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NEWS IN BRIEF

Erdogan to Attend Grey Wolves School Groundbreaking in Shushi

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Turkish and Azerbaijani Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ilham Aliyev, respectively, are expected to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for a school funded by Grey Wolves leader Devlet Bahçeli in Shushi, an Armenian city in Nagorno-Karabakh that has come under Azerbaijan's control in the recent 44-day war, media reports from Turkish reveal.

Yusuf Ziya Günaydın, an aide to Bahçeli, broke the news last week, *Hurriyet* reports.

The Grey Wolves are closely linked to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which has a political alliance with Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). The Grey Wolves are regarded as the militant wing of the MHP and are known for causing havoc throughout the world.

Prosecutors in Turkey To Strip Immunity of MPs, Including Paylan

ANKARA (Bianet) – The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has prepared summaries of proceedings for nine lawmakers from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), seeking to lift their legislative immunity.

The HDP lawmakers, along with 99 other defendants, are facing life sentences for having allegedly organized the deadly "Kobane protests" in Kurdish-majority cities in October 2014.

The summaries of the proceedings have been sent to the Ministry of Justice to be submitted to the parliament for a vote.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) have the parliamentary majority to approve the action.

Those being investigated are HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan, parliamentary group deputy chairs Meral Danis-Bestas and Saruhan Oluç, and Paylan, Hüda Kaya, Sezai Temelli, Pero Dundar, Fatma Kurtulan and Serpil Kemalbay-Pegközegü.

Dozens of HDP politicians were detained on September 25 after the investigation was launched and 17 were later remanded in custody.

The indictment charging the suspects with 25 offenses, including "managing a terrorist organization" and "attempted overthrow," was accepted on January 7.

The protests in question began in late September 2014 when ISIS launched an offensive to take over Kobane, a Kurdish town in northern Syria. Incidents between different protesting groups and the police response to protesters turned violent from October 6, resulting in the deaths of 42 people.

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A throng of demonstrators on Saturday, February 20

Dozens Detained at Anti-Government Protest in Yerevan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Dozens of members and supporters of an Armenian opposition alliance were detained on Tuesday, February 23, as they attempted to stop Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan from entering a government building in Yerevan.

The Homeland Salvation Movement alliance had urged supporters to surround the building that houses several government ministers as part of its ongoing campaign of street protests aimed at forcing Pashinyan to resign.

The high-rise was cordoned off in the morning by scores of riot police that kept protesters at bay and enabled Pashinyan to enter it and hold a meeting with senior officials from the Armenian Ministry of Environment.

More than 50 protesters were detained on the spot. Gegham Manukyan, a senior opposition figure, claimed that the police made more than 100 arrests.

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Ceramics Lab for People With Special Needs

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Mirror-Spectator Staff

GEGHANIST, Armenia – "It seems that our dreams have come true!"

This is how Alya Kirakosyan put it when the ceramics lab opened this month. Kirakosyan is the director of Warm Hearth, a house in the village of Geghanist in Ararat marz, not far from Yerevan. The house there shelters adult orphans, many but not all are women; all are graduates of special orphanages for people with special needs.

There are three such houses in Armenia: in addition to this one in Geghanist, there is one on the outskirts of the capital, and another in the village of Arinj (Kotayk marz). The residents are all adults with different
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Artsakh Outreach Campaign of Armenian Church Aids Displaced and Victims of Artsakh War

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ECHMIADZIN – The Artsakh war led to tens of thousands of

Armenians fleeing to Armenia for refuge, while many others in Artsakh lost their homes, family members and livelihoods. There are many different humanitarian programs to help these people. One of the largest, Artsakh Outreach, was established last November by the Mother See of Echmiadzin under the direction of Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

A committee of bishops and lay leaders from around the world, led by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See (Vatican), was appointed to coordinate this effort, which is being carried out through Echmiadzin's Social Services Department.

Archbishop Barsamian said that his committee includes five high-ranking clergymen aside from himself from important centers of Armenian population in Armenia, Russia, Europe, Australia and the
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One of the displaced Bagiyants children of Charektar, Artsakh, now in Vanadzor



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Vaccination to Start in March

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Vaccinations against COVID-19 in Armenia are expected to start in March, Minister of Healthcare Anahit Avanesyan told reporters on February 18, after the Cabinet meeting, adding that the vaccinations will be carried out on voluntary basis, and the vaccines for those in high-risk groups will be free.

“Small number of vaccines have already been used in Armenia, in particular several people have been vaccinated with Sputnik V which was received from Russia as a gift. Armenia will receive more doses in the near future and will be able to start the vaccinations for broader public circles. Risky group citizens will get the vaccine for free, but as for the price of the vaccine for other citizens, it’s still unclear,” the minister said.

She added that the government will import only those vaccines which have successfully passed the third stage of clinical trials. “So far, the experts have considered the use of AstraZeneca, Pfizer and the Russian Sputnik V vaccines. There are only issues connected with ensuring the thermal regime of Pfizer, which must be solved,” she said.

More than 9,000 Wounded During War

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A total of 9,094 servicemen of the Armenian military were wounded in action during the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War, the general prosecution announced on February 18 at a consultation on the military prosecution’s activities.

The final death toll isn’t yet available because of the ongoing identification of bodies and the search operations.

But the prosecution noted that in 2020 the bodies of 3,389 servicemen were identified.

Prosecutor General Artur Davtyan said that it is necessary for a comprehensive investigation to legally assess the Turkey-backed Azerbaijani war of aggression, the gross violations of international humanitarian law against servicemen, civilians and towns of Armenia and Artsakh, the Azeri crimes against humanity and use of prohibited munitions, as well as deployment of international terrorists by Azerbaijan.

Spotify to Launch in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Spotify is launching in Armenia in the next few days, the company announced on February 22.

The audio streaming service unveiled plans to launch in 85 new markets, areas that represent more than 1 billion potential new listeners, *Variety* reports.

The company made the announcement at its Stream On event for creators and partners. The 85 new markets span Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, Spotify now supports more than 60 languages natively, after adding native support for 36 new languages.

33rd Anniversary of Karabakh Movement Marked

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan issued a message on the 33rd anniversary of the Artsakh Movement, on February 20. In his address the President stated that Artsakh will be reborn again, rise from the ruins and will continue its eternal course for the sake of all fallen heroes, all dreams and generations.

“Dear compatriots, February 20, 1988 has entered into the annals of the Armenian people as a symbol of revival of the national spirit, firm unity and unbreakable will, as a beginning of a whole new period for recreation, loss and victories. Thirty three years have passed since that day. Today the Armenians of Artsakh are living one of the most difficult periods of their history,” he said. “Let this path accompany our people and Homeland with peace and success,” Harutyunyan concluded.

Dozens Detained at Protest in Yerevan

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Manukyan said security forces tried unsuccessfully to detain Ishkhan Saghatelian, who coordinates the opposition movement’s day-to-day activities. “We didn’t let them do that,” he told reporters.

According to eyewitnesses, Saghatelian was injured in an apparent scuffle with the riot police.

Manukyan insisted that the latest opposition protest was not a failure. He argued that Pashinyan had to “bring in several thousand police officers to be able to walk 200 meters in the city.”

The Homeland Salvation Movement, which comprises more than a dozen opposition parties, blames Pashinyan for Armenia’s defeat in the autumn war in Nagorno-Karabakh and wants him to resign. The prime minister has rejected the opposition demands, leading the alliance to resume its anti-government protests on Saturday.

Saghatelian and other opposition leaders have pledged to hold daily demonstrations this week in a bid to step up the pressure on Pashinyan. They and their supporters were due to again march through the center of Yerevan later on Tuesday.

Traffic was brought to a standstill in much of central Yerevan on Saturday, February 20, as an alliance of more than

a dozen Armenian opposition parties resumed street protests.

At the organizers’ urging, the protesters split and marched in four different directions after the rally, chanting “Armenia without Nikol!” and blocking major street intersections in the city center. Riot police did not attempt to disperse them and guarded key government buildings instead.

The opposition alliance blames Pashinyan for Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war in Nagorno-Karabakh stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire on November 10. It staged a series of demonstrations later in November and December in a bid to force him to hand over power to an interim government.

Those protests did not attract large crowds, leading Pashinyan to insist that he still has a popular mandate to govern the country.

The prime minister also expressed readiness on December 25 to hold snap parliamentary elections to end the political crisis in the country. Opposition leaders continued to insist on his resignation.

The ruling My Step bloc pointed to the opposition stance when it stated on February 7 that Pashinyan and his allies see no need to dissolve the current parliament. It also claimed that most Armenians do not want snap elections.

The Homeland Salvation Movement announced afterwards its decision to resume anti-government rallies.

“As long as there are upheavals there will be no development in our country. If they don’t resign things will get even worse,” Gagik Tsarukyan, the leader of the movement’s largest party, Prosperous Armenia, said in a speech delivered during the Liberty Square rally.

“Armenia must boil. There must be daily rallies. The city must be paralyzed,” said Vazgen Manukyan, another opposition leader whom the alliance wants to take over as a caretaker prime minister after Pashinyan’s resignation.

Manukyan also declared that the opposition should be prepared to mount an “uprising” if it fails to topple Pashinyan with conventional street protests. “We will follow Plan A but must always be ready for Plan B,” he said.

Saghatelian, who is affiliated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), backed the idea when he spoke with journalists after the Saturday rally. He said Armenians have a right to revolt against “this government of evil.” He stressed at the same time they must be patient and ready for a prolonged struggle against Pashinyan’s administration.

Aid through Hayastan All Armenian Fund Continues to Arrive

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Since the very beginning of the war, through the efforts of the Diaspora and with the support of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund, large-scale humanitarian aid has been sent to Armenia by different Diaspora communities. To date, approximately 184,345 kilograms (more than 184 tons) of various humanitarian aid has arrived in Armenia, the Fund told Armenpress.

The assistance received includes modern medical equipment, first aid supplies, wound treatment and skin recovery products, warm winter clothes, shoes, sleeping bags, tents, beds, food, gift packages for Artsakh schoolchildren and so on.

Starting on October 10th, through the efforts of Armenians living in the Diaspora and Armenian organizations from different communities, approximately 87,941 kg of humanitarian aid had been collected in the USA and Europe and transported to Armenia with the efforts of the All Armenian Fund. Cargo shipments were received from Los Angeles on October 10th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 22nd, 30th and 31st, with a total weight of approximately 61,549 kg, and 10,415 kg from the Netherlands on October 11th and 12th. Two planes arrived in Armenia from France and Belgium on October 23rd and October 26th, respectively, which delivered approximately 15,977 kg of humanitarian aid donated by different Armenian communities around Europe.

To ensure the swift and efficient delivery of aid to those most in need during the state of emergency, the Hayastan All Armenian Fund waived its right to these shipment during the 44 days of the war in favor of the Ministries of Emergency Situations, Health and Defense, which enabled the humanitarian aid to be directed to meet the needs of each institution immediately.

After the end of military actions, 33,389 kilograms of humanitarian aid arrived and was distributed directly by the Fund. Most of the aid received dur-

ing this period originated from Los Angeles and France. Cargo shipments were received on November 19 and 20, December 6, 7, 14, 18, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29 and January 14, 2021.

The assistance received during this period was distributed to Kanaker-Zeytun Medical Center and Maternity Hospital, Institute of Hematology, Central Military Hospital, Martuni Medical Center, Kapan Medical Center, the regional administration of Tavush, Ararat and Gegharkunik, the Homeland

Defender’s Rehabilitation Center, Noyemberyan Medical Center, Surb Astvacamayr Medical Center, Vardenisi Hospital, Erebuni Medical Center, Surb Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center, Goris Medical Center. Significant assistance was also provided to the Artsakh Ministry of Health.

Humanitarian aid continues to arrive in 2021 with approximately 63,015 kilograms of aid currently awaiting customs clearance, processing, and classification prior to distribution.

Aurora Initiates a Strategic Shift In the Artsakh Aid Program

YEREVAN – The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has announced a fundamental upgrade of its Artsakh Aid program, which from now on will be focused on assisting projects that support and facilitate the region’s long-term social development. The program, launched by Aurora in the aftermath of the war, had earlier been providing urgent humanitarian aid to the people of Artsakh on the basis of the #AraratChallenge crowdfunding initiative. In addition, the Aurora Co-Founders Nouraf Afeyan, Vartan Gregorian and Ruben Vardanyan have donated on behalf of Aurora \$1 million to Hayastan All Armenian Fund for Artsakh aid programs.

This new stage will be characterized by a shift towards sustainability, intended to ensure long-term impact, and will include funding projects that support micro and small enterprises, restore infrastructure, and boost economy. In the meantime, the Initiative remains committed to preserving and promoting Armenian legacy in the region and will also keep on assisting projects that provide direct aid to the underserved communities in Artsakh.

“Following the ceasefire established between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Aurora played an important role in providing immediate relief to the Armenians of Artsakh facing a grave humanitarian crisis. Today, strategic solutions are needed on the ground, and we are very excited to be one of the first to bring long-term social development back to the agenda and to support the projects that fuel it,” said Narine Aghabalyan, Head of Aurora’s Artsakh program.

Having already acted as one of the key humanitarian leaders of the region, Aurora plans to bring the Initiative’s partners together to share best practices at a conference that will be organized in April, as well as to engage experts from the Armenian Diaspora and to contribute to the development of a humanitarian platform designed to connect all stakeholders under the auspices of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. Since the launch of its humanitarian aid program for Artsakh, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has already allocated a total of \$581,740 (300,660,500 drams) to support fifty-seven local and international projects.



ARMENIA

Armenian Church Aids Displaced and Victims of War

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United States, as well as nine lay representatives, again from around the world. He exclaimed, "This is the obligation of the church — to reach out to those who are in need. This is a role that has been known throughout Armenian history from at least the times of St. Nerses the Great. Several decades ago, the Armenian Church responded immediately when the Armenian earthquake of 1988 took place." He described how Archbishop Torkom Manoogian at that time rushed to Armenia with several Armenian-American philanthropists to see what assistance was necessary.

The Approach

The initial efforts, Archbishop Barsamian explained, were to provide the immediate needs of refugees in Armenia. Consequently, they were provided with food and hygienic requirements. Once a month each family was given a package to provide them with the supplies necessary for the month. This was done throughout Armenia by means of the local dioceses, and 205 families, or 1,100 people in all, were helped. Sponsors were found in the diaspora. Later, aid was extended to 181 more families for a total of 306 families, or 2,315 people.

In addition, during this first period, Catholicos Karekin noted the dire straits of around 17,500 children in Artsakh or refugees in Armenia, as well as children of families with wounded or dead soldiers. He suggested providing each with a package of gifts. With aid from the US, Canada, Moscow and elsewhere, some \$200,000 was used to prepare in each diocese gifts including a bible, toys for the mind and stationery items, worth approximately \$15 per package, to be given during the holidays.

The second stage of aid involves offering support to make sure families are able to remain in Armenia or Artsakh, by providing them necessities such as a home, a means to earn a living, and education. The feasibility of return to Artsakh is being evaluated, the archbishop said. For those whose homes are now under Azerbaijani control, a new program is being prepared so that they will not have to leave for Russia, the United States or Europe, but will be given the confidence that they can continue their lives in Armenia or other parts of Artsakh and not have to continue to rely on aid to do so.

Archbishop Barsamian stressed the importance of creating more development programs. Otherwise, he said that as in the aftermath of the Armenian earthquake, aid recipients will get used to idleness and relying on the assistance of others. He said, "This is not good. It is necessary to aid them so that they can act on their own and form their own future."

A third stage will involve provision of psychological and spiritual assistance. Archbishop Barsamian spoke with Catholicos Karekin about a plan to deal with trauma. The losses Armenians experienced were not only of land and physical belongings. They also lost children, spouses, friends and family members. The number of wounded is great, while the fate of others, the "lost," remains unknown. The trauma that resulted requires both psychological and spiritual healing. Archbishop Barsamian stated that the clergy must be trained in dealing with the situation.

To have the resources to accomplish these plans, all dioceses of the Church of Armenia outside of Armenia are asked to raise money, while the dioceses in Armenia, and Artsakh, will distribute the aid to refugees and execute the various projects. Archbishop Barsamian pointed out that the Mother See has a financial department, and a separate financial specialist will handle the accounting, so that these programs will not be a burden to it.

The Implementation

Fr. Markos Mangasaryan is the director of Echmiadzin's Social Services Department. He said, "From the early days of the war, when our compatriots in Artsakh began to move to Armenia in the hundreds, then thousands, and then tens of thousands, the Mother See with all its wherewithal began to organize their reception in separate buildings, homes of believers, and communities. In Yeghegnadzor, Echmiadzin, Saghmosavan and Dzaghgadzor buildings were turned into dormitories for the displaced refugees." Aid was also extended to families of the wounded, the captives or the dead.

Fr. Mangasaryan echoed the words of Barsamian, as well as the intent of the catholicos, in stating that the Gospels provide a clear example of how to act, and so the church must give the refugees their material needs as much as possible.

He said that when refugees first started to come to Armenia, "all day and all night, my phone did not stop ringing." All kinds of people, ranging from mayors to individual citizens called for help. Refugees came to the church in various ways. Sometimes they came on their own and other times individuals or organizations contacted the church. It was very disorderly, and the state, overwhelmed, had zero participation in the transportation process, Mangasaryan said. It only helped at the end of October when it became clear how bad the situation was, and sent buses to transport people from Artsakh. The state also did return people later to Artsakh with buses.

The aid effort at first was spontaneous, and work began even prior to the formation of the Artsakh Outreach committee. Fr. Mangasaryan said, "This was something that happened as if we were doing it for a thousand years. We have this tradition which we have

inherited, especially during crisis periods. Somehow, it awakens and you do what is necessary even without coordination."

After the establishment of the committee, it began to coordinate efforts and work to provide more financial means. With limited resources, Fr. Mangasaryan said that three criteria were used to determine which families should receive aid: 1. Those from the territories lost to Azerbaijan; 2. Families with a minimum of four children (non-adult); 3. Families without property (real estate) in Armenia.

In the Echmiadzin refugee shelter, Fr. Mangasaryan said that for the first month, he would speak practically every evening for hours about the worries of the displaced. He declared that many organizations would bring 40-50 people to a hotel or building and say, here is food and shelter for you, but then leave them on their own. It quickly became clear that this was insufficient. Fr. Mangasaryan said, "You cannot simply leave people who were displaced due to war and say go live...they must come out of their traumatic condition. They need contact with people who can listen to them."

The Echmiadzin shelter hosted some 120 people over a period of four months. Some only stayed two weeks, others two months or even four months, but all know they must eventually leave, Mangasaryan said. The building has 20 rooms, but life is communal, with a cafeteria, and all expenses are paid for the residents. Those who leave find more appropriate housing in Armenia, return to Artsakh, or leave Armenia altogether.

The shelter in Yeghegnadzor helped some 300 people over the same four months. It probably received more refugees because it was closest to Artsakh, said Mangasaryan. Some refugees preferred to go to Lori (Gugark Diocese) because it was seen as the safest geographically.

He said that while the majority of the displaced, perhaps as many as 100,000 have by now returned to Artsakh, there are still over 25,000 refugees left in Armenia. Most of them are from the territories lost to Azerbaijan.



Displaced children from Artsakh receiving presents

While the initial aid of food and hygienic supplies was given only in Armenia, he said that soon it will also be provided to those in Artsakh, as part of encouragement to refugees to return there, even if they lost their original homes to the Azerbaijanis. This is also what the Armenian and Artsakh governments desire.

Fr. Mangasaryan emphasized that the biggest problem in Artsakh was actually not food or water, but habitations. If the issue of housing is not quickly solved, it will lead to further emigration when the borders are opened, he said. The second big issue is employment.

He compared the situation with that of the Syrian-Armenian refugees in 2011-12. The latter came to Armenia but it was not possible to provide them with what they needed so they emigrated. The Syrian Armenians were in much better financial shape and enjoyed many advantages compared to the Artsakh refugees.

Many of the Artsakh refugees from lost areas like Hadrut or Berdzor actually were settled there decades ago from Armenia where they were in a poor socioeconomic condition. Now that they return to Armenia, having lost everything, they are in even worse shape than before. Fr. Mangasaryan estimates that at least half or more of the 25,000 left in Armenia at present fall into this category. Furthermore, covid-19 makes the present situation more difficult.

Nevertheless, the Artsakh Outreach committee has prepared plans to provide housing and work and after finalizing them will choose the preferred sites and the ways to provide the tools or the needed education and training for work. Fr. Mangasaryan accepts that these are huge tasks, but he declares, "We do not hesitate in doing this. No matter if we cannot help everyone, even if we help one person to not remain idle, this is important."

The first priority, he said, is to keep these people in Armenia, and then eventually they can be transported to Artsakh when conditions permit.

Fr. Mangasaryan also confirmed that the Artsakh Outreach committee has a plan to work with families with psychological and spiritual difficulties. He observed that this is very apparent among soldiers who fought in the recent war, especially the young ones who were wounded. He said, "I do not know one soldier who participated in the war and returned who can sleep calmly now. I know many. I have visited their homes." Children

who have heard bombs or seen acts of violence also need healing. Aside from creating conditions for normal life and human contact, psychological and spiritual work is much needed, he said.

Who Is Doing the Work in Armenia?

In Echmiadzin, the Social Services Department has, in addition to its director, two deacons, one secretary, and two social workers who were brought on recently due to the Artsakh situation. It is primarily an administrative center which plans programs, Fr. Mangasaryan said.

Archbishop Barsamian said that a program manager and a public relations person will be added to its staff and people will also be hired for specific projects.

In addition to the Echmiadzin center, most dioceses in Armenia have their own social services departments. While these departments are formally subject to the direction of their diocese, each also coordinates its work with Fr. Mangasaryan. They each generally have a much larger staff than the Echmiadzin department since they directly deal with the population. Fr. Mangasaryan said that many have over ten staff members.

Finally, he remarked that every cleric in Armenia does the work of a social worker since he is aware of his community and what its needs are. The church tells the government, at various levels, about the information it has collected about who is from Artsakh in various regions, so that the same person does not get aid twice while another remains hungry. Fr. Mangasaryan observed that the government at present is not able to master this information or data on its own.

Aside from the Armenian government and the Armenia Fund, there are many other organizations doing humanitarian work, and Fr. Mangasaryan is in touch with them to be aware of what they are doing and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Finances

The total amount raised for aid as of February 3 is \$667,000 according to the Artsakh Outreach Interim Report, but that figure, Fr. Mangasaryan said, does not include the aid given in kind in Armenia. Many in the church communities hosted Artsakh refugees, for a total of thousands, and sometimes did not give money but took care of their needs directly.

James Kalustian, a leader in the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) from the Boston area, is one of the lay members of the Artsakh Outreach committee who is involved with financial operations. He said that the process was a very transparent one, declaring, "We understand where the funds are going and who is getting supported."

The general committee has formed a five-man financial subcommittee that meets weekly and authorizes all expenditures. He and Fr. Mangasaryan are among its members. Kalustian gave the example of a request for funds from a local Armenian diocese for families that needed help. After their number and needs were determined, a purchase order was made for the items

that had to be purchased, and the subcommittee authorized the allocation of funds to the diocese. Each distribution has at least one clergyman present to witness the transfer, and efforts are being made to have a member of the local church youth group present too. Social workers will follow up on the situation, and in some cases writers and photographers are sent to document examples of distributions for publicity purposes.

Berta Baghajian, an accountant based in California, is a member of the financial sub-committee who keeps track of expenditures and every month checks the records, while in Armenia logging of funds continues. Kalustian said there will definitely be an annual financial report, but there may also be reporting twice a year or even quarterly.

A website, <https://artsakhoutreach.org/>, has been established to raise donations for the Artsakh Outreach effort and to publicize the work being carried out. The appeal for funds initially was just a general one, but now there is an attempt to quantify the amount needed to support families of various sizes for varying periods of time in order to make it easier for people to feel the impact their money is having, Kalustian said. Publicity for fundraising is primarily carried out through social media at present, he added.

While the initial thought was that the Artsakh Outreach work would be a three-to-six-month exercise, it is clear now, Kalustian said, that it will at least last a year, and perhaps even longer. Furthermore, it is possible that this effort will eventually turn into the equivalent of Catholic Charities for the Mother See of Echmiadzin, so that there will be a ready system to collect and distribute funds in the case of future disasters affecting Armenians, whether in Armenia or the diaspora. Kalustian gave the Beirut explosion last August as an example of an instance for which such a structure would have been useful.

During the Artsakh war of 2020, there was an unprecedented degree of support from the diaspora. Kalustian said, "With the end of the war, people have to realize that the needs are greater than ever. No one is going to help the Armenians besides the Armenians themselves right now. Hopefully aid will come from Russia, the European Union and the United States, but right now the responsibility is ours."

For more information, readers can refer to the aforementioned Artsakh Outreach website or email Laura Gononian (lgonon-ian@yahoo.com).



INTERNATIONAL

International News

UN envoy: Don't Expect Azerbaijan to Eliminate Racism

NEW YORK (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Expecting Azerbaijan to eliminate racism and xenophobia would be futile, Mher Margaryan, Representative of Armenia to the UN, said at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Special Meeting last week.

“The global crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its severe impacts have shaken the very foundation of our societies, having increased structural inequalities that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, and further intensifying racism, discrimination and related intolerance,” the ambassador said.

However, Margaryan added, it would be futile to expect that racism and xenophobia can be erased in a country like Azerbaijan, “where violations of fundamental human rights, lack of accountable institutions, systemic corruption and instigation of violence and hatred have become part of the usual course of things, as extensively reported by independent experts and international organizations.”

“When the representative of Azerbaijan referred during today’s debate to the fictional number of ‘30,000 Armenians living peacefully in Azerbaijan’ and the ‘preservation of the Armenian church’ in Baku, they conveniently forget that, according to their own census, the number of Armenians in current Azerbaijan is only a few hundreds; that the authorities removed the cross and the dome of the church and turned it into an administrative building a long time ago,” the envoy said.

“Indeed, it is nothing short of cynicism that a country that tries to portray itself as ‘model’ of tolerance and multiculturalism, has been, in fact, systematically annihilating every trace of the civilizational presence of Armenians in the territories currently under its control.”

EU Supports OSCE Minsk Group Mediation Efforts

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The European Union (EU) supports the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and is ready to contribute to activating the negotiations in this format, the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar told the Armenian Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan during a meeting in Yerevan on February 22.

Harutyunyan briefed the EU delegation on the post-war situation in the region and the process of implementation of the 2020 November 9 armistice terms, the ministry of defense said in a news release.

Harutyunyan stressed that Azerbaijan is not implementing Clause 8, which stipulates the return of POWs and other captives, and is exploiting the process for its political goals to exert additional pressures upon Armenia.

Other issues relating to regional security were also discussed at the meeting.

EU Ambassador to Armenia Andrea Wiktorin also attended the meeting.

Paylan Warns Against Dying Languages in Turkey

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Turkish-Armenian lawmaker Garo Paylan warned that the Western-Armenian language is threatened in his country.

Garo Paylan, an ethnic Armenian Member of Parliament of Turkey, says that Western Armenian is “on the verge of destruction” in Turkey.

“My Mother Language – Western Armenian – and numerous other languages are on the verge of destruction,” he said on social media on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day on February 21. “On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, I wish for languages to live brotherly in our country.”

Haigazian University Hosts Symposium Dedicated to Lebanese Identity on Centennial of Country

LEBANON – Organized by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University in association with the Anis Makdisi Program in Literature at the American University of Beirut (AUB), a one-day virtual symposium titled Centennial of Greater Lebanon Reconstituting the idea of a “Lebanese Identity” Perspectives from the Lebanese Arts and Letters, took place on February 5.

The full-day conference brought together around 10 experts and scholars from leading Lebanese universities in the fields of history, philosophy, music and literature.

The symposium opened with the joint welcoming words of Dr. Arda Ekmekji, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University, and Dr. Hayat Bu Alwan representing the Anis Makdisi Program in Literature at AUB.

In his keynote speech, Professor Dr. Ahmad Beydoun from the Lebanese University delivered a one-hour comprehensive lecture on “Sectarianism in organizing the State and the Society: Activation vs Obstruction.”

This was followed by a panel on History, Historiography and Philosophical Thought, chaired by Dr. Berge Traboulsi from Haigazian University. First to speak was Dr. Hayat Bu Alwan from AUB who presented “Philip Hitti: A Historian from Lebanon.” For his part, Dr. Edward Alam from Notre Dame University (NDU) presented, “That Goodly

Mountain: Philosophical Reflections on Lebanese Identity.” The first panel concluded with Dr. Pascale Lahoud from Antonine University on “Renowned

Lebanese Identity.” Panelists Dr. Zeina Fayad from AUB presented “Three Francophone Pre-revolutionary Visions,” and Dr. Antranig Dakessian



Campus of Haigazian University

Philosopher of Greater Lebanon Rene Habachi.”

The afternoon panel on Arts and Letters was chaired by Dr. Zeina Fayad, Professor of Cultural Studies at AUB, hosting two participants: Dr. Nidaa Abou Mourad from Antonine University on “Criteria of Music Renaissance in Greater Lebanon,” and Dr. Ray Jabre Moawad from Saint Joseph University (USJ) on “the Word Lebanon in Lebanese Epigraphy.”

The final panel, chaired by Dr. Josph Al-Agha from Haigazian University, tackled the issue of “Reconstituting

from Haigazian University discussed the “Armenian Identity in the Lebanese Armenian Traditional Media from the years 1953 through 1975.”

The full day symposium was marked by stimulating virtual discussions and academic exchange, marking thus the centennial of greater Lebanon through intellectual and scholarly interventions which will shortly be published in a proceeding volume.

The day came to an end with the personal reflections and conclusions of Rev. Dr. Paul Haidotian, president of Haigazian University.

Azerbaijan Suspends Karabakh Search Mission Indefinitely

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia on February 23 again accused Azerbaijan of “artificially” delaying the release of Armenian soldiers and civilians remaining in Azerbaijani captivity more than three months after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ceasefire agreement calls for the unconditional release of all prisoners held by the conflicting sides. Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in Karabakh have arranged several prisoner swaps over the last two months.

A total of 64 Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians have been freed to date. More than 100 others are believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity.

Foreign Minister Ara Ayvazyan said Baku’s reluctance to free them constitutes a serious violation of the truce agreement and hampers the resumption of Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks.

“We are committed to the resumption of the settlement process but there must first and foremost be formed an environment conducive to peace. Prerequisites for that are not yet visible on the Azerbaijani side,” he said at a meeting with members of a standing committee of the Armenian parliament.

Speaking with reporters after the meeting, Ayvazyan said that Baku is facing growing international pressure to release the remaining Armenian prisoners.

“As expected, Azerbaijan’s policy of creating artificial obstacles to the return of prisoners is slowly becoming a headache for Azerbaijan,” he claimed. “We hope that Azerbaijan will abandon this policy of hostage taking and will immediately solve this important humanitarian issue.”

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reportedly raised the issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin when they last spoke by phone on February 17.

The Russian ambassador to Armenia, Sergei Kopyrkin, insisted on Tuesday that Moscow keeps doing its best to secure the release of all Armenian captives. “The work is not easy but it con-

tinues to be carried out persistently,” Kopyrkin told journalists.

In addition, PanARMENIAN.Net reported that search and rescue operations in Nagorno-Karabakh have been suspended indefinitely after the Azerbaijani side failed to authorize the mission on Monday, February 22, Karabakh authorities report.

No explanation was given for Azerbaijan’s refusal to allow the Karabakh rescue teams to search for the bodies of the victims of the recent war in territories under Baku’s control, the Karabakh Emergency Service said Monday.

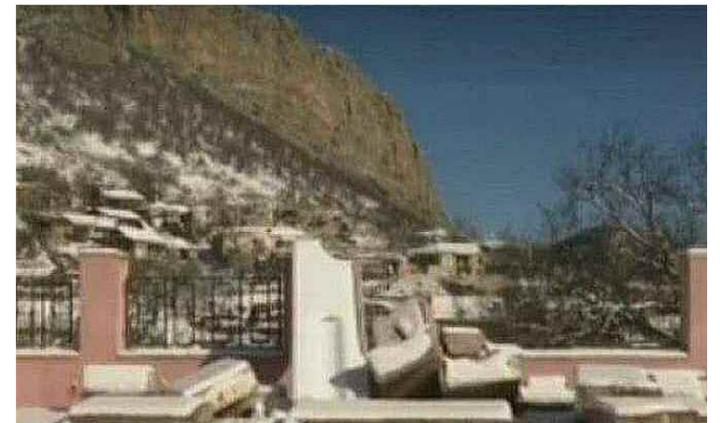
The process was first halted on February 15 and has not been resumed.

Another Monument in Artsakh, Now Under Azerbaijani Control, Is Destroyed

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Multiple cases of vandalism are being recorded in the territories of Artsakh that have gone under Azerbaijani control after the 2020 war.

Infoteka24, a leading online news portal, labeled the Azeri vandalisms as a “rebirth of fascist ideology.”

“The memorial honoring the heroes of the Great Patriotic War wasn’t chosen coincidentally by the brutes. Today, a rebirth of fascist ideology is taking place in Azerbaijan, against which the entire world fought in the 20th



The World War II (Great Patriotic War) monument in Karabakh, which has been vandalized by Azerbaijani authorities.

century. The silence of the international community will soon lead to two new Hitlers emerging in the world, in person of Erdogan and Aliyev,” Infoteka wrote in an article, referring to the desecration of the WWII memorial in the village of Avetaranots.

It mentioned that international organizations, politicians, including the Russian ministry of foreign affairs, have all condemned the vandalisms committed by Azerbaijanis in Artsakh, but no actions followed.



INTERNATIONAL

Ceramics Lab for People With Special Needs

CERAMICS, from page 1

levels of mental disability. All three houses are family type establishments, offering permanent residence to these individuals, who, although they are not able to work to earn a living, can learn to perform useful activities. The houses have social workers and caregivers who teach the residents basic household skills; then there is therapy, including in arts and crafts, and here is where the ceramics lab comes into the picture.

The new ceramics lab is a joint project set up by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) in partner-

now concentrated on their assignments and look forward to presenting the first fruits of their labors soon.

Margarit Piliposyan, deputy country director and programs director of FAR, has extensive experience with Warm Hearths. "The three houses are run by a local foundation which has a sister organization in the US," she explained, "Friends of Warm Hearth is their name. They support the costs for dignified living of all the residents, and the national budget provides some financial support as well. But the organization has to fundraise to finance therapy, vocational training and entertainment."

There are 30 adult orphans with disabilities who benefit from the project. They have classes twice a week of an hour and half each. The ceramics lab is a boon for all those who make use of it, as such therapy not only contributes to developing their motor skills but also improves their psychological situation. This is the only ceramics lab for the three houses. There are 50 individuals in all, and the organization arranges transportation to bring them to the ceramics lab, which has become a favorite activity center.

To set up the lab, a room in the house had to be refurbished, and equipped. The necessary equipment includes worktables, tools and a ceramics oven or kiln. Most of the equipment has come from Russia and is manufactured with special attention to safety. The oven, however, was produced locally by a master specialist who has supplied virtually all facilities offering applied arts and ceramics. The project organized enough materials, clay, paint, brushes, and



ship with the Mirak-Weissbach-Stiftung, a small foundation in Germany.

Kirakosyan described the excitement of the residents and staff: "We have been longing for this project for some time. The pottery project has not only a therapeutic significance for our residents, but will help us fulfill our goals in social entrepreneurship."

She explained the special qualities of this kind of therapy, which make it so important. "Clay is a living material," she said, "and has a calming effect, which is one reason why it is so widely used in art therapy. For those who have problems with manual control, clay is something that is easy to work with and does not require advanced skills." She said the students were

so forth, to guarantee continuing operation for a full year.

But it is not only ceramics. The residents make fashion jewelry, or learn carpet weaving; many attend carpet-weaving classes at the Parakar school, another facility supported by FAR which offers life skills training.

The pictures capture the positive mood and happiness the patrons experience, and the instructors are happy and satisfied as well. Work in the ceramics lab represents the first steps taken by many of these residents, and leads to their first creative experience. As they learn more and make progress with the craft, they will be able to create more sophisticated works, using paints and glazing in the oven.



The products of this activity are being made available for purchase through crafts markets, at Christmas, March 8th, Easter and so on.

FAR came into being in 1988 after the devastating earthquakes and provided immediate humanitarian relief. It continued in that capacity and has developed into a non-profit charitable organization, which focuses on programs in education, child protection, economic development, healthcare and social services. (<http://www.farusa.org>)

Margarit Piliposyan contributed to this article, including the photos.



Community News

TAAL Takes on Turkey's, Azerbaijan's Anti-Armenian Campaigns of Hate, Violence And Disinformation

LOS ANGELES – Five months after activating an informal task force addressing Azerbaijan's and Turkey's sudden, violent, and unprovoked genocidal assault and ethnic-cleansing attack against Armenians in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), Armenian-American journalist, radio host, and activist Vic Gerami has set out to amplify the impact of his own and his news-media and entertainment-industry colleagues' efforts to shine a brighter light on aggressor nations' war of propaganda, Armenophobia, and disinformation by launching the Truth And Accountability League (TAAL).

Supporters of human rights, groups and individuals concerned with ending the years-long campaign by dictators, would-be dictators and demagogues to replace truth, reason and factual knowledge with regimes of lies and "alternative facts" can support TAAL's defense of reason and truth, while stopping the genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh by participating in a new crowdfunding campaign on Facebook.

Azerbaijan and Turkey's genocidal attack and systematic ethnic cleansing assault against Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) has overwhelmed the Artsakh and Armenian governments—as well as Armenian-American advocacy organizations operating in the U.S. and abroad.

The persuasiveness of Azerbaijan's and Turkey's high-priced lobbying and public relations firms, which are now working nonstop in the US and in European capitals to protect both government's public images despite their aggressive and harmful actions, make TAAL's work a moral urgency.

While Azerbaijan and Turkish interests are being advanced daily in Washington D.C. by powerful lobbyists, both nations carefully crafted public images are only made possible by a deadly blind spot in the global community's collective consciousness and a void in too many individuals' consciences. That's exactly where TAAL is aiming to establish a beachhead with its work to build awareness and foster concern for the plights of Armenian children, women and men suffering the genocidal impulses of a deadly alliance.

"The Armenian community cannot afford to assume that members of the media will, on their own, examine all the facts and evidence and report without bias, while Azerbaijan's oil money directly or indirectly influences the media narrative," Gerami said.

TAAL aims to serve as a watchdog organization conducting human rights-violations monitoring and reporting. With eyes open wide and specifically focusing on how nation-states, dictators and other antidemocratic forces manipulate international media, diplomats, and members of the intelligentsia, be they individual or institutional, TAAL is elevating its powers of observation and aspiration to greater governmental accountability.

"In the weeks leading up to the September 27 attack on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), Azerbaijan had ramped up its deceptive public relations campaigns – employing no fewer than six of K-Street's heaviest-hitting lobbying firms, including the Livingston Group, Stellar Jay Communications, BGR, The Podesta Group, and DLA Piper," Gerami continued.

Gerami further notes that last year the southwest Asian country spent \$1.3 million on lobbying and that the previously mentioned Washington D.C. firms have worked aggressively to distort facts and to convince media outlets to report false narratives and distortions that favor the dictatorial Azerbaijani government.

"TAAL combats this war of disinformation," Gerami said. "We need those who believe in peace, democracy and human rights to step up to the plate and help us be effective in our work."

The mission of TAAL is to stop the defamation of the Armenian people; achieve worldwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide of see DISINFORMATION, page 10



Employees with donuts

LA Icon Randy's Donuts Plans Seven Las Vegas Locations

LAS VEGAS (Review Journal) – Iconic Los Angeles brand Randy's Donuts is coming to Las Vegas – with not one but seven stores.

The company has purchased a vacant drive-thru restaurant at 2170 S. Rainbow Blvd., between Oakey Boulevard and Sahara Avenue, and vacant land at Blue Diamond Road and Cameron Street. The Rainbow location is expected to open in late summer and Blue Diamond in fall or winter. The other five Randy's will be a mix of casino and stand-alone locations. Owner Mark Kelegian said he's already working with one of the larger casino companies.

Randy's is known to many people for the giant doughnut on the roof of the original Inglewood location, which is near Los Angeles International Airport.

Kelegian said Las Vegas was a logical choice because of the number of visitors it attracts and its 24-hour nature.

"People think we do most of our sales in the morning," he said in a telephone interview Thursday. "We do about 50 percent of our sales from 5 a.m. to noon, and we're still selling all day long and into the night. It's a brand that really goes all day long, and so does Las Vegas."

He said UFC president Dana White has been a fan since filming a spot in Los Angeles and encouraged the expansion to Las Vegas.

"He came and we let him make his raspberry jelly doughnuts and we just had a great time," Kelegian said.

Kelegian and his family bought the company, which dates to 1962, from the family of the original owner in 2015. They have since opened four more locations in Greater Los Angeles, and there are three in South Korea, with more on the way, in Southern and Central California as well as Las Vegas. Randy's Donuts offers catering and delivery in the Los Angeles area.

Open since 1953, Randy's is a staple for Angelenos. Randy's signature 32-foot novelty architecture donut, also known as the world's largest donut, sits atop the original Inglewood shop and is a top Los Angeles tourist destination. As Kelegian says, "they come for the photo op but return for the best hand-made donuts in the world."

"I like the idea of having a product that I think will stand the test of time," Kelegian said. "We went into this as a family business for my daughters. My two oldest daughters successfully had their own careers and are working for us now."

"I love that to death. Otherwise, I'm in the casino business and a law practice for 20-some years. This is a good family business. It's something we can keep providing to the public."

"We're franchising around the world, and we're going to be in seven to eight countries by the end of the year," he said.

see DONUTS, page 10

Senators Portantino And Wilk Introduce Bill Allowing Local Agencies To Divest from the Republic of Turkey

SACRAMENTO – On February 16, Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D - La Canada-Flintridge) and Sen. Scott Wilk (R - Santa Clarita) introduced SB 457, a measure that requires the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and the State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) Boards of Administration to allow school districts and cities to opt out of investment vehicles issued or owned by the Republic of Turkey.

"It's critical that we send a strong message to the Republic of Turkey that California does not support its ongoing and aggressive denial of the Armenian Genocide and its unprovoked attacks on Artsakh," stated Senator Portantino. "The State of California is home to the largest Armenian diaspora population in the United States and we stand in solidarity with Armenian Americans living in California, most of whom are direct descendants of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. We must take this opportunity to make a strong statement and create a pragmatic approach to divestment," concluded Portantino.

The State of California has a long history of divesting from countries that violate human rights. In 1986, Governor George Deukmejian condemned South Africa's apartheid policy by signing California's divestiture law, aimed at pressuring the government to end its system of racial segregation. In 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a Sudan divestment bill due to the ongoing genocide in the Darfur.

"California's record of speaking out against human rights violations and crimes against humanity is strong," stated Senator Scott Wilk. "With SB 457, we continue this important tradition and take a principled stand against Turkey's shameful denial of the Armenian Genocide and its aggression against the Republic of Artsakh. Silence is not an option, as it will embolden the government of Turkey to commit further crimes against humanity."

Portantino drafted SB 457 after discussing with Glendale City Councilmember Ardy Kassakhian the initiative he brought forth to the Glendale City Council to divest investment dollars from the Republic of Turkey.

"I am encouraged by the work of Senator Anthony Portantino, who has brought forth this legislation to allow local agencies to divest from the Republic of Turkey," stated Kassakhian. "Recent aggression by Turkey against the peaceful neighboring Republics of Artsakh and Armenia demand a response from those of us who put an emphasis on democratic values. In addition to its well-funded campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, the government of Turkey continues to support terrorist groups, using them to expand their influence in the region. Californians should be able to divest their dollars from such dictatorial regimes. I look forward to working with Senator Portantino and our leaders in Sacramento to make sure this bill is passed and signed into law."

Continuing to invest in the Republic of Turkey sends a dangerous signal and enables the government – through direct investments in its economy – to continue to deny justice to the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Divestment from Turkish bonds over the government's denial of the Armenian Genocide would impose much needed economic consequences on a regime that continues to engage in policies that constitute crimes against humanity.

Legislators who have signed on in support of SB 457 include Senator Bob Archuleta (D - Pico Rivera) and Senator Andreas Borgeas (R - Fresno) as co-authors.



Mark Kelegian



COMMUNITY NEWS

Society for Armenian Studies Holds 46th Annual Membership Meeting

FRESNO – On January 16, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held its 46th Annual Membership Meeting on Zoom. More than 40 members, including the Executive Council, were present at the meeting, which was open to all members of SAS.

The SAS President Dr. Bedross Der Matossian began by reviewing recent SAS accomplishments. He noted that the SAS Podcast has interviewed over 45 authors so far, and is available on platforms like Apple Podcast, Spotify, and Google Play. He highlighted the SAS Research and Travel Grants program which has so far supported 15 graduate students, including the first two recipients of the new SAS Grant on Race. As part of the newly launched Society for Armenian Studies Publication Series, Der Matossian presented the second volume on *The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) on its Centenary: Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy*, (2020) published by the Press at California State University, Fresno.

One of the notable achievements of SAS was that the prestigious publishing house Brill is now publishing the *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies* (JSAS). Dr. Tamar M. Boyadjian was appointed editor-in-chief of the new JSAS, and has been working to expand the scope of the Journal to show the depth and breadth of Armenian Studies as an interdisciplinary field. Entries for the Society of Armenian Studies (e-SAS), the online platform for shorter scholarly pieces on topics related to Armenian Studies, continues to publish pieces by both established and junior scholars. In light of the pandemic, the SAS also hosted and co-hosted numerous Zoom lectures, conferences, and symposia by concentrating on different aspects of Armenian Studies.

After reviewing the accomplishments to this point, Dr. Der Matossian mapped out the “Three-Year Strategic Plan of the SAS” which will concentrate on three areas: 1) strengthening SAS ties with educational institutions in Armenia and Artsakh; 2) mentoring SAS graduate students; and 3) disseminating knowledge about Armenian Studies throughout the world.

In order to strengthen ties with Armenia and Artsakh, SAS decided to cooperate with educational institutions in Armenia and Artsakh; concentrate on documenting and promoting the cultural heritage of Artsakh; and to encourage students from Armenia to become members of

SAS and to benefit from its scholarship as well as expertise. This will be accomplished by creating a program to sponsor students for \$10 per year. In its second area of mentorship for graduate students, SAS will organize workshops for graduate students; discuss alternative paths to careers; and provide a platform for graduate students and junior scholars (mostly from Armenia) to present their work and receive critical feedback. For the last area regarding dissemination of knowledge about the field, SAS decided to continue with its Podcast Series, Zoom Lecture Series, E-SAS, and JSAS.

After Der Matossian’s presentation, SAS Treasurer Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian Boyadjian; and the Editor of e-SAS, Dr. Dzovinar Derderian provided their reports, following which the floor was opened to questions from the larger membership community. A productive conversation followed about topics including the sponsorship of panels at major conferences, membership of scholars in Armenia, and work related to the preservation of cultural heritage in Artsakh.

To contribute to the three-year strategic planning of SAS, contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

Biden Visits Former Senator Dole after Cancer Diagnosis

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – U.S. President Joe Biden visited former Senator Bob Dole on Saturday, February 20, the White House said, two days after the Kansas Republican announced that he had been diagnosed with advanced lung cancer.

“He’s doing well,” Biden told reporters later on Saturday as he emerged from a church service. Prior to that, Biden paid a visit to the Watergate complex in Washington where the 97-year-old Dole lives.

Dole, who lost the 1996 presidential election to Democrat Bill Clinton, announced his cancer diagnosis on Thursday and said he would undergo treatment beginning next week.

Known for his quick, searing wit and legislative skills, Dole had a long career in the U.S. Congress that included two stints as Senate majority leader. In the early 1980s he chaired the Senate Finance Committee, which helps guide U.S. tax, trade and health policy.

He was President Gerald Ford’s running mate in the 1976 election that was won by Democrat Jimmy Carter.

Dole ran for the Republican presidential nomination three times, losing to Ronald Reagan in 1980 and George H.W. Bush in 1988 before getting the party’s nod in 1996. He was soundly defeated in the presidential election later that year by Clinton.

Dole suffered serious wounds in Italy during World War II that resulted in a long hospitalization. He received a number of awards for his military service, including two Purple Hearts.

He was treated by Dr. Hampar Kelikian (January 17, 1899 – July 24, 1983), an orthopedic surgeon, who significantly extended the surgical field. As a result of the relationship, Dole has been a longtime champion of Armenian causes.



Kerop Janoyan Named New Provost at University of La Verne

By Marilyn Thomsen

LOS ANGELES – The University of La Verne announced recently that it has selected Kerop Janoyan, PhD, as its next provost and vice president for academic affairs. He will join the leadership team headed by President Deborah Lieberman this spring.

Currently, Janoyan is dean of the Graduate School at Clarkson University in New York. He is also a professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and recently served as interim dean of the university’s Lewis School of Health



Dr. Kerop Janoyan

Sciences and director of distance learning.

As provost and vice president for academic affairs, Janoyan will oversee academic affairs, student affairs, the library, online programs, the nine regional campuses, campus health and safety, athletics, housing, institutional research, and the office of the registrar. He replaces Jonathan Reed, who is returning to the faculty after six years as provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Janoyan said that what drew him most to the university was “the people. After I met the students, faculty, staff, and the leadership, I had a sense of being ‘at home.’”

“I strongly believe that we must continue to innovate our educational programs to inspire a diverse, highly trained pool of global citizens and future leaders,” he said, “who will seize the opportunity to tackle our region’s and world’s challenges and solve challenges we don’t even know about yet.”

Janoyan was born in Iraq. He lived and attended school in the United Kingdom, Cyprus and Italy before coming to the U.S. with his

family and enrolling in the Glendale public schools for his secondary education. He completed his bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD programs in civil engineering at UCLA. He speaks three languages.

Lieberman noted that the provost search committee considered more than 120 applications in a diverse pool of candidates from across the country and internationally. Janoyan “stood out as a systems thinker who has the ability to bring a community together to achieve common outcomes and who is thoughtful and strategic in his work,” she said.

An important priority of the new provost will be leading the university in the execution of its recently approved 2025 strategic plan.

“I look forward to the specific opportunities at the University of La Verne,” Janoyan said, “empowering faculty and staff, supporting academic excellence, deepening the student experience, and building a diverse and inclusive community.”

California Legislators Announce Essay and Visual Arts Scholarships To Raise Awareness of the Armenian Genocide

SACRAMENTO – The California Armenian Legislative Caucus is holding two scholarship contests for the 2021 commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. California high school students in 9th through 12th grade are invited to participate in an essay contest and/or a visual arts contest to increase greater awareness of the Armenian Genocide on its anniversary.

All winners will be contacted directly and announced to mainstream and Armenian media by the California Armenian Legislative Caucus on Friday, April 16, 2021. All winners will be awarded scholarships and a trip to the State Capitol in Sacramento to be acknowledged at the California Armenian Legislative Caucus’ annual Armenian Advocacy Day during a press conference on Monday, April 26, 2021 and receive special recognition from the members of the Armenian Caucus. Original artwork will be requested from visual arts applicants if they are selected as a finalist, for possible display in the California State Capitol.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this may not be an in-person event. Final details will be given closer to the event date.

Criteria for each contest are detailed below. Students may enter both contests, but submissions must be entered separately.

Essay Scholarship Awards: First Place: \$1,000; Second Place: \$750 and Third Place: \$500

Visual Art Scholarship Awards: First Place: \$1,000; Second Place: \$750 and Third Place: \$500

Submission Deadline for both contests is Friday, April 9, 2021. Any submissions sent after the deadline will not be accepted.

Essay Criteria:

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have grown exponentially, especially during the 2020 pandemic. Many individuals, businesses and organizations use Facebook and other platforms to share various information, including the news. It is important that this information is factual, unbiased and true. The spread of falsified, distorted and inaccurate information on social media can be dangerous, especially when this information is circulated amongst millions of users.

In 2018, Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, stated that he did not think that Facebook should censor or remove what “Holocaust deniers” – as he called them – posted on their accounts because he said that there are things that various people get wrong. However, in October 2020, he changed his decision and stated that Facebook would now ban content that distorts or denies the Holocaust, due to an increase in anti-Semitic violence.

This year’s essay prompt asks contestants to write a letter to Zuckerberg, urging that Facebook take the same course of action

against denial and distorted posts regarding the 1915 Armenian Genocide as they have with the Holocaust. Reflect on Facebook’s updated Community Standards regarding the Holocaust:

All submissions must be received by the California Armenian Legislative Caucus electronically on or before the submission deadline of Friday, April 9, 2021 at 1915essay@gmail.com.

Please include your name, age, address, high school and grade along with the teacher’s name, email address and subject area at the top of the essay.

Please save submissions using your name as the document title and email as an attachment to 1915essay@gmail.com. Any submissions sent after the deadline will not be accepted.

Visual Art Criteria:

This year’s theme is “Human to Human Interaction.” All applicants must develop their submission in keeping with this theme.

Personal statement (300-500 words) explaining the artwork and how it connects to the theme of human-to-human interaction. In the top left corner, applicant must include: name, age, primary address, high school, grade, teacher’s name and subject (if applicable), phone number, and email address (this information will not count as part of the total word count).

Only two-dimensional, visual art submissions will be accepted. Submission types are limited to drawings, paintings, photographs, digital illustrations, and graphic design.

Submissions may not exceed an 11x17 frame and must weigh less than 25 pounds.

Submissions may not include any nudity, excessive and/or graphic violence, racial slurs, derogatory and/or offensive language, profanity, and may not make use of or replicate existing artwork. All submissions must be original work created by the applicant.

Email subject, as well as titles of the attached document, must be formatted as follows: “CALC – Student Name – Title of Piece” (e.g. CALC – William Saroyan – The Time of Your Life).

Submissions must include the personal statement and meet the criteria listed.

Submissions must include a high-definition photograph of the artwork, be sure to take a close up picture with enough lighting for the reviewers to see the detail of the work. It is acceptable to submit up to five photos. Be aware of the lighting of the piece and provide different angles to showcase the depth of the artwork.

Submissions must include one recent high-definition photograph of the applicant, suitable for publication (e.g. cap and gown photos, professional headshots, or quality photographs/close-ups of the applicant).


OBITUARY

Hovhanness Voskeridjian

Family Man, Actor, Dedicated to Armenian Catholic Church

PHILADELPHIA — Hovhanness Voskeridjian died on January 23. He was 92.

Hovhanness Voskeridjian was born on May 6, 1928, in Cairo, Egypt. He was the third child of Garabed and Aghavnie, both of whom were Genocide survivors. Unfortunately, Garabed died at a young age, leaving Aghavnie at the age of 35 to care for 5 children. The sudden death of their father solidified the bonds within the household. Family meant everything to Hovhanness. He revered his two older brothers Hagop and twin brother Khacho and adored his younger sisters Madeleine and Flora. They were active in the Church and the Armenian community.

Hovhanness, along with his siblings, were musically inclined. They played instruments



and had wonderful singing voices. The five siblings were truly a singing and dancing group that loved to get together and celebrate.

Hovhanness began serving on the altar at the age of 8. He looked forward to every Sunday and would arrive at church extra early so that he could secure his position as a candle holder. He often tussled with one boy in particular who also arrived early. That boy, Hovhanness Bedros XVIII Kasparian, later served as Catholicos of Armenian Catholics from 1982 to 1999.

From Cairo, Beirut, Montreal, New York, and Philadelphia, Hovhanness served the Armenian Catholic Church for over 84 years.

In addition to the church, Hovhanness was an avid lover of the stage. His veneration of the theater too started at an early age. In Cairo alone, he participated in more than 40 plays.

He continued his acting career in Beirut, Lebanon in the 1960s. While preparing for the role of Vartan in Vartanantz, he met Therese Djabrayan, playing the role of Mezdin Diginuh. His love for the theater and love for Therese united and blossomed. Eventually, they were to be married and started their lives together in the United States.

In the 1970s Hovhanness became an active member of the New York Hamazkayin Theatrical group under the direction of Herand Markarian. He performed in "Vartanank," "Parki Vashkharooner," "Aghotkis Mee Kharnuvir," "Medz Lrutian," "Sophigee Sukhaluh," "Horizonneren Hrgizvadz," "Ughevore," "Shurchane," "Soghomon Tehlirian" and "Haverjee Janabarheen."

He also performed in "Sudakhose" with the AGBU Ardashad Theatrical Group under the direction of Krikor Satamian, "Arevelian Adamnapouje" with the Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdichian Theatrical Group under the direction of Vartan Hovhanissian and "Morgani Khenamin" under the direction of Karine Kocharian, Armenian Star Artist and a monolog for Voice of Armenia, TVNY.

He had performed in countless cities across the United States and in Canada. Twice he

had the privilege of performing in Armenia. Whether he was the main character or had a cameo appearance, his theater presence was grand. The stage lit up with his talent and innate ability to captivate his audience.

In 1991, together with Hamazkayin Theater Group, he participated in the Festival of the Diasporan Theater. In 2015, in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, he played the role of Vahram Garabet in Kemal Yalcin's "You Rejoice My Heart," under the direction of Karine Kocharian and alongside renowned Armenian actors Arthur Karapetyan and Satik Hakhazarian. The highlight of his acting career was receiving the Armenian Theatrical Actors Association Gold Medal for 75 years of dedication and the William Saroyan Gold Medal of Diasporan Theater Dedication.

As much as he loved serving the church and the stage, nothing compared to the love he had for his wife Therese and the life they built together. They were married for almost 55 years and were partners in every sense of the word. They lived and worked together every day from the very start.

They owned and operated a dry-cleaning business where Hovhanness won several awards for his ability to remove the worst stains from the most fragile fabrics.

For over a decade they left the dry-cleaning business and started Voskedar. During this time, they typeset hundreds of books from prominent Armenian writers and poets culminating with Therese's first book Armadner and her second book, the first Western Armenian translation of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's The Little Prince.

Hovhanness and Therese had two children Armen (Patricia) and Arpy (Asadur) and five grandchildren, Vahe, Aleni, Sareen, Nare and Hovan. Nothing in this world brought Hovhanness more joy than his 5 grandchildren. Each one held a special place in his heart. His love for them was unconditional and their happiness was his number one goal. Their favorite fruits, candy or chocolate was on his weekly shopping list. He encouraged their talents and gifted them readily. He praised them often and always reminded them to listen and respect their parents.

And until recently, serving on the altar every Sunday alongside his son-in-law, Asadur and grandchildren Vahe, Sareen and Nare provided him true contentment, honor and pride.

He marveled at the natural talents of Aleni and Hovan. He would boast about Aleni's artistic abilities and get a gleam in his eye listening to Hovan's wit and performance on stage. He felt fortunate to see Vahe, Sareen and Nare almost daily. And he looked forward to the nightly routine of Arpy coming over at nights to wind down from the day, enjoy a glass (or two) of wine while recounting the days activities, talking politics and the state of Armenian affairs. He never missed his grandchildren's performances, recitations, awards, or celebrations. He was present at every milestone and knew how to party.

Hovhanness worked hard every day of his life. The boy who lost his father when he was only 10 spent a lifetime working to ensure stability for his family. He was a jack-of-all-trades. From his early days in Cairo, hand-rolling cigarettes in a tobacco factory, learning to wire in an electric company, to owning, along with his brothers Hagop and Khacho, Gavros a tool and dye manufacturing company boasting more than 100 employees.

Immigrating to Lebanon, then to the United States he was not afraid to work hard to put food on the table. He was the son of survivors and with Therese by his side, survived many ups and downs in his life.

He continued to act on stage until he was 87 years old, without missing a beat. He even had an appearance on the Philadelphia series HACK back in 2003.

Although life did not allow him to pursue his true passions, he made sure his son and daughter had every opportunity he did not. He provided them the best education, vacations, and music lessons, driving them week-

ly to piano lessons for 15 years. He would use that time to instill and reinforce the Armenian language and teach them songs.

Thirty years later, the American Dream was in fact a reality when his son walked across the stage to henceforth be called Dr. Armen Voskeridjian. From that day forward any and every health concern was mitigated and resolved with a quick call or a passing remark to Armen.

How fitting that after a long, productive, beautiful life, he took his last breaths in the arms of his son, who caressed and stroked him as he passed from this world to join all those who passed before him — his father, his mother, his sister Flora, his brother Hagop, most notably and devastatingly his nephew Garo and most recently his twin Khacho.

To know Hovhanness was to love him. He epitomized the true meaning of a gentleman. He was proud yet playful, reticent and yet a great raconteur. He could talk to anyone for hours. He loved politics and could watch the news for hours. He was proud to live the American Dream and took voting very seri-

ously. He dressed in a suit and tie to vote because it was an honor not to be taken lightly. He spoke seven languages (a trait he shared with his daughter-in-law Patricia) and could tell stories for hours.

It was only during St. Mark's 90th Anniversary celebration that the family found out that a young boy named Robert Chilingirian used to work for him in his Flushing, NY dry cleaners and he taught him how to play the mandolin. He never boasted. It was Robert who ran to Hovhanness to hug him and shared the story. He was an amazing tenor and sang in Armenian chorus groups wherever he lived and throughout his entire life. He served his Church, his community, and his family and he did so with respect and love.

Hovhanness was dedicated to all around him. He was the first to visit the sick, offer help to others, even giving financial aid when he himself needed money to pay bills.

Hovhanness Voskeridjian was buried at Saints Peter & Paul Cemetery on January 27. Due to Covid restrictions, the burial ceremony was private.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

U-Mich Armenian Students Organize Networking Event

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The University of Michigan Armenian Students Cultural Association (ASCA) has historically and currently been one of the most successful organizations of its kind in the United States. With predecessors dating back to the Genocide era, during which it was affiliated with the East Coast ASA (Armenian Students Association), the current version of the group is officially affiliated with the University of Michigan and its well known Armenian Studies Department, and dates back to circa 1979.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made 2020 and 2021 a tough time to be a college student, especially those who go away to school in college towns like Ann Arbor. The vibrant, diverse life of these microcosmic cities has disappeared.

The ASCA's major annual event is the annual Hye Hop, a dinner-dance held attended by college students from around Michigan and the Midwest. From its glory days in the 1990s when national figures would be present, to its more humble but still highly successful recent incarnations, the Hye Hop has always served as a platform for young people to have fun and raise money for a good cause while continuing Armenian culture through music and dance. Each year, the committee donates a large portion of the proceeds to a different charity in Armenia. This year, there could be no Hye Hop due to social distancing rules. So the students came up with something else.

Playing off the name and logo of networking site LinkedIn, the group dubbed their event,

held on February 13, as "ArmenIn," and it served as a combination networking event and career panel.

Celene Philip, a club member who helped organize the special event said, "Essentially because we couldn't do an in-person Hye Hop, we wanted to do something with Zoom and it would be a good tool to use to our advantage to get people from across the country. So we wanted to do a networking event. It wasn't hard to plan, but we needed to find the people."

Philip explained, the fact that it was a Zoom event rather than an in-person affair, helped the group find a range of interesting Armenian professionals from across the country to act as speakers.

"We had panels going throughout the day, and the board members asked general questions, and asked the panelists questions," said Philip. The panels were divided by theme into "The Importance of Networking," "Business and Entrepreneurship," "Art and Media," "Law and Politics," "Engineering and Technology," "Healthcare," "Professional School Admissions," and a final session on "Overcoming Obstacles."

Many of the speakers were from the Detroit Armenian community, as well as U-M alumni who had been active in the club.

Kim Bardakian, a well-known active member of the Armenian community who is an alumni of U-M as well as of the ASCA, presented the first topic, "The Importance of Networking." Bardakian, a New York native and California resident who works in the nonprofit sector and has focused her career in media and public relations, claimed that "Armenians are the original global network," and that "Armenians know how to network, it's a matter of tailoring your

networking better to what you are looking for." Bardakian discussed how to approach people and how to use your time wisely when attending large events, among other things.

The "Business/Entrepreneurship" panel featuring Carolyn Philip (UM alum), Christine Amirian, Jake DerHagopian (UM alum) and Monica Avakian, was well attended. The panelists ranged from people who had attended business school or were doing so currently. According to Philip there was "a lot of good conversation about what business means." Panelists stressed that the point of business is not to prey on other companies or take people's money, and focused on things like building trust with an employer.

One of the most interesting panels was "Art and Media," featuring Jared White and Lilit Pilikian (filmmakers of "100 Years From Home"); Karine Eurdekian (founder of Kooyrigs and a Michigan native); Aris Mardirossian (an analyst for the US navy who is also the mystery man behind the Instagram account "LavashLife"); and Ani Karibian, a Michigan native who has been living in Armenia and working for various NGOs for some years now.

The "Law and Politics" panel featured more well-known faces: Michigan State Representative Mari Manoogian; director of the Armenian Assembly's West Coast office Mihran Toumajan; community organizer, AYF/ARS/ANCA member and most recently regional organizer for the Biden campaign, Karoun Tcholakian; and lawyer Shant Sagherian; all of whom are natives of Detroit.

Sevag Nadjarian (UM alum), Ari Sagherian (UM alum), John Haytaian (proud grandfather of current UM student), and Vicken Asadourian

were featured on the "Engineering and Technology" panel. Haytaian is retired from a career in aerospace and other engineering fields, where he worked on the Apollo Program's Lunar Module and later helped Raymond Damadian develop the MRI.

Dr. John Ayanian, Dr. Roy Misirliyan, Kim Hekimian, and Anahit Movsesyan (UM alum) were featured on the "Healthcare" panel. A group of young people who have recently attended graduate school served as a "Professional School Admissions" panel: Sevan Misirliyan (UM alum), Arsen Melkonyan (UM alum), Sona Movsisyan (Michigan State alum and previous head of the Armenian club there), Lilit Kazazyan (UM alum), Rita Shehirian (current UM Med School), and John Balavitch (UM alum).

Finally, an "adopted daughter" of the Detroit Armenian community, Sona Dagley, currently pursuing a career as a motivational speaker, spoke on "Overcoming Obstacles."

According to Celene Philip, there were 120 people registered to take part in the sessions in some form. Students attended not only from the University of Michigan but other colleges in Michigan, as well as all over the East Coast (such as Villanova, Rutgers and Tufts), and there were also high school seniors from the Detroit Armenian community in attendance. The event even found people zooming in from as far away as France and Lebanon.

As the Hye Hop traditionally functions to raise money for charity, the ASCA asked attendees for freewill donations. The money is going to "Hye Hopes," an organization that aims to help displaced students from Artsakh continue their education. At press time, the committee stated that at least \$700 would be donated.

Armenian Assembly Welcomes Bipartisan Letter On Humanitarian Crisis in Armenia, Karabakh

WASHINGTON — On February 19, the Armenian Assembly of America released a statement welcoming a bipartisan letter signed by 100 Members of Congress to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin highlighting key policy issues, including the pressing importance of addressing the "ongoing humanitarian crisis in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh)."

Spearheaded by Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. and the Armenian Caucus leadership, the letter emphasized that "our diplomats must

insist that any future settlement supported by the United States will provide the people of Artsakh with the ability to reconstruct their communities and rebuild their lives without fear of further bloodshed. This should include significant US commitments to provide an urgently needed humanitarian aid and assistance package for the people of Artsakh."

Noting that the "terms laid out in the current ceasefire are untenable for Artsakh's long-term security and stability in the region," the letter said in part that "more must be done to pursue an enduring settlement based on the fundamental right to self-determination," and that the international community and the United States "has an important role to play by finally recognizing the right to self-determination for the people of Artsakh and their role as a legitimate negotiating party in resolving this conflict."

The letter also expressed concern that "Azerbaijan also refuses to free dozens of Armenian prisoners of war and apprehended civilians" in violation of the ceasefire signed on November 10, 2020, as well as the need to hold "destabilizing actors accountable."

In addition, the letter stated that "sanctions on high-ranking officials from [Turkey and Azerbaijan] and withholding aid, including ending the waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act and ceasing further military assistance through the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity program," would have helped halt last year's deadly actions.

The letter concluded that "the United States should seek to strengthen our strategic relationship with Armenia" and that President Biden should follow in the footsteps of both the House and Senate and formally recognize the Armenian Genocide this April 24th.

"We commend Rep. Pallone and the Armenian Caucus leadership for this timely and important letter articulating key priorities and the significance of US assistance to help the Armenian people," stated Mariam Khaloyan, Director of Congressional Relations. "We also remain deeply concerned that Azerbaijan continues its violent acts against Armenians and that prisoners of war and civilians are still held captive," Khaloyan added.

Below are the 100 Members of Congress who signed this letter:

Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), David Valadao (R-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Jake Auchincloss (D-

MA), Jim Banks (R-IN), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), Karen Bass (D-CA), Don Beyer (D-VA), Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Julia Brownley (D-CA), Ken Calvert (R-CA), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), Jim Costa (D-CA), Jason Crow (D-CO), Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Mike Doyle (D-PA), Veronica Escobar (D-TX), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Dwight Evans (D-PA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), John Garamendi (D-CA), Jesús "Chuy" García (D-IL), Mike Garcia (R-CA), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Glenn Grothman (R-WI), Josh Harder (D-CA), Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Darrell Issa (R-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Hank Johnson (D-GA), David Joyce (R-OH), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Dan Kildee (D-MI), Young Kim (R-CA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Doug LaMalfa (R-CA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Susie Lee (D-NV), Andy Levin (D-MI), Mike Levin (D-CA), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY), Brian Mast (R-FL), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Tom McClintock (R-CA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Richard Neal (D-MA), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC-At Large), Devin Nunes (R-CA), Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), John Rutherford (R-FL), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Brad Schneider (D-IL), David Schweikert (R-AZ), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Chris Smith (R-NJ), Michelle Steel (R-CA), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Lori Trahan (D-MA), David Trone (D-MD), Juan Vargas (D-CA), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Maxine Waters (D-CA), Peter Welch (D-VT-At Large), and Susan Wild (D-PA).

Journalist Tatul Hakobyan Will Talk about '44 Day Disaster' on March 6

FRESNO — Journalist and political analyst Tatul Hakobyan will speak on "The 44 Day Disaster: Why It Happened as It Did" at 10 a.m. (Pacific time)/1 p.m. (Eastern time) on Saturday, March 6. The presentation is part of the Spring 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is co-sponsored by the Homenetmen Fresno Sassoun Chapter.

Independent political analyst Tatul Hakobyan will discuss the major causes of the Artsakh War of September-November 2020, and analyze the reasons for the defeat.

Hakobyan has been a close observer of the political situation in Armenia following the war, and will discuss the various currents in the Armenian political scene. He will also discuss the broader regional aspects of the war, including the involvement of Turkey.

Hakobyan will bring his years of experience to answering questions about the lead-up to the war and also the aftermath of the war.

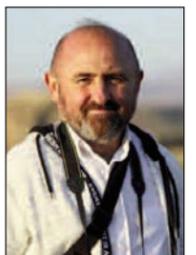
Hakobyan is a journalist and an analyst on the Artsakh War and Armenian-Turkish relations. He is the coordinator of the Ani Armenian Research Center and the author of three books: Karabakh Diary: Black and Green, Armenians and Turks: A View from Ararat, and Death Valley: The 44-Day Disaster.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesstatulhakobyan>

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.



Rep. Frank Pallone





COMMUNITY NEWS

TAAL Takes on Turkey's, Azerbaijan's Anti-Armenian Campaigns

DISINFORMATION, from page 6

of 1915-16; advocate for the free exercise by the Armenians of Artsakh their right to self-determination; attain universal recognition of the Independent Republic of Artsakh – and to secure justice and fair treatment for all people.

Referring to Gerami's vision for TAAL, Garo B. Ghazarian Esq., former chairman and current member of the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association, who also serves as co-chair of the group's Armenian Rights Watch Committee said, "It's comprehensive and very good.... You're spot on with your vision."

TAAL will not only be monitoring, "calling out," and otherwise addressing Armenophobia, extremism and bigotry in the US and around the globe whenever such transgressions arise in the news and entertainment media, social media, public policy environments, governing bodies, and academia, it will also stay abreast of, and expose instances of intelligentsia manipulation by bad actors seeking to oppress vulnerable populations.

"In Vic I trust," said State of California Commissioner Sam Khushy, a prominent Armenian American and leader in the community, noting his confidence that the nascent TAAL movement is in good hands.

While still in its early-launch phase, TAAL has already accomplished a great deal. Gerami co-produced the celebrity Public Service Announcement (PSA) awareness campaign, "I Stand with Artsakh & Armenia." Its PSA features Kim Kardashian, Serj Tankian, Congressman Adam Schiff, Ed Begley Jr., Sally Kirkland, Lawrence Zarian, Andrea Martin, and several other major stars.

Gerami granted several TV interviews to discuss the campaign, including to The Immigrant Magazine's TV program, Bionic Buzz, BEONDTV, Buy Armenian, and Brave New Hollywood, to discuss the dire situation in Artsakh. Urgently compelled to shed greater light on the genocide, Gerami has likewise published multiple articles about the assault on Artsakh in The Blunt Post, Desert Daily Guide,



Vic Gerami

and GoWeHo.

At the same time, Gerami continues advancing TAAL's mission by interviewing on his radio show and elsewhere leading members of Congress, other high-profile elected officials, and dignitaries from all over about the situation in Artsakh, thus putting their support on record. Recent interviews have included Sen. Bob Menendez, Rep. Adam Schiff (10.19.20), Rep. Jackie Speier, Rep. Brad Sherman, Rep. Katie Porter, Rep. Tony Cardenas, Rep. Maxine Waters, and Rep. Judy Chu, among others.

Gerami is the host and producer of his prime-time radio show, THE BLUNT POST with VIC on Independent Radio KPFK 90.7 FM (Pacifica Network). The program covers national breaking and headline news, politics, and current events, and Gerami offers analysis and commentary. The program broadcasts LIVE on Mondays, 6:00 a.m. (PT) on KPFK 90.7 FM and Livestream at KPFK.org.

Today reaching national international audiences, Gerami first built a foundation of knowl-

edge and skills by learning the media industry during his years at *Frontiers Magazine*, followed by positions at *LA Weekly* and Voice Media Group. For the second time, Gerami was selected as a finalist in the Los Angeles Press Club's National Arts and Entertainment Journalism Awards "Columnist of the Year" category in 2019, having first made the final round of consideration in 2017. Vic was a finalist in record seven (7) categories for the 62nd Annual Southern California Journalism Awards in 2020. His celebrity Q&A column, "10 Questions with Vic" is internationally syndicated.

In July 2020, the Los Angeles Press Club announced that Gerami is a Finalist in record seven categories for the 62nd Annual Southern California Journalism Awards. The seven categories in which Gerami is a finalist are a mix of investigative reporting, political coverage, social justice issues, and interviews. He is recognized for his print and online journalism, as well as interviews on his namesake radio show.

The Twitter handle @ArtsakhArmy is a part of the social media strategy to combat Azerbaijani and Turkish trolls and bots.

Gerami asked Lindsay Carlson, president of the Heart of LA Democratic Club to include the Los Angeles County Democratic Party's resolution condemning Azerbaijan in its membership newsletter. Similarly, he asked Jon Katz, president of the Santa Monica Democratic Club to post a statement on behalf of the organization.

Gerami also wrote an open letter to Sen. Dianne Feinstein to address her ignoring of California's 700,000 Armenian-Americans. The letter demanded an explanation for and an end to her deafening silence, and her apathetic response to Gerami's previous letter to the senator asking for help on behalf of Artsakh and Armenia. TAAL, Vic Gerami and the Armenian-American community are still waiting for Feinstein to say something meaningful about the ongoing genocide in Artsakh.

Gerami called out Cher, a fellow prominent Armenian-American, during an interview that he

granted to Brave New Hollywood, for being mute about the situation since September 27 and for going to Pakistan during the war, the only country that does not recognize the Independent Republic of Armenia. Pakistan is also one of the countries that supplied jihadist mercenaries to Turkey and Azerbaijan for the purpose of killing Armenians. Following the airing of Gerami's interview, Cher finally recorded a PSA of her own.

With a YouTube video, Gerami also called out the former presidential candidate Marianne Williamson for her apathy and hypocrisy regarding Artsakh and Armenia.

Gerami requested that his longtime friend, attorney, and West Hollywood Councilmember Sepi Shyne sponsor a resolution for the City of West Hollywood to recognize the Independent Republic of Artsakh. Gerami's relationship with all the members of the West Hollywood City Council, Mayor Lindsey Horvath helped him convince her to co-sponsor the resolution, which passed on its merits unanimously on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.

The goal of TAAL's crowdfunding campaign is to raise funds to cover initial expenses and to formalize the organization's structure; create a website; and secure various other tools necessary to carry out its ambitious, vital and achievable objectives.

The *Wall Street Journal* featured Gerami as a "leading gay activist" in its landmark 2008 coverage of opposition to Proposition 8, the ballot measure that for years denied same-sex couples in California the freedom to marry. In addition to his years of volunteer work as a leading advocate for marriage equality, later Gerami went on to serve as a Planning Committee member for the historic Resist March in 2017. In 2015, Gerami was referenced in the landmark Supreme Court civil rights case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the Court held in a 5-4 decision that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process and the Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

LA Icon Randy's Donuts Plans Seven Las Vegas Locations

DONUTS, from page 6

The original Randy's in Inglewood draws about 200 people a day to snap pictures, Kelegian said, and the icon is incorporated in some fashion at each location. The Blue Diamond shop, he said, will have a 20-foot doughnut "on the ground instead of the rooftop, because the neighbors wouldn't allow it."

But he said while people may come for the sign, they come back for the doughnuts. Kelegian said Randy's uses the original recipe and has had the same baker, who learned from the original baker, for 20 years.

"Our standards are so much higher than other doughnut shops that we had to make our own flour," he said. "We make everything by hand. A lot of the larger doughnut operations don't do it that way. Our doughnuts are fluffier

and lighter than anything you'll see out there.

"The one thing about the doughnut business is people can get creative and put whatever they want on top – and we do that, too – but at the end of the day the doughnut itself has to have the quality."

Since taking over the business, he said, they have added trendier flavors such as maple with churros, matcha tea and coconut-caramel-chocolate (and they also serve several varieties of the "Crondy," a sort of doughnut-croissant hybrid – but that 85 percent to 90 percent of the doughnuts they sell are the original varieties.

His own favorite? The cinnamon roll.

"I'm a sucker," he said. "When you buy a doughnut store, you've got to stop eating them."

Photos Courtesy of Randy's Donuts

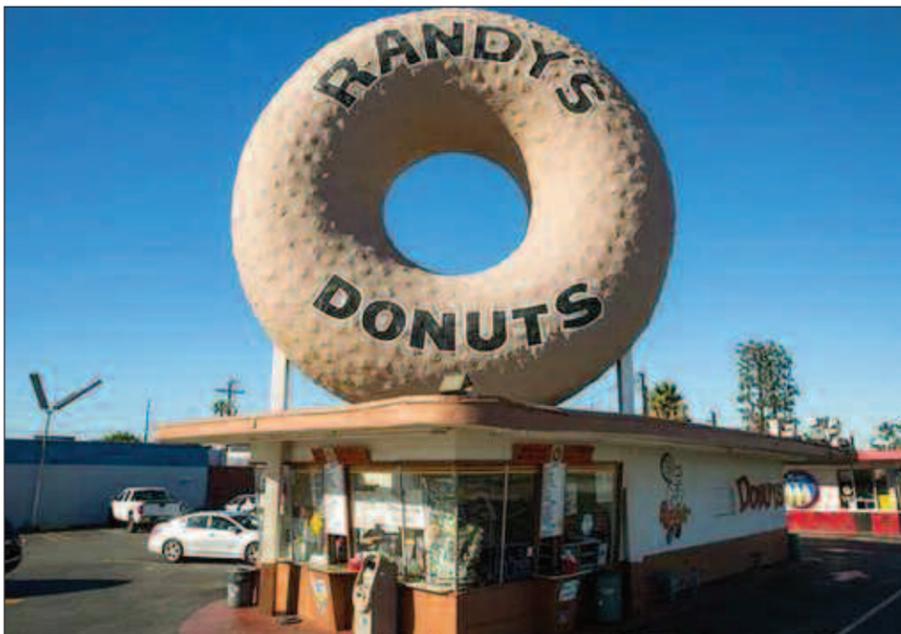


Pashgian Brothers Fine Oriental Rugs Recognized by Pasadena as Legacy Business

PASADENA, Calif. (pasadenanow.com) – The Pasadena City Council recognized Pashgian Brothers Fine Oriental Rugs, established in 1889 and moved to Pasadena after the turn of the 20th century, as one of the two first legacy businesses of the city.

The Legacy Business Program is an attempt by the city to support businesses that have been in Pasadena for at least 50 years and have contributed to the city in a unique way. Mayor Victor Gordo said at the January 25 city council meeting that the pandemic is challenging small local businesses economically.

The city will recognize the businesses in its newsletter and social media platforms, while the business owners will receive commendations and a window decal announcing it is a legacy business.

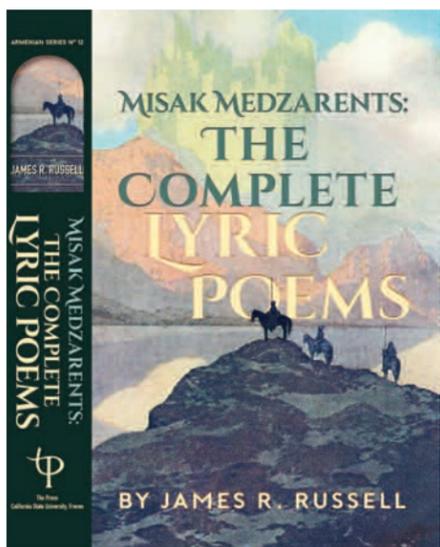


Arts & Living

James Russell to Speak on Misak Medzarents and His Poems

FRESNO —Dr. James Russell will speak on *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems* at 7 p.m. (Pacific time) on Thursday, March 11. The presentation is part of the Spring 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program.

Misak Medzarents, 1886-1908, was the second great lyric poet of the Western Armenian language after Bedros Tourian. During his tragically short life he published several slim vol-



umes of verse. The poems are written in a complex and allusive language that deploys ancient Armenian, local dialect and the vocabulary of Symbolism.

Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems is a translation and commentary by Russell of Medzarents' complete works, the first of its kind in any foreign language, complementing James Russell's previous work, *Bosphorus Nights*, of Bedros Tourian. The Complete Lyric Poems include more than 180 poems written by Medzarents, and includes the Armenian text of his poems.

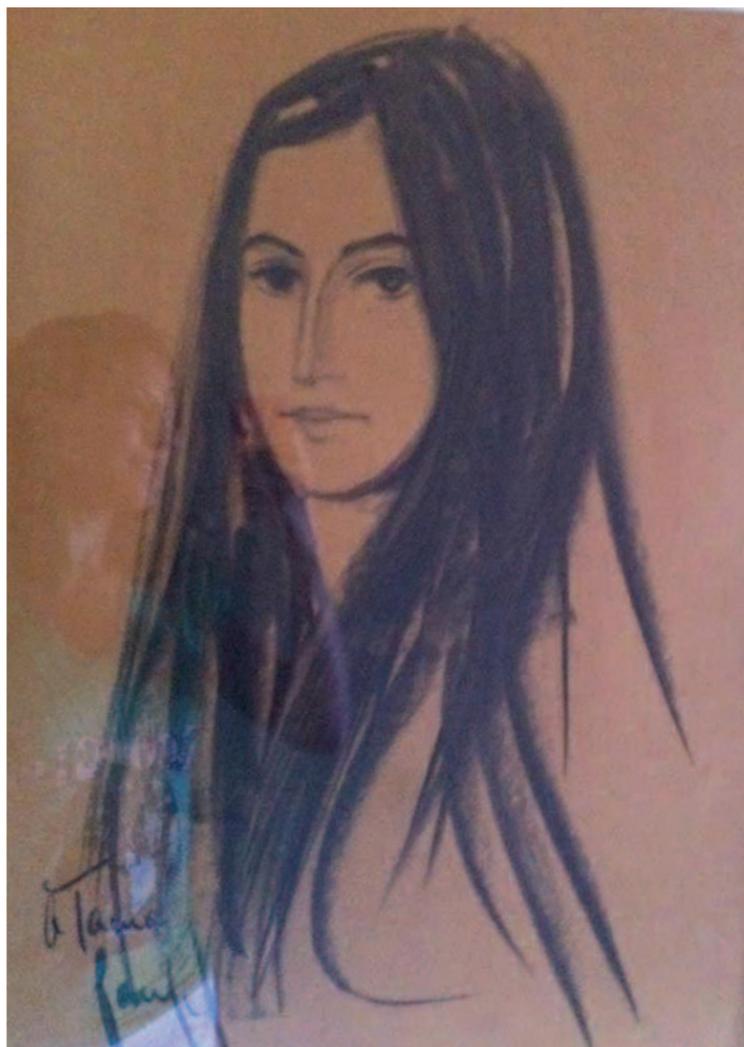
In the commentary accompanying each poem Dr. Russell has endeavored to analyze at length and in detail the particulars of language (redundant and alliterative patterns, etymological points, plays of intertextuality and allusion, and so on) and the dense thematic content, with its frequent echoes of literary and mythological imagery going far back into the Armenian past. Medzarents' poems are gorgeous to read and can be enjoyed without one's plunging into their depths. *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems*, is volume 12 of the Armenian Series of The Press at Fresno State.

Russell is Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, Emeritus, and now lives in Fresno. He is the author of a number of books including *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, *The Heroes of Kasht: An Armenian Epic*, and *Bosphorus Nights: The Complete Lyric Poems of Bedros Tourian*. He is the author of several hundred articles and monographs.

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesrussell>



Dr. James Russell



A sketch by Paul Guiragosian of Tanya Bakalian Safieddine (Tanbak)

Tania Bakalian Safieddine

'All my works come up from my Armenian identity'

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

and Barcelona and international relations at Georgetown University in Washington. She lived in Paris, where she studied and taught in various art studios. Tanbak produces paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media installations using natural colors and materials to depict historical themes, including the Lebanese civil war. Since 1997, Tanbak has been widely exhibited in Lebanon, as well as in number of countries of the world.

Dear Tania, you have degrees from two universities, but none of them is in art. Do you think your art would be different if you receive an academic art education?

I belong to a generation when women had to study serious subjects. If at the time I had said I wanted to go to art school, it would not have been serious. I wanted to leave Lebanon, so I went to Spain first, where I studied the language.

The contemporary art scene is active in Armenia. Our galleries and artists are in touch with their partners form various countries, but it seems here we do not know Lebanese modern art. How do you describe it?

It is very problematic. This is a good question study more deeply. Actually, on the cultural level relations between Armenia and Lebanon are equal to zero, although many non-Armenians Lebanese people travel to Hayastan and they love it. And we know nothing of the Armenian modern art scene. Ah yes. I remember

see TANBAK, page 12



Tania Bakalian Safieddine (Tanbak)

International Armenian Literary Alliance Launches with Reading, Mentorship Program, Poetry Contest and Events

The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA) will officially launch with a virtual reading by Armenian writers from around the world, hosted on Zoom on March 21, 2021 at 1 pm EDT. At the launch, the 2021 programming, including a mentorship program for emerging Armenian writers, a contest for young Armenian poets, and virtual readings and panel discussions will be unveiled. Admission is free.

At the launch reading, members of IALA's board of directors and advisory board, and other Armenian writers and poets, will share their work and announce IALA's mission: to support and celebrate writers by fostering the development and distribution of Armenian literature in the English language. IALA will grow a global Armenian literary community, support established authors and promote their work, and help lift up a new generation of emerging writers. Through readings, panel discussions and interviews, we will celebrate the diverse identities within our community, share Armenian literature with a wider audience and foster intercultural exchange. With support from IALA's network, literature about the Armenian experience will contribute more widely to global conversations on immigration; racial, ethnic and cultural identities; social and economic class; and gender and sexuality.

"Literature is a vital element of a people and a culture – we are our stories," says founder Olivia Katrandjian. "As writers, we



Olivia Katrandjian

must support each other if we want to thrive not only as individuals, but as a literary community. As a people, Armenians must support our writers if we want the world to listen to our stories. IALA will provide a platform through which Armenian writers can be heard."

Shahé Mankerian will run the first-of-its-kind IALA Mentorship Program in summer 2021, which will provide mentorships for emerging Armenian writers of the novel, memoir, creative nonfiction, short story, and poetry. Mentors will read and provide feedback on their mentee's writing, and speak virtually with their mentee throughout the two-month program. IALA will host a reading to feature the work of both mentees and mentors. Applications will be available on the IALA website later this year.

"It is exciting to spearhead the Mentorship Program for one great reason: the program will bring together aspiring Armenian writers with established Armenian authors," says see MENTORSHIP, page 14



ARTS & LIVING

Tania Bakalian Safieddine: 'All my works come up from my Armenian identity'

TANBAK, from page 11

a few years ago Ashkal Alwan, the Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, had an Armenian guest for a lecture and it was extremely interesting. And in music festivals we often have musicians. But I do not recall any Armenian visual artists.

Who are your teachers and what are your inspirations and concerns?

In Paris I went to a preparatory school for art. I had never held a pencil in my hand: the teacher laughed at me and gave me the greatest piece of advice in my life: go and do anything except art. At that very moment I knew I would not do anything else. So I attended art classes at Ecole d'Art Martenot de Paris, after which I taught in Paris for a while and then returned to Beirut.

What did Lebanon, Spain, the US and France give to your art?

Of course, traveling always expands your viewpoint. Spain was where I met Goya, Velasquez and Antoni Tàpies. America was a country of nice ignorant people with no links to the world. As about France... well, I learned about the French Revolution and how to say 'non' when you have to.

My impression is that you prefer to use black, white and grey – some people will analyze this as you not being an optimistic person. Is this true?

The colors in the world are so beautiful; I could not challenge their creator by making some sad copies. The black is strong – it contains all the colors and it was a great challenge to create a work with only one color that is denied the attributes of niceness. No makeup – just a raw, plain and basic color. I am not really optimistic. With a genocide and half a dozen civil and regional wars behind me and this rotten state of the world, I would be foolish to be optimistic. But still, I am alive with a capacity to see. I try to think about what is going on around, enjoy flowers and good chocolate. And most importantly, I am working on half a dozen new plans and dreams.

In Yerevan we have a museum presenting the very impressive creations of Iranian-Armenian artist Marcos Grigorian. You also work with sand and ash. Do they have a special meaning for you?

It is a pity I did not see that museum (so I will have to plan another visit!). Yes, I like challenges, and sand and ash were for me full of meaning. The ashes were of Beirut, my destroyed city. They, of course, mean death, which in a way haunts the artist. And all the different shades of sand you can find are just amazing. Just going back to something primitive I guess, like the first drawings done in the cave!

In your French-language essay "Confessions in the Time of Corona," I like your thoughts: "It seems overwhelming to me to think that this tiny, almost invisible virus can keep the world alive in anticipation of the worst. Until the vaccine hits the market, the writers of science fiction series, films and novels have plenty to do." How has the pandemic affected your art?

We artists live in a world we constructed and put fences around it to keep us away from the insanity of the world, which is growing at an incredible speed. So I am working on a crazy tapestry which I had been planning for years.

Where are your ancestors from and what have you inherited from them?

My grandparents on my father's side were from Kayseri and mother's side was from Izmir. So we lived in Beirut with the eternal smile, jokes, food, family from these two lost cities.

Some ten years ago you touched the theme of the Armenian Genocide.

When I returned to Beirut, the city where I was born, it was devastated by the Civil War. So it was obvious I had to speak about it. Thus, my first exhibition on the war was held. But working on it I realized that something deeper was coming out, hidden deep inside me. It was the Genocide. So I made a wall of martyrs and working on it I gave them the names I knew: Kevork. Aram. Puzant. Ara. Assadour. etc.

Is this unavoidable for a Diaspora artist?

The heritage of living around this hole is impossible to erase. It is within you. I realized that all my works come up from this identity, from my first exhibition to the last. The last one was on the camps (which Pompidou museum in Paris bought a piece) I called "In transit." It was

a great success because it sounded so contemporary to the world we live. Especially in the Middle East with all the migrations caused by wars. But originally the meaning was the Armenians.

If I am not mistaken, once you used the Armenian alphabet in an installation.

An Armenian organization commissioned it for the April 24 commemoration of the Genocide. It emanates from a very personal story. My father had a factory in the Karantina community next to Bourj Hammoud, a shantytown consisted of houses made of cardboard. He used to tell me every time we passed: "Never forget, my daughter, that we Armenians, lived in such houses." Then the Armenian alphabet was commissioned to me. It is another "hole" in my life, because I neither know how to read it and nor speak it properly. Funny Armenian is the secret language of my heart, it comes up fluently only with my family members.

Many consider the Armenian ghetto of Bourj Hammoud inspiring. I see it as being very cinematographic. You also depicted that neighborhood in your work.

I like to call Bourj Hammoud a very particular place. Firstly, the low level of houses lets you see the sky. Secondly, it changes according with time. When I was a kid, I used to hate it because my grandmother used to drag us there to church and it used to be so long, never ending

with the smell of incense that used to sicken me. But it was decorated with paintings and the whole ceremony and the priest's robe was like being in a theater. But we were rewarded after that with lahmajoun. Years later a friend of mine, singer and songwriter Vicken Tarpinian, introduced me to a great guy, the late director Varoujan Hadesian, who had assembled the youth of Bourj Hammoud and introduced them to the plays of Shakespeare. It is a pity that the spirit of Bourj Hammoud has faded now, as the Armenians who have money are moving out and they are replaced by Sri Lankan and Syrian workers. No more small shoe and fabric producers. China is supplying everything. I had a dream of creating a small museum of the immigration of Armenians in Bourj Hammoud. But I am completely outside of the community, and they told me the biggest dream they have is to get a visa to Los Angeles.

Your portrait made by the brilliant Lebanese Armenian artist Paul Guiragosian is remarkable. What is the story behind it?

It is one of the stories of my life I am very fond of. I was I think around 17 or 18 years old. I was getting out of a movie theater and had to catch a bus. There was a gallery just in front of the bus station so I decided to go in as the bus was late. An old shabby-looking old man became glued to me while I was watching the paintings. A very annoying man indeed. I thought he was the

doorman, but it was Paul Guiragosian! Then he ran and got a piece of paper and told me he wants to do my portrait. I could not care less. He insisted. And in three minutes he drew a fantastic charcoal! It took him really three minutes. And it was really me from the inside out, not just outside! Afterwards he told me: "Please, come back and I will make a good oil painting of you! Look at my paintings, they are all tall women just as you." It is true that I am a very tall woman and it was a problem then, because I was taller than most Lebanese. I never went back. When I told this to my agent, he told me: "Well, that's how you lost half a million dollars." And I don't know why I did not tell him I am Armenian. Because I am sure he guessed it, he had the feeling. I used to like the fact of silent words were stronger, than bla bla bla...

I am always interested in mixed identity issues.

Of course multiple identities broaden your view, enrich your culture. We, Armenians of the Diaspora, are extremely lucky to have these these multiple cultures.

I see you used a childhood photo of yours shot in Yerevan in one of your works. After that have you ever returned to Armenia?

No, I went to Armenia just once. Of course I would love to return and to donate one of my works to the Yerevan Modern Art Museum!

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ARTS & LIVING

If You Are into Slavic Studies You Must Know 'Iron Woman' Nina Berberova

By Valeria Paikova

PARIS (*Beyond Russia*) – With her stunning looks, charisma and sex appeal, Nina Berberova could doubtless have become a silver screen siren. But a different scenario unfolded after she left the Soviet Union for Europe, spent more than two decades as an émigré in Paris and finally moved to the United States, where she became one of the most successful writers of Russian lit-



Nina Berberova (Russia Beyond)

erature in the west.

Bestselling Russian-American novelist Ayn Rand described Nina Berberova (1901-1993) as “one of the most important writers in twentieth century Russian literature.”

Indeed, put her in a time machine and Berberova would be the face of Gloria Gaynor’s *I Will Survive* disco era hit. She was, in fact, a double threat: a very outspoken charming lady and a self-motivated down-to-earth go-getter.

“I, to my chagrin, considered myself made of pig iron,” Berberova revealed in her autobiography *Kursiv Moi*, written in Russian but first published in English as *The Italics are Mine*. Berberova’s superb storytelling skill manifested itself in her memoirs depicting her inner turmoil. She looked back to experiencing the revolution, emigration and WWII through her encounters with Russia’s best writers, poets and thinkers.

She was on friendly terms with Marina Tsvetaeva and Boris Pasternak, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Vladimir Nabokov, Zinaida Gippius and Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Alexander Kuprin and Ivan Bunin, Maxim Gorky and Alexander Kerensky. Her memoir is full of biting sidelights and hurtful comments.

Berberova was taken by the huge personality of Baroness Moura Budberg (born Maria Zakrevskaya). Moura was the mistress of H.G. Wells and Maxim Gorky and a suspected double agent for the UK and Soviet Russia. She was an adventurer dubbed the Mata Hari of Russia. Berberova’s biography of Moura was aptly entitled *Iron Woman*. The title spoke for itself and equally referred to both Budberg and Berberova.

Nina, an only child, grew up in St Petersburg. Her father was an ethnic Armenian, whose ancestors founded the city of Nakhichevan-on-Don (now part of Rostov-on-Don) after being forcibly relocated from Crimea by order of Catherine the Great in the late 18th century. Her grandfather, Ivan Berberov, was a renowned physician educated in Paris. Nina’s mother came from the family of Russian landowners, the Karaulovs.

Berberova was the muse of renowned Russian poet Vladislav Khodasevich.

In the early 1920s, Nina entered the circle of

young writers and poets grouped around Anna Akhmatova’s former husband Nikolay Gumilev. Nina’s first poem saw the light of day in 1922. In the same year, Berberova and Khodasevich left Russia. As it turned out, for good.

The couple moved around a lot, living for some time in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Italy. Curiously enough, they first lived with Maxim Gorky, accompanying the author of *Lower Depths* on spontaneous trips to nearby countries.

Their symbiosis with Gorky, who had a habit of taking crowds of people with him on his numerous journeys, was somewhat strange. Nina and Vladislav basically lived in a commune, but an intellectual one.

In 1925, Khodasevich (acclaimed by Vladimir Nabokov as “the greatest Russian poet of our time”) and Berberova, who was 15 years younger than her husband, decided to call it a day and moved to Paris. It was finally just the two of them.

Although both were actively involved in the literary world, life for them was not easy. They had little money in those days and their literary earnings weren’t even enough to cover rising living costs.

Berberova took any job she could find. Nina cross-stitched and created hand-made bead-necklaces. She also kept busy at her Singer sewing machine. One day, something went wrong and a terribly rare part broke down.

In despair, without informing anyone, Nina headed straight to the Paris headquarters of the Singer corporation and asked for a new bobbin winder spindle. Local bosses were caught totally unaware and granted her request in bewilderment, without saying a word.

An experienced sewer, Berberova also tried her hand at writing short stories, poems and film reviews for several Russian émigré publications.

“The Easing of Fate” and “Billancourt Fiestas” were written during this period, as well as “The Accompanist,” set in 1942 Nazi-occupied Paris (that book was turned into a movie by Claude Miller).

In 1936, Berberova wrote a biography of Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The book was a success and was translated into several languages. It became a best-seller in Sweden. Berberova, who always



Nina Berberova and her husband, writer Vladislav Khodasevich in Sorrento in 1925

sought the spotlight, decided to learn Swedish in order to impress her publishers during a planned business trip to the country. To kick her ambitious plans into high gear, Berberova asked a former diplomat Joseph Loris-Melikov, who was friends with poet Zinaida Gippius, to teach her the Swedish language. He was a polyglot and knew several languages. But, maybe his memory had played tricks on him. Loris-Melikov apparently got confused and accidentally taught Berberova... Norwegian.

In 1932, having lived with Khodasevich for ten years, she left him. As they said in the Russian expat community of Paris, Berberova made sure she cooked Khodasevich borsch to last for three days and darned all the poet’s socks. “The law of cause and effect does not apply when it comes to people,” she wrote. Khodasevich died in Paris in 1939, following surgery for cancer of the pancreas. He was only 53.

In 1936, Berberova married another emigrant, journalist and artist Nikolai Makeev. Two years later, they bought a house in a beautiful countryside, an hour’s drive from Paris. During WWII, Ivan Bunin was invited there (he never made it). Earlier, before the war broke out, Alexander Kerensky, who lost power to the Bolsheviks during the October Revolution of 1917, visited Berberova and her husband in the village of Longchamp.

Berberova had lived in Paris for a quarter of a century and was more than ready to turn over a new leaf. In 1950, she packed her belongings into two suitcases and left for the United States.

Berberova didn’t speak a word of English. It was apparently one of the most difficult decisions she had ever made.

“In my entire life, I made a responsible choice that mattered to my fate and individuality no more than four or five times but, I confess, each time this conscious choice gave me a feeling of power and freedom, a sharp sensation of an electric charge that can be called happiness, regardless of whether that choice brought a sense of well-being or destruction,” she later wrote in *The Italics are Mine*.

In the United States, Berberova married again, embarked on a triumphant teaching career and raised several generations of Slavists. She became a lecturer at Yale University and professor of literature at Princeton University. Trailblazing Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky wrote a poem dedicated to Miss Silver Age, after visiting her home in Princeton in 1988.

Berberova never gave up writing and published several short stories in the U.S. She see BERBEROVA, page 14

Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 27 – UNDER THE SNOW MOON A virtual program of Friends of Armenian Heritage Park to Meet & Greet, Virtually Walk the Labyrinth. Share Wishes for The Wishing Tree. Enjoy Musical Performances. at 4pm. TO REGISTER VIA ZOOM, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org with February 27 in Subject line

MACRH 3 – LABYRINTH WALKING: THE POWER & HEALTH BENEFITS. Wednesday at 5pm Virtual program of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Brigham & Women’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with Armenian American Medical Association, Boston Public Health Commission, City of Boston Age Friendly and The Greenway Conservancy. Welcome: Maura Koutoujian, PCC, CPHWC Senior Professional Coach, Mass General Brigham/Brigham and Women’s Hospital; Fellow, Institute of Coaching, McLean/Harvard Medical School; In Conversation: Darshan Hemendra Mehta, MD, MPH, Medical Director and Director of Medical Education, Benson-Henry Institute; Associate Director, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, Brigham & Women’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School; Assistant Professor in Medicine, Harvard Medical School, with Armineh Mirzabegian, MD Internist, Reliant Medical Group, part of OptumCare; UMASS Medical School. For the link to register, please visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Events

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

APRIL 7 – CELEBRATING ART, SCIENCE, SERVICE & COMMERCE: LEADERSHIP, SHARING EXPERIENCES. Wednesday at 5 pm. A public program in a series to celebrate contributions to our life and culture in Art, Science, Service and Commerce, the words etched around the Labyrinth’s Circle This virtual program features influencers - each leading by extraordinary example – who will speak about their experiences and commitment to social good and making a difference. Ann Zacarian will offer the Welcome, Chief Marty Martinez, City of Boston Office of Health and Human Services, Greetings. Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB TV, is Host. Participants include Edward Casabian, investor, early Uber employee; Julia Grove, Picture Editor, “This is Us,” NBC series; Avak Kahvejian, PhD, General Partner, Flagship Pioneering; Councilor Julia Mejia, Boston City Council; Berj Najarian, Director of Football & Head Coach Administration, New England Patriots; and Tracey Zhen, President, Zipcar. For the link to register, please visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Events

RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 5 – April 30 – “The Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale” – 7th annual Gala concert Armenian Cultural Hour , Providence RI. Every Friday at 7:30 p.m. Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish’s Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

MARCH 5 – Our Youth Talents

MARCH 12 – “The Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale”– 7th annual Gala concert

MARCH 19 – “Our Yerevan”- Film Presentation in English

MARCH 26 – “The Birth of Sassunsi David” Oratorio by Garbis Aprikian. From the large amphitheater of the Sorbonne, France

April 9 – “Sayat-Nova” State Minstrel Song Ensemble, Armenia

April 16 – “Cultural Genocide” - Film Presentation in English

April 23 – Memorial Concert, dedicated to Armenian Genocide

April 30 – “Armenia, The Land of Noah”- Film Presentation in English



ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Literary Alliance Launches with Reading, Mentorship Program, Poetry Contest And Events

MENTORSHIP, from page 12
Mankerian. "The guidance from the experienced writer will be invaluable to the budding storyteller."



Shahé Mankerian

The inaugural Young Armenian Poets Awards will provide a platform for emerging Armenian writers between the ages of 14-18. Submissions will be read by IALA board members and judges Gregory Djanikian, Mashinka Firunts Hakopian, Alan Semerdjian, and Raffi Wartanian. Awards



JP Der Boghossian (Artyom Tonoyan photo)



Arthur Kayzakian

will be granted for the top three poems, which will be published in the online cultural arts magazine h-pem. Deadline for submission is April 30, 2021.

"We're hoping to honor the next generation of Armenian poets with an opportunity to be read and a platform to be recognized for their work," says director of the contest Alan Semerdjian.

IALA's board of directors includes Katrandjian, Nancy Agabian, J.P. Der Boghossian, Arthur Kayzakian, Shahé Mankerian, Lola Koundakjian, and Levon Golendukhin. The advisory board includes Alan Semerdjian, Aline Ohanesian, Arlene Avakian, Arevik Ashkharoyan, Arminé Iknadossian, Gregory Djanikian, Lory Bedikian, Mashinka Firunts Hakopian, Nancy Kricorian, Peter Balakian and Raffi Joe Wartanian.

For more information, visit IALA's website, www.armenianliterary.org, or contact Olivia Katrandjian at olivia@armenianliterary.org.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

Recipe for Great Lent (MEDZ BAHK)

Courtesy of St. Gregory Armenian Church, Fowler, California.

All ancient churches observe Great Lent (Arm. Medz Bahk,), also called "Karasnortk" since it lasts forty days. The days of Lent are referred to as Karasnortagan and the Sundays-Karasnortagan Giragi. Great Lent is the longest of the fasts prescribed in the liturgical calendar and it begins on the Monday following Poon Paregentan and lasts for forty days (six weeks) up until the Friday prior to Lazarus Saturday. Great Lent is therefore the preparatory spiritual journey with its destination of Easter, "the Feast of Feasts." It is the preparation for the "fulfillment of Pascha, the true Revelation.

The Latin name Quadragesima corresponds to the Armenian Karasnortats Bahk ('Fast of Forty Days'). The traditions differ in how to calculate the forty-day period. The principles and practices of Lent in the Armenian Church are deeply rooted in the Bible, the ancient Christian traditions, the life-example of Christ and His disciples, and the lives of the great church fathers, all of whom contributed to the establishment of the canons of Lent.

The focus of Lent is on "Man the Sinner": on his repentance, his spiritual cleansing, and his eventual salvation. (See: <http://stjame-sevanston.org/great-lent>)

Fasting during Lent needs to be done in the context of deep reflection on the truth about ourselves, in a spirit of unusual sincerity and honesty. Fasting is, in fact, a companion to prayer: one more way we speak to God from the heart. Great Lent is the time of preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of our own life which is to be fulfilled in our resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion - of prayer, fasting, and alms giving.

If you're keeping a strict fast, the St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco offers the following Lenten-friendly recipes for family and friends. "Maintain a fast from certain foods, this builds discipline and conscientiousness in your daily life, and promotes health. A strict Lenten fast in the Armenian Church prohibits all animal products, but if your health or circumstances can't allow for it, start smaller. It shouldn't become an obsession, but a precursor to spiritual growth."

Red Lentils with Cracked Wheat Vospov (KHEEMAH OR KUFTA)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4 cups red lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup cracked wheat (bulgur), fine
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon red pepper, to taste



PHOTO COURTESY OF [HTTPS://STJOHNARMENIANCHURCH.COM/CATEGORIES/FASTING](https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/categories/FASTING)

GARNISH

- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red and green pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped scallions or onions

TO MAKE

Place lentils in a kettle, add water and bring to the boil. Simmer 5 minutes, removing thick foam that rises to the surface.

Add salt and continue simmering, covered, for 40 to 50 minutes, stirring occasionally. When mixture has cooked to a thick, yellow mass and water is absorbed, remove from heat.

Measure cracked wheat into a deep bowl and spoon cooked lentils over it, mixing to blend. Set bowl aside, covered for 10 minutes.

Heat olive oil in a small skillet and add onions, sautéing them just until they begin to brown. Add pepper, stir, then add skillet contents to bowl and knead or mix thoroughly. Taste to adjust seasoning.

Moisten hands and shape mixture into finger- or sausage-shaped patties: inch off a piece, squeeze it gently in your clenched fist and release it. Arrange patties on a serving platter. Combine garnish greens, sprinkle over patties, and serve.

Yield: 6 or more servings.

For this recipe, go to: <https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/articles/243/lenten-recipe-red-lentils-cracked-wheat-vospov-kheemah-or-kufta>

'Iron Woman' Nina Berberova

BERBEROVA, from page 13

divorced again after 29 years of marriage. "I have never been able to look into anyone so attentively and deeply as into myself. Sometimes I tried, especially in my youth, to do it, but I did not succeed very much. Perhaps there are people who know how to do this, but I haven't met them. In any case, I have not met people who could look into me further than I would myself," she wrote.

Author of *Pushkin Hills* Sergei Dovlatov, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1979, corresponded with Berberova for several years.

"But then she realized that I entirely consist of qualities that she hates - a gutless person, tortured by insecurities. And the correspondence faded away. I have a lot of respect for her, I love her two memoir books (her poetry and prose are rubbish, in my opinion), but she

is a completely rational, cruel, cold person, capable of learning Swedish for an upcoming tourist trip to Sweden, but also capable of leaving her sick husband who could no longer give her anything," Dovlatov wrote. His remark wasn't entirely unfounded.

In 1989, the indefatigable Berberova visited post-Soviet Russia, where she caught up with the glitterati of the Russian literary world.

The Iron Woman died in 1993 in Philadelphia, aged 92. She was the walking, talking proof of what can be accomplished in life through perseverance and imagination. "My whole life has been a reconciliation of contradictions: all the various and often opposite features in me have now merged into one."

(To see the full story with pictures, visit <https://www.rbth.com/arts/333388-nina-berberova-iron-woman>)



COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

New Regional Order in Disorder

By Edmond Y. Azadian

It looks like all around the globe, there are developments and transformations in many regions that are undergoing a reset.

President Joe Biden reversed the foreign policy course set by his predecessor, Donald Trump, who led the US to isolation through unilateralism and championing America First.

Before leaving office, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lobbied a salvo against China, leaving the task of damage control to the incoming administration.

However, the new administration took power with a preset agenda of containing Russia.

The Biden Administration's new aggressive policy against Russia will resonate in Europe. Because of Mr. Trump's isolationist policies, the European Union was veering more towards Russia, mainly through cooperation in trade and energy. But the recent trip of Josep Borrell, the foreign policy chief of the European Union (EU), proved to be disastrous, because Moscow refused to budge to the EU's demands regarding human rights.

Therefore, the EU decided to fall back in line with Washington to confront Russia, mostly by toughening the sanctions regimes.

As the West takes aim at Moscow and Beijing, Turkey has a free hand to maneuver between the two camps, assiduously working to build its own empire, working under the cover of NATO.

Turkey already has strained relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, with Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Greece and

ty and inflaming the masses with an ideology of hate and superiority: that of weaponized Islam. Also, Erdogan has legitimized in all this – from Syria to Libya and from Chechnya to Karabakh – the use of jihadist terrorists, by dispensing to them both temporal and divine rewards, \$2000 in cash now for each “infidel” head and 72 virgins in the afterlife.

Referring again to Danforth's piece, we read about Erdogan's plans: “In the face of those threats – real, self-created and imagined – Ankara has sought to exploit the opportunities inherent in changing the global order to turn the tables in its favor. With cross-border military operations in Syria and Iraq, military deployments in Libya and Azerbaijan and some literal gunboat diplomacy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Ankara has been quick to bring hard power to bear in disputes where it feels the reigning status quo is both favorable and brittle.”

Turkey wreaks havoc in many regions, creating disorder, and then imposes its own order on the situation. A case in point is Syria, where Turkish aggression, in collusion with the Islamic State, took 100,000 lives and created a refugee problem, displacing four million. Turkey then played the charitable role, milking billions from European countries to take care of the refugees and keep them from spilling into Europe.

Turkey's developing relations in the region may not be directed necessarily to isolate and threaten Armenia, but the net impact amounts to that. For example, Turkey has been joining Pakistan to challenge Saudi Arabia for supremacy in the Sunni world. Saudi Arabia heads the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a position Turkey vies for.

OIC has refused to make the issue of Kashmir a topic on its agenda. That has created a rift between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and Turkey is capitalizing on that stand off. Journalist Taha Siddiqui has published an article in Investigative Journal, whose title is revealing: “Turkey-Pakistan Jihadi Nexus?”

Indeed, Turkey has recruited jihadists in Syria to go and fight in Kashmir on behalf of Pakistan, as Pakistani Jihadists had fought against Armenian forces in Karabakh. Pakistan is a hub for terrorists, harboring Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's Talibans. The Pakistani government has sided with Turkey and Azerbaijan in all global forums against Armenia.

While exchanging terrorists with Pakistan, Turkey has taken another step by organizing a meeting between the foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss trade and energy programs in the Caucasian region. Ankara also has issued indirect signals to Armenia to include the latter in

regional development programs, “if Yerevan behaves.” This probably means Armenia must first give up seeking recognition for the Genocide, which has become a huge liability and source of embarrassment to Turkey, and also ratify and finalize the Kars Treaty of 1923, which set the border between the two countries.

For all practical purposes, Turkey has colonized Azerbaijan by helping the latter to win the war and shore up Ilham Aliyev's sagging popularity.

But, it turns out now, Turkey is preparing to use Azerbaijani territory as a launching pad to expand its pan-Turanic empire into Central Asia. It is an alarming sign that the Grey Wolves of Devlet Bahçeli are planning to open a school in Shushi. The Grey Wolves party is allied with Erdogan's AKP and considered to be the external arm of Turkey's deep state, involved in many criminal acts and assassinations, such as the murder of journalists Abdi Ipekçi and Hrant Dink, as well as the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul by Ahmet Agca, a member of the Grey Wolves. What is more disturbing, the presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkey will attend the groundbreaking.

On this occasion, Hulusi Akar, Turkey's minister of defense, announced that Erdogan's government has helped Azerbaijan during the 44-day war with Armenia and will continue to help in the future as well. This means that Turkey and Azerbaijan are up to further mischief in the region.

Azerbaijan's new status as the launching pad for pan-Turanic expansion is further elaborated by none other than Paul Goble. This former agent of the CIA and employee at the State Department, has become a journalist and scholar stationed in Azerbaijan. He is the author of controversial plans in the region. He was the person who floated the plan for a land swap in 2000 between Armenia and Azerbaijan, known as the Meghri Plan, which at the time many took lightly as a trial balloon, but lo and behold, it became a reality through the tripartite declaration of November 9, 2021.

Mr. Goble's article appeared in the February 18 issue of Eurasia Daily Monitor, under a very significant title: “Growing



Cyprus. It has alienated many of Washington's friends, yet now it is looking to mend relations with the US.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently sent a conciliatory message to the Biden Administration, suggesting that common interests between the two countries far outweigh the differences. Indeed, most of the outstanding issues between Washington and Ankara are reversible in nature: democratic reforms, releasing human rights activist Osman Kavala and mothballing the S-400 Russian missiles.

In a piece in the February 2021 edition of Foreign Policy, Nicholas Danforth correctly identifies Erdogan's policies by stating: “In his approach to both foreign and domestic politics, Erdogan combines short-term flexibility with long-term consistency. He has repeatedly made tactical pivots under pressure, offering positive rhetoric and limited concessions to countries with whom he previously tussled.”

Turkey has encircled Armenia through Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave. The recent joint military exercises in Kars were the continuation of the 44-day war against Armenia. Armenians have to realize, as well as the world community, that the Turkish threat is real and ongoing. For Erdogan, the picture is clear: if his Ittihadist predecessors were able to conceptualize that they would wipe out an entire indigenous people and occupy their ancestral homeland in plain view of the global community, and remain unrepentant, a repeat performance is possible, without serious repercussions.

Recently, Turkish news outlets resurrected maps, which were released by Stratfor several years ago, outlining Turkey's future zone of influence. The same sources revealed that by the year 2050, Turkey's influence will cover the Balkans, North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, parts of Russia (Krasnodar, Stavropol, Rostov and Astrakhan regions, Crimea), Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Greece, Cyprus and more.

This plan is not laughable, nor just an Erdogan dream, because Ankara's policy planners are actively pursuing these goals. And the Turks have never hesitated to shed blood to seek their ends.

Erdogan emulates Hitler by attaining technological superiori-

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COMMENTARY

Network State: The New Armenia Vision

By Vahram Ayvazyan

Preface

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

Post Artsakh war, Armenians everywhere, and more particularly in Armenia, anxiously look for novel ideas and undertakings that could inspire hope and confidence towards the future of the Armenian nation. It is in that context that the article that is being published in the Mirror-Spectator stands out as a novel and intriguing concept. The outstanding novelty in the concept of the Network State consists in the fact that it proposes a concrete organizational structure which, when successfully implemented, renders possible for every and any Armenian living on this planet to bring his/her contribution to the welfare of the Armenian state.

Furthermore, by the very fact of the vast geographic distribution of the proposed structure, the latter becomes immune to the enemy's destructive attempts which are inevitably localized.

As much as the theoretical concept is truly formidable and innovative, its practical implementation is in itself, needless to say, a formidable undertaking subject to any number of various obstacles in real life.

The most encouraging fact, however, is that this concept, its formulation and the initiative to implement it comes from a group of highly motivated young professionals in Armenia and expatriates. Their leader Vahram Ayvazyan, author of this article, is an exceptionally enthusiastic, dynamic and indefatigable young person who has already managed to participate in many international conventions and programs. In particular, he has been trained by Al Gore as a participant in an environmental protection and climate control program.

I was invited and participated with pleasure, just as a listener and benevolent advisor, to a few Zoom meetings of this group. By now they have over 200 adherents who are being subdivided into smaller working groups.

It is refreshing and encouraging to watch, help and participate to such a movement, originated and promoted by our young and dynamic professionals from Armenia. I encourage strongly our equivalents in the Diaspora to join and strengthen this creative movement.

The past year, 2020, was disastrous for Armenia and its diaspora: Armenians lost 1/4 of their homeland, de facto losing Artsakh, leaving thousands of victims dead and wounded, prisoners of war (POWs), displaced people and refugees. The disaster still causes psychological depression.

The post-war actions and statements that followed, about no return of POWs and continuous violation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, combined with widespread anti-Armenian statements in the Azerbaijani and Turkish press, reveal that peace and unblocking of relations between Armenia and Turkey as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan are just an illusion. Hence, even if the final de jure conditions are created for the latter, and the defeated government of Armenia agrees to their implementation, they will de facto not be functional.

The publications of the Turkish, Azerbaijani, Kurdish and Arab media, and speeches and statements of the political circles of Turkey and Azerbaijan, over a long period of time have made clear that the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression is a classic example of a policy clearly aiming at genocide which unfortunately will continue. In genocide studies there is a well-known basic rule that we must bear in mind: "Pacification" of a perpetrator and new concessions to him do not eliminate the risk of a new genocide and new losses but accelerate the implementation of the genocidal policy and furthermore increase the losses and the number of the victims. History reports hundreds of such examples. Hence, comparing the French-German or Swedish-Finnish models of peace with Armenian-Azerbaijani or Armenian-Turkish relations is a pointless waste of time and resources. Moreover, it potentially leads to many destructive consequences. It seems that for at least during the next fifty years, Armenia will not be able to establish secure and peaceful relations with its neighbor countries Turkey and Azerbaijan, as the unwavering thesis of the need to eliminate Armenia and the Armenians is being voiced not only at the level of the government but also in the public in those countries.

Accordingly, Armenia and the Armenian people throughout the world have no choice but to oppose Turkish and other expansionist and imperialistic aspirations, if we definitely want to preserve the existence of the Armenian state and its long-term development prospects.

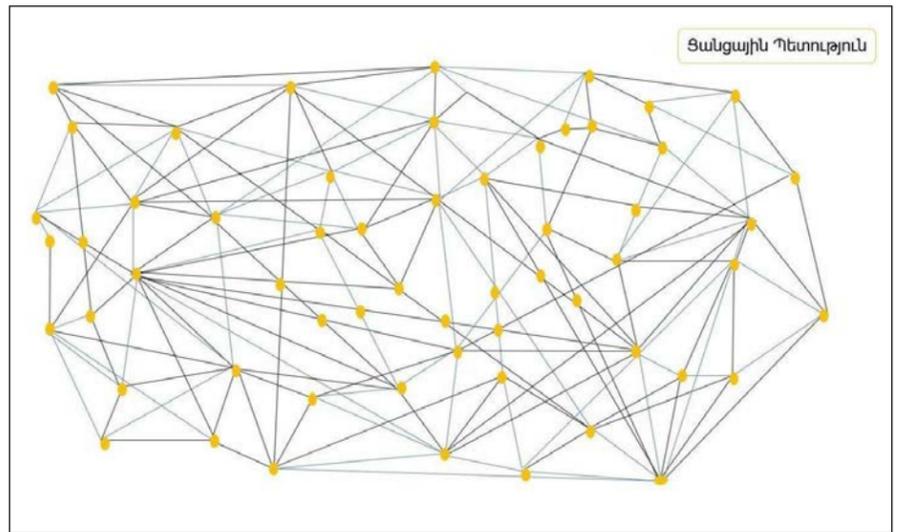
The plight of Armenia and Armenians all over the world to oppose the superior military, political, diplomatic, economic, and financial resources of Turkey and Azerbaijan is really a difficult but necessary challenge that we Armenians in Armenia and in the diaspora must accept cold-bloodedly. Otherwise, we will lose the last 10% of Greater Armenia: Armenians, both in the Republic of Armenia and dispersed in the diaspora will then be left rootless and devoid of a motherland.

We must be clearly aware of this danger both in Armenia and in the diaspora: the time for the deceptive expectation of coming rosy days is over.

The Vision of the Network State

Today, many people in Armenia and the diaspora already understand that the system of Armenia-diaspora relations that took shape in 1991, since Armenia gained independence, turned out to be ineffective, which was clearly demonstrated by the bitter results of the Artsakh war of 2020.

For about thirty years, both in Armenia and in the diaspora, we have not been able to create a viable pan-Armenian platform, a mechanism of relations and a network, to use effectively both the intellectual and financial resources of the Armenian people around the world. Consequently, it is a vital necessity to finally come to an all-Armenian consensus, to actively engage in the creation of a pan-Armenian platform which may be termed "The Network State." This is a large system of webs which is constantly expanding, thanks to our "spider" compatriots functioning in different parts of the world.



As the picture above shows, neither external forces, nor agents, nor internal traitors and prothers - "pro-Russian," "pro-American," "pro-Turkish," "pro-Chinese," etc., can effectively fight against such a complex and decentralized system.

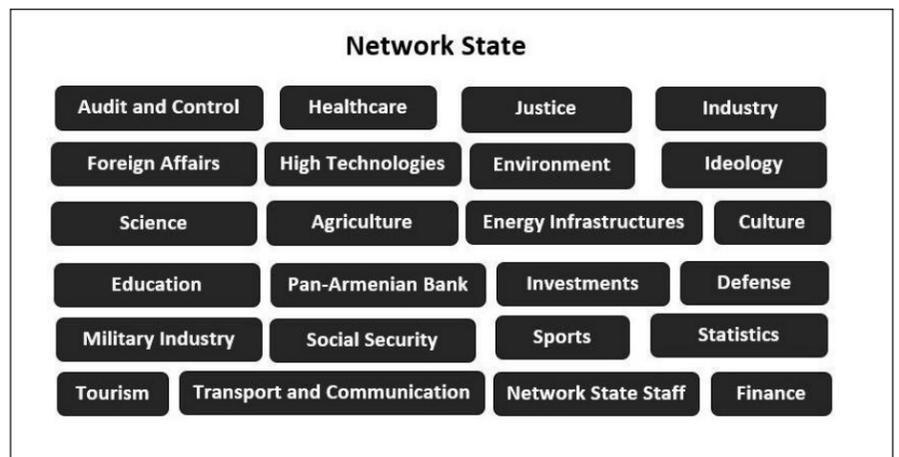
The keyword of the Network State is "Armenia-centrism" based on the philosophy of "All for Armenia;" the ultimate goal of any Armenian's activity should be to contribute to the development of Armenia by repatriation, participation in its governance, economic activity, by investments and innovative thoughts, by providing knowledge, lobbying, cultural and sports expansion. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Network State is not just a product of emotional and patriotic feelings. It is the mutually beneficial key to solving specific political, economic, moral, psychological and cultural problems.

The Network State brings together all Armenians living and working in the different parts of the world, uniting their intellectual and material resources, and meanwhile it protects them. Indeed, the citizen of the Network State by helping Armenia is also protected by the Network State, using its resources anywhere in the world.

The Network State is not only a platform for economic investments and provision of resources, but it also is the birthplace of the future pan-Armenian military-political elite, which must eventually take on the burden of making Armenia a viable, developed, stable and attractive state.

Structure and Mechanisms of Functioning of the Network State

At the initial stage, the Network State is a digital virtual state with its own departments and divisions to which access can be provided to all Armenians, and to foreigners as well, interested in Armenia and concerned about the future of the Armenian people, by issuing an electronic entrance visa.



We have already launched the Network State on Google Drive as well as Trello platforms and have formed a database of hundreds of participants - including citizens, data and investment programs. We already formed 24 working groups from Armenia and the diaspora, bringing together like-minded individuals and devotees who have expressed willingness to join and contribute to the implementation of different projects. Meanwhile, our IT team is actually building a digital platform with our own working space with the capacity of video-calls, live chats, investor-businessman meeting rooms, etc.

In order to establish the Network State, it is necessary to focus on two areas: investment in various programs and the pan-Armenian Bank.

The different departments and divisions of the digital platform of the Network State will include small, medium and large business projects, startup ideas which will be presented to investors in Armenia and the diaspora, letting the Network State apparatus provide solutions to legal and tax problems, and act as a link between investors and economic entities. Special attention should be paid to the issue of PR and marketing of implemented programs.

An important place in the structure of the Network State should be given to the pan-Armenian Bank - the permanent intellectual and financial treasury, which should become the guarantor of the security of the citizens of Armenia and the Network State. This is the reason why the Bank should be open to all segments of Armenia and the diaspora, especially encouraging the participation of the middle class. The Bank can even operate online or have its offices all around the world, and the bank's financial sources can range from deposits and shares to donations of \$20 or more per month.

The transactions and financial operations of both the bank and the investment platform will be constantly monitored and audited, and in any case, those who invest no matter what amount, and those who own the bank's shares are allowed to bring their audit teams in case they do not trust the financial reports of the Network State. This will ensure transparency of financial transactions and put an end to the sad and disastrous phenomena of dispersion and disappearance of funds received from the Diaspora.

Special importance will be attached to the possibility provided for financial transactions between Armenians in the diaspora. As an example, an Armenian historian in Munich may need a doctor. As a citizen of the Network State he finds an Armenian doctor in Munich and visits him, uses his services and may take advantage of a flexible system of discounts provided to citizens of the Network State.

Citizens of the Network State receive an electronic residency card (E-Residency), which will enable them to be fully engaged in the work of the NS, enjoy various discounts, tax benefits and opportunities for NS citizens provided by the discounts and services provided by the Network State's staff through its specialists and the leverage of its political and financial resources.

In the Protection section of the NS, there is a special subsection dedicated to the protection of compatriots in the diaspora.

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Erdogan's Tightrope Walk Between East & West May Soon Collapse

Ever since President Joe Biden's election last November, hundreds of articles have been published around the world analyzing the problematic relations between Turkey and the United States. President Biden has made no secret of his dislike, if not outright hostility, toward Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The main points of contention between the United States and Turkey are as follows:

- 1) U.S. support for Kurdish allies in Syria which Turkey considers terrorists;
- 2) Turkey's purchase of S-400 Russian missiles which could expose NATO's military technology to Moscow. As a result, the United States cancelled the sale of advanced F-35 jets and imposed sanctions on Turkey;
- 3) U.S. refusal to extradite the Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen whom Turkey falsely accuses of inciting the coup d'état against Erdogan in 2016;
- 4) Turkey's abysmal record on human rights with the jailing of thousands of innocent civilians, journalists and judges on trumped up charges which President Biden finds unacceptable.

President Erdogan is following the strategy practiced by the Ottoman Empire of manipulating rival European powers against each other, by switching sides and changing partners. For example, he has declared himself to be the defender of all Muslims and particularly Palestinians, while engaging in a military partnership with Israel until recently. Another example is Turkey's membership in the Western military alliance of NATO, while purchasing billions of dollars of sophisticated Russian missiles which are incompatible with NATO and U.S. weapons. At the same time, Erdogan is cozying up to Russia while involved in a military conflict with Russia in Syria and Libya. Turkey and Russia, two normally antagonistic countries, have also managed to find a modus vivendi in the Artsakh conflict.

The souring of relations between the U.S. and Turkey dates back to the time of Obama's presidency, during which Biden served as Vice President. Erdogan was annoyed with Obama after an initial friendship. However, the Turkish leader devel-

oped a privileged relationship with the United States after Donald Trump became President. It is still unclear what prompted such a warm personal affection between the two. Was it Trump's financial interests in Turkey or his bizarre fondness for tyrants around the world? We may never know.

Nevertheless, Biden fired the first shot in a December 2019 interview with the New York Times in which he called Erdogan an 'autocrat' and stated that the United States should support Turkish opposition leaders "to be able to take on and defeat Erdogan. Not by a coup, but by the electoral process."

The next awkward situation arose when Erdogan congratulated Biden a few days after the November election. Four months later, Biden has still not contacted Erdogan even though he has called many other world leaders. Erdogan must be deeply offended by this diplomatic snub.

The first indication of the Biden administration's tough policy on Turkey became evident on January 19, 2021, during Blinken's Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing, when he pointedly called Turkey a "so-called strategic partner" and raised the possibility of imposing more sanctions on that country. "The idea that a strategic – so-called strategic partner of ours – would actually be in line with one of our biggest strategic competitors in Russia is not acceptable," Blinken said. "I think we need to take a look to see the impact that the existing sanctions have had and then determine whether more needs to be done."

Blinken's critical comments on Turkey were later reaffirmed by US national security advisor Jake Sullivan who described Turkey as "an ally that in many ways... is not acting as an ally and this is a very, very significant challenge for us and we're very clear-eyed about it." Sullivan placed Turkey in the same category as China.

On February 5, 2021, the Pentagon confirmed that the Biden administration has no intention to lift the sanctions on Turkey for purchasing the Russian missiles. Turkey's "decision to purchase the S-400 is inconsistent with Turkey's commitments as a U.S. and NATO ally," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said. "Our position has not changed.... We urge Turkey not to retain the S-400 system.... Turkey had multiple opportunities over the last decade to purchase the Patriot defense system from the United States and instead chose to purchase the S-400, which provides Russia revenue, access and influence," Kirby said.

To make matters worse, Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soslur repeated in early February the baseless accusation that the United States was behind the abortive Turkish coup in 2016. State Department spokesman Ned Price issued a sharp rebuke, calling the allegations made by the Turkish Minister as "wholly false." They "are inconsistent with Turkey's status as a NATO ally and strategic partner of the United States," added Price.

Another contentious issue is the in absentia Turkish trial of American professor Henri Barkey of Lehigh University on

false charges of aiding the 2016 coup. The US State Department called the accusations against Prof. Barkey baseless.

On February 10, 2021, the U.S. State Department called on Turkey to immediately release from jail Turkish philanthropist and human rights activist Osman Kavala who has been detained for more than three years without a conviction. Kavala was falsely accused of trying to overthrow the Turkish government with Prof. Barkey during the 2016 failed coup. The State Dept. urged Turkey to comply with a European Court of Human Rights ruling in late 2019 that Kavala be released.

On February 15, 2021, when Blinken finally called Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, he urged Turkey not to retain the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system.

Last December, when the United States placed sanctions against Turkey for the purchase of the Russian missiles, the Turkish Foreign Ministry arrogantly warned: "Turkey will take the necessary steps against this decision, which will negatively affect our relations and will retaliate in a manner and timing it deems appropriate."

Turkey is still attempting to find a way to circumvent the U.S. sanctions. On February 1, 2021, it hired Arnold & Porter, a major American lobbying firm in Washington, D.C., to resolve the dispute with the U.S. government over the Russian missiles. The contract was signed with the Ankara-based SSTEK Defense Industry Technologies, owned by the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB), Ankara's main defense industry authority. SSTEK agreed to pay Arnold & Porter \$750,000 for the six months to give Turkey "strategic advice and outreach" to U.S. authorities.

It is highly doubtful that Turkey will be able to resolve the dispute regarding the Russian missiles through its hired lobbyist. Interestingly, the contract with SSTEK specified that Arnold & Porter "does not make any promises or guarantees" about the outcome. "If the matter does not reach a successful conclusion, for any reason, SSTEK shall still be responsible for all fees and disbursements charged by the firm under the terms of this agreement." It is noteworthy that at a time when the Turkish economy is on the verge of collapse and the Turkish people are in dire financial straits, President Erdogan is wasting \$750,000 of Turkish taxpayers' money on useless lobbying.

It remains to be seen if Turkey's tightrope walking skills will succeed to maintain the Russian missiles and evade the U.S. sanctions. Should Turkey be forced to get rid of the missiles, it will have to face the consequences of a major disruption in its relations with Russia. Turkey will then have to choose either the East or the West. It will no longer be able to fool both sides. Biden and Blinken are too experienced to fall for Erdogan's tricks.

The title of a recent article by journalist Nicholas Morgan describes best the state of U.S.-Turkish relations: "Is Turkey Biden's Ally from Hell?" We will find out shortly.

from previous page

During the days of the Artsakh War in 2020, anti-Armenian violence in France and other countries showed that the lives of compatriots from the diaspora are also under threat, so despite the fact that the Network State is based on the "All to Armenia" philosophy, the NS will also ensure the physical safety of our fellows of the network by using its resources and levers of influence, lobbying and information flows. In other words, the NS is a mutually beneficial cooperation between network "spiders" whether in Armenia, Paris or Toronto; all to Armenia, Armenia to all. And those trying to disrupt the network will be dried like "flies" in a spider's web.

Provided the concept of the NS is thoroughly followed, we can achieve remarkable results in a short period of time and eliminate the threat of physical destruction hanging over the Armenian people. Furthermore, we can make Armenia attractive for large-scale repatriation.

By combining the intellectual know-how of the network, modern Armenia-centric national ideology and strategy will eventually take shape.

Thanks to the network, we must be able to influence the decision-making in the geopolitical power centers and create a favorable military-political environment for the Armenians to solve our vital problems without suffering losses.

The network state should focus on education, Armenian studies, the preservation of the Armenian identity, as well as the development and expansion of Armenian culture as well.

A Concluding Appeal to all Armenians

The creation of the digital platform of the Network State will allow the formation of professional teams and work on the various programs within the above-mentioned departments and subsections of its structure. The relations with the RA and its current or future transitional Government can be managed by means of the Network's "soft" and "smart" power technologies.

Dear compatriots in Armenia and the diaspora, I appeal to all of you, urging you to think about the above-mentioned ideas and start working on expanding this pan-Armenian platform i.e. the Network State. I am convinced that we can turn this into reality. Time is running out, so we must start acting today to put the pan-Armenian network, the Network State, into operation.

To join us, fill in the application form via Google (available in Eastern Armenian and in English):



(Vahram Ayvazyan is an International Relations and Genocide scholar, startup founder and a Climate Reality Leader, personally trained by former US vice president Al Gore.)

New Regional Order in Disorder

DISORDER, from page 15

Azerbaijani-Central Asian Ties Likely to Trigger Conflicts with Russia and Iran."

Mr. Goble particularly stresses, "In prosecuting a triumphant war against Yerevan, Baku demonstrated its own ability to act. But just as importantly, Azerbaijan has shown to people and governments in the Caucasus and Central Asia that it is a force to be reckoned with, in part thanks to its growing links with Turkey."

Mr. Goble further heralds, "Moreover, Kabul, Baku and Ashkhabad recently reached another important agreement promoting what is known as the Lapis Lazuli Corridor linking Afghanistan with Turkey via Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan."

It is a hypothetical issue whether Baku could have "executed its triumph" alone but one can question why it needed 2,000 Syrian and Pakistani Jihadists and Turkish army brass to man thousands of drones on its behalf. And why did it take 44 days to win a partial victory?

The writer is correct that these developments should worry Russia and Iran. The latter was a net loser in the war, without engaging in the battlefield. As a consequence of the war, Iran has a longer border with Azerbaijan to protect against Israeli intelligence gathering. Tehran has to make strategic adjustments as it has become more vulnerable against a potential Israeli pre-emptive strike against its nuclear facilities.

In addition to its vulnerability, now its own territory is a target for amputation. The reference in Erdogan's speech during the victory parade in Baku on December 10 seeking the

return of Iranian Azerbaijan was not a slip of the tongue, nor a "misinterpreted reference," because ever since that signal, Turkish and Azerbaijani media have intensified their campaign against Iran, accusing it of colonizing southern Azerbaijan, referring to Iran's northern region populated by ethnic Azeris.

Thirty eight percent of Iran's population of 85 million is of Turkish Azeri extraction. Baku and Ankara have been stirring ethnic foment among them, calling on them to claim their Turkic language and heritage.

Based on Goble's track record, his revelations about Azerbaijan's new role indicate that Iran's territorial dissection is not only on Ankara's and Baku's radar, but that of Washington and Tel Aviv as well.

Following the 44-day war, the regime in Iran was panicked and dispatched its foreign minister, Javad Zarif, to Baku, Ankara, Yerevan, Tbilisi and Moscow not to be left out of the game and settled in joining the Eurasian Economic Union, to be in the good graces of its northern neighbor.

Turkey has been inciting problems in many parts of the world, even beyond its immediate neighborhood, with impunity. And out of that turmoil it as created a new order of its own, as evidenced in Azerbaijan.

Turkey is certainly following the path of Germany, using very same tactics to achieve its territorial ambitions.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement trip in 1938 to Berlin, only emboldened Hitler in his ambitions.

Who will stop the new monster before it endangers world peace?



Wake-Up Call Armenia: Rethinking The Economic and Business Models

By Vahan Zanoian

Much has been written about the conventional economic development challenges of Armenia: Infrastructure needs, energy security, export promotion, agricultural development, emphasis on specific sectors such as IT, direct foreign investment, more affordable credit for businesses, etc. While these issues remain important, there are deeper and less tangible challenges that often get neglected in the professional discourse—both in Armenian research efforts and in the publications of multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Without minimizing the importance of the conventional topics, this paper will focus on some of the key intangibles.

Most of the intangible challenges are related to measures aimed at compensating for the small size of the Armenian economy relative to its trading partners. In small countries—say, with a population of under 10 million—like Armenia:

a poor economy and sub-standard education system cannot support a strong military,

a poor economy cannot support a strong education system,

lack of innovation and a poor education system cannot support a strong economy,

poor economic opportunities and slow growth cannot support growth in immigration,

slow growth (or decline) in population in turn stifles economic growth, starting a vicious cycle.

However, just because Armenia is a small country in a bad neighborhood, it does not mean that it has to remain economically weak. While small countries do not have the economies of scale enjoyed by larger ones, they can be much more agile, more adaptable, and suffer from fewer and more manageable social challenges. The proven way of compensating for small size is (1) high and increasing productivity of labor and capital; (2) synchronization of various economic spheres to create synergies and positive economic externalities; (3) technological innovation (a major catalyst for productivity gains) through dedicated R&D spending; (4) efficiencies built into the system of production and distribution of goods and services.

The rest of this article will be devoted to an exposition, in outline form rather than detailed analysis, of various intangible measures which, directly or indirectly, contribute to and promote the four measures listed above.

Flexible and Fluid System

One of the intangibles which rarely gets discussed, but which is a pre-requisite for meeting measurable growth and development targets, is the need for a flexible and fluid system. To boost creativity and innovation, rigidities in structures, processes, and hierarchical relationships must be loosened. Ideas should flow freely across all ranks within organizations and across sectors. Every step of every process, whether in business, education, government, research, or military, should be a new learning experience and an opportunity to improve. In order to achieve this, “standardization” of systems, procedures and management practices, as well as inflexible routines, should generally be avoided and phased out, because standardization, by definition, leaves little room for review, critique and constant improvement.

In this context, entitlements are poison. They stifle the fluidity and dynamism on which a growth-oriented system thrives. Without the implied dynamism of a flexible and fluid system, small countries like Armenia cannot compete in any sphere, and especially in the economic and military spheres. And yet, this has been and still is one of Armenia’s most dilapidating problems, with only a few exceptions—i.e., rigid hierarchical systems, both in government and in the private sector, whereby decision making is centralized at the top, with virtually no flow of creative ideas, especially from lower ranks of young professionals.

Synergies

Limited human and natural resources can be compensated only by high efficiency, productivity, innovation and creativity. But even these characteristics, necessary though they are, are not sufficient to maximize the potential of a small economy. What is also needed is strong cross-sector synergies, whereby progress in one area naturally benefits other areas. For example, if a major advancement in technology remains isolated in its own sector, it will not contribute much to the rest of the economy; competitive efficiencies are created by a system that is conducive for technological advancement to translate into productivity gains in a variety of sectors and be a catalyst for startups, thus triggering stronger overall economic growth; it should also lead to more capital inflows, stronger trade, improved international image and brand for the country and consequently improved diplomatic relations and improved defense capabilities.

Small countries simply cannot afford multiple parallel efforts

to meet different strategic needs; nor can they afford the luxury of extreme specialization. The creation of “islands of excellence,” while potentially useful as a starting point, will not lead to any consequential national advancement unless those islands are integrated into the broader economy with direct benefits and multiplier effects across other sectors. To facilitate the integration and synchronization described above, professionals in the private sector (and military officers) should be very good at many things, rather than extremely good at one thing; that’s what will enable them to recognize the applicability and value of a given technological innovation to their field of activity. Multi-disciplinary approaches and solutions become central to this process. This is the best way to ensure transferability of success from one sphere to the next, and thus to ensure that the whole is always larger than the sum of the parts.

One way of establishing cross-sector synergies is the development of interrelated economic hubs (business clusters). These must be studied carefully and adapted to the economic landscape of Armenia—obvious applications are: (1) agriculture + animal husbandry + production of processed foods + exports of processed and unprocessed agricultural products; (2) interrelated IT and tech activities—as in Silicon Valley; (3) various R&D-military-Civilian use hubs. (4) The full value chain of various mining projects; unfortunately, today, mining in Armenia is limited to extraction and export of minerals. That transfers considerable value to the refiners and processors of those minerals abroad. The full value chain of mining entails refining technologies and auxiliary services dedicated to the refining, distribution and marketing of finished products, all of which form another interrelated hub of economic activity. Such hubs not only have strong built-in synergies and efficiencies, but also create positive externalities in the form of applications of the experience gained in them (technical as well as marketing know-how) in other sectors.

Monopolies

Monopolies are another major impediment to flexibility, fluidity and growth. The post-Soviet Oligarchic system is founded on monopolies. The symbiotic relationship between the monopolies and the government, and often even between the monopolies and the general public who has grown used to the goods and services provided by the Oligarchic system, has rendered all efforts of reform stillborn. Monopolies do not fit in a dynamic, flexible, fluid, innovation-driven economy (which is why they will fight any attempt at reform). Low participation rates in the economy automatically restrict dynamism and creativity. Risks of low participation are more than income inequality—when a small percentage of the resources carries the entire burden of economic growth, something will break in the socio-economic structure. In the very least, monopolistic obstacles to new businesses and new companies must be removed. Established monopolies should not be allowed to dominate emerging sectors. A modern, innovation-driven economy should be allowed to flourish and speed past the traditional monopolistic sectors without any interference or hurdles. Aside from all the other benefits, this will make a significant contribution to job creation as well—in most economies, most new employment opportunities come from companies younger than 5 years.

Innovation

The main engine of wealth creation should be invention and innovation, and not just trade, finance and other service industries such as tourism, hotels and restaurants. The former has superior multiplier effects on the economy compared to the latter. To enable innovation and invention, dedicated R&D spending is a must. Successful small countries spend a disproportionately large share of their GDP on R&D, often exceeding 3% of GDP.

Commercializing success in R&D is another challenge. The government must devise a mechanism for funding early-stage, high-risk ventures. Grants for startups and mechanisms to encourage Venture Capital must be introduced. Efforts to lure foreign development funds into government-backed ventures must be initiated by the government, with the aim of commercializing academic and scientific inventions, and the transfer of military R&D to civilian use, and vice versa. The agriculture sector must thrive in this tech-driven economy. Small to medium family farms should be major beneficiaries of innovation and invention.

Needless to say, the education system should be integrated into, and geared to support, this process. But that’s the topic of another article.

A Niche in the Supply Chain

To punch more than its weight globally, Armenia needs to find a niche in the global supply chain to make itself indispensable for critical production lines. Supplying strategic minerals has provided a niche of some developing economies—e.g., oil and gas or rare metals. For Armenia, the niche has to come through technology and innovation—i.e., supplying technologically superior

parts to crucial industries worldwide. This could be in the medical field, or in advanced robotics and communications, even in renewable energy production technologies. Professionals within the Armenian government responsible for economic and trade policy should join forces with the science and technology community in the private sector and guide this process. A key aspect here is to always stay ahead of the game, to constantly reinvent and innovate; Armenia should be the one that renders its own technological innovations obsolete by constantly improving them, before anyone else. That will secure its niche.

The Diaspora

The diaspora has been an underutilized resource since independence. A major charm offensive and confidence building campaign must be launched, especially now, after the demoralizing defeat and unfathomable losses of the last war. The brain drain should be turned into a two-way street. Those who leave, should have the incentive to come back, having acquired valuable experience and knowledge in scientific institutions and research centers abroad.

The government must launch an outreach program targeting Armenian professionals in companies like Microsoft, Google, Apple, Facebook, IBM, Intel, Oracle and many others also in Russia, Europe and Asia, and find meaningful ways to engage them in Armenia. Areas other than tech for talent search in the Diaspora include: teachers, legal expertise, diplomatic skills, military R&D and intelligence (retired military officers), Venture Capitalists.

A two-way brain traffic should be a priority for the management of a tech-driven economy. For a natural-resource poor, landlocked, small country in a bad neighborhood, real value lies in intellectual talent, which, at a global level, the state of Armenia has wasted. Resettlement and repopulation should have been a focused government policy right after independence, but, instead, Armenia’s population declined in the last 30 years. The decline was caused by poor economic conditions and poorer opportunities, chronic corruption and social injustice, and sometimes even deliberate government encouragement, to reduce popular unrest—all direct consequences of the prevailing Oligarchic system and lack of a sense and culture of statehood.

Demographics

One of the major failures of Armenia since independence and of Artsakh in the past 26 years, was the drop in the population of Armenia and only marginal increase in that of Artsakh, in spite of huge dislocations in the Middle Eastern diaspora. Now, after the defeat, the challenge is much more difficult, but much more important at the same time. Both Armenia and Artsakh must now embrace a diligent repopulation strategy. Newcomers to Armenia, including non-Armenian family members, should be granted residency, citizenship, and, if needed, benefits as part of a campaign to populate Armenia and Artsakh. This is an integral part of nation-building and statehood. A wave of immigration would also contribute to and promote Venture Capital infusion into Armenia.

To save the state, the government of Armenia must embrace the global Armenian resources, even if it means sharing power. Reluctance to share power has been a destructive, post-Soviet, Oligarchical defensive mechanism, which cost the Armenian state dearly.

The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing

Above all else, Armenia should avoid the mercantilist notion that opening borders, in and of itself, will cause an economic boost. The most vicious “wolf in sheep’s clothing” that we face today is the proposal to open borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, unblock transportation routes, and liberalize trade and cross-investment, before any progress is made on more substantive political and strategic issues. This might create false economic hopes in some circles, but it will spell the end of the prospects for economic development and competitiveness in Armenia, especially if there are no protections for local producers from Turkish imports, and Turkish and Azeri nationals are allowed to buy land in Armenia. In the best case, this policy will enrich a handful of monopolies who will import Turkish goods, while impoverishing and economically paralyzing the rest of the country.

But First, We Need a Government

If these intangibles are addressed and resolved in tandem with the host of conventional challenges listed in the first paragraph, the effectiveness of the latter will be far greater. Without fixing the intangibles, the conventional remedies, while useful each in its own way, will not result in a massive, nation-wide leap in the economic capabilities of Armenia, which is what is needed after the war.

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COMMENTARY

Dictatorship Sows Division In Nagorno-Karabakh

By Alexander Sikorski

From September to November of 2020, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a bloody war over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and its surroundings. After 44 days of combat, a Russian-negotiated ceasefire came into force, ending hostilities with Azerbaijan as the victor.

Now that Azerbaijan has won, it is the responsibility of the Azerbaijani government to maintain peace and protect the people it governs. Unfortunately, though violence has abated, Azerbaijan's authoritarian regime has not taken appropriate steps to cool ethnic tensions. Part of the problem is authoritarianism itself. Long-term peace cannot happen without democratic reform in Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh is an ethnically Armenian enclave that is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan. Since 1994, the territory as well as seven historically Azerbaijani provinces have been governed by the Republic of Artsakh, an Armenian-backed breakaway state. This was the result of the first Nagorno-Karabakh War of 1988-1994 which was decisively won by Armenia, and resulted in over a million refugees, tens of thousands of casualties on both sides, and an uneasy peace amid latent ethnic hatred.

This second Nagorno-Karabakh War is practically a reversal of the first. This time, with strong Turkish support, Azerbaijan has succeeded in reclaiming all seven historically Azerbaijani provinces as well as parts of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Republic of Artsakh is greatly diminished, and connected to Armenia by a single road monitored by Russian peacekeeping forces. An estimated 90,000 Armenians have been left displaced by the war.

A steady stream of photos and videos has poured out of the area documenting human rights abuses committed by soldiers. In two of some of the most gruesome videos, Azerbaijani soldiers can be seen beheading Armenian captives, and another one shows Armenian soldiers cutting the throat of an Azerbaijani border guard. Though both governments have promised to identify and bring the perpetrators to justice, Azerbaijan has already dismissed many accusations as fake, and unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan did not allow independent journalists access to sensitive areas, making it difficult to verify claims and document evidence. Both sides have accused each other of committing human rights violations, but it is now Azerbaijan's responsibility as the victors to bring peace.

Unfortunately, the ethnic Armenians who now find themselves governed by Azerbaijan are right to be skeptical that they will be treated humanely. The sheer number of Azerbaijani soldiers that appear comfortable filming atrocities, as well as the widespread denial of these atrocities in Azerbaijan, are only recent developments in Azerbaijan's history of ignoring or welcoming abuses against Armenians. In 2012, for example, an Azerbaijani officer who murdered an Armenian with an axe in Budapest was extradited back home, and promptly given a hero's welcome, including a pardon and a promotion.

Perhaps an even greater barrier to peace than ethnic tension, is Azerbaijan's own government. Azerbaijan is ruled by a fully authoritarian regime that shows no respect for human rights, even to its own citizens. Since 1993, Azerbaijan has been ruled by the Aliyev family like a textbook dictatorship. Meaningful political opposition in Azerbaijan is impossible. No independent media is allowed to exist, activists like Oslo Freedom Forum speaker Leyla Yunus are regularly imprisoned and tortured, and elections are a mere formality. In 2018, Aliyev was "reelected" to a fourth term with 80% of the vote, after opposition candidates were prevented from registering.

Discussions about degrees of autonomy for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh run up against the fact that nobody in Azerbaijan, save the regime itself, has any degree of control over domestic politics, and the recent actions and rhetoric of the Azerbaijani government do not bode well for a peaceful coexistence with Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. Several days ago, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry announced that it would try two Lebanese-Armenian civilians for terrorism after kidnapping them in Nagorno-Karabakh while moving to disbar one of the last remaining human rights lawyers in the country.

Democratic reform in Azerbaijan is needed to secure future peace in the region. Azerbaijan cannot expect ethnic Armenians to be loyal citizens of a country that doesn't allow representation or basic minority rights. Simultaneously, the democratic opposition in Azerbaijan faces a major challenge today. Victory in battle has made Aliyev popular. His wartime speeches have become part of the popular culture and images of the victory parade will surely be heavily featured in regime propaganda for years to come. Worryingly, some members of the opposition have reacted by trying to outflank Aliyev's irredentism, arguing that the government should have gone further and seized all of Nagorno-Karabakh — maybe even all of Armenia. Meanwhile, young activists and anti-war campaigners have been labeled "sluts" by nationalist Azerbaijani bloggers.

If, as Aliyev claimed in his victory speech, Azerbaijan is committed to "long-term peace" and the "the path of justice and international law," his government should commit to democratic reforms that would give political rights and representation to ethnic Armenians, as well as Azerbaijanis. Repeating the mass deportations and ethnic violence of the early nineties will only lead to more violence in the future. As difficult as democratic reform may seem today, it is the only viable path toward reconciliation and eventual peace in the region.

Alexander Sikorski (@AKSikorski) is a Program and Policy Fellow at the Human Rights Foundation.

Joy of Theater In Yerevan but Where Are the Masks?

By Gerald Papasian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – At the end of October last year, I left Yerevan and went to Paris for professional reasons. Television series shooting was allowed but theatres were closed along with shops, restaurants and cafes. Paris was no longer Paris!

Three months later I made it a point to return to Armenia where I was teaching at the Drama Institute. Armenia had decided to reopen its schools and universities. The second semester began on February 1, and despite the overall feeling of depression, I found enthusiastic, motivated and positive final year drama students eagerly waiting for me to begin working on Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" for their diploma performance. There still is a young, vigorous and positive generation determined to carry on against all odds.

They are our best hope.

I also found out that and after almost 11 months of confinement, the government had instructed all theatres to reopen.

Theatre fans are overjoyed to attend productions once again and actors are happily ready not to deceive them. All agree that live performances will boost the morale and help heal the broken spirit of the people.

I, of course, totally support the decision.

However, while attending a couple of new plays, I was aghast to find out that almost no one in the house was wearing a mask!

As I asked theatre directors the reason, I was told that they found themselves incapable of imposing on the public to behave more wisely. This careless attitude can be seen a little bit everywhere in Yerevan.

No one seems to care for safety anymore, as if the disastrous war and the everlasting virus threat has shaped an attitude of resignation and apathy. No one seems to think about the possibility of the virus statistics rising again and consequently forcing the health ministry to close down everything once more.

The government has to be much more vigorous in imposing the law by helping theatre managers, providing them with inspectors and threatening them with heavy fines.

Performers too seem to be left to their fate by the very government that bid them to start working again.

The least they can do is to impose COVID-19 tests for all performers, once a week, and offer those expensive tests FOR FREE. They cost 30 to 40 dollars in Armenia! The average salary of actors is something between 140 to 240 dollars ... monthly!

Live performers should be considered as working in high-risk environments similar to teachers, medical workers and soldiers, and regarded as top priority when the time comes to be vaccinated.

Otherwise, the bliss of finally having theatrical activities may very well be short lived.

Allowing the opening of theatres as if it was a benevolent gesture, a gift, is not enough. It has to be complemented with the means to help those who are supposed to implement it.

Wake-Up Call Armenia

from previous page

Of course, the ultimate prerequisite to the above is an effective state. Scratch the surface of any global success story and you'll find good government behind it—strong checks and balances, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. On paper, Armenia has the key structures (legislative, executive and judicial branches), as well as most of the necessary laws and regulations, but in practice none of these work as they should. Weak checks and balances in government have been a key problem since independence. The judiciary was never truly independent. The average Armenian citizen does not stand a chance of winning a fair case against a politically more powerful or wealthy entity in an Armenian court. This has eroded public confidence in the system of governance. The powers of the Presidency and later of the Prime Minister have been almost absolute, especially if the latter's faction has parliamentary majority. That kind of executive power corrupts. Combined with lack of professionalism in governance, it becomes disastrous.

There is no alternative to a truly competent, dedicated government, one-hundred percent loyal to the Armenian state, which has the vision and determination to create a strong, defensible and globally competitive country and economy. Ironically, this is

the least expensive and, at the same time, most difficult part of the challenge. It takes a handful of people, with a coherent sense of mission, to spearhead the effort, and ultimately secure buy in from the population. Given the frustrations and disappointments of the Armenian public with past and present administrations, the time is right for a new voice and a new vision. It may be even right for a new social deal among the main constituents and political forces, who may finally realize that all prosper through a larger pie. If all political factions worked to enlarge the national pie, rather than their own slice of it, Armenia will be a materially different country. Only an effective state can guide this process, not only in the economic and business spheres, but also in critical requisite spheres like education and public health.

The political economy of Armenia must evolve into a post-Oligarchic phase in such a way so as to fit into the country's unique socioeconomic and political landscape, establishing a new dynamic between the private sector and the government. Existing models—whether a laissez faire system, or a centrally planned system, or even specific mixed systems adopted by some European and Asian countries—cannot necessarily be emulated, at least not in their entirety, without causing socioeconomic dislocations in Armenia. The government has to find the right role, based on the specific circumstances of Armenia, whereby it provides the necessary macroeconomic environment for the private sector to thrive, while at the

same time safeguarding the unique public sector goods and services necessary for a fair, defensible and competitive state.

Longer-Term Goals

It is useful to have a few concrete objectives in mind while pondering the various policies outlined above. As a longer-term vision, Armenia should aim to: (1) be among the top 20 then top 10 economies of the world in terms of per capita income; (2) to have 10-20 Armenian companies listed on Nasdaq and the NYSE; (3) to be a major destination of foreign direct investment from around the world—US, China, India in addition to Russia—including non-Armenian sources; (4) the Global Competitiveness Index produced by the World Economic Forum incorporates multiple macro- and micro-economic indicators and attempts to come up with an overall assessment of how much a country's economic environment is conducive to providing prosperity to its citizens. In 2019, Armenia was number 69. By 2045, it should aim to be number 20. (5) By 2050, the Armenian transportation and heating sectors must be converted to electricity, reducing considerably dependence on imported fossil fuels, while keeping Armenia a net exporter of electricity through a second, state-of-the-art nuclear plant and a host of renewable energy projects, such as hydro-electric and solar power. The consequent vast improvement in the air quality in Yerevan would simply be an added bonus.



Assembly's Spring Virtual Advocacy Conference to Feature Congressional Armenian Caucus Leaders, Policy Experts

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) is pleased to announce that its Spring 2021 National Advocacy Conference will take place virtually during the week of March 8, 2021. Key Members of Congress, leading academics and policy analysts will be featured panelists. In addition, conference participants will have an opportunity to advocate for Armenian issues with their representatives online.

"The Assembly's conference will address topics covering congressional priorities, human rights issues, preserving cultural heritage,

Study of Human Rights at Columbia University; Dr. Michael Rubin, American Enterprise Institute; Dr. Rachel Goshgarian, Lafayette College; Dr. Christina Maranci, Tufts University; and Amasia Zargarian, The HALO Trust, with more to follow.

"I would like to thank our State Chairs for their important work and urge Armenian Americans from across the country to join us for this informative and timely conference," Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan added.

The Assembly's National Advocacy Conference aims to rein-



Rep. Jackie Speier, Rep. James McGovern, Rep. Frank Pallone

with a special focus on the post-war situation in Armenia and Artsakh," stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.

Congressional speakers include Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Jackie Speier (D-CA), along with House Rules Committee Chairman and Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Rep. James McGovern (D-MA). Additional featured panelists include Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America; Jeff King, President of International Christian Concern; David L. Phillips, Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights Institute for the

force awareness and support of Armenian issues in the United States and bring together Armenian Americans from across the country to join with Members of Congress and congressional staff to highlight and discuss key areas of concern and steps to further strengthen U.S.-Armenia relations for the betterment of the Armenian people.

The Spring 2021 National Advocacy Conference is free and open to the public. Please stay tuned for registration links and sponsorship opportunities on the Assembly's website. For highlights from previous Assembly National Advocacy conferences, visit: <https://www.aimhye.com/>.

Turkey Hires US Lobbying Firm to Return to F-35 Jet Program

ANKARA (Reuters) - Turkey has hired a Washington-based law firm to lobby for its readmission to the US F-35 fighter jet program after it was suspended over its purchase of Russian air defenses, a contract filed with the US Department of Justice showed.

Ankara had ordered more than 100 stealth fighters and has been making parts for their production, but was removed from the program in 2019 after it bought the Russian S-400 missile defense systems, which Washington says threaten the F-35s.

It has now hired law firm Arnold & Porter for "strategic advice and outreach" to US authorities, in a six-month contract worth \$750,000 which started this month.

Ankara has said its removal from the program was unjust, and President Tayyip Erdogan has said he hopes for positive developments under US President Joe Biden.

The contract was signed with Ankara-based SSTEK Defense Industry Technologies, owned by the Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB), Ankara's main defense industry authority.

Arnold & Porter will "advise on a strategy for the SSB and Turkish contractors to remain within the Joint Strike Fighter Program, taking into consideration and addressing the complex geopolitical and commercial factors at play," the contract said.

Despite Turkey's removal from the program, and sanctions imposed on Turkey's defense industry in December, the Pentagon has said it will continue to depend on Turkish contractors for key F-35 components.

Turkey's communications director Fahrettin Altun said Turkey had already paid for some F-35 jets.

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, speaking after a NATO defense ministers' meeting, said he had "brought to the clear attention of our allies that licensing restrictions, attempts for sanctions or even the threat of sanctions against Turkey" only weaken the alliance.

Assemblymember Nazarian Moves to Stop Soda Industry Tactics in the State

SACRAMENTO - This week, Assemblymember Nazarian (D-Van Nuys) introduced legislation to eliminate the statewide preemption on local sugary drink taxes, a measure forced upon the legislature by the soda industry in 2018 that was described by the Sacramento Bee as a "shakedown" akin to "extortion". As California counties and cities are considering all options to close their unprecedented budgetary shortfalls, Nazarian believes the legislature should give municipalities access to every revenue-generating option, especially one that simultaneously improves public health outcomes.



Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian

have sugary drink taxes as a potential revenue-generation and public health tool.

As COVID-19 continues to disproportionately affect Black and Brown communities in California, research shows that communities of color also have a disproportionately higher risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes in their lifetimes, in part due to the overconsumption of cheap sugary drinks flooding into their communities. Diabetes is a risk factor for severe COVID and the LAO has also highlighted the health proposition behind a sugary drink tax "of potentially leading to improvements in health—such as reduced rates of heart disease and diabetes.

"The proliferation and targeted promotion of sugar-sweetened beverages to marginalized communities makes it a racial and health equity issue," said Rod Lew, MPH, Executive Director of Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL), "And in this era of renewed attention on racial justice, we must support proven policy initiatives that puts the health of our communities first. One of the first steps is to remove State preemption banning local taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages."

Six cities including Los Angeles and 3 counties including Contra Costa have already either passed a resolution or written a letter in support of lifting preemption, and dozens of additional cities and counties are currently reaching out with interest. Currently, the City of Berkeley's soda tax is raising \$1.5 million for its residents, Oakland around \$7 million, and San Francisco \$15 million. Revenues have been directed towards schools and nutrition programs, both of which have served as critical resources for families during the pandemic.

"California voters who passed sugary drink taxes have given their cities millions of dollars in revenue to address critical health and funding needs. The American Heart Association is proud to support Assemblymember Nazarian's bill to restore power to local municipalities to improve the health of their residents and their local economies during these unprecedented

times," said Kathy Rogers, Executive Vice President of the American Heart Association Western States Region.

Assemblymember Nazarian added: "Special interests should not be dictating policy to our cities. This bill gives power back to the people."

Nazarian is proud to have the support of American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership, California Black Health Network,

California Dental Association, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, The Praxis Project, Public Health Advocates, Public Health Institute, Roots of Change and Social Justice Learning Institute.

Adrin Nazarian represents the 46th Assembly District, serving the San Fernando Valley communities of Hollywood Hills, Lake Balboa, North Hills, North Hollywood, Panorama City, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Toluca Lake, Valley Glen, Universal City, Van Nuys, and Valley Village



The Play 'Zabel' Appears Online

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) - The play "Zabel," which tells the story of the life and work of well known Istanbul-Armenian writer and one of the trailblazers of the feminist movement, Zabel Yesayan, was streamed online on February 19.

The play was staged by the Performing Arts Ensemble of Bogaziçi University and has been presented several times to appreciative audiences. This time the play was staged at the Moda Theatre and directly streamed online.