

Russian-Turkish Center Begins Monitoring Karabakh Truce

SHUSHI (RFE/RL) – A joint Turkish and Russian observation center to monitor the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh started operations after an opening ceremony with senior defense officials in attendance on Saturday, January 30.

Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov and deputy defense ministers from regional powers Turkey and Russia were there to launch the center, in the Agdam region east of Karabakh, according to Azerbaijan's state news agency Azertac.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar announced on January 29 that one Turkish general and 38 personnel will be stationed at the center.

"Our activities will intensify with the work of this joint Turkish-Russian center and we will fulfill our duty to defend the rights of our Azerbaijani brothers," Akar said in a statement posted on the Defense Ministry's website.

Turkey and Russia agreed to form a joint observation center shortly after Moscow in November brokered a ceasefire agreement that ended the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in and around Karabakh. Turkey was a major backer of Azerbaijan in the conflict.

Turkish Major General Abdullah Katirci and Russian Major General Viktor Fyodorenko will reportedly command their



Russian APC and soldiers of the peacekeeping force (L) patrol in front of an Azerbaijan's army checkpoint near the demarcation line outside the town of Shushi (Susa), Nov. 26, 2020

respective contingents at the center.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev welcomed the opening of the Russian-Turkish center when they spoke by phone later on Saturday. According to the Kremlin, the

two leaders expressed hope it "will contribute to the further stabilization of the situation" in the conflict zone and the conflicting parties' compliance with the ceasefire agreement.

see TRUCE, page 3



Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, at right with stethoscope, at Khndzoresk mobile hospital tent

'We Were Defeated in Healthcare, Too' Dr. Hovhannisyan's War Ended in Kapan

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES – Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, an internal medicine

and intensive care specialist from Los Angeles, was in Miami, attending his friend's birthday party when he learned that war started in Artsakh. The party was canceled. He returned to LA immediately, bought a ticket and left for Armenia on October 2. Upon arrival he was appointed by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia to Goris Medical Center, in Goris naturally, where he treated soldiers during the most critical first days of the war. He continued his journey to Khndzoresk, Ishkhanadzor, Kashatagh, Shushi and finally Kapan, when the war was over. "I was at the surgery room when I got the news that the cease fire was signed. We stayed four more days in Kapan. Then I was back to Yerevan and continued my work in the different hospitals there until December 2. Two months of war...", remembers Dr. Hovhannisyan now in his private Los Angeles practice, sharing his story over lunch break.

see HEALTHCARE, page 3

UN Human Rights Experts Urge Release of Captives From Karabakh Conflict

GENEVA (RFE/RL) – Human rights experts at the United Nations have called for the "prompt" release of prisoners of war and other captives by Armenia and Azerbaijan from their recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner in Geneva said in a statement on Monday, February 1, that the two countries should also move quickly to return the bodies of those killed to families for burial "with due respect for cultural customs."

"Everyone deprived of their liberty for reasons related to the conflict should be returned to their homes, and relatives of those killed must be able to receive the mortal remains of their loved ones, in line with

see CAPTIVES, page 5

Former President Kocharyan To Again Visit Moscow

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The judge presiding over the trial of Robert Kocharyan has allowed the former Armenian president to visit Moscow for the second time in less than two months, it emerged on Tuesday, February 2.

A trial prosecutor, Gevorg Baghdasaryan, revealed the permission and demanded an explanation from the judge, Anna Danibekyan, during the latest court hearing on coup charges leveled against Kocharyan and three other former officials.

"We don't know the grounds on which Robert Kocharyan is allowed to leave Armenia," complained Baghdasaryan. He said Danibekyan should have consulted with the prosecution before making the decision communicated to the Armenian police.

see KOCHARYAN, page 5

NEWS IN BRIEF

Church Insists on Pashinyan's Resignation

ECHMIADZIN (Armenpress) – Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II has reiterated the church's stance demanding the Prime Minister Pashinyan to step down.

"There is no change in our convictions and stance," the Armenian Church leader told reporters on January 28. "Never before has the country been in such a difficult situation, we've never had such a loss of the homeland, the country has never faced such dangers. Uncertainty for tomorrow has never been so alarming for our people," Karekin II said.

He reiterated that the church is guided by national and state interests.

He publicly asked the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign in December 2020.

Aram I, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, joined Karekin II in the appeal.

Russian-Armenian Cosmonaut in Training

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Russian-Armenian cosmonaut Harutyun Kiviryan has been selected as a test candidate for Roscosmos Cosmonaut Team and could fly into space, the aerospace research company revealed in a statement on February 1.

The Interdepartmental Commission (IAC) for the selection of cosmonauts and their appointment to spacecraft and stations crews decided to recommend Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center appoint four people to the positions of test cosmonaut candidates of Roscosmos Cosmonaut Team. The decision came into force on January 27, 2021 following an open contest started in 2019.

The candidates will train for the next two years. Kiviryan was born on August 23, 1993 in the Republic of Adygea.

Armenia 'Did Not Ask CSTO to Help'

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenia did not request the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) mechanisms to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas said at a press conference on February 2.

According to him, the organization has repeatedly advocated for the cessation of hostilities and the settlement of the conflict peacefully, and that position has not changed, TASS reports.

"Why didn't the CSTO intervene? You can't think that our organization has limited itself to observing the situation, expressing demands for a ceasefire and negotiations. No, we did a lot of work," said Zas. "In that situation, there was no request from Armenia for military or any other kind of assistance from the CSTO."

INSIDE

Bardakjian Looks Back

Page 6

INDEX

Armenia	2-3
Arts and Living	12
Community News.	6
Editorial	18
International	4,5



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Syrian Mercenaries Detained in Armenia Treatment Meets International Standards

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The detention conditions of Syrian mercenaries held in Armenia are in line with international standards, a group of public monitors said in a statement on Tuesday, February 2.

During the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh, the Armenian side detained two Syrian citizens, who were placed under arrest as a measure of restraint. They are charged under a number of articles of Armenia's Criminal Code, including international terrorism and gross violations of the norms of international humanitarian law during armed conflicts.

The group of public observers conducting public monitoring in penitentiaries of the Armenian Ministry of Justice checked the conditions of their detention during a visit to the penitentiary institutions.

The group of public observers says that the persons are kept in two different cells of the facility for security considerations.

Yerevan to Host International Duduk Festival

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Dudukman Production company and Lecturer at Yerevan State Conservatory Emanuel Hovhannisyan have initiated an international duduk festival-contest to take place in Yerevan from April 5 to May 5.

As the organizers of the festival report, the event is aimed at promoting the legacy of the Armenian unique instrument as well as reveal new talents among young musicians.

The festival-contest is open to young duduk players under 22 from over the world.

The contest will take place in three stages. All performances of the contest will be recorded and shared on social media platforms of Dudukman Production. The best musicians will have an opportunity to cooperate with well-known musicians as well as take master classes from best specialists of the sphere.

The deadline for participation is March 15 with submission to be sent to dudukman@mail.ru and dudukman@gmail.com email addresses.

Azeri Soldiers Detained, Freed in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Russian military announced late on Monday, February 1, that it had secured the release of two Azerbaijani army soldiers detained after crossing into Armenia at the weekend.

The Defense Ministry in Moscow said they were detained by officers of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) near the village of Tegh in Armenia's Syunik province. It gave no details of the incident.

A ministry statement said the Azerbaijani servicemen were freed at the request of Russian peacekeeping troops stationed in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

The NSS and the Armenian Defense Ministry did not comment on the incident on Tuesday. Tegh's mayor, Nerses Shadunts, confirmed the detentions but said he is not allowed to disclose their circumstances.

"The situation here is not tense right now," Shadunts told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "There is no panic among local people. Everything is normal."

"As for our border guards and army, you can conclude that everyone was on duty and vigilant and properly did their job," he said.

Tegh is located close to the Lachin corridor that connects Armenia to Karabakh and is controlled by the Russian peacekeepers.

During the six-week war Russia deployed soldiers and border guards to Syunik to help the Armenian military defend the region located southwest of Karabakh against possible Azerbaijani attacks. One of the Russian border guard posts was set up near Tegh.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, a Village Split In Two by Ceasefire Struggles to Get by

By Artem Mikryukov and Nvard Hovhannisyan

TAGHAVARD, Azerbaijan (Reuters) — Ethnic Armenian farmer Lenser Gabrielyan looks with sorrow at his land in the village of Taghavard, now cut off from him and his family under the terms of a peace deal which ended last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Within weeks of the conflict's outbreak in September, military forces from Azerbaijan had entered Gabrielyan's picturesque mountain settlement and made big territorial gains.

A Russia-brokered ceasefire last November cemented Azeri advances in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan but had been controlled by ethnic Armenians since the early 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The accord split Taghavard, which stretches for three kilometers along an unpaved road towards a mountain range and which had a pre-war population of over a thousand ethnic Armenians.

It also left Gabrielyan, who has lived there since his birth, with his house on one side of a new border and his farm-land on the other.

"Now we have nothing to do," lamented the 65-year-old, as he walked near a barn that used to house livestock, but whose roof had since collapsed under shelling.

"I used to farm. But almost all the land was left under Azerbaijani control... No tractor is left here, all the equipment is in the hands of the Azeri side."

Azeri forces took control of the upper western end of the settlement. Those ethnic Armenians who did not flee now live in the east, protected by ethnic Armenian military units.

Gabrielyan's family, including his ten grandchildren, stayed. But like other families, they are now struggling to get



Local resident Nverd Avazenyanyan collects water in divided Taghavard village in Nagorno-Karabakh region

by as fields where livestock used to graze and a nearby forest, where they used to chop firewood, are under Azeri control.

Before the war, his family kept sheep and pigs. Most of them were lost when the village became a battlefield and Gabrielyan says his family will run out of firewood in a month.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "Everything is in ruins."

Before the war, residents also enjoyed running water to their homes from wells located in the upper part of the village. That access has now been lost.

An alternative water source — a pipe located several hundred meters away from houses is now the only option. A Reuters reporter watched recently as residents brought several plastic bottles and metal cans of water loaded onto two donkeys back home. The journey took them around 30 minutes.

Gabrielyan's daughter-in-law, Minara, cried as she showed pictures of her

brother, who was killed in combat on the same night when the peace deal was agreed.

She says she is scared to live in their house, which is only hundreds meters away from Azeri outposts, which are visible on sunny days.

"We don't know now what it is - war or peace? We can't go out freely or sleep calmly at night. We wake up from every noise because we are afraid," she said.

A Reuters reporter saw an Azerbaijani soldier on guard on a hillside overlooking the village, just several dozen meters away from ethnic Armenian military positions.

Lenser Gabrielyan picks up fragments of exploded shells when walking in a nearby field, still criss-crossed with trenches, and says it worries him that his grandchildren have to live so close to a hostile army.

"We're staying here," he said. "(But) I don't know what will happen. It is dangerous."

Top Russian General Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A visiting top Russian general met with Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan on Friday, January 20, for the second time in five days to discuss Russia's close military ties with Armenia.

Colonel-General Sergei Istrakov, the deputy chief of the Russian military's General Staff, arrived in Yerevan on January 25 for what the Armenian Defense Ministry described as "staff negotiations" between the armed forces of the two allied states. Istrakov began

the trip with separate meetings with Harutyunyan and his Armenian counterpart, Colonel-General Onik Gasparyan.

A Defense Ministry statement released on Friday, said Istrakov met with Harutyunyan again to brief him on the results of the talks that touched upon "all directions of Russian-Armenian bilateral military cooperation." They discussed joint activities planned by the two sides, the statement said without elaborating.

The Russian ambassador in Yerevan, Sergei Kopyrkin, met with Harutyunyan

and Gasparyan on Thursday, January 28, to congratulate them on the 29th anniversary of the official creation of the Armenian army.

On Tuesday, Harutyunyan inspected the main command post of a joint Russian-Armenian system of air defense protecting Armenia's airspace. He was accompanied by a Russian Air Force general.

"Vagharshak Harutyunyan stressed the need to deepen Russian-Armenian military cooperation, including in the area of air defense," said the Defense Ministry.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian similarly announced plans to deepen Russian-Armenian relations in a televised address to the nation aired on New Year's Eve. He said his country needs "new security guarantees" after the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia already has close political, economic and military ties with Russia. It hosts a Russian military base and has long received Russian weapons at knock-down prices and even for free.

Moscow deployed 2,000 peacekeeping troops to Karabakh as part of a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the war on November 10. In addition, it dispatched Russian soldiers and border guards to Armenia's Syunik region southwest of Karabakh to help the Armenian military defend it against possible Azerbaijani attacks.



Colonel-General Sergei Istrakov (second from left), the deputy chief of the Russian military's General Staff, meets with Armenian Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan, Yerevan, January 29, 2021.



ARMENIA

‘We Were Defeated in Healthcare Too’ Dr. Hovhannisyan’s War Ended in Kapan

HEALTHCARE, from page 1

During the entire time Dr. Hovhannisyan was working in critical care at the hospitals and the frontline. He says: “The critical care unit didn’t have any time to rest. Sometimes one patient needed more than one doctor. Everything was going through us: we were the ones who established whether the patient was going to surgery right away or in an hour, or if he was going to be operated on at all. Every doctor concentrated on a patient. The differences of specialization somehow disappeared.”

During the war, doctors rushed to Armenia and Artsakh from all over the world. The work was tremendous. Few had military medicine experience. Even fewer could imagine the magnitude of injuries they were dealing with. Dr. Hovhannisyan says: “None of us was ready for this reality. I don’t want any of my colleagues to get offended, but by my opinion, our enemy defeated us with his healthcare system too. I am not talking about the individual professionalism of my colleagues from the diaspora or Armenia; we have amazing doctors. But overall, military medicine was unprepared.”

Dr. Hovhannisyan agrees that there are a lot of differences in possible approaches of treatment. But all medical professionals were united like never before: “We were sleeping on the floors next to each other for days not even knowing [people’s] names. We were that busy. Days later, I even learned that one of the doctors is my neighbor in Los Angeles. We were asking questions, trying to find better solutions for the patient. The goal was one: to do everything possible to save our soldiers.”

Back in the US, the doctor evaluated his overall experience. He finds some significant structural aspects of foreign medicine absent in Armenia which made the situation worse during the war.

“We have brilliant surgeons in Armenia. However, young surgeons who are newly graduated from residency programs, having great theoretical knowledge and being honest doctors, practically were not prepared to perform complicated surgeries. Residency programs in

even to check his temperature. Even when it was driving only with the speed of 20 km/hour, my hand was shaking. It was much easier to transport a patient who was in a deep sleep,” the doctor recalls with noticeable irritation. “There were only two helicopters that supposed to transport injured soldiers. These helicopters were working without navigation systems. Therefore, they couldn’t work during the night. And also, the capacity was so limited that only a doctor and the pilot could fit in there with one patient,” he continues.

Another significant obstacle according to Dr. Hovhannisyan is the shortage of blood. He states that certain types of blood and blood products were hard to obtain, continuing, “In some cases, a patient’s outcome was very bad because of that. We couldn’t get the amount of blood we needed.”

The help from the diaspora was huge, as Dr. Hovhannisyan confirms. He was receiving boxes full of medication and medical supplies addressed to him from people he didn’t even know. But the issue was its organization and placement. He said: “We were learning that certain medication has arrived. And then, when we needed to use it, it was still sitting in the box in the hallway or someone’s room.”

He remains disappointed in the hospital nurses’ training in the far regions of Armenia, explaining: “We worked with very well-trained nurses from Yerevan. But unfortunately, the majority of nurses in the far regions are still in the era of ‘Analgin-Dimedrol’ [painkiller medication largely used during the Soviet era]. If I am asking the nurse to make me a heart stimulant, she shouldn’t ask me about the dosage. She must know that already. It’s a waste of time, especially during wartime.” All training efforts are centralized in the capital city, according to the doctor.

Dr. Hovhannisyan shared all his concerns with Armenia’s minister of health. The latter explained that no new graduate desires to practice outside of Yerevan. As a result, the population there suffers without a good healthcare system. But Dr. Hovhannisyan thinks that it’s



Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, at left, in front of Khndzoresk mobile hospital

n’t know where to start and where to finish. It took me several hours to understand how to act. That was the horror of this war.”

Dr. Hovhannisyan had to practice very close to the battlefield, in the mobile hospitals. These were huge tents inherited from the last century with metallic operation tables and huge gallons of oxygen right next to the tent with their rubber tubes on the floor that “could blow up with a single fired drone.” Doctors established three zones in the mobile hospitals where patients were being placed according to their injuries. After every defeat the whole team moved the tent back.

In his work with several hundred patients, Dr. Hovhannisyan considers his biggest achievement to be saving the lives of 27 soldiers who had almost no chance of survival. “If I needed to go back to Armenia only for these 27 kids, I

more now and finds new meaning in it. “I love my profession very much but it should not serve for causes like war. It should serve to make our parents live longer, our children to be healthy, our wives and sisters to become more beautiful, our women to have easy labor and delivery. After having that 44 days of experience, I started to love medicine even more. I became a better son, a better husband. I want to have a boy very much... Those kids were the best ones; they weren’t like us, they were better than our generation, they had unimaginable courage,” the doctor says, referring to all the soldiers he met in Armenia and Artsakh.

With over 200 doctors and nurses Dr. Hovhannisyan created a virtual group that meets regularly to discuss the possible ways to support the motherland. They named the group Goris Forever, since everyone initially met in



Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, fifth from left and with stethoscope, at the Goris Medical Center

Armenia don’t adequately prepare for practical aspects of surgery,” says Hovhannisyan.

Next, he finds unpreparedness in the system of medical transportation. Transporting a patient from the frontline to the hospital or one city to another created significant difficulties because of the number and quality of the vehicles and roads. “Sometimes it would take four to five hours to transport a patient. It was impossible to perform any procedure on a patient during the ride. We had to stop the car

possible to fix this with the proper incentives.

In total, Dr. Hovhannisyan’s team treated several hundred patients, of whom only a handful had gunshot injuries. They encountered a lot of “inhuman” injuries, as doctor describes and explains after a heavy silence, while recalling his difficult early days in Armenia: “In my 22 years in medicine I never said ‘I don’t know’ as an answer when it came to the treating the patient. In Goris, when the first patients arrived, I simply didn’t know what to do. I did-



Dr. Armen Hovhannisyan, second from right, at the Goris Medical Center

Russian-Turkish Center Begins Monitoring Truce

TRUCE, from page 1

Under the agreement, around 2,000 Russian peacekeepers are also deployed along Karabakh frontline areas and a land link connecting Karabakh with Armenia.

Armenian Defense Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan praised the Russian peacekeeping operation on Monday in a phone call with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu. According to the Armenian Defense Ministry, Harutyunyan said the peacekeepers have helped to ensure the “almost full observance of the ceasefire.”

A ministry statement said Shoigu phoned Harutyunyan to discuss the results of “staff negotiations” held by senior Russian and Armenian military officials in Yerevan last week. The two ministers also spoke about “the course of the resolution of Armenia’s security issues in the post-war period,” it said without elaborating.

would go again. They are not going to become mathematicians, but they are going to live. That’s why I am proud of my team,” Hovhannisyan says with a tremble in his voice.

Months after the life-changing experience Dr. Hovhannisyan continues his practice with a new purpose. He signed up for classes to learn more about military medicine. He assures that this should be done by every medical professional in Armenia. He values his work even

the hospital in Goris.

“All of us established one thing: from now on none of us can go to Armenia as a tourist. We only want to go there to work, to share our experience and knowledge with our colleagues,” Dr. Hovhannisyan says. He promised the same for the doctors in Armenia: whenever they come to the US, he will make everything possible for them to gain experience in hospitals or clinics here.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

EPP Urges Azerbaijan to Release POWs

BRUSSELS, Belgium (Panorama.am) – The members of the European People's Party (EPP) Political Assembly (PA) called on Azerbaijan to accelerate the exchange of prisoners of war (POWs), captives and bodies of the dead and demand their immediate release, the EPP said in a statement released after a video-conference on Monday, February 1.

The EPP urged the European Commission to pursue this humanitarian question in the current and future relations with Azerbaijan and called on the European Parliament to urgently discuss the process of exchange of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) prisoners of war and captives.

During the meeting via video conference, the EPP PA members also discussed the ongoing coronavirus situation and Alexei Navalny's arrest.

Georgia Resumes Regular Air Travel with Armenia

TBILISI (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Beginning from February 1, Georgia has removed restrictions on regular air traffic to 12 countries, including Armenia, the country's civil aviation authority reports.

Restrictions were imposed in early March 2020 to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the country.

Two flights a week will operate from the Georgian capital to Yerevan, Armenia.

In addition to Armenia, Georgian travelers can now fly to Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Austria, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus, the Civil Aviation Agency said.

In Georgia, the process of the gradual recovery of regular air traffic began in August 2020.

Geolocated Image Shows Terrorist Commander in Azeri-Controlled Area

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) – Armenian military expert Haik Khachikyan has identified the exact location of a photo featuring Hossam Deeb, a commander of the Sultan Murad terrorist group, who was recruited by Azerbaijan during the six-week war against Nagorno-Karabakh in fall 2020.

At the time of the photo, Deeb was in Jabrail (the exact coordinates are: 39 ° 23'18.81 "N 47 ° 1'48.65" E).

International journalists like Lindsey Snell have published pictures of a number of terrorist mercenaries from Sultan Murad and other Syrian factions, who were transferred to Azerbaijan by Turkey to participate in hostilities against Karabakh.

In the war against Artsakh (Karabakh), Turkey supported Azerbaijan militarily, also by transferring terrorist mercenaries from the Middle East to fight against Karabakh. Armenia was the first to report on Turkey's deployment of thousands of Syrian fighters to Azerbaijan. International media publications followed suit, as did reactions from France, Russia, Iran and Syria. The Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army has already unveiled footage from the interrogation of two such terrorists captured on the front.

Mount Ararat Reopened to Climbers

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) – Since 2015, the authorities of the province of Agri have given Mt. Ararat the status of a "Special Safety Zone" and have prohibited recreational climbing of the mountain, citing the conflict between the Republic of Turkey and the PKK.

Despite the ban, for the last six years, numerous mountaineers have continued to be able, by irregular and illegal means, to reach the peak - often with the assistance of local Kurds.

Beginning in February the ban has officially been lifted and mountaineers travelling from countries around the world will be able to legally climb the mountain with permission from the authorities.

Tension Grows in Austria over Deportation of Three Young Girls to Georgia and Armenia

By Katy Dartford

VIENNA (DPA) – Tensions are growing in Austria over the deportation of three girls to Georgia and Armenia, including a 12-year-old girl who was born in the country.

The government is being criticized for expelling the children, who are considered to be "well-integrated" into Austrian society, especially amid the coronavirus crisis.

Tina, 12, who was born in Austria and has lived there for 10 years in total said: "When we started, I saw many people and policemen who pushed these people away, who pushed them on the ground."

After a seven-year process, her family's asylum applications were finally rejected in December 2019.

Even without a legal base for asylum, the authorities examined the procedure of whether deportation would be compatible with the human right to private and family life.

In the case of Tina and her family, the authorities decided that the state's interest in ensuring respect for its laws prevailed.

Early Thursday morning, on January

28, ahead of the imminent deportations, there were massive protests from friends, classmates and human rights activists at the deportation center the girls were staying at on the outskirts of the Austrian capital, Vienna.

"Even if she is not Austrian on paper, she is a perfectly integrated member of our society, with many friends, a good student, a family and her life here in Austria. That's why it makes us sad that she is deported to a country she has no relation to," said one boy at the protest. "We are here to fight for Sona [the other girl] because it is not fair," said another girl at the protest.

"They took her from home in the middle of the night with the whole family. She is a great friend, integrated, well-adapted, she is a good student, preparing for her baccalaureate, preparing for a cooking exam. She writes a diploma thesis, that is not fair."

The Greens, who are currently in the governing coalition with the conservative ÖVP party, sharply criticized the deportation.

"It cannot be that perfectly integrated young people, in this case, students, are taken out of the classrooms, and brought into a country of origin they don't even know, they don't even speak the language of," said Rudolf

Anschober, Austrian Minister of Social Affairs.

"I think it would be a good thing if we looked for a human solution," he said.

Those in favor of the deportations, including the interior minister, Karl Nehammer, argued that several court decisions found that the family had no legal right to stay in Austria.

"I am concerned that the parents of these children brought them into this situation. That the parents deliberately abused the right of asylum. There were numerous negative asylum procedures against them," he said.

The deportations have garnered national attention in Austria after schoolmates of Tina, launched an online petition that has gathered more than 34,000 signatures.

All Austrian courts rejected the family's claims to stay, according to multiple media reports, and the Federal Administrative Court ruled that part of the reason the family had been in Austria for so long had been because it ignored the authorities' instructions.

According to the interior ministry, Tina's family had been in the country illegally for four years.

However, advocates of the girls said that Austria was not legally obliged to deport people without stay permits.

Istanbul's Hrant Dink School Looks To Community for Assistance

ISTANBUL (Nor Marmara) – Istanbul's Armenian schools and institutions have seen many difficulties in 2020. Aside from the loss of communal togetherness typically seen at events, fundraising has become more difficult because events have been made impossible by social distancing.

The Hrant Dink School is under the auspices of the Armenian Evangelical Church in Gedikpasa [Gedikpasha]. Most of the students are children of natives of Armenia who have moved to Istanbul for work. The school's volunteers work under the leadership of Haroutiun and Talar Horozoglu. They are facing the same difficulties that all the other Armenian schools in Istanbul have faced this year. The school's daily schedule has been disrupted by the pandemic, and financial difficulties have mounted, because the parents are not in a position to pay tuition.

Horozoglu said in an interview that based on the decisions of the Ministries of Education and Health, the Hrant Dink School has continued either face-to-face or distance learning. For the nursery school and kindergarten students, face to face learning has always been preferable, because their parents work and there is no one to take care of them in the house.

The elementary and middle school students are taught through distance learning. Through the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, their 15 students received computers in order to follow their classes.

Every year in March, the graduating class goes to Yerevan for an examination certifying that they have passed 9th grade, and to receive their diplomas. This year, due to the pandemic the 10 graduates had a delayed departure, but were able to successfully take their exams and enroll in high school there.



Hrant Dink School images

During the first wave of the pandemic, 20 students left with their families for Armenia. A few months ago, during the second wave of the pandemic, 20-22 more students returned to Armenia. Now the number of stu-

dents is around 80-82.

On January 28, the divine liturgy was celebrated in Galata's St. Gregory the Illuminator Church on behalf of the Hrant Dink School. In the absence of a fundraising banquet, the school



INTERNATIONAL

Kirill Chakryan

Bodybuilder as a Sculptor

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / MOSCOW – My interlocutor is a 32-year-old professional athlete and fitness trainer Kirill Chakryan. He studied at the Moscow Sports Academy, specializing in theory and methodology of combat sports and weightlifting. Kirill is a bodybuilding champion of the Moscow Oblast (region) and the Moscow Championship in the weight category up to 85 kilogram (2015), ten-time champion of the Cups and Championships of Moscow in weightlifting, two-time champion of All-Russian weightlifting competitions and of weightlifting competitions among the CIS countries, candidate for master of sports in bench press and powerlifting, candidate for master of sports in bodybuilding, master of sports in weightlifting.

Dear Kirill, I am very glad to introduce you to Armenian readers internationally. We are always glad to see Armenian surnames in any field, in big sports and in such a visual sport as bodybuilding is. It is said about bodybuilders that they think only about their bodies for 24 hours - is that so?

Good afternoon, Artsvi, I also want to greet all the readers! Bodybuilding, in my opinion, is one of the most difficult sports, as it requires dedication 24 hours a day. To achieve ideal proportions, a bodybuilder as a sculptor hones his body day after day. This requires a lot of training (especially on lagging muscle groups) and also devoting a lot of time to sleep and diet. Exercises, sleep, food – all three of these components are necessary for the growth and changes in the muscles in our body. If something is missing from these three things, the result can hardly be expected. Answering your question: a bodybuilder thinks about the body for 24 hours, otherwise the result simply will not be.

Your father, Arkady Chakryan, a weightlifting coach, if I am not mistaken, was engaged in bodybuilding after 50. So age doesn't matter in bodybuilding?

My father Arkady Borisovich Chakryan has been fond of sports since childhood. In the 1990s there was a cult of Arnold Schwarzenegger, who led many to workout and weightlift in basements. In the 1990s there were few opportunities, therefore he, like many others, trained with weights at home. Once my father brought my brother and me to the weightlifting section of CSKA (Central Sports Club of the Army), where we began our path of professional athletes, he watched our training, then he began to slowly study this sport himself, which led him to the head coach position of CSKA weightlifting. Being self-taught, he mentored masters of sports and candidates in masters of sports,

also helped international champions of sports in preparing for competitions. One was Ruslan Albegov, who over time became an Olympic medalist in weightlifting. Not long time ago, my father decided to perform for the first time and try out as a bodybuilder, winning the Moscow Region Championship in bodybuilding in the master category. I think he thereby managed to set a good example to his peers and young people, that it is never too late to try yourself in something new and that even at 50 you can look good!

I believe your brother and sister also had a big influence on your development as an athlete.

My older brother Arthur is a champion in weightlifting, and prize-winner in bodybuilding and my sister Liubov is a master of sports of international class in weightlifting. We have always been together, trained, and of course, as the youngest one, I always looked up to my siblings, since I considered them promising athletes, especially my sister. Liuba, being a multiple champion of Russia in weightlifting and two-time European champion in weightlifting (and all this until 16 years old!), had very great prospects in this sport. At that time most of all I wanted her to participate in the Olympic Games, but unfortunately she did not manage to reach such a level because of a serious knee injury, which later ended her career.

Having such a sculpted body, were there any invitations to participate in show business projects?

Yes, I was invited to participate in various TV projects but you know, actually I do not like all these things. Of course, now I understand that this is media and there is nowhere without it, but I am more a supporter of the so-called old school, working silently and quietly towards goals and achieving them.

Who is your idol in sports?

Hmmm, there are no idols, there are many great athletes of whom I am proud, who inspired me with their examples, with whom I would like to meet, communicate, as each great athlete deserves respect.

My 17-year-old son goes to the gym and like many of his peers dreams of gaining muscles faster without chemicals. What advice can you give him?

There is only one advice to your son – do not rush. Hurrying can lead to injuries; the gym and work on your body is a long-term road and there is no need to rush. Let him read a lot about nutrition (this is 80-percent of the success in bodybuilding), and also about the technique of performing exercises, because the better the technique is, the less injuries and better progress are. Also, in our time there are many sources where you can take information, the main thing is to find the right one. I want to wish your son only



success, and if he sets a goal for himself, he will definitely achieve it.

Do you know other Russian bodybuilders of Armenian origin? Well, except for your brother Arthur.

Bodybuilders of Armenian descent? Hmmm, unfortunately not.

Where are your Armenian ancestors from?

My ancestors on the Armenian side lived in Turkey. When the Genocide began, my great-grandfather Ardash and great-grandmother Arpenik, while still children, moved to neighboring villages close to the border of Russia, on the territory of Abkhazia, so all our relatives are now in the Krasnodar Krai and Abkhazia. In Armenia itself, unfortunately, I have no one, and this is all the information about my ancestors that I managed to find.

Have you ever been to Armenia?

I have never been to Armenia, but I always wanted to go and see. Last time I planned a trip to Armenia for the last summer, but quarantine and Covid-19 introduced their own changes. When all this settles down, and the situation in the world levels out, and the borders are opened, I really hope that I will finally be able to visit Armenia.

What do you wish for the Armenians all over the world dreaming of having a beautiful body?

Love yourself first of all, watch your diet,

go in for sports, develop yourselves, study, and then you will definitely get a beautiful body, because the main thing is to set up

UN Human Rights Experts Urge Release of Captives From Karabakh Conflict

CAPTIVES, from page 1

the ceasefire agreement signed on November 9, 2020,” the experts said.

“Failure to disclose information on the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and refusal to hand over the remains of the deceased may amount to enforced disappearance, which both Azerbaijan and Armenia have committed to preventing,” they added.

At least 6,000 people were killed in the six-week war stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement on November 10. The agreement calls for the unconditional exchange of all prisoners held by the conflicting parties. Dozens of them were swapped in December.

On Thursday, January 28, Azerbaijan released five more Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) in return for an Azerbaijani captive freed by the Armenian side. The latest exchange raised to 59 the total number of Armenian POWs and civilians repatriated to date.

More than 100 others are believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Yerevan accuses Baku of dragging its feet over their release.

The UN expert group also expressed concern at “allegations that prisoners of war and other protected persons have been subjected to extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, torture, and other ill-treatment.”

“No exceptional circumstances whatsoever – whether a state of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency – may be invoked as a justification of torture and enforced disappearances,” they said. “Such acts, when perpetrated in armed conflict, may also constitute war crimes.”

“We appeal to the authorities of Armenia and Azerbaijan to carry out thorough, prompt, independent, and impartial investigations into allegations of serious human rights violations committed during the conflict and its aftermath in order to hold perpetrators to account and provide redress to the victims. These actions will facilitate truth, reconciliation, and healing,” the experts said.

Former President Kocharyan to Again Visit Moscow

KOCHARYAN, from page 1

“If you think that the court’s decision must be appealed you are not deprived of that possibility,” countered the judge.

Kocharyan was allowed to be absent from the country from February 3-8. His spokesman Victor Soghomonian told the Hraparak newspaper that Kocharyan was to fly to Moscow to take part in a meeting of the board of directors of a major Russian corporation, AFK Sistema.

Kocharyan has been a board member since 2009. He reportedly attended a board meeting during his previous trip to the Russian capital in mid-December.

The 66-year-old, who governed Armenia from 1998-2008, had not been able to attend any Sistema meetings since being first arrested in July 2018. He was most recently released from jail on bail in May 2020.

Sistema’s main shareholder, Vladimir

Yevtushenkov, was reportedly one of four wealthy Russian businessmen who paid the bulk of the \$4.1 million bail set by Armenia’s Court of Appeals.

Russia has criticized the criminal proceedings launched against Kocharyan. Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly made a point of congratulating him on his birthday anniversaries and praising his legacy.

Some Kocharyan loyalists claimed that Putin spoke with his former Armenian counterpart by phone during the latter’s December trip to Moscow. Kocharyan’s office did not confirm that.

The ex-president, his former chief of staff Armen Gevorgian and Armenia’s two former top generals, Seyran Ohanian and Yuri Khachaturov, stand accused of overthrowing the “constitutional order” after a disputed presidential election held during the final weeks of

Kocharyan’s decade-long rule. The charges stem from a deadly post-election unrest in Yerevan. All four defendants reject them as politically motivated.

Speaking during Tuesday’s court hearing, Kocharyan insisted that he is tried for his handling of a “political process.”

Kocharyan has been at loggerheads with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government ever since it took office following the “Velvet Revolution” of April-May 2018. He has joined opposition groups in blaming Pashinyan for Armenia’s defeat in the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh and demanding his resignation.

Kocharyan said last week that that he and his political allies will participate in snap parliamentary elections even if they are held by Armenia’s current government. “We will participate and win,” he declared.

Community News

Armenologist Kevork Bardakjian Reviews Accomplishments, Looks to the Future

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Dr. Kevork Bardakjian retired and became an emeritus professor of Armenian languages and literatures in May 2020 after holding the Marie Manoogian Chair of Armenian Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor for some 33 years. This is an opportune time to look back at some aspects of his career and his plans for the future.

In a 2011 interview in the *Mirror-Spectator*, he discussed his childhood. Born in Beirut and raised in Aleppo and Damascus, he was greatly influenced by his father, an Armenian priest, to enter Armenian studies. His studies at Damascus State University, Yerevan State



Kevork Bardakjian

University and Oxford University provided him with formal training, and he received his doctorate from Oxford in 1979. While studying at Oxford he worked as the Armenian specialist at the British Museum. He began teaching at Harvard University as an instructor in 1974 and became a senior lecturer. He also worked as a bibliographer for the university library.

He left Harvard to become the first holder in September 1987 of the Marie Manoogian Chair, which Bardakjian said was established with him in mind. Ronald G. Suny was already the holder of the Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History at the university and had started a program in Armenian studies. For seven years the two worked together in building up that program, organizing lectures, symposia, film festivals and musical events.

However, Suny left for the University of Chicago in 1994. Bardakjian said, “When he left, I took over as director of the program. On my request, the role of a director, to be appointed for three years by the director of the International Institute at the university, was defined and formalized, with various responsibilities and an executive committee to help.” Bardakjian organized many lectures and conferences through the Armenian Studies Program.

One major task was to fill Suny’s vacant chair at the university. Four scholars were invited as visitors to teach short courses (this journalist was one of them), and then there was a one-year appointment. After this Stephanie Platz was hired in 1997. She was followed by Jirair Libaridian, who in 2001 initially came to teach one semester a year for several years, and eventually was given a visiting professor appointment.

Meanwhile, Suny returned to the university and was an initiator of the Workshop on Turkish-Armenian Studies. He soon approached Bardakjian to participate, and the

see ACCOMPLISHMENTS, page 9



“Seerov Jash” volunteers at St. John

St. John’s ‘Seerov Jash’ Program Continues to Serve Metro Detroit Community

DETROIT — Though everyone in the country and the world has been massively impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, one of the most affected populations has been the elderly and those

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

who are otherwise incapacitated. Individuals who live alone and have relied on family members or loved ones to assist with their shopping or preparing meals were suddenly told that they should not take visitors, in order to protect themselves from the threat of infection, which at their age could be lethal.

As soon as the pandemic struck in March, Metro Detroit’s Fr. Aren Jebejian and the leadership and parishioners of St. John’s Armenian Church knew they had to do something. Thus, a special program titled “Seerov Jash” — Meals With Love — was born.

“On average, we send out from 250-300 meals a week,” says Lisa Mardigian, Youth Coordinator at St. John’s and an integral part of the Seerov Jash team. “We’ve been doing it since March and recently we passed the 10,000 mark.” The meals have been served twice weekly since the inception of the program. St. John’s onsite caterer, Paul Yousoufian, prepares the meals with his team. St. John’s building administrator Paul Andonian creates an e-blast to inform community members of the ongoing program. They are instructed to call or email Mardigian, who takes reservations for meals and lines up the team of drivers.



Volunteers working in St. John’s kitchen

person — observing all safety protocols of course. “I really want to give Annette credit, because she’s someone who has been doing this religiously,” says Mardigian (no pun intended).

Most of the recipients are the elderly, and many live in various senior living centers in the area. “Some of these people are 97-98 years old, we’re helping out people that are too old to leave their homes by themselves, and they rely on the camaraderie of our delivery volunteers and look forward to the visits,” Mardigian says.

In conclusion, states Mardigian, “It’s been an honor for me to be a part of an outreach program that not only fulfills the Christian mission of feeding our parishioners with meals but also feeds them spiritually, personally, and emotionally.”

Dr. Cliff Megerian Named CEO of University Hospitals

By Lydia Coutré

CLEVELAND, Ohio (*Crain’s Cleveland Business*) — Dr. Cliff Megerian, a respected researcher and clinician, has been tapped as the next CEO of University Hospitals.

Megerian, currently president of UH Physician Network and UH System Institutes, will succeed Thomas Zenty III, who announced this fall that he will retire in January 2021 after nearly 18 years leading the health system. Zenty is the longest-serving leader of Cleveland’s health systems, which comprise UH, Cleveland Clinic and MetroHealth. Under Zenty’s leadership, UH grew from three hospitals to 18.

During the interim period, Megerian will serve as president of the health system, according to a UH news release.

“Cliff has the clinical, academic and operational experience that this role requires, along with a deep appreciation for the character of UH, our mission and vision,” said Arthur Anton, chair of the UH board of directors, in a prepared statement. “He is an accomplished physician and scientist, with impeccable patient-care, research and teaching credentials based on decades of experience. These characteristics, in addition to his keen insight into healthcare strategy and trends, will serve our health system well going forward.”

For the past year, a succession planning



Dr. Cliff A. Megerian

committee of the UH board engaged in a “thoughtful and deliberate succession planning process,” Anton said in the release. The committee “analyzed the future needs of the health system and established a profile of the qualities and characteristics desired in an ideal candidate for the CEO position,” according to the release.

As president of UH Physician Network, Megerian currently reports to the CEO and has been a member of the executive committee. Previously, Megerian served as chair of the Department of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery, from 2012 until 2018, after holding the vice chairman role for five years, according to the release, which notes he was also director of the UH Ear, Nose & Throat Institute for seven years.

Additionally, he held the inaugural Richard and Patricia Pogue Endowed Chair in Auditory Surgery and Hearing Sciences and was director of otology, neurotology and lateral skull base surgery at UH. He is currently professor of otolaryngology — head and neck surgery at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

“I am truly grateful and humbled to have received the support of the UH board of directors to lead UH as we embark on a new chapter in our history,” Megerian said in a prepared statement. “I will work closely with the board, Tom Zenty, fellow leaders and caregivers throughout the health system to assure a seamless leadership transition. We will collaboratively create the strategies for UH to continue advancing the science of

see MEGERIAN, page 11



COMMUNITY NEWS

FAR and Norman K. Miller Charitable Trust to Help Children with Bronchial Asthma

NEW YORK — Bronchial asthma, the most common chronic childhood disease, is a major health problem for many children in Armenia. According to recent statistics, 10 percent of children, ages 5 and under, are those who suffer from asthma, and 15-20 percent of these children may develop disabilities if their symptoms are not controlled with medication. This problem has become critical due to COVID-19 and the recent Artsakh War, which has made it difficult for parents to purchase medications. Fund for Armenian Relief, which has prioritized children's health and care for years now through its comprehensive programs, recently forged bonds with the Norman K. Miller Charitable Trust established by the late Armenian-American entrepreneur, inventor, and philanthropist Norair K. Deirmengian. FAR's partnership with the trust will support procurement of hard-to-find yet essential medications needed to treat acute asthma. Through the initiative, 100 children from vulnerable families in Artsakh and Armenia will receive these medications in 2021.

"This generous support came in time. The Armenian government and the Department of Respiratory Medicine and Allergy at Arabkir Medical Center were facing a serious problem covering the need of this life-saving medication. The regular intake of this medication is essential for children with bronchial asthma to prevent frequent strokes and further, more severe



Norman Miller

consequences, which may result in disabilities," said FAR Health Program Director Dr. Hambardzum Simonyan. Norair K. Deirmengian was a survivor of the 1915 Genocide who was born near Kasken Maden, Turkey in September 1914 at the onset of World War I. His mother, Serpouhee, gave birth to him in the back of a hay cart as she and her two other sons, Arsen and Kourkin, were fleeing for their lives. His father, Karekin, was murdered before he was born.

Norair spent his childhood in refugee camps and orphanages in Romania, France, and Italy, often questioning when or where his next meal would be coming from or whether or not he would have a bed to sleep in that night. His meager beginnings deeply influenced his lifelong desire to provide safety and security for others. From a young age Norair excelled academically. His intelligence brought recognition and earned him an invitation to attend Moorat Raphael College Preparatory School in Venice, Italy. With graduation just weeks away, he received a letter from a distant uncle, inviting Norman to come to the United States, which he did in 1935. After two years at West Catholic High School, Norair was accepted at the University of Pennsylvania School of Business where he majored in accounting. He paid his tuition and continued to improve his English by tutoring other students in Italian, Spanish, German, and French.

After the WWII, where he was assigned for a time to regimental intelligence due to his ability to speak English, Turkish, Armenian, Romanian, Italian, French, and Yugoslavian, Norair K. Deirmengian returned to civilian life

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From left, Barge Miller, Norman Miller and Flossie Miller

and began manufacturing novelty coin purses along with his two brothers in the basement of their Philadelphia row home.

Starting in 1956, Norair K. Deirmengian began developing safety products for the overhead door industry, including edge sensors for industrial and commercial doors and motorized gates.

In 2004, thanks to his donations, Nor Getashen (Arstakh) community members were provided with clean, safe running water. He believed that if the people could see a way out of devastation, they would be able to help themselves recover and regain productive lives.

His daughter, Flossie Miller, who has made this donation to FAR possible, said, "I thank God for my Dad who, all the way from Heaven, continues to help children in need. May God bless Armenia and especially the children who have had their childhoods taken away from them."

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COMMUNITY NEWS/OBITUARY

Valadao: Security of Armenia Top Priority for Armenian Caucus

WASHINGTON – In resuming his role as co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues (Armenian Caucus), Representative David G. Valadao (R-CA) told the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) this week that the safety and security of the Armenian people is a top priority.

“In the aftermath of the six-week war launched by Azerbaijan against the Armenian people, addressing the humanitarian needs as well as ensuring the safety and security of the Armenian people is an issue on the minds of many of my Armenian American constituents,” said Valadao, in an exclusive statement to the Assembly. “I look forward to continuing my role as co-chair and working with the Armenian American community on these critically important issues.”

Over the past decade, Valadao has advocated for stronger ties between the US and Armenia and the US and Artsakh. Born and raised in



David G. Valadao

California's Central Valley, Representative Valadao learned about the Armenian people early on, as many of his neighbors and friends were of Armenian descent.

“Representing his constituents in the San Joaquin Valley, Representative Valadao has

been a steadfast proponent of strengthening US-Armenia and US-Artsakh relations,” stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “During his tenure in Congress, he led efforts in the House to ensure continued US assistance for de-mining in Artsakh, strongly supported affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, and repeatedly spoke out against Azerbaijani aggression, including the four-day war in 2016 as well as last year's six-week war backed by Turkey. We appreciate Congressman Valadao's dedication and leadership as a co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, where he re-joins his fellow Caucus leaders Congressman Pallone, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Congressman Adam Schiff and Congressman Gus Bilirakis.”

Valadao, who represents California's 21st Congressional district, has served in government since 2010, where he has taken a special interest in Armenian American issues. He trav-

eled to Armenia and Artsakh, alongside fellow Armenian Caucus members, in September 2017 and reflected positively on the “unforgettable experience.” While there, Congressman Valadao observed first-hand the challenges facing both Armenia and Artsakh and advocated for change upon his return to the US, including through the introduction of an amendment to increase funding for The HALO Trust's de-mining efforts.

The Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues was established in 1995 to bring together a bipartisan group of legislators dedicated to advancing US-Armenia relations. Over the decades, the Armenian Caucus has worked to ensure US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide, robust funding for Armenia and humanitarian assistance, including de-mining to help the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, among other key issues. The Armenian Caucus currently has 108 members.

Obituary

George Dermksian, MD (1927-2021)

NEW YORK – George Dermksian was born in New York City on November 10, 1927, to Yervant and Mariam Dermksian. He had one sister, Seerapey.

He grew up in New York City and went to Stuyvesant High School. After finishing high school he went to Columbia University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948. He then earned a Master of Arts at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1950, following which he completed his Doctorate of Medicine in 1954 at Cornell University Medical College.

In 1954, he became an Intern in Medicine at

St. Luke's Hospital in New York City in 1954. He did a second year of Residency at St. Luke's Hospital before becoming a Captain in the United States Air Force, School of Aviation Medicine, at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, in 1956-1958.

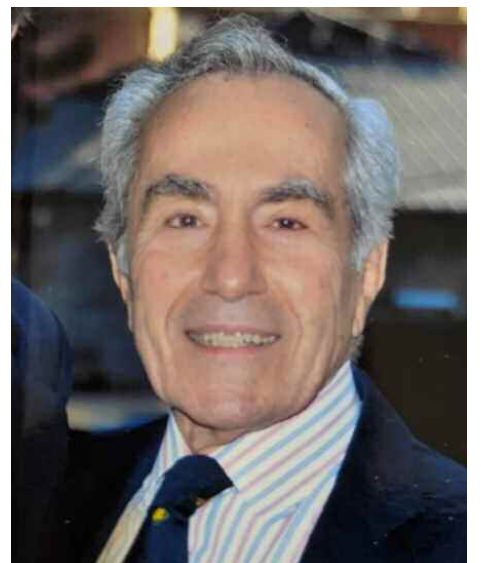
Following his return to New York City, he went on to finish his third year as a Resident in Medicine in 1958. Dr. Dermksian served as Chief Resident in Medicine at St. Luke's Hospital in 1959-1960. He then went into private practice for himself from 1960 to 2001. His numerous academic appointments included

Clinical Professor of Medicine at the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University. He served on and led numerous medical societies and committees during his medical career. Dermksian officially retired in 2001, but continued to be actively involved in medicine right until the time of his death.

He was actively involved in every aspect of the Armenian community throughout his entire life from the Armenian Youth Federation to the Armenian Prelacy to the Armenian Assembly. He devoted his life to St. Illuminator's Armenian Cathedral, of which he was a delegate to the National Representative Assembly through different periods from the 1960s to the 1980s. Nothing was more important to him than being Armenian and making sure that the tradition and legacy of the Armenia people would live on forever.

Dr. Dermksian married Tamara Manookian in 1954. They had two children, Gregory and Jeffrey. He would always spend his spare time with his family. Tamara died in 2019 after 64 years of marriage.

Dr. George Dermksian passed away suddenly



on January 14, 2021, and is survived by his two children (Gregory and Jeffrey), their wives (Suzanne and Roubina) and his four grandchildren (Matthew, Michael, Nicole and Jenna) who all adored their “Papa.”

Grace (Boyajian) Surabian Dedicated to Family, St. James Church

SAUGUS, Mass. – Grace (Boyajian) Surabian, 95, died at the High Pointe Hospice House in Haverhill on Thursday, January 7 after a brief illness. She was the wife of Harry Surabian with whom she shared 52 years of marriage as well as the widow of the late John Mirijanian.

Born in Philadelphia, Surabian was the daughter of the late Vartan and Elizabeth (Fink) Boyajian. Her primary goal in life was to be the best daughter, sister, aunt, wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She was all about faith, family and friends.

Grace enjoyed the company of her friends and family during the 25 years they summered at Old Silver Beach in Falmouth.

She was a member of the St. James Armenian Church for more than 50 years. In that time, Harry and Grace were active members of the



Mr. and Mrs. Group. From this group spawned a closer-knit group of 14 women better known as “Club 14” that got together once a month faithfully for more than 50 years to play cards and have fun.

Grace was also proud of her work making lifelike porcelain dolls, china painting and sewing.

In addition to her husband, she is survived by her two children, Jan Mirijanian of NJ. and Patricia Egavian and her husband Gregory of Boxford;

three grandchildren, Lauren, Eric, and Kimberly; two great-grandchildren, Gabriella and Sage; her sister, Mary Boornazian of PA. She was predeceased by her brother, Vahan Boyajian. She is also survived by her sisters-in-law, Florence Boyajian and Giselle Surabian.

Due to the present pandemic, the family will be delaying the funeral service until a later date.



Harry Salibian

BURLINGTON, Mass. – Harry Salibian, of Burlington, died on January 28, 2021.

He was the husband of the late Zaro (Apelian) Salibian. He leaves his son, Dr. David Salibian and his wife Nayiri; grandchildren Christian and Catalina and brother Vatche (Van) Salibian; brother-in-law Mike Apelian and sister-in-law Shoghig Basmajian. He is also survived by many loving nieces, nephews and cousins. He was predeceased by his brothers George, Abraham and Albert Salibian.

Funeral and cemetery services are private. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, current public health and safety measures will be followed. Social distancing and facemasks will be required for everyone's safety.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenologist Kevork Bardakjian Reviews Accomplishments, Looks to the Future

ACCOMPLISHMENTS, from page 6
latter was encouraging. Bardakjian said, “My idea was to help impartial and openminded Turkish scholars and help Turkish denialism implode as a first step. In other words, without compromising on the Armenian Genocide, to bring in Turkish scholars.” However, he said that a disagreement in approach with the other organizers became evident, and specified: “My understanding was that their idea was of rapprochement.” He feared a watering down of the significance of the Armenian Genocide. Bardakjian participated in the inaugural workshop in Chicago in 2000, but soon left the group.

Bardakjian, who reads Ottoman Turkish among other languages, had previously also been drawn into genocide studies on several occasions. He was consulted on including the Armenian Genocide in the US Holocaust Museum, and this led him to write *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide* (1986).

Teaching and Creating Necessary Resources

Bardakjian said that one of his most important focuses from day one at Ann Arbor was teaching, declaring: “What I did was teaching literature, culture and language. I taught both Eastern and Western Armenian. I also started taking on graduate students.” He also taught Classical Armenian, and had some history students.

Bardakjian instituted a major and a minor in Armenian Studies. While his chair initially was in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, he moved it to the Department of Middle East Studies after a decade, where he felt it was a better fit due to geographic and historical reasons.

He taught some joint courses in this department, and collaborated with faculty, chairing dissertations, helping with recruiting and teaching, and promoted scholars in Ottoman and modern Turkish, Persian and Arabic. He said, “The idea was to integrate Armenian into that and to find its distinct place in that entire region and picture, as well as to collaborate with specialists in Early Christian Studies in the department.”

He quickly began the Armenian Language Summer Institute, providing annual two-month intensive summer classes in Yerevan from 1988 until 2010, with a few interruptions. He said, “This was, I think, a good enterprise. It really put us on the map. We got students from all over the world, from America, Europe, North Africa and Russia. It was conducted under the Soviets, and after the Armenian earthquake, so people were very anxious to go.” After Armenian independence, travel to Armenia became easier and competition emerged in the form of other programs, but it continued successfully, Bardakjian said.

Apart from this program, Bardakjian said he worked hard to try to establish academic ties with Armenia. An exchange program for faculty and students was signed between Ann Arbor and Yerevan State University, but, Bardakjian said, “It didn’t really fly. It didn’t fly because Michigan didn’t give the money. Yerevan said they would receive our students and we were supposed to receive their students, but it was expensive. We were talking about at least 60 to 70 thousand dollars a student, so it was confined to one or two visits.”

Meanwhile, in 2011, Bardakjian was elected to the Armenian National Academy of Sciences in recognition of his contributions to Armenology.

In order to promote research on Armenian studies and provide easily accessible resources at Ann Arbor, Bardakjian worked on developing the university’s library collection on Armenian topics, just as he had while at Harvard University. He said, “We had some 1,500 titles when I first came, and it was up to 20,000 by the mid or late 1990s. I literally carried books from Yerevan. We also established exchanges with libraries, such as the Armenian National Library, library of the Academy of Sciences, and the Matenadaran [the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts]. I would go with big suitcases, with gifts, and come back with books.”

In the end, he said, Michigan ended up as one of the four largest Armenian collections in the US, with some books that no other library here

has. Among the extensive personal libraries he obtained for Ann Arbor were those of Vahe-Vahian [Sarkis Abdalian], Kersam Aharonian and Kevork Abajian from Istanbul.

Bardakjian not only expanded the library resources for scholars and students but also created teaching tools. When he first came to Harvard in 1974, he said, “Robert [W. Thomson, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies] and I felt there was a need for textbooks. That is why, though I am not a linguist by training, together we prepared the Western Armenian textbook [*A Textbook of Modern Western Armenian*, 1977], which was a best-seller until the early 2000s.” Thomson then wrote a parallel volume for Classical Armenian, after which the two planned a reference guide for the entire period of Armenian literature.

However, both scholars ended up leaving Harvard, so they agreed to split the guidebook into two separate volumes. Bardakjian took on the modern period and published *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* in 2000. He explained, “Our idea was not to work just ourselves but to make the materi-

this year.

After Daranaghtsi is finished, Bardakjian said he will focus on a handbook on Armenian literature to be published by Brill and sponsored by the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes. It discusses the status of the field, with 10-15 scholars involved. Bardakjian is working on the 1640-1920 period.

Third is a history of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. He has been searching for evidence to explain its obscure origins.

He is also interested in the modern part of the Armenian apocalyptic tradition, post-Cilician period, and intends to put together a bibliography and a study of writings covering the 14th to 18th centuries. He had previously edited a volume with Sergio La Porta on this called *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective* (2014).

Focus and Approach

When asked, in light of his varied interests and fields, what his main academic focus might be, he replied, “It would be the history of

views, for instance. That is fascinating to me.”

Bardakjian characterized his scholarly approach: “I am in some ways a Marxist. In other words, I look at things in their appropriate milieu, in their place, and I don’t trust historians ... so I go to texts. What is important to me is to see what people said at the time, fully realizing they may be propagandists of that era, but you have no choice. If you are going to reconstruct a period, you have to go to the texts. I don’t have much faith in generalizing theories.” He made clear that he is definitely not a post-Modernist, exclaiming, “I don’t believe in these things.”

On the Armenian Chairs in the US

Aside from his direct involvement at Harvard and University of Michigan, Bardakjian over the years has been consulted on the establishment of various other Armenology chairs in the US. He also has been involved in the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) from its inception and has served as its president and in other high-level positions over the years.

When asked how successful the project of introducing Armenian studies in the US through university chairs has been, Bardakjian replied, “It was an excellent idea, but the fault was in the way they established these chairs and the terms they laid down. I know some of these institutions were arrogant: they told Armenians give us your money and then go. It was not the same in Michigan.” An endowed chair like that at Columbia University, he said by way of example, has not had a permanent chairholder for nearly three decades.

He added that ideally the agreement to fund a chair should specify the purpose of the chair (some field of Armenian studies), state that the endowment cannot be used for other purposes when the chair is vacant, but ensure that the money accumulates instead, and any candidates for chairholder must have excellent command of Armenian in order to be able to use Armenian-language primary sources. Beyond this, of course the university can choose any suitable scholar.

Bardakjian suggested that SAS should continue to keep an eye on the various Armenological chairs and programs which had been created through Armenian-donated money to make sure that they serve their intended functions. Although SAS would have no legal standing per se, it could still have some influence.

He also felt creating new Armenological institutes which could look after graduate students, encourage research and do publications would be useful.

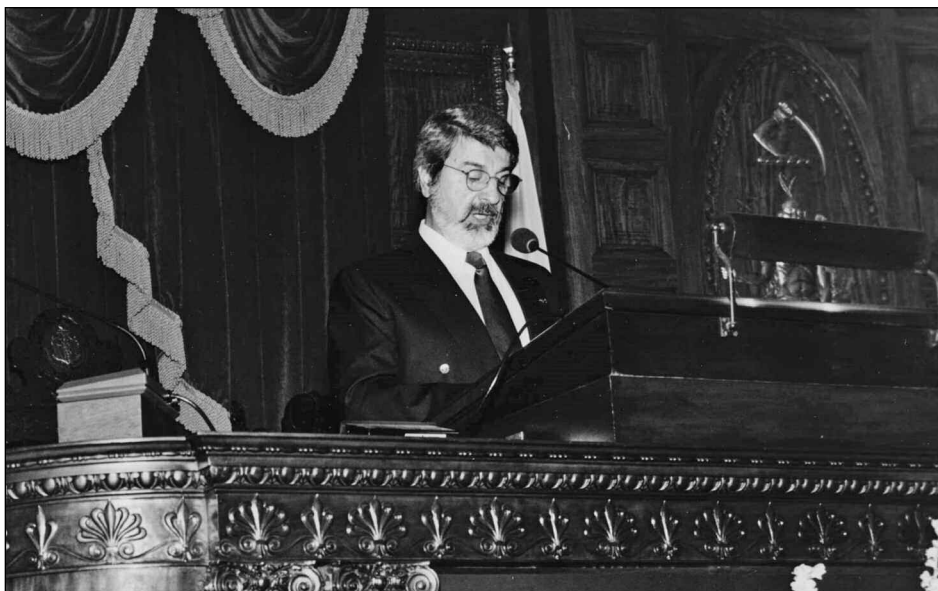
Scholarship in Armenia

Bardakjian noted that in Armenia, Armenian studies has continued as it was in the past. The current government tried to introduce educational reforms. He said that however it is not the right approach, declaring, “For example, they have confused Armenian literature for global or comparative literature.” Instead, they should do both separately. What should be changed, he said, is the critical approach, principles and valuation of relevant authors.

As times change, some writers will be relegated to the rear and interest in others revived, but the emphasis, Bardakjian stated, should be on authors of contemporary relevance. He declared, “We need to teach the important writers who illuminate our minds about the past and present.” Furthermore, the critical tools the modern world uses must be introduced to Armenia, he said.

The Matenadaran has a new generation of young scholars, linguistically well prepared, which has joined the ranks of the established scholars there, Bardakjian said, while the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, led by Ruben Safrastyan, has a few young people, is publishing, and is open to change. Yerevan State University, on the other hand, Bardakjian declared, “has taken a very traditionalist and conservative stand. There is a more urgent and wider need for the use of contemporary methodological and critical tools.”

It general, it is the old guard, the old approaches and the old traditions that still prevail. Armenian arts and literature must, he said, see the world through Armenian perspectives, but such perspectives should be very wide.



Kevork Bardakjian, keynote speaker at the Massachusetts State House Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, April 2002

al available and accessible to other scholars, Armenian and non-Armenian.” Unfortunately, he said, he could not find money or support to continue and expand this work chronologically past 1920.

Bardakjian also published a textbook of Eastern Armenian in 1999 with Bert Vaux.

Preparing Graduate Students

Bardakjian served as a graduate adviser to a number of master’s program students, as well as to doctoral students. Among the latter, he served as the main advisor to Kari Neely, who worked on Armenian, Arabic and Circassian literature in the first half of the 20th century; Michael Pifer (Armenian lyric poetry), who won the ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award; Vahe Sahakyan, on the post-Genocide Armenian diaspora; and Etienne Charrière, on Armenian and Greek novels in the late 19th century. He was joint advisor for Allison Vacca (on Armenian relations with Islam during the caliphate). He was on the doctoral committees for Stephen Rapp, Jr. (on Persia, Byzantium, and the Architects of the Written Georgian Past), Pamela Young (Ottoman-Armenian education), Ali Bolcakan (on language reform in Armenian, Turkish and Greek), who was defending his thesis the first week of February 2021; and Jeremy Johnson (not completed).

Future Projects

Bardakjian has a number of long-term projects he plans to realize. First is the translation of the 17th century chronicle of Grigor Daranaghtsi (Kamakhtsi). He said, “This is a very important work that is a cross between a travelogue and diary. He tells about the relations between Armenians and non-Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. It is not about kings and patriarchs but about ordinary people. He travels from Crimea to Rodosto to Echmiadzin and finally to Jerusalem.” The text is about 700 pages long, and the style is convoluted, so Bardakjian is on his third revision and completing the footnotes. He hopes it will be ready

Armenian thought, the relation between word and picture, and the period after the fall of Cilicia to the 18th century. That would be the most interesting to me.”

He gave an example of the relationship between word and picture. He suggested to someone from the Matenadaran who was looking for a topic to look for texts from the 17th and 18th centuries and paintings done by the Hovnatarians and others, to see how these two different mediums reflect Armenian realities of the time. He said, “I try to bring in paintings, music, texts, etc.; that is how I try to revive the silent past.”

He continued: “I am an organized eclectic. I am a universalist. I like to look at what is called Turkey today, the Armenians today, but I like to see them in the larger picture as neighbors to Syria, Iran and Russia now. When I am studying something, I would like to bring in other disciplines and go to the roots of the phenomenon.”

Bardakjian is interested not only in Daranaghtsi but several other key texts of the same period. He said, “It is still some kind of mystery to me how the Armenians were able to survive the post-14th century to the 18th, and how some kind of informal structure, thoughts and actions, formed some kind of a unity – very loose, but something was there. That is what I will try to capture. That is what I will try to do by studying these texts.”

He explained further: “There are people who write on every single thing they discover. I don’t write on everything I discover. That is not my character. I want a fuller picture of things. So I also like to resolve obscure points and problems. I like them. But that serves a purpose. It’s not just that. It brings out something. I have written this booklet on Baronian’s writings [*The Historical Figures and Events in Some of Hagop Baronian’s Allegorical Works, in Armenian*, 1980], allegorical writings whose heroes are animals or Greek mythological figures, prepared under Ottoman censorship. Once you decipher it you have his political



Virtual Diocesan Assembly Focuses on Voting For Officers, Budget, and Proposals

NEW YORK – On Saturday, January 23, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held its 118th annual Diocesan Assembly as an online gathering, convened over the Zoom video conference platform. Some 150 attendees—clergy, delegates, parish council chairs, and observers, representing local parishes throughout the Diocese—too part in the meeting.

Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, who presided over the gathering, acknowledged the novelty of holding a Diocesan Assembly remotely. In his welcoming remarks he noted that this was not only a first in the history of the Diocese, but possibly a milestone in the history of the Armenian Church, considering that other diocesan jurisdictions had decided to forego their representative assemblies for the duration of the pandemic crisis.

Findikyan said that delegates throughout the Eastern Diocese felt that even under such circumstances it was important to hold an assembly, and communications technology made the gathering feasible. The Primate emphasized that whether meeting face-to-face or over the Internet, “the church and the actions of its leaders always aim to serve God’s will, first and foremost.”

Worldwide concerns over the pandemic had caused the cancellation of the scheduled 118th Diocesan Assembly, which was to have taken place in May of 2020, in Dallas, TX. Furthermore, an earlier online gathering of Diocesan delegates and leaders on September 12, 2020, was conducted as an “informa-tional assembly,” with a limited scope and timeframe. In the same informational vein, throughout the fall several online “breakout sessions” were held, during which leaders of Diocesan departments and organizations reported on their activities and upcoming plans, and fielded questions from delegates.

Voting Takes Center Stage

An important function of the January 23 Diocesan Assembly involved voting for elected officers, proposals, and matters such as the approval of the Diocesan budget. In preparation for the meeting, the Diocesan Council along with representatives from the Board of Trustees, Nominating, Auditing and Proposals Committees, and officers of the 117th Diocesan Assembly, tested a virtual voting platform and deemed it to be both secure and user friendly.

At the outset of voting, Nominating Committee chair Dr. Lynn Cetin (Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside, NY) thanked Alex Topakbashian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, Wynnewood, PA) for his technical help in adapting the secure voting platform “Election Buddy” to the needs of the Diocesan Assembly. (The same platform is being recommended to local parishes for use in their respective parish assemblies this year.)

With the voting system in place, the first order of business was to elect officers of the 118th Diocesan Assembly. Having led the early portion of the meeting (as well as the September 12 “informational assembly”), 117th Diocesan Assembly chair Lisa Esayian turned over the virtual gavel to the incoming officers: chairman Gregory Saraydarian (Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY), vice chair Zaven Tachdjian (St. Gregory the Enlightener, White Plains, NY), and secretary Laurie Bejoian (Holy Translators, Framingham, MA).

Elections were also held to fill seats on the Diocesan Board of Trustees, as well as the Nominating, Proposals, and Auditing committees. (Results of all the elections appear below.)

A report from the assembly’s Standing Committee on the National-Ecclesiastical Assembly, Ecclesiastical Representative Assembly, Bylaws and Church Governance was presented by Ara Araz (St. Leon, Fair Lawn, NJ).

Financial Report and Proposals

Roseann Manoogian Attar (St. John, Southfield, MI) delivered the Financial and Budget Report on behalf of the Diocesan Council, which she serves as its longtime Treasurer. She discussed the sometimes difficult measures the Diocesan Council and administration took in the wake of the pandemic, noting that Diocesan financial concerns during the unpredictable pandemic year were greatly relieved by the federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP), which loaned \$500,000 to the Diocese. The Diocese is applying for the second round of PPP funding, while also applying for forgiveness of the first-round loan.

She noted that the Diocese raised over a million dollars for Artsakh during the year. She also congratulated Diocesan Development director Laurie Onanian’s efforts for the 2020 Annual Appeal, which raised in excess of one million dollars to fund the Diocese’s ministries for the coming year.

Diocesan Council Chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian (Holy Translators, Framingham, MA) made special mention of a half-million-dollar endowment established in memory of the late Edward Onanian, which will for the first time ensure an annual retirement benefit for lay members of the Diocesan staff.

Proposed Diocesan budgets for 2021 (of around \$3.7 million) and 2022 (around \$4.4 million) were both approved by the delegates.

The final area of deliberation by the delegates involved a series of proposals, several of which sought to amend the Diocesan Bylaws. Three such Bylaws amendments were passed by the assembly; these involved amendments that (a) clarify the nature of the majorities on the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees



Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over the 118th annual Assembly of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, which convened as an online video conference on January 23, 2021. Some 150 attendees—clergy, delegates, parish council chairs, and observers, representing local parishes throughout the Diocese—too part in the meeting, which included secure voting for elected officers, proposals, and the approval of the Diocesan budget.

required to authorize the dispensation of real properties, (b) establish a limit of three consecutive 4-year terms for service on the Diocesan Council, and (c) permit the Diocesan Board of Trustees to hold meetings telephonically.

All three of these amendments were passed for the second consecutive year, and pending approval by the Catholicos of All Armenians will be adopted into the Bylaws.

Voting on several other proposals was deferred to a later date, in consideration of the lateness of the hour. The report of the Auditing Committee was also deferred to that time—which is still to be determined but will be scheduled for the near future.

With a benediction from Bishop Daniel, the January 23 virtual session of the 118th Diocesan Assembly was adjourned. Before doing so the Primate expressed appreciation to the assembly officers and delegates for an orderly gathering in unusual circumstances, to the Diocesan Council members for their efforts throughout the difficult preceding year, and to Diocesan staff members Jennifer Morris and Kathryn Ashbahian for gracefully running the technical aspect of the Zoom video conference.

118TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

Assembly Officers

Gregory Saraydarian (Bayside, NY)—Chair
Zaven Tachdjian (White Plains, NY)—Vice Chair
Laurie Bejoian (Framingham, MA)—Secretary

Board of Trustees

Zaven Tachdjian (White Plains, NY)—full 10-year term
Edward Korkoian (Southfield, MI)—3-year completion of term

Nominating Committee

Dn. Ara Jeknavorian (Chelmsford, MA)—Chair
Fr. Ghevond Ajamian (Dallas, TX)
Fr. Tadeos Barsaghyian (St. Paul, MN)
Fr. Mesrob Hovsepian (White Planins, NY)
Jeanette DerHagopian (Cheltenham, PA)
1st Alternate: Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan (Bayside, NY)
2nd Alternate: Danny Mantis (Racine, WI)

Proposals Committee

Jacki Melkonian El Chemmas (Southfield, MI)—Chair
Fr. Tavit Boyajian (Palos Heights, IL)
Fr. Avedis Kalaydjian (Racine WI)
Charles Babikian (Chicago, IL)
Sarine Zenian (Washington, DC)
1st Alternate: Michael Kazarian (Southfield, MI)
2nd Alternate: Fr. Andreas Garabedian (Chicago, IL)

Auditing Committee

Russell Kashian (Greenfield, WI)
Alternate: Dean Shahinian (Washington, DC)

ACYOA Planning 75th (+1) Anniversary Alumni Reunion Weekend in 2022

NEW YORK – The Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), the national youth program of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, has decided to postpone the original plans of an event-filled 75th Anniversary Alumni Reunion Weekend in Northern New Jersey. The weekend of fellowship and celebration will now take place next year from Friday, September 16 - Sunday, September 18, 2022 in what is renamed, “75th +1” Anniversary Weekend. In the interest to gather as many ACYOA alumni and friends as possible, it was decided to move the weekend dates to accommodate everyone.

Shake’ (Ajamian) Derderian from Philadelphia will lead efforts across the Eastern Diocese throughout 2021 to celebrate ACYOA on the parish level. Kim Bardakian of Oakland, CA and Scott Najarian of Boston will Co-Chair the 75th Reunion Weekend on September 16 -18, 2022.

Early members of the Reunion Host Committee include ACYOA alumni Levon Altiparmakian, Sue (Chagachbanian) Biramian, Arda (Nazerian) Haratunian, Dn. Diran Jebejian, Taline (Jessourian) Najarian, Karen (Cholakian) Kazarian and Lisa Manookian. The committee will engage other ACYOA alumni to help organize specific events and serve as regional ambassadors to encourage alumni of all ages to participate.

ACYOA was created on January 12, 1946 in Providence, Rhode Island- one of the early legacies of the Primate of the time, the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan of Blessed Memory, who saw a successful youth movement as the future of the Armenian Church. Throughout its history both at the local chapter and national levels, ACYOA has organized and sponsored Christian education programs and retreats, service programs (domestically and abroad), leadership conferences, social and cultural events, and sporting competitions.

At this time, it’s encouraged that all ACYOA alumni make note of the date for this weekend of celebration next year from September 16-18, 2022. More details of the reunion weekend will be made available in the coming months.

If you’d like to get involved or become an ACYOA Alumni Ambassador for your church or region, please contact ACYOA75@gmail.com.



AGBU Announces Artsakh Research Grants

NEW YORK — In response to the Artsakh war, the subsequent media conflict, and the imperative need for incontestable scholarly research and analysis, AGBU is announcing the Artsakh Research Grants. This newly established initiative will raise awareness and enhance knowledge of Artsakh by expanding both mainstream and scholarly access to the region's history, culture, and current affairs and disseminate this array of information to the public. The AGBU grant will enrich assets on Artsakh studies by adding original published work to a greater pool of primary resources and accurate accountings based on pioneering research and other existing publications.

"The genesis of this grant was the concept of knowledge-based identity formation," said AGBU Central Board Member and Education Specialist Lena Sarkissian. "We established the grant to enhance the skills and research methods that help shape the Armenian identity to further understand the Armenian reality, promote awareness, and build reliable knowledge of Armenia and Artsakh. We want to control and spread our narrative to the world with quality data, verifiable sources, and on-the-ground research that will withstand the test of time."

The grant is open to students and scholars of all heritages. Graduate students, academics, researchers, post-doctoral scholars, independent writers, freelance journalists, and others interested in developing an expertise and understanding of Artsakh are encouraged to apply.

Research may include but is not limited to historical and/or contemporary work examining social, cultural, psychological, legal, economic, technological, humanitarian, and environmental issues of the region's past, present and future. Published work may include articles, reports, papers, as well as high-quality videos and podcasts.

Grant proposals must include samples of previously published work, a resume/CV, and a proposed budget with strategy for the on-the-ground research project. Proposals and completed works can be submitted in English, French, Spanish, or Russian.

Applications are in English and will be accepted on a rolling basis until April 30, 2021.

To learn more about the AGBU Artsakh Research Grants, visit www.agbu.org/artsakhgrants.

LA County Health Equipment to Be Donated to Armenian Engineers and Scientists' Group

LOS ANGELES — Recently, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion by Supervisor Kathryn Barger to donate electrical safety analyzers and portable medical devices no longer needed by the County to the Biomedical Engineering Committee of Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America. This donation, part of an equipment replacement process at the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, will include 12 Medtaster 5000c Electrical Safety Analyzers previously used as part of routine maintenance for biomedical electrical equipment and 27 GE Dinamap portable medical devices used to track a patient's vital functions. Biomedical Engineering Committee of Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America (BECAESA) provides support and assistance to organizations and entities throughout Armenia to improve the health and welfare of its citizens and visitors.

"I am pleased to be able to facilitate this donation and help support the work of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America to promote health and well-being of the Armenian Community," said Supervisor Barger. "This is a creative way to ensure that surplus equipment within Los Angeles County finds a new home and new purpose by organizations in need of such items."

Barger represents the largest concentration of Armenian-Americans in the county.

Dr. Cliff Megerian named CEO of University Hospitals

MEGERIAN, from page 6
health and the art of compassion."

A pioneer in the use of cochlear implants in children, Megerian is recognized as an international authority in ear surgery, according to the release. He has received more than a dozen research grant awards and completed several projects funded by the National Institutes of Health, according to the release.

Megerian received his medical degree from the University of Michigan Medical School and completed his internship and residencies at University Hospitals, followed by a fellowship at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Harvard Medical School, according to the release. He also holds a management certificate from CWRU's Weatherhead School of Management.

"We are highly confident about the future of our great health system with Cliff's leadership," Anton said in his statement. "The role of leadership is to create an environment where our 28,000 caregivers, researchers and teachers are able to achieve their potential and rise to meet the healthcare needs of the community we serve. They have powered our advancements in care and every day make a difference in the lives of our patients."

Donors of Record-Breaking Cleats for Artsakh Revealed

WATERTOWN — The #PeaceForArmenians cleats that broke NFL records have made the news again as the winning bidders on January 6, 2021 were revealed to be Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian of Boston. Kolligian and Khederian were on a mission to acquire these cleats, not for themselves, but to support the Armenia Fund and to bring awareness that another genocide is taking place in Artsakh. POW's remain imprisoned by Azerbaijan and innocent Armenian civilians are being tortured and killed and displaced from their homeland, and these atrocities have not been widely reported in the news.

Kolligian, president of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Museum of America, and Khederian, Vice President, are donating the cleats to the Museum. The dynamic duo have devoted their time and effort to keep the Museum in the forefront of the Armenian and non-Armenian communities. Proud and committed to the Armenian Museum's mission, this recent gesture

part of this. I was just the middleman for the extreme generosity and was thrilled to learn that Michele and Bob were the winners," Najarian recalled.

When the war in Artsakh broke out again on September 27, the typically quiet and behind-the-scenes Najarian realized he had to speak up, and he started a campaign using Instagram. One of the first videos he posted was of his boss, Coach Bill Belichick, expressing concern about human rights abuses being committed against Armenians in Artsakh.

Soon thereafter, Najarian announced the auction of the one-of-a-kind cleats—which would close on Armenian Christmas—designed by Massachusetts-based artist Joseph Ventura. The shoes featured a church, khachkar cross-stone, Mount Ararat, and the tricolors of the Armenian flag and were worn by Najarian on the field during three Patriots games. The shoes became a cultural phenomenon and broke NFL records for attracting the most bids in the "My Cause My Cleats"



Michele Kolligian and Bob Khederian donated the #PeaceForArmenians cleats to the Armenian Museum of America; they are pictured at Gillette Stadium with Berj Najarian of the New England Patriots who spearheaded the record-setting campaign to support humanitarian relief in the aftermath of the Artsakh war.

speaks to their generosity and passion for their Armenian heritage and the legacy left behind by the Museum's founders 50 years ago.

While the auction was going on, they knew they were up against another determined bidder. At one point they were about to put a pause on their bidding but with less than three minutes left to go they entered one final bid of \$40,300, which sealed the deal! "It felt like we had just won the Armenian Super Bowl," said Kolligian and Khederian.

"It was an exciting campaign and a record for the NFL's charitable campaign. We give credit and our sincere thanks to Berj Najarian and the Patriots Family for making this campaign a success in raising awareness about Artsakh," said Kolligian. "In the end what made us most proud was to support the ongoing humanitarian efforts in Armenia and Artsakh and to be able to give the cleats a permanent and prominent place in the collection of the Armenian Museum. The icing on the cake is that the cleats will remain in New England, home to the Patriots! The cleats will be featured in a Family Case in the Museum and we will be using them in a creative way to raise additional funds for the children of Artsakh whose lives have been drastically impacted by this war."

The Armenian-themed cleats were created by Armenian-American Berj Najarian, who is the Director of Football/Head Coach Administration for the New England Patriots. The NFL's "My Cause My Cleats" campaign was initiated in 2016 as a way for players to use their voices and their influence to build support for social causes.

"The entire experience went above and beyond my expectations and was incredible and humbling to be a

campaign, even surpassing cleats auctioned by all-star quarterback Tom Brady.

The Patriots are a tight-knit team, even described as a family by team captain Matthew Slater, who posted words of support for Armenians on social media along with linebacker Chase Winovich, wide receiver Julian Edelman, defensive back Devin McCourty, and even ex-Patriots star Tom Brady.

While Coach Belichick has supported the Armenians before, notably by wearing an Armenian pin during a visit to the White House in recognition of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the awareness around Artsakh started when Najarian made a presentation about his heritage and the history of the Armenians as part of the team's internal social justice campaign. In preparation for this talk and his social media postings, Najarian reached out to the Armenian Museum of America for resources and advice.

"I'm fortunate and thankful to work for the Kraft Family and Coach Belichick, and to be around the players. It was a collective effort of rallying around each other. It was special. I'm already looking for what's next. There is a lot more work to be done for Armenia," Najarian said.

The Armenian Museum issued a statement after the war, along with other influential organizations such as the Getty Museum and The MET. "We are concerned about the Armenian monuments, artifacts, and buildings that are now threatened in areas under Azerbaijani control," noted the statement. "This is a part of Armenia's heritage, but it is also a part of the world's rich culture. The Armenian Museum of America has doubled down on its mission to protect, preserve, and share Armenia's heritage so it will forever endure."



Arts & Living

California Artist Arpi Krikorian Spreads Armenian Culture, Color, and Joy

By Michelle Mkhlian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PASADENA, Calif. – California-based illustrator Arpi Krikorian has dedicated her life to celebrating and spreading the joy, richness, and vibrancy of Armenian culture. Arpi is renowned for her beloved modern illustrations of Armenian-inspired characters which are adorned with intricately-drawn traditional Armenian costumes.

Arpi and her family emigrated from Beirut, Lebanon to Southern California in 1978 to flee the Lebanese Civil War. Her artistic journey began at Mesrobian Armenian School when her art teacher, Ms. Wagner, encouraged Arpi to apply for the ArtCenter College of Design’s high school program. After completing the program, she became certain that art was her calling, but when she explained to her father that



Arpi Krikorian (Photos from arpikrikorian.com)

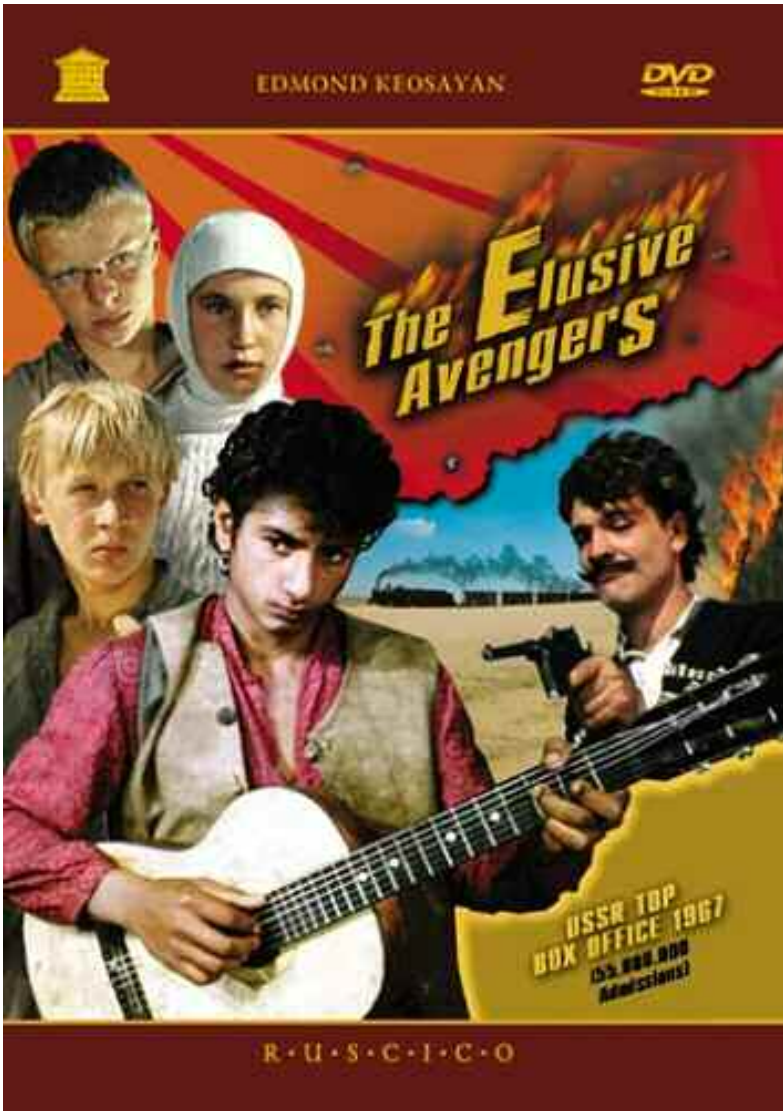
she intended to study illustration and become a full-time artist, he was not convinced. He had the staunch belief that Arpi could only help the Armenian people by becoming a lawyer or doctor. Nevertheless, committed to her dream, she applied and was accepted to the same ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, on the university level.

After earning her BA in illustration there, Arpi worked as a staff artist for “The Angry Beavers,” a Nickelodeon animated series from 1995-2000. She also worked on notable shows like “SpongeBob SquarePants,” “CatDog,” “Dora the Explorer,” “Oswald the Octopus,” and “Hey Arnold!”. As “The Angry Beavers” series came to an end, her family was growing, and her father, a realtor of 40 years, was diagnosed with cancer.

Compelled to take over her father’s business, Arpi stepped away from illustration to earn her real estate license and worked as a realtor for the next ten years. Arpi shared, “I actually loved being a realtor. I met a lot of great people and learned a lot about business, but it got to a point where I really needed to get back to my art.”

Fortuitously, in 2008, her daughter’s school, Sahag-Mesrob Armenian Christian School in Altadena, Calif., was looking for a new art teacher. What was only supposed to be a few weeks of teaching turned into three years because Arpi enjoyed working with the students so greatly.

“That role got me really excited about creating art for myself again. So I started drawing for myself and then I posted a drawing I did of an Armenian dancer on Facebook. It was funny see ARPI, page 16



Armenian Director Created Westerns in USSR

By Haykaram Nahapetyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – In 1965 the Soviet government was getting ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Great October Revolution of 1917. The government invited moviemakers to discuss the prospects of making new films dedicated to the Bolshevik revolution. Among the invitees was 29-year-old Armenian film director Edmond Keosayan, originally from Leninakan (known now as Gyumri), the second largest city of Armenia. He was young and perhaps less experienced than others. However, he was known for unstoppable energy and a temperament for experimentation. More importantly, a few years earlier, Keosayan produced a comedy about a female cook which became one of the most famous comedies of its time. He entrusted the main role of the cook to Svetlanna Svetlichnaya, also born in Leninakan, where her father, a Red Army officer had been stationed at the time. She later became a famous Russian actress.

One of the key problems the Soviet producers were facing with the 50th anniversary was how to prepare films to attract Soviet audiences. Society seemed to be tired of the strict propaganda that saturated the culture in decades following the revolution.

In the days of Nikita Khrushchev’s leadership (mid-1950s to the 1960s) some Western movies began to be screened in the Soviet Union and some literature was translated. To the surprise of the government, many American motion pictures galvanized incredible public interest, much greater than many of their contemporary Soviet films. In 1961 a record number of 67 million movie tickets were sold for the American Western “The Magnificent Seven” by film director John Sturges, surpassing any other Soviet or foreign film screened in the USSR till then.

At the 1965 discussion, Keosayan drew attention to this precedent, suggesting that a new approach be adopted. Per Keosayan, the films on the revolution should focus less on the revolution itself but rather feature adventures, horseback riding, shooting and action that would still remain within the scope of the revolutionary context. Keosayan basically spoke in favor of shooting a Western-style movie

see MOVIES, page 13



Edmond Keosayan

Dr. Joseph Bohigian to Speak on Armenian Musical History

FRESNO – Composer Dr. Joseph Bohigian will speak on “The Water Has Found Its Crack: Finding Armenia Through Music” at on Friday, February 19, at 7 p.m. Pacific Time, 4 p.m. Eastern Time. The presentation is part of the Spring 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is co-sponsored by the Fresno State Music Department.

Displacement and dispersion loom large in the Armenian collective memory, as seen through their music and the work of the composer and musicologist Komitas. A longing to reclaim elements of lost culture pervades the Armenian diaspora, where “Home” is reconstituted in exile. In response to the notion of a reclaiming of culture, Joseph Bohigian moved to Armenia to compose a piece titled “The Water Has Found its Crack,” tracing displacement, dispersion, and reclamation in Armenian music in order to explore the ways these three elements affect the negotiation of internal and external identity boundaries in diaspora.

The idea of the water ‘finding its crack’ is represented in the text of the composition, which comes from fragments of Armenian folk songs referencing water. In the piece, Bohigian reflects on the centrality of displacement in



Dr. Joseph Bohigian

Armenian culture in a quasi-folk song. The fluidity of dispersion manifests in lingering sliding tones which push at the boundaries of the traditional pitch-structure of Armenian music. The reunion of reclamation comes through an abstraction of sacred chant. These negotiations of identity boundaries are a central feature of identity maintenance for the dispersed, and thus the negotiation of fluid boundaries is an important part of music in search of Home. This is the story of Armenia. The story of an exiled people longing to be reunited – the story of the water finding its crack.

Bohigian is a composer and performer whose cross-cultural experience as an Armenian-American is a defining message in his music. His work explores the expression of exile, cultural reunification, and identity maintenance in diaspora. Bohigian’s works have been heard at the Oregon Bach Festival, June in Buffalo, Walt Disney Concert Hall, New Music on the Point Festival, TENOR Conference (Melbourne), and Aram Khachaturian Museum Hall performed by the Mivos Quartet, Decibel New Music, Great Noise Ensemble, Argus Quartet, and Fresno Summer Orchestra Academy.

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



ARTS & LIVING

Armenian Museum of America Announces 'Kez Het Hayastan' Concert Honoring Armenia

WATERTOWN – The Armenian Museum of America recently announced the third in its bi-monthly Online Concert Series. The performance is being recorded live in New York by three Armenian sopranos, Hasmik Meikhanedjian, Alvard Mayilyan, and Anahit Zakaryan. They will be accompanied by pianist and composer Hayk Arsenyan. The concert, titled “Kez het Hayastan” (With You, Armenia), is dedicated to Armenia.

The event will be aired online on Sunday, February 14 at 2 p.m. EST. It is free, open to the public, pre-registration is not required, and the video will be made available on the Museum’s website and social media pages including Facebook. This concert series is supported by a generous grant from the Dadourian Foundation, and it is curated exclusively for the Armenian Museum audience by artistic director and Konstantin Petrossian, who is a composer and conductor.

“We’re excited to present this third concert to our members, followers, and community,” noted Executive Director Jason Sohigian. “We joined many institutions in offering virtual programs during the pandemic so people can remain connected while we are temporarily closed. Normally we would host performances such as this in our gallery, but we are happy to host it online for our community in Watertown, Los Angeles, and around the globe. It is fitting because the audience at the Armenian Museum is truly global and people visit our website and social media pages from more than 75 countries.”

The Armenian Museum of America has expanded its offerings of virtual events while the galleries are temporarily closed to comply with COVID-19 regulations. In addition to the concert series, online programs include a weekly “show and tell” video about an object from its collection by Curator Gary Lind-Sinianian and a monthly virtual exhibition series, which has already featured Artsakh Rugs and Armenian Embroidery.

Hasmik Meikhanedjian has been singing professionally for more than 30 years. She has degrees in music from the Armenian State

Pedagogical University and Komitas State Conservatory. Meikhanedjian has worked with the State Radio and TV Chamber Choir of Armenia, performed in numerous festivals and concerts throughout Europe and the US, and was a member of the choir of Holy Echmiadzin. She joined the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir in 1993, for which she is currently one of its leading soloists.

Alvard Mayilyan is an expert in Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music and has performed throughout Europe and the US. She holds a master’s degree in voice and academic music from Yerevan State Conservatory. She has served as vocal coach to the Gomidas Choir of the Eastern Diocese in New York, and as director of the children’s chorus of the New Rochelle Opera. Her singing is featured throughout Sonia Balassanian’s film “Who Is the Victim?” which was presented at the Venice Film Festival.

Anahit Zakaryan started her voice training at a very young age at the School for Gifted Children and then the State Music Conservatory under the tutelage of Tatevik Sazandarian. After graduating, Zakaryan was invited to continue her studies at the Juilliard School of Music. She was soloist at the Armenian State Opera, Academy Choir of Armenia, and Armenian Female Choir, as well as soloist and one of the founders of the Armenian Youth Opera Theater. In 1993, her vocal talents earned her first place in a national Komitas Competition.

Pianist and composer Hayk Arsenyan has appeared in recitals throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas. A professor at NYU’s Tisch School, he holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano from the University of Iowa. He was awarded the Yevgeny Kissin Scholarship at Manhattan School of Music. Arsenyan is a lifetime member of the French Society of Authors and Composers, a member of the Composers Union of Armenia, a member of the Ararat International Academy of Sciences in Paris, and he directs the AGBU’s Performing Arts Department.

These New York-based musicians have craft-



Clockwise starting in the top left: Alvard Mayilyan, Hasmik Meikhanedjian, Anahit Zakaryan, Hayk Arsenyan.

ed an inspiring program that includes works by renowned composers such as Komitas, Tchukhadjian, Melikyan, Amirkhanyan, Petrossian and Mekanejian, paying homage to Armenia and celebrating hope, faith, and love in these difficult times.

The link to this free concert will be available on the Museum’s Facebook page, YouTube Channel, and website www.ArmenianMuseum.org.

The Armenian Museum of America is the largest Armenian Museum in the Diaspora. It has grown into a major repository for all forms

of Armenian material culture that illustrate the creative endeavors of the Armenian people over the centuries. Today, the Museum’s collections hold more than 25,000 artifacts including 5,000 ancient and medieval Armenian coins, 1,000 stamps and maps, 30,000 books, 3,000 textiles and 180 Armenian inscribed rugs, and an extensive collection of Urartian and religious artifacts, ceramics, medieval illuminations, and various other objects. The collection includes historically significant objects, including five of the Armenian Bibles printed in Amsterdam in 1666.

How an Armenian Filmmaker Created Westerns in the USSR

MOVIES, from page 13

in the USSR, a totally new genre for Soviet cinematography. According to some sources, there was a moment of hesitation by the supervisors. Emulating an American movie-style in the years

of the Cold War was a challenging idea. However, the government finally accepted the initiative.

By the end of 1966 Keosayan’s film about four teenagers (three of Slavic nationalities and one Gypsy) was ready. The magnificent four, despite their young age, were skillfully riding horses, shooting from guns, and engaging in all kind of tricks – helping poor people and chasing the oppressors. In April 1967 in Moscow’s Home of Cinema, the premiere of Keosayan’s “The Elusive Avengers” took place.

Public appreciation of the film exceeded all expectations. A schoolgirl wrote a letter to one of the actors saying that she had watched the film 50 times. In Soviet cinematography, if a film would recover the expenses within a year after its release, it was considered a success story. With more than 50 million movie tickets sold, Keosayan’s “Avengers” paid off its budget within eight weeks after release – and secured substantial income in the following months. Keosayan also did the first sequel in the USSR by producing two more films describing the adventures of the four avengers. In both cases, with 60+ million tickets sold, Edmond Keosayan scored new records, therefore jumping to the top of the list of the most successful Soviet moviemakers.

In spite of his head-spinning success, Keosayan never forgot his ethnic roots. He frequently included Armenian actors in the films. Armen Dzhigarkhanyan, Eduard Abalian, Sergey Potikyan, Artem Karapetyan and Laura Keosayan (his wife) appeared in his movies with many compatriots serving as part of his technical crew. Keosayan also directed two films in Armenia itself. The first was “The Men” [Tghamardik], a comedy, in 1973 and then, in 1978 “Star of Hope” [Hooso Astgh]. The latter is a historic drama dedicated to the struggle of the Armenian people in the Syunik region of Armenia. A monument on Zoryan Street of Yerevan, not far from the Opera House, depicts the group of friends who appear in the film “The Men.”

A small detail reveals something of Keosayan’s feelings about Armenian identity. In a movie called “When September Comes” (1975), an old Armenian man flies to Moscow to take his grandson for the first time to school on September 1, when the schoolyear officially commences. In one of the final scenes the man

gets drunk and sings an Armenian song. The Russian voice-over of the song relates some content about apple trees. However, the Armenian audience could understand that in reality the song was dedicated to Armenian



Monument on Zoryan Street in Yerevan of the friends in the movie “The Men”

fedayees. “Hay fedayeener, dzhan fedayeener, dzer mayrere dzez ghurban,” sang the old man.

Edmond Keosayan passed away in 1994. Both his sons, Tigran and David are engaged in movie production. Few Soviet moviemakers followed his example by creating more Soviet-type Westerns. The new genre eventually became known as Eastern, however, for distinguishing purposes.



ARTS & LIVING

Responding To Violence Through Art

YEREVAN — Every message I have received from Armenia over the holidays has expressed the notion that 2020 was a terrible year for everyone, and doubly so for Armenia. Not only has the pandemic brought sickness and death to many families, but the war in Artsakh has left the country traumatized, many young people wounded or killed in battle.

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Arman Hambardzumyan, a young artist in Yerevan, wrote that he worked through the end of November, trying to express his feelings through art. Three sculptures resulted from the process: “Jason,” “The Battle against the Minotaur” and “The Child of War.” The last one, created during the military conflict, has a special concept.



Arman Hambardzumyan with “Hector”

“The idea was born, he explained, “when I saw the destroyed childhood of the children living in Artsakh, hiding in shelters under the bombed-out buildings. In the eyes of the children, I read the pain of the horror of war. Arman called it a “war of generations. In earlier times, he said, “children used to play with balloons or fly kites, but today out of a peaceful sky comes danger, with drones and bombers. In his sculpture the child is holding the string to a kite, which “has turned into a military drone bearing the flag symbols of countries engaged in aggression against the Armenians. Those countries that supplied the drones have carried out “deadly policies that have become “a plague for our Armenian nation.

With this sculpture, Arman said, “I raise my voice and condemn the insidious military policy of the governments of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Israel towards our peaceful country. This sculpture represents all children worldwide whose childhood has been shattered by the aggression of foreign enemies.

In the recent war, Arman’s brother Haykaz was deployed in one of the most dangerous places in the south, and fortunately returned home safely.

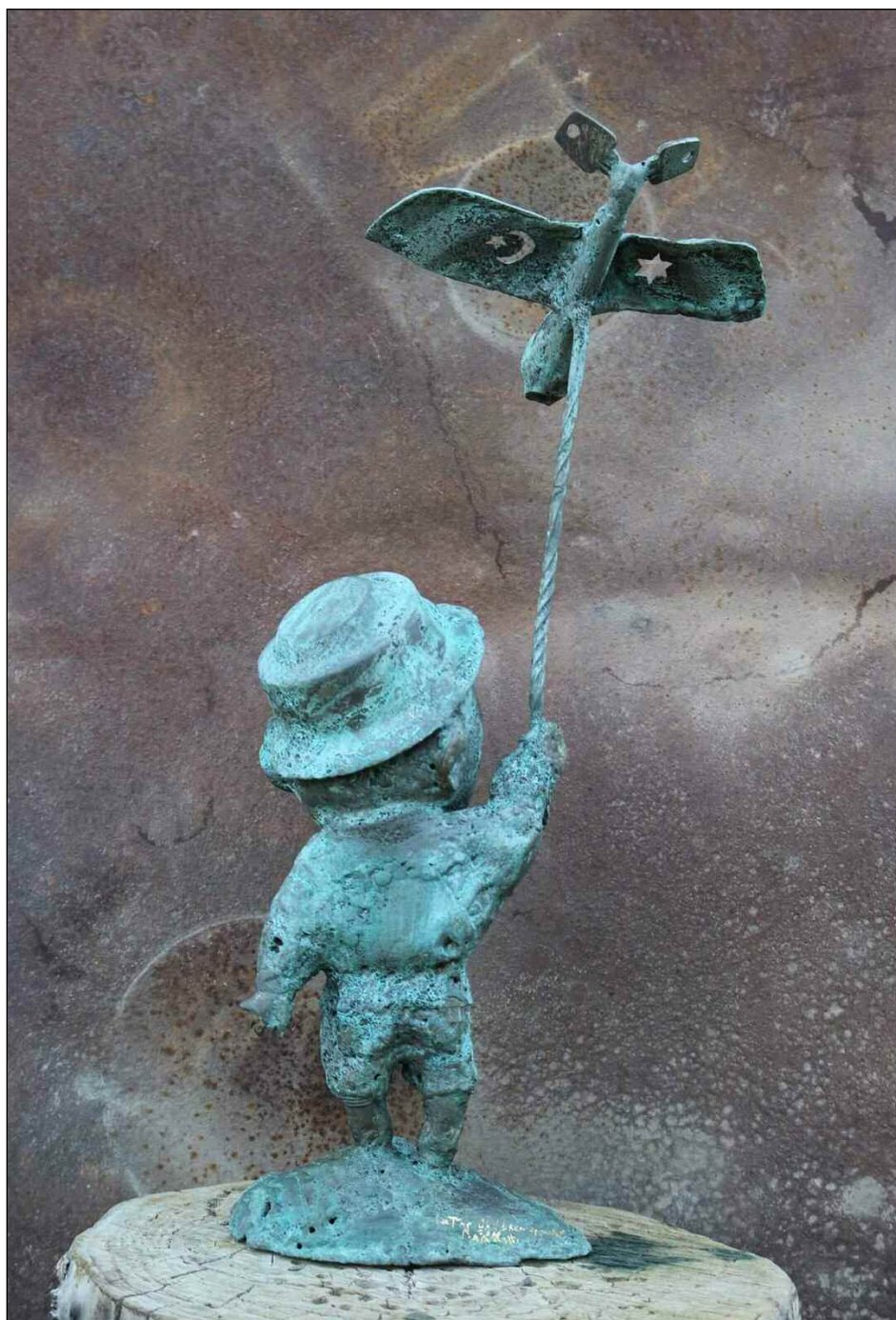
Arman was born in 1988 and was a child when newly-independent Armenia was engaged in war in Nagorno-Karabakh. As a youngster, he had no toys, and therefore had to make himself things for amusement. His father always wanted to become an artist but did not have the means to do so; Arman decided to realize his father’s dream and, while still in elementary school, determined to study art. He attended the Henry Igityan National Art Center, then earned his master’s degree at Yerevan Pedagogical University. He has specialized in bronze sculptures, focusing on subjects from mythology, including the Homeric epics. One magnificent piece depicts Hector, the Trojan warrior.



“Battle Against the Minotaur



“Child of War”





ARTS & LIVING

This 22-Year-Old Is Paying for College by Selling Rare Vintage on Depop

By Liana Satenstein

HOUSTON (*Vogue*) — Olivia Haroutounian is not your typical college student. The visually arresting 22-year-old looks plucked out of a Pre-Raphaelite painting with long black curly hair and old-world features, and frequently wears a vintage Oasis T-shirt and Manolo kitten heels. Unlike most college students with an eye for rare designer garments, she makes her fashion habit work in her favor. Her sales pay her tuition at the University of Houston, where she studies corporate communication with a minor in anthropology.

Her Depop page, where she has 26,000 followers, is a treasure trove, including a bold-print '90s mesh tank top by the Paris-based label Xuly.Bet and a race car-inspired pair of stretchy shorts by the Japanese label Hysteric Glamour. Balancing out these indie finds are Insta-must pieces like a Jean Paul Gaultier mesh shirt with the image of Jesus and a lime-green Gianni Versace bodysuit. She's been a collector since she was 10 years old, so it was only destiny that she become a vintage seller. (Depop is a peer-to-peer social shopping app.)

Haroutounian grew up trawling estate sales and yard sales alongside her mother, who is a vintage clothing dealer. "She started doing it when she was pregnant with me. She didn't want to leave me with a babysitter," she says. While she disliked going to sales with her mother at first, Haroutounian slowly became interested in clothing. Her mother had an affinity for American designers of the '70s, such as Stephen Burrows, Geoffrey Beene, and Norma Kamali, which sparked Haroutounian's obsession with clothes. "I kind of fell in love with clothes there," she says. Her first purchase was at 10 years old when she went to a yard sale of a former rock band



manager. "There were '70s clothes, like platforms and all of these really rare T-shirts," she says. "Everything was a quarter. Ever since then, I've been super into collecting." From that sale, Haroutounian has kept a Hole T-shirt, as well as an authentic John Lennon and Yoko Ono "Bed-Ins for Peace" T-shirt that she estimates is worth about \$1,000.

At 13, Haroutounian started to make a profit. Her first sale was a '60s Swiss-made record player that she bought for \$50 and resold for \$1,200. Later at 16, she purchased a '90s Betsey Johnson bondage skirt from a thrift store for \$1 and sold it to one of her mother's customers for \$60. She didn't launch her website until 2017, when she was in high school and cleaning out her closet with a friend who recommended she start selling on Depop. "I was hesitant, but when I started, everything sold pretty quickly," she says. "And I just kind of went from there." During her time selling, Haroutounian has found some stellar gems, including a Jean Paul Gaultier tattoo dress and matching bolero from spring 1994, a pair of



Versace boots from the fall 1992 S&M collection, and a Prada suit from spring 1996, which she describes as "avocado green with a Bakelite buckle." It's not the only celebrity-favorite piece in her collection. One of the most standout items is a red leather Chanel jacket from fall 1992, the same style that Claudia Schiffer wore on the runway.

Mixed in with the big-ticket items are pieces from less-known designers, whom Haroutounian has an encyclopedic knowledge about.

Her Depop page is a mishmash of offerings that includes a plaid dress by lingerie-infused French label Chantal Thomass, a corset by Belgian-Flemish designer Kaat Tilley, as well as one by Catherine Coatney, who created '90s goth-fetish wear for club kids. Some of the smaller labels are the most sought-after, such as Xuly.Bët by Lamine Kouyaté, a Paris-based designer known for their work in upcycling and experiential shows, and the Italian designer Romeo Gigli, whose work feels like entering a majestic art piece from the mid-1800s.

"I like them because I don't really see people carrying them and I like carrying things that are unusual and forgotten about," she says, "I personally love this stuff. I find it hard to sell it, but it is so well-made and different."

Currently, Haroutounian spends about three to four hours a day shopping online for clothes, and hours upon hours shopping for pieces on the weekend with her mother. When Haroutounian is ready to list, she photographs herself for four hours at a time, three times a week. "I have a tripod, but the remote broke, so I use a self-timer," she says. "And I have a painter's tarp that catches the flash."

With each post on Depop, Haroutounian adds a snippet of history about the item she is selling.

Under a burgundy puffer by Japanese designer Keita Maruyama, she explains, "Most of the pieces from this collection were car-themed with Maruyama's initials in the style of the STP [Standard Temperature and

Pressure] logo."

For a plaid Chantal Thomass for Ter et Bantine dress she writes, "Chantal Thomass started designing around age 18.



Thomass would design clothes, her mother would sew them together, and her boyfriend would paint designs onto them with turpentine paint."

Although the research takes a bit of time, she enjoys it. "I feel like people are far more interested in seeing something by somebody they've never heard of before and learning something," she says.

Haroutounian has a hefty schedule between her business, which takes upwards of 40 hours a week, and being a full-time college student. But she is making it work. When asked how she manages it all, her answer is simple: "I work better under pressure."

Down the line, she'd like to use her deep knowledge of fashion history to educate others. Most recently, she has been asked to do more styling. "There is a big lack of anything to do with the arts in this state in terms of public education. There aren't programs in high school to learn how to put together portfolios or make connections. There is a lot of talent, but everyone leaves," she says. "I want to create something that makes people stay and build."

Whatever she chooses to do after college, it will be very much vintage-focused. "I truly believe that the vintage market is going to become as big as retail and as powerful," she says. "Keeping that in mind, the most important thing to me is keeping it accessible and realizing that my business is a vehicle for promoting being environmentally conscious. Also, educating people on fashion history and designers people have forgotten about or never heard of."

Photos: courtesy of Olivia Haroutounian / @shop_reallifeasliv



California Artist Arpi Krikorian Spreads Armenian Culture, Color, and Joy

ARPI, from page 12

because people who had met me in the previous ten years didn't know that I was an artist. They just knew me as a realtor. After I posted the drawing, people were asking me where can I get that and who made this, because at the time I posted it, I didn't even say it was my own work," Arpi explained.

Arpi was first inspired to draw her famous Armenian dancers when she couldn't find joyful Armenian cultural decorations or art work with which to decorate her daughters' bedrooms. After receiving an overwhelmingly positive response from her Facebook connections, she began ordering canvas prints and custom mugs featuring her illustrations of Armenian dancers. As the demand for more of her joyful Armenian products grew, Arpi began mass producing

repeating patterns on different cultural relics like khachkars [stone crosses], the cloth lining of the books of the Madenataran [The Armenian Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan], Armenian doors, tapestries, tilework, embroidery, and needlework. I then create my own patterns for the backgrounds using those existing patterns as my inspiration."

Creating the backgrounds is a process similar to creating the characters, except the backgrounds are colored digitally rather than with markers. By keeping the background and character as separate layers in Photoshop, she can adjust the illustration to be used for various products.

When a friend suggested that Arpi should name each of her dancers, she knew they had to be given authentic Armenian names.

"My father, who passed away two years ago, felt it was extremely important to pass down Armenian names to future generations. If any of my friends had babies and they didn't give them Armenian names, my dad would scold and lecture them about the importance of passing traditional names down. That was one of the reasons I developed the page of Armenian name suggestions on my website. It was about eight months to a year of research of looking at different books and websites and going through the dictionary to find words that would make for a nice Armenian name." Arpi explained.

Perhaps there is no greater testament to Arpi's impact on culture and art than the New York City Metropolitan Museum of Art featuring her products at Armenia!, an exhibition from 2018-2019. Her products completely sold out so she had to restock. It was said to be one of the best-selling special exhibit stores that they have had to date. Arpi gushed about the achievement: "It was one of the best things I think has ever happened to me. I felt very, very proud."

On several occasions throughout 2019, Arpi held successful pop-up shops at the department store Nordstrom. She shared with me a touching Armenian-language conversation she had with a young customer during one such occasion.



everyday items such as stationery, kitchenware and clothing adorned with her artwork from December 2013. Today, her products are sold in a total of ten stores throughout Los Angeles and New York, and via her e-commerce website.

Arpi effusively exclaimed: "If you ask me, who are you, my first answer before I even say my name would be I'm Armenian. I'm so in love with our Armenian dances – the hand movements, and the gestures. I love the fact that everything we do as Armenians, even the names that we have, all have meaning behind them."

With a focus on cultural art and heritage preservation, Arpi employs a modern illustrative style that takes traditional costuming and pat-



terns from the Armenian heritage and presents it with a modern twist.

Arpi detailed her creative process, "My characters are original products of my own imagination. I always start in my sketchbook with a pencil drawing of the character, then scan the sketch into Photoshop to clean things up and refine the drawing. I then print out the black and white pencil drawing onto mixed-media paper and I actually hand-color the character with markers. People are always shocked to hear that I draw the characters with markers. They often think I either paint them or create them digitally. As for the backgrounds, I search for

"I was selling my Armenian products at Nordstrom in Glendale when a family came in with their daughter who was about four years old. She looked at one of my backpacks then grabbed it and hugged it. She came up to me and said, 'Asi yes em!' [This is me!] And I went, 'Do you think it looks like you?' She said, 'No, she doesn't look like me – she is me!' She asked, 'How did you do it?' I responded, 'I drew it' and she replied, 'You drew me?'"

This little girl, who participated in Armenia folk dances, could not understand how the dancer on the backpack could look like her, and showed it in disbelief to her mother, again



Arpi Krikorian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), 2018 (Photo from @arpikrikorian)

exclaiming, "Look, she drew me. It's me, it's me!" Arpi said, "It made me cry to think this little girl was walking around the store not expecting anything to relate to her, and here she is seeing someone who looks just like her, at Nordstrom! It was an incredible experience. That's why I do this. That's what brings me happiness."

Arpi frequently receives photos and touching messages from Armenians in different countries, ranging all the way from the Netherlands to Brazil who have purchased her products.

Arpi said, "I don't want to be known as a retailer. I'm an Armenian artist who makes Armenian art and culture accessible. For \$18 you can have a mug that reminds you of being Armenian each time you use it. The fact that my art is out there and is reaching Armenians all over the world and bringing them happiness and connecting Armenians to the homeland is what inspires me and gets me going."

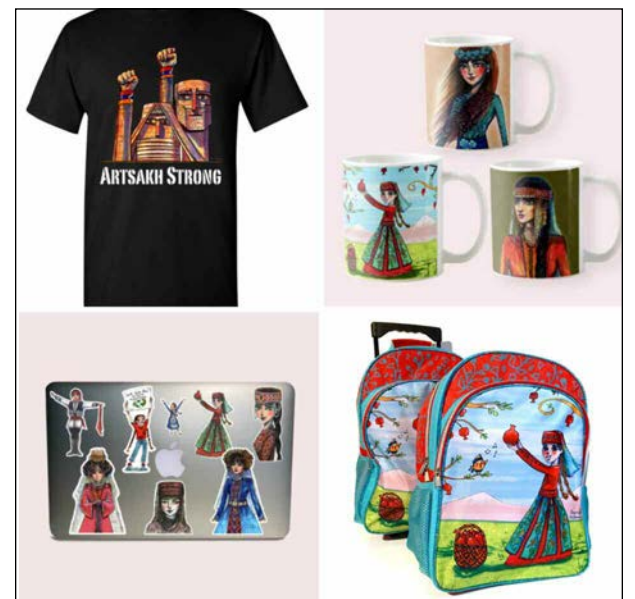
Arpi contributes to the Armenian community and diaspora not only through her art work, but through her philanthropy. Prior to the war in Artsakh, Arpi sent \$15,000 worth of her school supplies including backpacks, lunch boxes, pencil cases, journals, and tote bags to 200 students and school staff at Armenian Relief Society-sponsored schools in Artsakh. Since the explosion at the port of Beirut, Lebanon in August 2020, she has also donated a portion of her profits to the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) of Lebanon. Additionally, Arpi has donated over \$28,000 to her husband, Joseph Krikorian's non-profit organization, Code 3 Angels through the sales of her "Artsakh Strong" t-shirt. This allowed the organization to purchase and distribute medical equipment and basic necessities like clothing and food directly to the displaced families of Artsakh.

Arpi is currently working on several new projects. One of these is a dream over 30 years in the making. Arpi is submitting three children's books to publishers, two of which are Armenian-themed and written in English.

She explained: "I want to be able to share our culture with non-Armenians. I want them to know that we're not just the victims of the genocide. There is so much more to us. We are survivors, we are strong people, we are deeply root-

ed in culture, and we love poetry and art. It's empowering for everyone to learn about different languages, cultures, and ethnicities."

In addition to working on several children's books, Arpi has been developing "Sosse and the



Arpi Krikorian products (Photos from arpikrikorian.com)

Daredevils of Sassoun," an Armenian-themed feature animation in collaboration with Twiddle Productions Inc. The animation, based on the epic legend of David of Sassoun, follows the daring adventures of Sosse, a young Armenian girl who through her heroic journey eventually joins David and the daredevils in a historic battle to free Armenia and her people from invaders. You can watch the trailer for "Sosse and the Daredevils of Sassoun" here.

One of Arpi's greatest goals is to create a non-profit organization that funds creative writing and arts education for Armenian youth to ensure the perpetuation of the Armenian language and continued revival of Armenian art and literature.

Arpi has a message for fellow artists and creatives: "My advice is, don't create things because you think they're going to sell. Create for the sake of your own enjoyment. Create what you love and what you want to see. Soon enough, you will find your audience because you're never alone in how you feel, never. Also, don't keep yourself a secret. By putting yourself out there, you could be inspiring someone else to do the same and the more people we have putting their art out there, the happier people we have in the world, and the happier world we'll have."



Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

St. Sarkis Halva (Marshmallow Halva)

This St. Sarkis Halva recipe is featured in *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* published by Lena Tashjian and Siroon Parseghian in 2020. “The holiday celebrates Saint Sarkis, one of the most beloved Saints within modern Armenian culture, as he is the Armenian patron saint of love and youth, similar to Saint Valentine. His feast day is a moveable feast, held anywhere between January 11 and February 15.

On St. Sarkis Day, Armenians in the Diaspora believe that before you can have the good halva, you have to consume and endure the not-so-good aghablit.

The holiday is celebrated 63 days before Easter, and the aghablit is an unbearably salty cookie or wafer that is always consumed the night before St. Sarkis Day,” says Lena.

“Aghablit sets the wheels of love in motion for those people who are not yet married,” adds Lena. “The night before the holiday, after consuming the aghablit, you are not meant to eat or drink anything afterward, which means you will go to bed thirsty. And then you are expected to dream about a person who will offer you water or lead you to a source of water. According to the tradition, this person will be your future spouse. Every man who has the name Sarkis is congratulated for their name on Saint Sarkis Day.”

On the eve of the holiday, Lena begrudgingly consumes aghablit, reminding herself that by eating the almost inedible cookie so that she will be able to treat herself to the delectable St. Sarkis Halva in the morning.

According to Revd. Dr. Nersessian, “St. Sarkis lived during the fourth century and was from Caesarea of Cappadocia in Asia Minor. He rose through the military ranks as a consequence of his valiant campaigns and even a trustworthy and faithful general to Emperor Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman Emperor. At the accession to power of Emperor Julian the Apostate in 361 AD, Sarkis took refuge with his son, Martiros, in Armenia. Later, when the pagan emperor Julian fought against the Persians, Sarkis and his son went to Persia to join the Persian army in the service of the Persian king Shapur II and fought in the Persian army against the Romans. Sarkis also converted many Persian soldiers to Christianity. King Shapur II discovered that Sarkis was a Christian and asked him to abandon his faith and embrace Zoroastrianism instead. St. Sarkis steadfastly refused to abandon his faith. Finally, the king executed both Sarkis and his son.

“Today there are over 200 monasteries and churches in his honor. Thousands of tales are stories are woven around his name. In Armenian art, he is usually depicted on a horse with his son Martiros sitting behind him. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has a large printed curtain made in Madras in 1710 with the image of St. Sarkis and Martiros on horseback,” says Dr. Nersessian. “For the Armenian nation, St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved. It isn’t casual that St. Mesrop Mashtots brought the relics of the saint to the village Karbi (Ashtarak Region) and the Church of St. Sarkis was built over his relics,” adds writer Tamar Najarian.

To make aghablit (Salty Wafers/Cookies), combine: 1 1/4 cups of flour with a few tablespoons of salt and stir well. Add enough water to create a dough and roll it out. Cut into shapes of choice (or use cookie cutters) and bake at 350F (180C) until golden brown, 20 to 30 minutes.

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 to 1 cup sugar
1/3 cup water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 teaspoons rose water
5 cups (250 g) vegan (gelatin-free) marshmallows*
1 cup walnuts halves
2 to 3 cups sesame seeds (you won’t use them all but need a good amount to properly coat the halva)

PREPARATION: For the lamb:

Place sesame seeds in the refrigerator to cool. In the meantime, combine water and sugar in a pot and bring to a boil. Once the sugar water boils, reduce heat to low-medium and add the lemon juice.

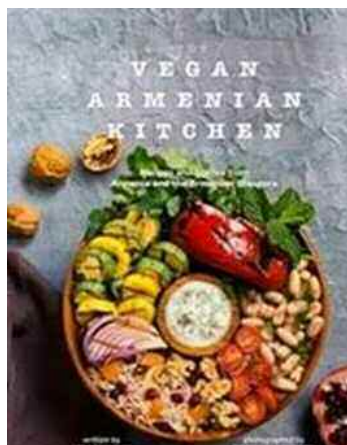
A few minutes later, add the rose water. Once mixture becomes golden in color, add the marshmallows. Stir until completely



smooth, and then turn off heat. Pour chilled sesame seeds in a tray. While mixture is still hot, pour scoops of it—making the scoops as round and flat as possible—on top of the sesame seeds. Pour as many scoops as you can fit on the tray.

Place walnut halves in the middle of each scoop. Let the halva cool for about 45 seconds to 1 minute, as it will be much easier to roll and handle the scoops. Then fold one side over, followed by the other.

* From Lena Tashjian: “This halva is traditionally made by whipping the reduced liquid from boiled dried soapwort roots. Marshmallow is a short-cut used by many people today. For example, Dandies Marshmallows are made with all natural ingredients, contain no high fructose corn syrup or gelatin (they’re 100% vegan), and are the first ever marshmallow to be Non-GMO Project Verified.”



ORDER TODAY: *The Vegan Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* is a self-published project (2020) between Lena Tashjian, the author and recipe developer, and Siroon Parseghian, the photographer and food stylist. Filled with over 115 recipes, the cookbook highlights the plant-based and many Lenten staples present in both Armenia and the Diaspora, and includes a wide selection of veganized classics. “We contin-

ue to donate all proceeds from our signature tote bags to @armeniafund, along with a portion of proceeds from the cookbook, matching whenever possible.” Go to: <https://veganarmeniankitchen.com/product/vegan-armenian-kitchen-cookbook/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/CometoArmenia/posts/249484385128744>

Calendar

MASSACHUSETTS

FEBRUARY 10 – Wednesday at 10am

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

FEBRUARY 14 – Armenian Museum of America Online Concert Series, “Kez het Hayastan” (With You, Armenia!)

Sunday at 2 pm EST (11:00 am PST and 11:00 pm in Armenia): The Armenian Museum of America is hosting its third bi-monthly Online Concert. The performance is recorded live in New York by three Armenian sopranos, Hasmik Meikhanedjian, Alvard Mayilyan, and Anahit Zakaryan. They will be accompanied by pianist and composer Hayk Arsenyan. The concert includes works by composers Komitas, Tchukhadjian, Melikyan, Amirkhanyan, Petrossian, and Mekanejian. The event will be aired on our YouTube Channel, is free, open to the public, pre-registration is not required, and the video will be available on the Museum’s website and Facebook page. This concert series is supported by a grant from the Dadourian Foundation and is curated for the Armenian Museum by artistic director Maestro Konstantin Petrossian, composer and conductor.

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

MARCH 3 – Labyrinth Walking: The Power & Health Benefits.

A 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. at 5pm. 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, To register, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org with March 3 in Subject line

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

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EDITORIAL

The Unfinished Agenda of the Minsk Group

By Edmond Y. Azadian

One of the first tasks of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has been to contact the chairperson-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Sweden's Foreign Minister Ann Linde, to reactivate the group to resume tackling its residual agenda items, which include developments in Ukraine, Belarus and the Caucasus.

All these issues have one country in common: Russia. President Biden has already called President Vladimir Putin of Russia, discussing a reset between the two countries.

From all appearances, it looks like the conversation had a sour end, since President Biden had touched on the incarceration of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

In the meantime, a French Foreign Ministry delegation has visited Armenia and Azerbaijan twice, offering economic aid to both countries and helping launch projects in the region.

By precipitating a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia pushed forward their own agendas, settling their forces in the region, particularly in Azerbaijan, where both countries had no earlier presence.

One of the purposes of this haste for war and disastrous peace was to bypass the Minsk Group of the OSCE, which had been tasked with handling the Karabakh conflict for the last three decades.

Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and Russia's peacekeeping forces – there is no reason to postpone the issue of status.

The Caucasus is one of the tinderboxes of the globe as the interests of many major and minor powers converge in the area and the parties during their tussles are inclined to short-change Armenia's interests.

The war brought catastrophe to Armenia but it also caused heavy damage to neighboring Iran, which was completely left out of the game; Turkey, as a surrogate power for the West, moved closer to Iran's border. Azerbaijan, by recapturing territories from Armenia, created a much longer border with Iran, and therefore offers a wider playing field for Israeli spying and interference for the former.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, during the victory parade of December 10, in Baku even hinted at Iran's dismemberment.

The Iranian regime was alarmed and that is why its foreign minister, Javad Zarif, embarked on a charm offensive tour of the region, to play catch up. In each capital, he said what his hosts wanted to hear. In Baku, he congratulated the Azerbaijani government on recovering its territories. In Yerevan, he offered economic cooperation. In Ankara, he invited President Erdogan to visit Tehran and in Moscow, he reminded President Putin that Iran has been a friendly force in the region.

Iran has also pledged to help improve relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but thus far, it has not found takers.

Now Iran has to gear itself to face the Biden Administration's demands to revisit the nuclear deal it had



The previous US administration had little interest in foreign wars or traditional alliances and pact. Now that the tumultuous election process is over in the US, Washington and Paris have been reclaiming their place at the negotiation table to take care of the remaining items on the agenda.

In the case of the Karabakh conflict, a single issue remains to be resolved: the legal status of the enclave.

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan is intentionally not returning Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) and detainees, to clog up the agenda and delay negotiation on the status of Karabakh. The POWs are being kept hostage in Azerbaijan to be used as bargaining chips by Baku.

Indeed, the ceasefire declaration signed on November 9 between the three countries calls for military forces of the warring parties to remain in the positions that they held on the date of the ceasefire. Azerbaijan wants to see Karabakh's defense forces move out of Stepanakert. With the strategic Shushi already in its hands, overtaking Stepanakert won't cost it much effort.

Once Azerbaijan's artificial hurdle is removed, the Minsk Group co-chairs will have to work on the status issue. Armenia, however, has to press for accountability from Azerbaijan for its violation of one of the basic principles of the Minsk Group, which excludes the use of military force to resolve the conflict.

Russia has acquiesced to the fact that the question of status has been left on the agenda but it believes that its resolution should be postponed until a future, as-yet-undetermined date, to be taken up by the Minsk Group.

Since other issues have been settled instantaneously –

agreed to with the Obama administration, which had been rescinded by Trump.

There are indications that this time around, President Biden will make good on his pledge to recognize the Armenian Genocide if Ankara does not pre-empt it with a sweet deal that Washington cannot refuse. Thus far, the Biden administration has been observing an ominous silence with Ankara. The president has called many capitals – friend and foe alike – and has not yet responded to President Erdogan's request for a phone conversation.

After sidelining Iran – and for that matter Russia – in the region, Ankara is trying to impose its will further afield.

As a matter of fact, it has come up with an economic program or "Platform of the Six" involving Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and Armenia. The latter is invited to join, provided that it drops its hostility against Azerbaijan and Turkey, according to a foreign ministry official in Ankara.

The above development program along with the unblocking of all communication and transportation in the region, proposed by the November 9 declaration, pose a double-edged sword for Armenia.

Under the condition of the blockade, Armenia has already forged its economy over the last 30 years.

Armenia has to be wary of any Turkish proposal, not out of paranoia, but out of historical experience. An opinion piece was published in the Washington Post on January 28, by Asli Aydintasbas. The piece pretty much outlines the parameters of Erdogan's rapprochement to President Biden.

continued on next page

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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:

Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

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

CORRESPONDENTS:

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

Contributing Photographers:

Jirair Hovsepian

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Baika Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Made Yet Another Gaffe, Implying that Shushi Was An Azeri City

After ruling Armenia as Prime Minister for almost three years and most importantly during the country's recent disastrous defeat in the Artsakh War, Nikol Pashinyan keeps making mistake after mistake and misstatement after misstatement.

As I have written before, regrettably Pashinyan is not competent to lead Armenia. He is more of a protester and a critic who does not possess the necessary skills and experience to be the head of state. The Artsakh War made the situation in the country even worse and exposed Pashinyan's inability to manage the plethora of Armenia's problems.

Armenians around the world had high hopes that, after getting rid of the previous regime, Pashinyan would be able to lead Armenia into prosperity and a degree of normalcy. The overwhelming majority of Armenians supported him due to their complete hostility to the former government.

Unfortunately, it turned out that Pashinyan was all talk and no action. In addition to his lack of experience, he surrounded himself with advisors and ministers who knew even less than he did. As a result, neither he nor his government had the slightest chance to be successful. The Artsakh War made matters worse. As the Commander-in-Chief, he made error after error leading Armenia and Artsakh to an indescribable disaster from which we will not recover for decades, if ever. Pashinyan now insists that he should remain in power to correct the grave problems of the country. One would be extremely naïve to believe in such a promise. A leader who is incompetent to lead in peacetime and utterly fails during the war is in no position to correct anything. He has made matters worse with his misstatements and erroneous policies.

Several weeks ago, while addressing the Parliament, Pashinyan angered many Armenians by describing as "unfortunate and pale" the historic Armenian city of Shushi in Artsakh. There was no reason to use such negative adjectives to describe a city which is the pride of all Armenians.

More recently, during another appearance in Parliament, in response to a question from a deputy about Shushi, Pashinyan made matters worse for himself, when he said: "Shushi before the conflict and the liberation [in 1992], had an Azeri population of 90 and more percent. In other words, you mean to say that the city of Shushi with an Azeri population of 90 and more percent is Armenian with that status?"

A huge outcry erupted among Armenians around the world after Pashinyan's unfortunate words. This was yet another self-inflicted wound. A few days later, during Pashinyan's visit to Yerablur, the cemetery where fallen Armenian soldiers are buried, when a journalist questioned him about his statement in Parliament on Shushi, he said that he would give an answer if the reporter put her question in writing. The following day, the journalist wrote Pashinyan's words on a large placard and read them aloud, while standing in front of the Prime Minister's building. Even though one of Pashinyan's supporters attacked the journalist and tore up her placard, the Prime Minister kept his word and on his Facebook page addressed the controversy during a live video.

In his response, Pashinyan first accused the media of manipulating his words. He repeated that in the early 1990's Azeris consisted of over 90 percent or rather 96 percent of Shushi residents. He went on to state: "How Shushi could be considered under Armenian control by its status when 96 percent of the population was Azerbaijani?" Pashinyan then mentioned the offer by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on October 19, 2020, several weeks before the end of the war, to accept Armenia's demand for a ceasefire on condition that Armenians allow the return of the former Azeri residents to Shushi, under Armenian rule.

Pashinyan made several errors in his original statement and subsequent failed attempt to set the record straight. Actually, he had no reason to go into such a convoluted and false argument. He had just to say that he rejected Aliyev's offer because allowing Azeris to return to Shushi under Armenian control was unacceptable to him and most Armenians. In fact, that's exactly what Pashinyan told the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, when the latter relayed to him Aliyev's offer. Had Pashinyan limited his remarks to

that fact, there would have been no outcry in the Armenian world. There was no reason to say that Shushi was mostly populated by Azeris prior to 1992, causing such a controversy at a time when his power is waning and he is criticized by a lot of Armenians, including many of his former supporters.

By mentioning the high percentage of Azeris living in Shushi in the past, Pashinyan made several mistakes:

First of all, regardless of the number of Azeris who lived in Shushi, it is a well-known fact that it has been an Armenian city for centuries long before Azerbaijan existed. In 1920, after Azeris massacred thousands of Armenians in Shushi and pursued a policy to depopulate the city's Armenians, their numbers were diminished considerably. But Pashinyan provided no such background in his misleading statement.

Secondly, Pashinyan was wrong to judge whether an area is Armenian or not by its population at a particular time. For example, there are hardly any Armenians now living in Nakhichevan or Western Armenia, but Armenians still consider these territories to be a part of historic Armenia.

Thirdly, it is understandable that accepting Aliyev's offer to allow former Azeri residents to return to Shushi, under Armenian control, was a hard pill to swallow for Pashinyan and most Armenians, there is an important issue to consider. How many Azeris would have returned to Shushi to live under Armenian rule? Very few, if any. Pashinyan's implication that thousands of Azeris would have returned to Shushi, making the city's population again 96 percent Azeri was totally unrealistic. No Azeri would have wanted to live in Shushi under Armenian rule, just like no Armenian would risk living in territories controlled by Azerbaijan.

Finally, Pashinyan's refusal to accept Aliyev's offer on October 19, 2020, meant that the war was prolonged until November 9, 2020, causing the loss of much more Armenian territories to Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Azeris took over Shushi completely and many more young Armenian soldiers were killed or wounded. The consequences of Pashinyan's faulty decisions during the war were far worse than his misstatement in Parliament and his subsequent lame effort to correct himself.

The Prime Minister should realize that the longer he clings to power, the more he destabilizes the country. A defeated and incompetent leader cannot improve the tragic situation in the country. The sooner he leaves, the faster a new government can take over and try to reduce the damages suffered by Armenia and Artsakh.

The Unfinished Agenda of the Minsk Group

from previous page

It seems that the premise of Erdogan's new policy will be to convince Washington that Turkey has become a major power and can act on its own. "Increasingly self-confident and with growing domestic defense capabilities, Turkey's strongman is no longer interested in being a loyal member of the West. He believes that Turkey should pursue its own destiny — with himself at the helm," the article states.

However, the writer believes this to be a hard sell and states other tactics to which Erdogan may resort by writing: "A big reset may be elusive. But one area where positive momentum in Turkish-US ties can happen is the periphery — in ancient conflicts like Cyprus and Armenia. In anticipation of the Biden administration, Ankara has recently embarked on a charm offensive towards the European Union and reached out to regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and Israel. After a year of headline politics, Turkey is also encouraging the United Nations to restart the Cyprus Talks on the decades-long division of the island. More surprisingly, a senior Erdogan advisor told me that Ankara is ready to normalize relations with Armenia."

We have seen the recent "love letters" exchanged between Erdogan and President Emmanuel Macron of France, a month after Erdogan had publicly advised his French counterpart to get his head examined.

While the issue of Cyprus began with the 1974 invasion of the island by Turkey and its subsequent occupation of 40 percent of the land, Turkey has not given in an inch, but every time international pressure increases on Ankara, the Turks feign readiness for negotiation, only to end up with the same result.

Armenia has also fallen in that trap before, once during the football diplomacy between Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Abdullah Gul and another during the signing of the Zurich

protocols in 2009.

Every time the major powers swallow Turkish excuses and shy away from their intentions, so as not to disrupt Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia. Turkey is preparing the diplomatic world for another round of mock dialogue with Armenia.

Lragir.am reported on January 31 that the expert on US-Armenian relations, Souren Sargsyan, has advised Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to call and congratulate President Biden. On the other hand, "he has warned [Pashinyan] to stay away from negotiations with Turkey. If any process of Armenian-Turkish relations is initiated, Biden will refrain from recognizing the Armenian Genocide and that's what Turkey wants."

Once burnt, twice shy.

Armenia should not fall for the lies again, because that has been Turkey's tactic to deflect outside pressure to recognize the Genocide.

On the contrary, Armenia has nothing to gain from establishing relations with Turkey, particularly when the latter just recently unleashed its weapons and hired jihadists to wreak havoc on Armenia and Artsakh. Armenia has to set the bar very high by requesting recognition of the Genocide by Turkey and put that country on the defensive. If Turkey wants to set up a joint commission, the task of that commission has to be to assess the amount of compensation Turkey owes to Armenia.

Now that Foggy Bottom has signaled its desire to reactive the Minsk Group, all these developments will also reflect on the decisions of the other co-chairs who intend to take Moscow and Ankara to task for having precipitated the Karabakh war for their own selfish ends.

It is time to address the Minsk Group's unfinished agenda.

LETTERS

How Did We Get Here?

To the Editor:

How did we get here? Individually we're top notch professionals, businessmen/women but as a people we seem to go two steps forward and one step back. We're victims of one crisis after another with no victories in sight starting in modern history with the Genocide to our heart wrenching loss of Armenian land and religious sites in Nagorno Karabakh after a hard fought war in 1988 reclaiming our historical land. We suffered major losses during the earthquake and some say that we've never fully recovered from that. Armenia has had one self serving short sighted leader after another when perhaps more welcomed input from the diaspora might have advanced our country (agreement with Raffi Bedrosyan's commentary 1/9/21) Do we still throw money at Armenia without preconditions, accountability and input? Perhaps a think tank comprised of Armenians from Armenia, the Diaspora and yes even great minds from the non-Armenian community might help Armenia as I had suggested years ago in a letter to the editor. So the question is actually twofold: How did we get here and where do we go from here? The good news is that we are a resilient people because after adversities we have resolve and bounce back seemingly to be knocked down again. We have no problem demonstrating against our victimization as recently as during the war in Artsakh and of course the obligatory yearly demonstrations on April 24 telling the world about the first genocide of the twentieth century and the massacre of one and a half million people of the first Christian nation. So why aren't people listening or care about our plight?

The answer seems simple: A house built without a strong foundation can't stand and we as Armenians haven't built that foundation. Why should non-Armenians care about our issues when they don't really know who we are or about our rich history, religion and individual successes. Why haven't we laid the groundwork by hiring P.R. firms to disseminate information about the aforementioned? Everyone knows that Jews are the chosen people but who knows that Armenians are considered to be the second chosen people because we are the first Christian nation? Why aren't our high-profile Armenians in entertainment, media, advertising, journalism, etc. tapped to promote their own people or successful businessmen to form a committee to develop business in Armenia? Why isn't our clergy giving sermons as invited clergy in non-Armenian churches telling their parishioners how we became the first Christian nation and details about our religion and service?

Woe-is-me obviously doesn't cut it. We need to be more sophisticated in our thinking and planning. And most importantly, we need ten, twenty, fifty year plans and need to set up the infrastructure to realize the goals if Armenia is to survive.

Adrienne G. Alexanian
New York, New York



Free ALL Armenian POWs and hostages held illegally in Azerbaijan

BritishArmenian.org started this petition to UNITED NATIONS UN Secretary-General António Guterres and 7 others

To: UN Secretary-General, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe Secretary General, Director of OSCE ODIHR, OSCE Secretary General, OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

We call upon the peaceful citizens of the world, who defend universal human rights and the principles of justice, to sign the present petition to:

- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of ALL Armenian POWs and captives held unlawfully in Azerbaijan after the official ceasefire.
- Condemn Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev for war crimes.
- Impose sanctions against Azerbaijan for breaking UN legislation on Human Rights, The Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, and The European Convention on Human Rights.

1. Torture is illegal

The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment, and The European Convention on Human Rights prohibit torture. However, the latest AD HOC Report of January 2021 [2] by the Human Rights Defender of Armenia announced numerous cases of barbaric treatment of Armenian civilians and soldiers in captivity in Azerbaijan, including:

- beating POWs, causing mental trauma and physical injuries;
- humiliation and debasement of captives to make false statements;
- physical torture of captives resulting in fatalities.

2. It is illegal to hold POWs after ceasefire agreement

Several months since the trilateral Ceasefire Statement of November 9 2020 - between Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia - hundreds of Armenian POWs have not been released. Azerbaijani forces continue taking new military and civilian captives, both men and women, in the post-war Nagorno-Karabakh region. Captured civilians and soldiers were beheaded after the Ceasefire, and those carrying out those heinous acts have been glorified by the Azerbaijani state. President Aliyev openly supports and encourages hatred and violence towards Armenians through his public speeches and state-sponsored propaganda including education system. His irresponsible conduct jeopardizes any prospect of peace in the wider region

By refusing to free Armenian captives, the Azerbaijani regime violates the third Geneva Convention which provides legal framework for POWs against torture and inhumane treatment. The convention states that “POWs cannot be prosecuted for taking part in hostilities,” and that “they must be released and repatriated without delay after the end of hostilities”

Aliyev has also violated Article 8 - concerning the return of POWs - of the trilateral Ceasefire Statement.

3. How many ethnic Armenian POWs and captives are held in Azerbaijan?

As of the beginning of January 2021, 190 cases have been reported to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) by the Representative of Armenia to the ECtHR. Additionally, human rights lawyers Siranush Sahakyan and Artak Zeynalyan have filed 95 individual cases on behalf of the captives’ families at the ECtHR. The Court has unequivocally and universally accepted these complaints and ordered interim measures to protect the lives of Armenian captives whose lives are at immediate risk. Azerbaijan has failed to comply with the ECtHR order, and has refused to provide accurate and complete information.

The number of captives continues rising and currently stands at 230.Only 5 more POWs have been released today, today, the 28 January 2021.

4. Sanction Azerbaijan for breaking international laws and ethnic cleansing

By concealing the precise number of Armenian captives, the Azerbaijani government retains them for political manipulation to achieve more concessions from the Armenian side, who lost the control of 75% of Nagorno-Karabakh following the recent war. If European and international lawmakers fail to condemn the Azerbaijani government, then ongoing killings, kidnappings, and terrorism against indigenous Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh will continue until they all perish or flee from the region. The plan of ethnic cleansing of Armenians by Aliyev’s regime persists in front of the eyes of the ‘free, democratic’ world, who watches but ignores, hears but refuses to act. Today, if the ethnic cleansing of Armenians is carried out in Nagorno-Karabakh, there are no guarantees it will not extend to the Republic of Armenia tomorrow. President Aliyev is preparing for the next military aggression: Turkish and Azerbaijani joint military exercises are scheduled for February in Turkey’s Kars region, on the Western border of Armenia, "the intensity of these exercises will be increased from now on", Aliyev openly announced his aggressive strategy.

5. Condemn Aliyev for war crimes

The ECtHR has also confirmed that the civilian Maral Najarian has been imprisoned in Baku since 10 November 2020, after the trilateral Ceasefire. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been denied access to Armenian hostages, including Maral and other female captives. Due to the overwhelming evidence of heinous abuse of Armenian captives, the state of Maral and other female hostages is deeply concerning. Inhumane treatment of POWs and captives is a gross violation of international laws by Azerbaijani regime. War crimes perpetrated by Aliyev must be condemned.

As peace-loving citizens of the world, we urge you to take action now!

Human lives matter. Every day, every hour, every minute, and every second counts. Tomorrow will be too late. Act today to release MARAL and ALL ARMENIAN CAPTIVES AND POWs, victims of unlawful torture, brutal mental and physical abuse.

January 28, 2021
info@britisharmenian.org

Paylan Offers History Lesson to Erdogan on Gen. Kazim Karabekir

ISTANBUL (*Nor Marmara*) – On January 27 social media and news agencies reverberated with the new political debate that had arisen between Turkey’s President Erdogan and Armenian deputy of the Turkish Parliament from the HDP party, Garo Paylan. The subject was the post which Erdogan had made on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Kazim Karabekir Pasha, commander of the Eastern Front in the Turkish War of Independence and of the Turkish forces in 1920 Turkish-Armenian War.

Erdogan referred to the anniversary of Karabekir’s death on Twitter, and posted the general’s picture, directing a rhetorical question to the people as to whether they knew the history of the picture. In his post Erdogan indicated that Karabekir had been a goodhearted national figure who was well-disposed toward young people and protected homeless children. According to him, Karabekir was a father to orphans and had taken 6,000 children under his wing in Anatolia, taking care of all their needs. As for the history of the portrait, Erdogan indicated that it was gifted to Karabekir by the orphans of Trebizond, who were under the general’s care. Erdogan wrote: “Underneath the portrait, the writing in Ottoman Turkish again shows how good and great-hearted Karabekir Pasha was. The writing is this: ‘To the hero Karabekir Pasha, greatly-respected father of orphans...from the Armenian orphans of Trebizond. Rumi 1922, 9 September.’”

Paylan responded to the tweet by directing a question to Erdogan: “Mr. Erdogan, do you know the history of that portrait? Those children were orphaned because their families were subjected to destruction in the days of the genocide committed against the Armenian people. Mr. Erdogan, are you really prepared to be faced with the history of that portrait?”

Azerbaijani Military Regularly Fires at Armenian Villages, Ombudsman Says

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – The Azerbaijani military fire from small and large-caliber weapons in the immediate vicinity of the villages of Chakaten, Nerkin Hand, Shikahogh, Yeghvard, Agarak, Uzhanis in the Syunik province of Armenia, Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan said on January 28.

Civilians and community bodies of all these villages have informed the Human Rights Defender that shootings take place regularly, both during the day and at night.

According to the alarms, the shootings are clearly heard in the villages, aimed at intimidating civilians and, first of all, children and women.

At the same time, the villagers observed

that the Azerbaijani servicemen fire when they are drunk. The shooting is usually from large-caliber weapons and more intensive in these cases.

The delegation led by the Human Rights Defender was informed about these shootings on January 9, 2021 during their visits to Tshakaten and other villages of Kapan. At that time, it was directly reported that the shootings were causing tension in villages.

“These criminal, absolutely condemnable acts must be completely excluded. They have become a real threat to the rights to life and health, physical and psychological integrity and other rights of civilians of Armenia, recognized internationally and guaranteed by

the Constitution of Armenia. These shooting grossly violate best interests of the children as well,” the Ombudsman said.

“The mentioned fact further reinforces the Human Rights Defender’s assessment that the presence of Azerbaijani armed forces in the immediate vicinity of Armenia’s civilian border communities, on inter-community and interstate roads is a real threat to the lives and other vital rights of civilians,” Tatoyan adds.

Reports on these facts will be sent to international organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the UN and the Council of Europe. Separate reports will also be sent to special mechanisms of intergovernmental organizations.

Armenian Defense Contractor Charged With Fraud

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The owner of a company supplying Armenia’s armed forces with weapons and ammunition has been arrested on fraud charges, the National Security Service (NSS) said on Monday, February 1.

The NSS said that the charges stem from a \$1 million contract for the supply of artillery shells which Davit Galstyan’s Mosston Engineering company signed with the Armenian Defense Ministry in 2018.

It said the company breached the contract by providing the ministry with ammunition designed for older and different artillery systems. Artillery units could not accomplish their “combat tasks” with those shells, the NSS added in a statement.

This is why, it said, NSS investigators have indicted Galstyan and Mosston’s director and asked a Yerevan court to remand them in pre-trial custody. It was not immediately clear if the suspects will plead guilty to the accusations.

Nor was it clear if the NSS could also prosecute any current or former Defense Ministry officials. The statement said in this regard that the investigators are taking measures to “identify the full circle of individuals involved in the corruption scheme.”

Galstyan was an adviser to Armenia’s former Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, who was sacked in November following the war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The security service further revealed that Galstyan is also facing three other criminal investigations into his companies’ dealings with the Armenian military. But it did not give any details of those inquiries.

Galstyan’s companies have been among the Defense Ministry’s leading suppliers in recent years.

Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan, who served as chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff from 2018-2020, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Monday that they repeatedly failed

to fulfill their contractual obligations during his tenure.

“There were quite a lot of cases where we handed back supplies, demanded their replacement or found defects and told [the contractor] to eliminate them,” Davtyan said without elaborating.

Andranik Kocharyan, the pro-government chairman of the Armenian parliament committee on defense and security, described the fraud accusations as credible and said they were made possible by the sackings of Tonoyan and previous NSS directors.

“Such corrupt practices are not possible without the support of high-ranking officials,” he claimed. “So let’s wait for further developments.”

Kocharyan and Tonoyan traded bitter accusations in the immediate aftermath of a Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the Karabakh war on November 10.