wielding any political power.

And a group of seventeen parties, not represented in the parliament, have formed an opposition front headed by former prime minister, Vazgen Manoukyan. But behind that group, the shadow of the former regime is looming to scare away the majority of the voters.

If Pashinyan has effectively achieved anything, it is demonizing the old regime's representatives and polarizing society.

The population in Armenia is now left licking its wounds. Confusion abounds. Many people are asking for Pashinyan's resignation, without pointing out a viable alternative.

President Armen Sarkissian also is calling for Pashinyan's resignation, hoping he himself can lead during the transition period, assisted by technocrats, but his drive has not gotten much traction, either.

The only silver lining behind the pandemic is that it has halted the emigration. The danger of Armenia's depopulation is very real once the pandemic subsides.

The Christmas and New Year season is traditionally a period of rejoicing. But this season comes with desperation and trauma in Armenia and around the world.

At midnight on December 31, we will all celebrate the coming New Year. It will be time to finally say good riddance and farewell to 2020, and hope for a much better year.

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COMMENTARY

The Trilateral Agreement

By Van Lapoyan

THE purpose of this article is to try to find out, what went wrong and why. I am sure, more investigations in the future will be required, to have a thorough and detailed understanding of what happened; However, for the time being, it is up to us to self-assess, reflect and ask ourselves, given the circumstances Armenia finds itself today, what kind of options do Armenians have, to secure Armenia's survival in the future.

This Trilateral Agreement between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia was very difficult to accept for the Armenians in Armenia and all over the world, especially for those who have lost their loved ones in the combat and also for the families who ended up losing their home, their land and their homeland.

All of the opposition parties in Armenia, and most of the Armenians in the Diaspora, including His Holiness Aram I Catholicos of Cilicia have refused the trilateral agreement. Of course, everybody wanted a better outcome but did the Armenians have a better alternative considering they were the defeated army. Are we forgetting that?

For three decades, Armenians considered Nagorno Karabakh, including the seven Azeri occupied regions a part of Armenia where 146,000 Armenians lived in an area of 12,600 square kilometers. A real luxury of space. And for 26 years, no country in the world recognized Artsakh as sovereign state – including Armenia and Russia.

The non-resolution of the conflict was a heavy economic burden on Armenia and Karabakh. It was imperative to find a solution to the Artsakh question. But returning occupied land for peace was not acceptable to the Armenian Public in general and for Artsakh people in particular.

On the contrary, the Armenian Diaspora was asked to invest through Hayastan All Armenia Fund, and other private foundations, in building roads, kindergarten schools, residential houses, water supply lines, and all kinds of infrastructure projects, right at the bordering towns and villages with Azerbaijan to consolidate their grip on the occupied land with no intention of returning them.

It is true that Armenians historically and for centuries, have lived and built their churches and monasteries in those regions, and therefore have a legitimate historic claim on them as their homeland, but unfortunately since Stalin maliciously annexed them to Azerbaijan in 1923, there was a legal problem to resolve, which needed some concessions.

As no political solution was being contemplated, Armenia dedicated a significant portion of its budget, every year, to its military buildup, though still only half the size of the Azeri military budget. This affected the Armenian economy, and scores of Armenians emigrated to find better life in other countries.

Azerbaijan, on the other hand, had oil and gas revenues to rely on. Israeli military and technological support to Azerbaijan based on their mutual interest gave the latter a huge advantage on the battlefield. Meanwhile, Turkey's military involvement with their troops, armored divisions and their air force and Bayraktar drones, were equally important in tipping the balance towards Azerbaijan.

The Turks proved their military might not only to the Armenians, but to the Russians as well, who were very cautious to engage them, which forced Armenians to capitulate. Under these circumstances is it fair to hold Prime Minister Pashinyan the only responsible party for the humiliating defeat?

Given the circumstances under which the Armenian forces found themselves on the battlefield early November 2020, Mr. Pashinyan, did not have any other alternative, other than to sign the agreement. Armenia should thank the Russian government for its timely initiative and intervention in this conflict, risking its own soldiers' lives against the Turkish deadly drones, though protecting their own geopolitical interest in that region, but at the same time saving 20,000 Armenian soldiers and civilians from indiscriminate massacre.

Had the Russian government not committed itself to intervene in the conflict and worked hard to prepare the Trilateral Agreement document, today we would have wit-

nessed the Azeri flag flying on Stepanakert and all the remaining Artsakh territories.

Since April 2016, when Azerbaijan used its Israeli drones to kill one hundred of our soldiers and wounded more than two hundred, it was obvious that Azerbaijan had the upper hand in the military hardware and therefore, it was imperative for the Armenians to catch up with the drone technology at least to be on par with Azerbaijan.

The Armenian president at that time, Serzh Sargsyan, tried to solve the Karabakh problem through diplomatic means with his Azerbaijani counterpart but failed due to Artsakh leaders' refusal to accept concessions. He also failed in modernizing the Armenian Army by not acquiring modern drone technology-based equipment and sticking to the old 1990s equipment.

His corrupt regime was unbearable for the Armenian people and Mr. Pashinyan was able with his populist speeches and unrealistic promises to win the hearts of the disgruntled population. With the West's intelligence agencies help, he achieved the so-called Velvet Revolution in May 2018.

We have to give credit to Mr. Pashinyan for his courage and determination in taking over the government. The masses supported and adored him overwhelmingly, not because he was qualified for the job, but rather because of their hatred of the ancient corrupt regime.

From May 2018 up until the eruption of the war on September 27, 2020, almost two and half years, Mr. Pashinyan had ample time to prepare the Armenian military for a drone war with Azerbaijan or to solve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict through political and diplomatic means.

He failed in both fronts miserably: On the military side, rather than upgrading the Armenian army with sophisticated drone technology, he spent \$120 million buying four SU-30 jets without their missiles and auxiliary equipment, making them completely useless. On the political front, his pro-Western, anti-Russian policy did not secure him any military support from the West nor any help to enforce a much-desired ceasefire with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The head of the Armenian Armed Forces, Gen. Onnik Kasbarian, warned him on June 12, 2020, three months prior of the start of hostilities, that a conflict with Azerbaijan and Turkey was imminent and that war should be avoided at any cost since Armenia would be the clear loser.

At this stage, I wonder if Azerbaijan would have accepted any compromise or a political solution. After almost 10 years of military preparation and strengthened political and military alliances with Turkey and Israel, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev needed a military victory to take his revenge for the country's embarrassing defeat during the Karabakh war of 1990-1994 and glorify his image in Azerbaijani history.

Furthermore, Aliyev would have insisted on the return of all territories, including Artsakh, to Azerbaijan, which would have been categorically refused by the president of Karabakh and the Artsakh people and is still a difficult issue today to solve, even after the cease fire and the capitulation of the Armenian and Karabakh armies.

So we can say that on June 12 the war was inevitable and Pashinyan could have done nothing to stop it. But were there any other opportunities to stop the war during the 44 grueling days of intense hostilities?

On September 30, after three days of war, General Kasparian recommended to the prime minister of Armenia to accept a cease fire at any cost, after Armenia's air defense system comprising the Russian S300 batteries as well as all radar systems were completely destroyed by Turkish Bayraktar drones, thus leaving the skies of Nagorno Karabakh open to the Turkish F16s and the Israeli and Turkish drones which killed scores of Armenian servicemen and destroyed huge number of tanks and multi-launch missile equipment.

Several ceasefire agreements were reached, sponsored alternatively by Russia, France and the US, but to no avail as Azerbaijan and Turkish forces kept on breaking them one after the other in order to achieve their military campaign objective of capturing Shushi and the Lachin Corridor and then negotiate the capitulation of the Armenian forces once reaching the heights of Shushi 10 kilometers from Stepanakert.

Mr. Pashinyan and Mr. Arayik Haroutyunyan, the president of Karabakh, had another opportunity to accept a ceasefire agreement on October 19, proposed by Russia, keeping most of the Artsakh region intact and returning the seven regions back to Azerbaijan with a condition of accepting the Azerbaijani displaced refugees back into Shushi. Pashinyan and Haroutyunyan lost the best opportunity they had been offered, by refusing the proposal and ended up signing the capitulation agreement on November 9.

It was a huge mistake, for which they will have to answer to the families of more than 5,000 Armenian soldiers who valiantly fought and died for their country.

Knowing well the destruction of all Armenian air defense systems, the leaders of Armenia and Artsakh called for general mobilization of the Armenian people, promising their victory with a slogan: "Victory is Ours" (HAGHTELOU ENK), thus sending thousands of patriotic Armenians to the frontline to be massacred by the Turkish and Israeli drones.

Mr. Pashinyan and Mr. Haroutyunyan knew very well that the Armenian and Artsakh Armies could not withstand the coalition of the Azerbaijani, Turkish and Jihadist armies, but nonetheless they continued the war.

In their minds, signing a ceasefire at this early stage and giving away the seven regions without securing the independence of Artsakh would have been considered by the Armenian general public as treason. Yet, their decision meant the loss of thousands Armenian lives and half of Artsakh despite several proposals by the Russian government which were much more advantageous than the last agreement.

Pashinyan and Haroutyunyan did not have the courage to accept the fact that they were not ready for this war and to stop it with the minimum losses possible. They chose blatantly to lie to the Armenian people, claiming the Armenian Army is delivering heavy losses to the enemy and that victory was at hand. And this is where they bear full responsibility.

What about on the political and diplomatic side?

Since Mr. Pashinyan took over the government in May 2018, his primary focus was using his intelligence apparatus (A-A-DZ) to incriminate his political opponents with any fabricated excuse to put them in jail and gain popularity with his followers. A couple of his victims were Robert Kocharyan, the pro-Russian ex-president of Armenia and Gagik Tsaroukyan, a wealthy businessman and the leader of the main opposition party.

He wanted to fulfill his promise to bring all wealthy people (oligarchs in his terminology) down to the asphalt (literally) as wealthy people were all considered corrupt.

He is still using the same tactics today, against the leaders of the opposition political parties who are asking for his resignation after the embarrassing defeat. He intimidates them by handcuffing and putting them in jail, just for the fact they called for his resignation.

His Promise of Democracy, Justice and Freedom of Speech for which he was elected for, are well forgotten. Rather than focusing all his efforts to solve the multiple challenges he is facing today, after signing the capitulation agreement, he made sure to convene the parliament, in these unprecedented circumstances, to strip away Tsaroukyan's parliamentary mandate. Unbelievable.

He thought that his pro-Western, anti-Russian foreign policy would make Armenia an independent nation. And he acted as such, damaging the historical and excellent ties with the Russian federation and specifically with Vladimir Putin.

If we look at the map of the Caucasus, we see that Armenia is a very small landlocked country compared to its neighbors Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran, and if it exists at all, after 5,000 years of calamities, it's due to its people's spirit of survival, and of course due to the Russian presence in the region and their geopolitical interest.

At any moment, should any of Armenia's neighbors decide to invade Armenia, it would not take them too long to achieve their target. Recently, there have been several declarations by Recep Tayyip Erdogan that Armenia is Turkish territory, while Mr. Aliyev declared that Armenia is Azerbaijani territory.

The only reason Armenia still stands, is because of Russian interest in the Caucasus. The future of Armenia is closely linked to the wellbeing of the Russian nation. If NATO succeeds to bring down the Russian Federation, Turkey and Azerbaijan will waste no time in marching to Yerevan.

Mr. Erdogan's recent aggressive and expansionist policy in Azerbaijan was supported by Washington and the British Intelligence MI6 whose Director Mr. Richard Moore, the ex UK ambassador to Turkey, is Mr. Erdogan's close friend.

Mr. Erdogan, the self-proclaimed leader of the Islamic extremists of the world, and his ambition to unify under one flag the Turkish-speaking former Soviet countries of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan thus creating a so-called Turkish/Islamic NATO, in the southern borders of Russia is the perfect ally of the west, to destabilize the southern region of the Russian Federation.

Therefore, Pashinyan's pro-western and anti-Russian policy did not serve Armenia's interest. Being open to western civilizations should not be at the expense of losing Armenia's main protector, Russia.

Mr. Pashinyan's policies and decisions in the last 2.5 years brought Armenia to its knees. The opposition parties, who have refused The Trilateral Agreement, want to renegotiate it to bring back some of the lost territories and are asking for the Prime Minister's resignation. Russia made it very clear that they are not interested in any new renegotiation. They are having difficulty controlling the Turkish demands of expanding the Turkish troops throughout Nagorno Karabakh and want to stick to the original agreement. They will have to live with Mr. Pashinyan's cabinet until the implementation of the agreement is complete.

Mr. Pashinyan's, he will never admit guilt and will never resign unless forced to. He will always find somebody else to blame for his failures. In the same token, Mr. Haroutyunyan, the president of Artsakh blamed his own soldiers for running away from the frontline and not dying under Bayraktar drone attacks. He should have blamed him-

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Armenians Haven't Had a Competent Leader, Since Catholicos Khrimian Hyrig

Khrimian Hyrig is a highly revered clergyman. But, he is also a great leader who has given wonderful political advice to the Armenian nation.

His Holiness was born in Van, Western Armenia, in 1820 and became the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1869. Due to his nationalistic views, he was forced to resign by the Ottoman government in 1873. He was then installed as Catholicos of All Armenians in Echmiadzin in 1893 and died in 1907.

Khrimian Hyrig is well-known for his participation in the Berlin Congress in 1878, hoping to receive from the Great Powers a decision to force the Ottoman Empire to establish substantial reforms in the Armenian provinces. He did not accomplish his objective because Armenians were powerless. He likened the failed Armenian efforts in the Berlin Congress to his attempt to eat from a bowl with a "paper ladle," while other nations had an "iron ladle."

The highly nationalistic Khrimian Hyrig exhorted his fellow Armenians to arm themselves: "People of Armenia, of course you understand well what the gun could have done and can do. And so, dear and blessed Armenians, when you return to the Fatherland, to your relatives and friends, take weapons, take weapons and again weapons. People, above all, place the hope of your liberation on yourself. Use your brain and your fist! Man must work for himself in order to be saved."

Khrimian Hyrig's wise words are just as valid today, particularly after the latest disastrous defeat Armenians suffered at the hands of better armed Azerbaijan and Turkey.

A recently surfaced letter by Khrimian Hyrig, written over a century ago, is as applicable today as it was back then. It is headlined: "If You Have an Independent State in the Future, Do Everything You Can to Never, Ever Lose Your Independence."

Here is Khrimian Hyrig's meaningful counsel, which I have translated into English:

In the future, I hope you already have an independent state and you have realized our centuries-old dream. If so, you are now living in someone's dream come true; in the dream of millions. I hope you realize the power of luck that has befallen you.

I would like to know what that dream is like in reality, but since I cannot see it with my own eyes, let me express my remarks with this letter. If you read these lines, I will become a part of your present and my future.

When I went to the Berlin Congress to raise the rights of our people around the world, only then did I realize that we must first have the right to have a right. That right is acquired with weapons.

You've probably heard of the "iron ladle". The civilized nations of Europe, which seemed to us to be law-abiding and fair, gave us nothing but pity. Russia, which seemed to be a great friend of our people, other than sympathy, sees and hears nothing but its own interests.

The Armenian people seemed to be like a hungry child outdoors in the frosty winter, before whom everyone closed the doors of their homes. The Armenian people were without a care-taker, but the most important thing I understood was that we should not look for care-takers from abroad. There, in the future, I am sure, you will not look for foreign care-takers and you will not pin your hopes on Europeans, Russians or other states.

If you have an independent state, your only care-taker must be your own government. I hope the government will not leave you abandoned, but if it abandons you, what is the point of your independence?

The greatest misfortune of the people is that its own leaders treat them in the same way as the foreigners. We lived under the yoke of foreigners for centuries. They treated us cruelly and unfairly. We sought justice and did not find it. If you have an independent state, I hope there is justice there.

The Turks treated Armenians very unfairly. Can an Armenian treat another Armenian the same way? Here, in the past, one of the greatest tragedies of our people is its ignorance. How can an uneducated people find their place in this cunning world? The Turkish authorities will not allow this, as they see their danger in the education of our people. The greater the education of the people, the more restrained the government will be.

I devoted my whole life to spreading enlightenment in the Armenian provinces, but alone I could not do much. If you have a state, educate our people, spread enlighten-

ment in the provinces. The uneducated people choose uneducated masters who oppress them and one day the uneducated people are obliged to choose foreign masters.

At a time when ordinary people are living in the provinces under the heavy burden of the situation, wealthy Armenians in Istanbul are living in sheer luxury. They are indifferent to the situation of the people, as if they were foreigners. The Turkish authorities even ally with them to keep the people obedient. I hope that the rich in your country are not so arrogant and are not allied with the bad government against the people.

In 1876, when the Ottoman Constitution was adopted, the hope for salvation awoke in us. We thought that the five-hundred-year-old, infertile and old mother Turkey brought forth to the old world a new, young constitution, but our hopes were dashed and time showed that they were beautiful letters written on paper, while the people continued to suffer. There, in the future, perhaps you also have a beautiful constitution and laws. I want your laws not to remain on paper like the Ottoman constitution.

And finally, I want to give you a message. Have ambassadors who properly voice the demands of the people to the world, and the clergy will not engage in diplomacy, leaving aside their flock. Have leaders who love the people, because the Armenian people have suffered a lot from the hatred of foreign leaders. And never seek foreign care-takers. And if you have in the future an independent state, do everything you can to never, ever lose your independence again.

These wise words are an excellent advice to every leader of Armenia and to the Armenian people worldwide. They are as appropriate today as they were back then when Armenia was not an independent country. Not a single person should aspire to lead Armenia without heeding Khrimian Hyrig's prudent counsel. Armenia has numerous problems. But the two most important problems are:

1) Armenia needs to develop a powerful military to fend for itself without relying on other countries. A weak nation is always subject to the dictates of more powerful ones, as we witnessed in the recent Artsakh War. If you are weak, you have no rights and no one cares to come to your rescue. Unless Armenia becomes more powerful militarily and economically, it will always be subjugated, particularly since we are surrounded by vicious enemies who constantly plot our destruction.

2) The next important requirement for our nation is to have a competent leader, something we rarely had throughout our long history, and we do not have it today.

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self for not providing aerial protection for his soldiers. How could he send those young kids to their deaths and blame those who have chosen to survive?

Of course, the Armenian people have their own share in this fiasco as well for the following reasons:

1. For choosing and supporting blindly a populist, superficial, incompetent leader and his young inexperienced and incompetent team, who were more interested in grabbing and sticking to power by any means rather than facing and solving the challenges of the nation. They can even be considered corrupt by using government money to hire an army of fake email operators to use in social media for their own benefit and advantage. They have divided the nation, rather than unifying its people by labeling their opponents as Black Armenians while they considered their supporters as White Armenians. They have lied to the Armenian Nation by misrepresenting the reality on the war front and sent young Armenians to the front lines to be killed.

2. For thinking that Armenians are unbeatable. After winning the war in 1994, the leaders of Karabakh thought that they were unbeatable. Their religious leader had claimed during a speech in Stepanakert in June 2019 that the people of Karabakh were the chosen people of God and therefore they would never be defeated. The success of 1994 was a morale boost to Armenians all over the world, considering the fact that most Armenians had a tragic memory of the 1915 Genocide and the success of Karabakh was a rebirth of their identity. They associated with that success and forgot that Armenia was a very small nation, compared to the other nations of the world, and they cannot survive unless they are protected.

It is funny how Armenians think about themselves: "They think they are the most intelligent people in the world." Their army is the strongest army in the world. Any famous scientist, actor, politician or wealthy businessman has an Armenian antecedent. If that were true, then Armenia should have been one of the greatest nations on earth. But the reality is, Armenia is one of the poorest. They forget that this small weak Christian nation nestled and landlocked between three large strong and rich Muslim nations, which have been their historical enemies for centuries, cannot survive unless it is protected by a superpower. It takes courage to admit and accept our weaknesses, rather than claim that we are unbeatable and go to the front line and die.

And even today, after the capitulation, you will see some rhetoric on Armenian T.V. stations: "You can't beat an Armenian". It is time for Armenians to wake up and see reality the way it stands. They are not better nor more intelligent than any other nations in the world. On the contrary, they have a lot of work to do, to survive and keep this tiny piece of land from evaporation.

3. For complaining that Armenians are left alone and no country in the world is helping them. Armenians love playing the victims. It has been like this for centuries and it has become part of their DNA. It is time to change it. Armenians' success or failure are in Armenian hands, do not blame other countries for not helping you. Blame yourselves that you have not been able to create enough interest for other countries to help you.

After this horrendous defeat, Armenia's Economy today, is in shamble, its currency will be devaluated dramatically in the next coming months. Unemployment will reach all time high. Huge number of Armenians and Karabakh citizens will leave the country for better life in the Diaspora. Pasinyan's "Proud citizens" (HBARD KAGHAKATSI) will not be so proud at the end, after his two and half years of disastrous and miserable rule. He and his inexperienced and unskilled team, will be judged by future generations as the most incompetent, inept, superficial, intentionally misleading, self-serving team Armenia had through its history.

It is time to think seriously about the security and the wellbeing of the future generations. The real victory for the Armenian people is to provide a secure country to its citizens, at peace with its neighbors, nurturing and preparing healthy future generations.

To achieve that, Armenia should revise its policy regarding its lost territories. The priority should be given to secure present Armenia's and Artsakh's borders, whatever its left of it, and focus on the economy and the wellbeing of its citizens.

Turkey has amassed a huge army on Armenia's borders. Armenia cannot protect its borders without the Russian army's physical presence on its territories. Unfortunately, Russia's military presence will cost Armenia its independence and Armenia will be under Russian Protectorate whether they like it or not.

4. For failing to consider the diaspora as a part of the Nation. Today, the Armenian diaspora has been considered as a "milking cow" for their financial support and being kept

out of the Armenian political scene. To have a secure Armenia at peace with its neighbors 4 conditions are necessary to happen:

- A) A Financially strong Armenia, and a thriving economy.
- B) A strong Military Structure to deter its neighbors from any thoughts of aggression.
- C) A military pact with Russia to secure the integrity of its territory to protect them from any aggression.
- D) An international political support to Armenia's security and wellbeing.

As you may notice, conditions A and D cannot be achieved without the full involvement of the Armenian Diaspora.

A country of 2.5 million people has less probability of survival than a country of 10 million people.

The Diaspora should be considered a part of the Armenian Nation and be given Armenian passports for those who consider themselves Armenians. They should have the right to vote during elections and have their own representatives in the parliament and government. However, in order to acquire that right, each Armenian in the diaspora should pay 5 percent of their yearly income as National Tax (azgayin dourk) to the Armenian government. It should be done automatically while they are filing their income tax in their country of residence. This will allow a constant flow of financial support to the Motherland and improve the economy.

Of course, this may be quite a task to achieve, considering that there should be a consensus on how many representatives from the diaspora will be allowed in the parliament and government and also many revisions to the constitution which will be quite difficult to achieve, given the present conditions of the country. However, do Armenians have a better alternative?

As far as the diaspora's political contribution to secure political and financial support from the countries they live in, coordinated meetings are necessary between the Armenian Foreign Ministry and the representatives of the Armenian Diaspora to unlock Diaspora's potential in this field.

The future is scary. Armenians don't have the luxury of being passive. They need an intelligent government to take them out from the situation they found themselves in and steer them smoothly to safety and prosperity. They have to act fast and work hard for their right to exist and survive. This defeat should wake them up.

(Van Lapoyan is a resident of Toronto.)



The Two Survivors:

Israel and Armenia and Their Relationship

By Taleen Babayan

In a cable dated July 10, 1915, Henry Morgenthau Sr., the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, sent a dispatch from Constantinople to Washington, D.C., raising the alarm on the unfolding genocide of the Armenian people. He uncovered the “persecution of Armenians assuming unprecedented proportions in a systematic attempt to bring destruction and destitution on them.”

Morgenthau Sr., who was Jewish, was unable to prevent the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians. But his large-scale humanitarian efforts are often remembered by descendants of survivors around the world. His eyewitness accounts in *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, published in 1918, served as one of the first primary sources of the Armenian Genocide, shedding light on the atrocities of mass extermination.

Only one generation later, the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. — Henry Morgenthau's son — met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 16, 1944, to discuss freeing Jews from Nazi-led Europe. He said that he was “deeply disturbed” about the failure of the U.S. State Department “to take any effective action to save the remaining Jews in Europe.”

Morgenthau, Jr. cited the Armenian Genocide, referring to his father's efforts in “getting the Armenians out of Turkey and saving their lives.”

Following the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were killed, the State of Israel was established in 1948. Armenia, which experienced a brief stint of independence in 1920 before being annexed by the Soviet Union, finally became a republic in 1991. The modern states of Israel and Armenia, however, are rooted in mighty fallen kingdoms: the Kingdom of Israel in 723 BC, and the Armenian Empire in 1375 AD.

When Armenia achieved independence at the turn of the twenty-first century, there was the anticipation of establishing close ties with Israel. As custodians of two of the world's oldest civilizations, the two nations had much in common. They were both persecuted people who had lived the majority of their existence under subjugation, with a strong feeling of survival and deep ties to their faith and culture. The established presence of Armenians in Jerusalem for thousands of years also paved the way for dialogue.

But it wasn't until Armenia's Velvet Revolution in 2018, and the election of democratic leader Nikol Pashinyan as Prime Minister, that serious discussions and advances in diplomatic relations began to take shape. The opening of the Armenian Embassy in Tel Aviv on September 17, 2020 was a monumental turning point punctuating the growing cooperation between the countries. This rapprochement, however, was short-lived.

Just two weeks later, on October 1, the Republic of Armenia recalled its Ambassador Armen Smbatian. This major step was taken after confirmation that Israel was selling arms, including explosive cluster munitions and drones, to Azerbaijan, who had been using them against the Armenian civilian population in Nagorno-Karabakh since the beginning of a renewed hostilities between the countries on September 27th. Azerbaijan, who has been heavily backed by Turkey, pushed to seize the remaining territory that they had laid claim to since Stalin signed over the historic Armenian lands to the Soviet Republic in 1924. The conflict harks back to the dying days of the Soviet Union, when the majority Armenian population of the region exercised their right for self-determination in 1988, calling for Nagorno-Karabakh to unify with Armenia. Azerbaijan, for its part, asserted that Nagorno-Karabakh was legally their autonomous region. Once both countries emerged from the Soviet Union as independent states, fighting escalated into a full-blown war from 1992 until 1994, when a ceasefire was implemented. Since then, the territory, which is governed by the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), has been at the center of unsuccessful peace talks regarding the status of the disputed territory, mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group.

On Monday, November 9, 2020, after 44 days of intense fighting, a multilateral armistice agreement was signed by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and the Russian Federation's President Vladimir Putin. The agreement dictated major territorial concessions by Armenia to Azerbaijan, including the districts of Shushi, Kalbajar, and Lachin, among others. The war and its consequential impact shook up budding relationships, principally that between Armenia and Israel.

Paul Stronski, Senior Fellow of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, notes that Israel's relationship with Turkey has been a “complicating factor” in developing more fruitful relations with Armenia. The geopolitics

of the region have isolated Armenia and have forced it to rely on Iran—a country that opposes Israel's existence.

“Armenia's dependence on Israel is in part because of its closed borders,” says Stronski, who served as senior analyst for Russian domestic politics in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. “But I think that the government of Armenia also doesn't offer a whole lot to Israel and is not a producer of things Israel needs, such as energy or security, which connected Israel to other former Soviet states.”

The growing defense relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan over the last decade was also on Armenia's radar as Israel became a key provider of high-tech weapons to Azerbaijan, providing a catalyst for Armenia to enhance its relationship with Israel.

Although Turkey and Israel have had strong bilateral diplomatic and military ties throughout the twentieth century, there has been a dampening in relations over the last decade, in part due to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's interjections into the Israel-Palestinian conflict and his assertion of Turkey's historical claims to Jerusalem.

In the same vein, relations between Iran and Armenia have not been as solid, particularly after the Velvet Revolution of 2018 which brought the democratic leader Nikol Pashinyan to power. Though the emergence of a pro-Western nation could be an issue for neighboring Iran, Stronski highlights that this leadership change “gives Israel a better partner.”

While the time was ripe for Armenia to finally open its embassy in Israel, the move signaled changes in the region, upending the traditional view that the South Caucasus, which consist of the former Soviet Union bloc and Turkey, a player in the Middle East, remain separate entities.

“They're all in close proximity to each other,” Stronski notes. “So the problems and issues are merging and the Caucasus have become more tied to the Middle East, particularly through Syria and Turkey.”

A consequence of these changes is the current war between Azerbaijan and the Armenian-populated territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, complicating what was once a burgeoning relationship with Israel.

“The Armenians view this war as an existential fight for the survival of their nation and they view it as a second genocide,” Stronski says. “While the Turks are playing a very unhelpful role in providing full diplomatic cover and active military support, I don't see Israel doing that.”

Israel is seen as playing more of a “secondary role” through its weapons supplies, though Stronski does raise the possibility that Israel could use its leverage in Azerbaijan to de-escalate the conflict—a resolution that the OSCE Minsk Group, including Russia, France and the U.S., has not been able to accomplish.

“Certainly, there will be a tough road ahead to get things back on track with Israel,” says Stronski. “But there are Armenian populations across the Middle East, and Israel is one of the major powers in the Middle East, so I do think once this war is over that Armenia will still want to have those avenues open.”

The lack of formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Israel's government may also be a hindering factor in Armenia-Israel relations. Dr. Stephen Smith, Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation, recognizes a thread between the Armenians and the Jews, who “until recently have lived exclusively in the diaspora and both carry the burden of genocide and the memory of genocide.”

Despite this association, a rift exists, which Smith attributes to the two groups of people who are advocates of their identity, raising the possibility that “people who suffer aren't necessarily the best allies of others who suffer.”

“They have to fight for their identity to reclaim the past that has been lost and in the case of the Armenian community, even the possibility of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide,” said Smith, who currently holds the UNESCO Chair on Genocide Education. “Fighting against denial for a century is exhausting and I think it makes the Armenian community continuously have to fight for their identity.”

The geopolitics of the region, where Turkey is a leading power, has allowed for denial of the Armenian Genocide to prevail, thus creating more of a divide between Israel and Armenia at a diplomatic level. Recent staunch efforts by Israel and Armenia to move towards diplomatic relations are now at great risk, because of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Though Smith notes that it is “regrettable” that Azerbaijan is in possession of Israeli hardware, he doesn't consider this to be an Israeli political statement, because the defense industry in Israel is an economic sector independent from political decision-making.

“If there is evidence that the actions of Azerbaijan in that region rise to the level of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, then I think Israel should think very differently about its continued relationship with Azerbaijan on a legal level,” he said.

Politicians, however, can also invoke a moral desire to prevent a country's weapons being used on civilians in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. A number of scholars have acknowledged that the violence against the Armenians has risen to the threshold stated in the UN's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

“As it stands, this is a conflict between warring parties, but you do see strong evidence of ethnic cleansing of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh,” says Smith. “Because of the overwhelming force of Azerbaijan, backed by its allies, civilians have made the smart choice to become refugees and the likelihood of them returning is very low.”

The USC Shoah Foundation, which preserves eye-witness testi-

monies of the Holocaust and genocides in one of the largest digital collections of its kind in the world, provides the personal experiences of suffering through a human lens.

“What happens in these crises is that the politics overshadows the situation, the voice of the individual gets lost and it becomes about numbers,” says Smith. In his view, it's important to listen to those people now in order to prevent missing “a vital part of the story.”

Regardless of the resolution that has been reached, it will be incumbent upon the governments of Armenia and Israel to initiate dialogue about their future relationship.

“The establishment of diplomatic relations is essential to anything that comes after this conflict, irrespective of Israel's role in it, and to preserve the political, cultural, and economic relations of the two countries through diplomacy,” Smith observes.

Historically, Armenians have had a symbolic presence in Israel and Palestine across the last 2,000 years. They are centered in the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem, where the Armenian Patriarchate is located, as well as a number of Armenian schools and churches. The connection between Armenians and Israelis seems stronger than that of Turkey and Azerbaijan, though Israel's position towards Armenia is “weak,” according to Dr. Bedross Der Matossian.

“Israel has more to gain from Azerbaijan and Turkey in terms of realpolitik for national interests than from Armenia,” said Der Matossian, who is vice-chair of the Department of History and the Associate Director of the Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “Armenia's geostrategic position makes it challenging for the relationship between Israel and Armenia to flourish.”

Born and raised in Jerusalem, Der Matossian highlights the extensive business and military relationships between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Israel as to why there haven't been more developments in Armenia-Israeli relations, particularly since “Azerbaijan is a more viable ally for Israel, where 20-30% of Israel's oil runs through the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline,” he notes.

During the April 2016 four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, it was discovered that high-tech equipment sold by Israel to Azerbaijan, specifically Israeli-manufactured drones, had been launched from Israel. Though neither Israel nor Armenia's foreign ministries commented on current arms transactions between Israel and Azerbaijan for this article, Armenia's foreign minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan has stated that “Israel should stop this deadly business with Azerbaijan.”

Former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John M. Evans, says “I do think that Israel's sale of high-tech weapons to Azerbaijan will not be forgotten any time soon by Armenians.”

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, there had been increased collaborations between Israel and Armenia regarding technology, tourism, education, and medicine, fields which could play a dominant role in strengthening relations, according to Der Matossian.

What won't affect relations, in his view, is the Armenian Genocide issue, since Armenia does have fruitful relationships with countries who do not formally recognize the Armenian Genocide. Instead, Der Matossian sees the Israeli government's wavering in recognizing the Armenian Genocide as a “pressure card”: bringing the debate to the Knesset whenever it wants something from Turkey, where the proposed resolution is eventually allowed to subside.

“There is a substantial intellectual class in Israel who are committed to recognizing the Armenian Genocide, but it still hasn't happened on a governmental level and we don't know when it will,” he says.

There was a time when Armenians did indeed have a positive dynamic with Israeli leaders, including former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

“They were very close friends with the Armenians,” remarks Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, an executive committee member of the World Council of Churches. “But when the right-wing Likud party came into power, the relationship changed because the interests changed.”

He emphasizes the fact that an “overwhelming majority of Jewish people acknowledge the Armenian Genocide as do every single one of my Jewish friends, but of course the government is not ready yet.”

Israeli-Armenian Arpi Shotigian sees first-hand the Israeli groups that demonstrate alongside Armenians on the Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24, which is consistently covered by local Israeli media.

“There is a disparity between what the government does to protect its political interests, whereas the common people do recognize and feel sorry,” said Shotigian, an attorney born and raised in Jaffa.

Looking beyond recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the government of Armenia was well aware of Israel's efforts to normalize relations with Arab countries in the Middle East and the Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates; it sought to establish a more stable relationship from the onset by foregoing the customary step of posting a regional representative to Israel, instead opening a full-fledged embassy in Israel.

“I think the Armenians read the cards very well by opening an embassy here in Tel Aviv because they understand Israel is a major player and the Embassy is a strategic step towards having closer relations due to the political interests in the region,” said Shotigian.

The Embassy's opening ceremony took place, symbolically, on the eve of the Jewish New Year. Ambassador Armen Smbatian said

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COMMENTARY

Why the US Should Support Armenians in Artsakh

How to Cut Aid to Azerbaijan and Turkey and Enforce the Patriot Act

By Aris Govjian

America needs allies around the world if it is going to remain a global economic and geopolitical leader. An opportunity is available to the United States to both gain a global ally in the Armenian Diaspora and to raise its own prestige. For months, Armenians have been under attack by Azerbaijan and Turkey. Their goal has been to commit another genocide against the Armenians. While a peace agreement has been signed, it seems to be temporary and fragile as the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey tell their population that their fight and struggle with Armenian is not over. They are torturing and beheading captured Armenian civilians and prisoners of war. America can do the right thing, and it does not require a single soldier to go to war.

Stop Giving Away Money and Weapons

Hundreds of millions if not billions of taxpayer dollars in military grants and aid were sent to Turkey and Azerbaijan, and they decided to use it to destroy schools, hospitals, and cities where innocent people live. They used it to murder a civilian population friendly to the United States. The simple act of stopping military aid to Turkey and Azerbaijan will save the US billions and save countless lives. Azerbaijan and its allies have already committed war crimes and began using it for propaganda to incite more violence. The time has come to stop wasting money on blood thirsty regimes.

Recognize Artsakh

A clear statement officially recognizing

Artsakh as an independent country will raise the reputation of the United States and make it a leader among nations. Armenians are being targeted because of their unique culture, Christian faith, and the fact they are native to the land that Turkey and Azerbaijan want. Armenians have a country, and a part of it known as Artsakh was separated by Stalin during the time of the Soviet Union. On September 2, 1991, the people of Artsakh declared their independence from the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, most of the world does not recognize it as an independent country, even though it has its own operating government serving and protecting their people.

Growing US Influence and Power

The massive and politically active Armenian Diaspora, which stretches across the world, will notice who helps the Armenians. The Armenian diaspora is organized and committed to ensuring peace for their people, the communities they live in and their way of life. If the US demonstrated that it stood for peace and recognized the sovereign country of Artsakh and stopped handing out money to Turkey and Azerbaijan, then this diaspora would be more eager to support America abroad.

Just by wasting less money and making an official statement recognizing an independent country, the US can drastically improve its standing internationally. The amount of leverage and influence our country would turn the tide in falling behind other emerging powers.

A New Strategy to Cut Military Aid to Turkey and Azerbaijan

We Americans need to pursue every possible way to stop the massive amounts of weapons and military aid that our government provides to Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thankfully, there is a mechanism in American law to put politicians, lobbyists,

bureaucrats, and corporate agents on notice and potentially reclaim funds sent to violent dictatorships such as Turkey and Azerbaijan. This means any past, present, and future military aid will fall under the scrutiny of the law and those who uphold it.

The U.S. code for crimes and criminal procedure specifically prevents arming and furnishing weapons to be used against friendly nations and peoples. Given Turkey and Azerbaijan's violation of this rule by attacking Armenian populations and continued genocidal rhetoric from their governments, there will be consequences for people and organizations who pursued and currently pursuing sending military weapons, support, arming vessels such as planes, ships, drone, missiles, and related resources to these regimes.

The penalty listed in U.S. Code Title 18, § 962 clearly states the guilty perpetrators will be fined and or imprisoned for up to three years.

Section 962 provides incentives for lawyers and organizations to pursue these cases. The value of military aid and supplies can effectively be reclaimed. Half the recovered funds from these cases will go to the informer, and the other fifty percent will go to the Federal government. This is a high commission to reward people for stopping waste and abuse.

Intent to harm friendly nations and people are proven beyond doubt regarding Turkey and Azerbaijan. In 2014, on July 27, Azerbaijan government began shelling Armenian civilians and killed people in their own homes. Then on April 1, 2016 the Azeri military murdered elderly Armenians in their own home and launched a relaunched a brief four-day war. During this brief war, the President of Turkey voiced his full support for Azerbaijan.

In July 2020, during a global pandemic, Azerbaijan again attacked Armenians, target-

ing civilians within the Republic of Armenian in the region of Tavush. Today, Azerbaijan and the Turkish military is ethnically cleansing Armenians and committing documented war crimes which they use as glorified propaganda. The Turkish President has also effectively stated that they will finish the genocide their ancestors started. They have used many kinds of vessels to transport jihadists and military equipment into the region to target innocent people.

Azerbaijan's unwillingness to adhere to ceasefire, refusal to placing gunfire locator technology, disseminating violent propaganda to their own population, and constant attacks on Armenians prove their intent. Even after signing a new peace agreement, they continue to glorify genocidal perpetrators and tell their population that the conflict with Armenia is not over as they torture Armenian Prisoners of War.

Every lawyer specializing in qui tam cases, government waste, corruption, and international law can benefit by pursuing cases regarding military assistance to the Republics of Turkey and Azerbaijan. There is a strong case against Turkey and Azerbaijan for their premeditated attacks on Armenians. A lot of money can be recovered. Military aid to Turkey alone amounts to over a billion dollars annually, and over a hundred million to Azerbaijan in 2019. A fifty percent reward can create a financial dynasty for anyone who pursues it.

This type of law may be present in other countries as well. Recovering military aid provided to Azerbaijan and Turkey should be pursued by all Armenian organizations specializing in law and government affairs.

Enforcing the Patriot Act Against Turkey and Azerbaijan

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at the time that it will give "new impetus" to its relations with Israel, while also securing the Armenian Orthodox Church's ongoing presence in the Holy Land. While Israel was pleased with this step forward, Iran expressed dismay.

The opening of the Embassy came on the heels of an increase in tourism ties between Israel and Armenia, with two direct flights a week between Tel Aviv and Yerevan.

"Israelis are known to be very curious people who travel all over the world," Shotigian observes. "A lot of them have already gone to Armenia, with positive reviews, and there are many others who want to go and have a proper holiday."

The Armenian presence in Israel peaked in 1948, when about 20,000-30,000 Armenians lived in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. Now only 250 families remain. The initial mass emigration of Armenians, according to Shotigian, occurred not too long after Israel's independence, as a result of the Israel-Palestine conflict, which the Armenians did not want to get involved in. An estimated 10,000 people from Armenia, including Jews, moved to Israel in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union. They reside in various parts of the country, although a large chunk of the Armenian population of Israel continue to live in the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem.

"We always try to categorize ourselves in Israel and we are categorized as well," said Shotigian. "We're neutral but we are a small community and immigration has not yet been addressed formally by leaders."

Philanthropist Annie Simonian Totah, who founded the Totah Family Foundation with her husband Sami, has contributed significantly to both the Armenian and Jewish communities in the U.S., Armenia and Israel, in the fields of healthcare, education and culture. A visible activist in the Washington D.C. political scene for the past four decades, she has become known as a bridge-builder between the Jewish and Armenian communities, which have positively impacted Armenia-Israel relations.

She observed early on the areas in which Israel excelled and the mechanisms it had in place that could help the newly independent Republic of Armenia in 1991. These include the Armenia Tree Project, inspired by the Jewish National Fund, and Birthright Armenia, modeled after Birthright Israel, which aims to foster a closer bond between the diaspora and the homeland.

The opening of the Armenian Embassy in Israel, according to Totah, was a long time coming, emerging as a real possibility after the election of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in April 2018. A year later, Deputy Foreign Minister Grigor Hovannissyan, a former Ambassador of Armenia to the United States, visited Israel, fol-

lowed by Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. A formal presidential decree by President Armen Sarkissian in February 2020 led to the opening of the Armenian Embassy in Tel Aviv.

"It was a wise move by the Armenian government to forge a partnership with Israel because the leadership understands that Armenia is a blockaded country surrounded by enemies," Totah says. She notes that Armenia is forced to rely on Iran as its economic lifeline, an arrangement that is not well-regarded by European countries, the United States, and Israel. "I believe Armenia will benefit greatly from Israel, which during its 72 years of existence, has become a global leader in advanced military systems, technology, healthcare, agriculture and research."

Due to her influence and ability to make connections between the two countries, Totah was seriously considered as Armenia's first Ambassador to Israel in the early 2000s, during President Robert Kocharyan's administration. The complexities of the Second Intifada, along with Israel's hesitance to open an embassy in Yerevan, meant that this possibility was only momentary.

The commonalities between the two countries, in terms of faith, family values, tradition, and suffering, can be considered the bedrock for a valuable friendship and mutually beneficial goals. Like Israel, Armenia has a significant amount of brain power. Totah believes that the two countries can be a "guiding light in their respective regions."

The war, however, has been a "strong blow" to the relationship between Israel and Armenia, which had hitherto been on an upward trajectory.

"Because of different political agendas, Israel and American Jewish organizations have remained silent," Totah says. "They are waiting on the sidelines, like so many other major international powers."

This recent Israeli stance stands in stark contrast to last fall, when American Jewish organizations brought in their share of support for the passage of resolutions in both the House of Representatives and the Senate for the historic recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the U.S. Congress. Totah credits the active mobilization of Jewish-American organizations, that helped them reach that symbolic milestone together.

"On moral grounds, Israel should recognize the Armenian Genocide, knowing very well that the Armenian Genocide was the precursor of the Holocaust," says Totah, reflecting on the Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel's staunch efforts to establish formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Totah, however, doesn't see the rebuilding of the relationship

between Israel and Armenia anytime soon, since the "wounds are very deep."

"I'm hopeful that once the Nagorno-Karabakh war is peacefully and justly resolved, diplomatic relations would resume," Totah says. "Furthermore, there will be a new beginning whereby through diplomacy, negotiations and cooperation, Israel will officially recognize the Armenian Genocide and pave the way to brighter tomorrows."

Dr. Zeev Levin, research fellow at The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, asserted that "international relations are based on interests, and up to this point there have been more mutual interests with Armenian opponents than with Armenia itself, and vice versa."

While acknowledging that the war is a "barbaric act," Dr. Levin stated that private firms in Israel are selling weapons to Azerbaijan and if asked, would also sell to Armenia. The lukewarm relationship in years past is embedded in deeper geopolitical issues, he opines.

"After thirty years Armenia finally sent an Ambassador to Israel," Dr. Levin says. "It could have made a difference if they sent one twenty years earlier, but it's never too late to start building cooperation."

He hopes that both territorial conflicts – including Israel-Palestine – will "find a solution in the near future next to the negotiation table."

In his memoirs, Ambassador Morgenthau Sr. wrote, "I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this," referring to the Armenian Genocide. When world leaders ignored the first genocide of the twentieth century and left the perpetrators unpunished, it gave the green light to Adolf Hitler to execute the Holocaust against the Jews, stating: "Who, after all, remembers the annihilation of Armenians?"

Though the relationship between Armenia and Israel remains on shaky ground, there is a shared history ingrained in the champions of truth and human rights. This kinship was emphasized when soil from Henry Morgenthau Sr's grave in New York was transported to Yerevan, Armenia, and laid at the Armenian Genocide Memorial's Tsisdernakabert Wall of Remembrance in April 1999. The meaningful ceremony took place in the presence of his grandson, Henry Morgenthau III, who acknowledged that his grandfather "took it upon himself to go completely outside the bounds of diplomacy and perhaps legality" in order to uphold moral authority: a lesson that remains as relevant as ever today.

(This article initially appeared in the *Tel Aviv Review of Books*.)

EU Offers to Foster Karabakh Peace

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) — The European Union has expressed readiness to contribute to international efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after the recent Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Senior EU officials and an Armenian government delegation headed by Foreign Minister Ara Aytvazyan discussed the situation in the conflict zone at a session of the EU-Armenia Partnership Council concluded late on Thursday, December 17. The meeting held in Brussels was chaired Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign and security policy chief.

A European Council statement on the meeting quoted Borrell as saying: "The EU stands ready to assume a role in supporting and shaping a durable settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in close complementarity with the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. We are ready to use our peace-building and reconstruction tools to support this."

The Minsk Group is co-headed by the United States, Russia and EU member France.

Oliver Varhelyi, the EU commissioner for enlargement and neighborhood who also attended the meeting, said in that regard that the 27-nation bloc plans to provide 10 million euros (\$12 million) in additional humanitarian aid to victims of the Karabakh war.

Varhelyi also voiced its readiness to "work towards more comprehensive conflict transformation and longer-term socioeconomic development."

The Armenian and EU officials met in Brussels one day before a similar session of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council. "These meetings reiterate the importance of the



EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell chairs a meeting of the EU-Armenia Partnership Council, Brussels, December 17, 2020.

EU's partnership with the countries in the region and the EU's support to its recovery and to sustainable peace," the EU statement said.

Reconstruction efforts in and around Karabakh began shortly after Russia brokered an Armenian-Azerbaijani ceasefire deal that stopped the six-week war on November 10.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday urged other international actors to make good on their pledges to help victims of the conflict and, in particular, refugees returning to Karabakh.

Why the US Should Support Armenians in Artsakh

SUPPORT, from page 19

Turkey and Azerbaijan are directly hiring and transporting known terrorist groups to attack ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East and South Caucasus. The governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan are both committing money laundering by illicitly financing militant groups from Syria and

Libya. The United States must conduct anti-terrorism operations to ensure no funding and resources go to these terrorist groups. Under the US Patriot Act, the Federal government has the authority and the duty to pursue all money laundering and financial activity that fuel terrorist organizations and their individual or state sponsors.

Furthermore, the government of Azerbaijan and its leadership extensively use elaborate money laundering schemes to bribe politicians, bureaucrats, news media, journalists and finance international terrorism. They do this by setting up shell companies abroad to act as a slush funds for operations.

Being complicit in money laundering that violates the US Patriot Act will result in asset forfeiture. Given that the governments themselves and their officials are financing terrorism, all assets of the Turkish and Azerbaijani government which are in American financial institutions must be claimed by the United States Federal government.

(Aris Govjian is a Los Angeles-based writer and businessperson. He has been a lifelong supporter of various Armenian charities and causes. Aris enjoys writing on Armenian topics, fiction, and historical and philosophical nonfiction. To learn more about Aris and his writing, please visit www.arisgovjian.com.)



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Together for Artsakh

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

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

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

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

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

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

We also need the following technical experts:

- Copywriter
- 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.