

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXI, NO. 43, Issue 4685

MAY 15, 2021

\$2.00



Russian peacekeepers arriving in Shushi last year (Sputnik photo)

Russia Vows No Letup in Karabakh Peace Efforts

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Russia will keep doing its best to ensure the full implementation of the Russian-brokered agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said during a visit to Yerevan on Thursday, May 6.

“We are not reducing our efforts at returning all detainees to their homes, demining, preserving cultural and religious heritage as well as launching the work of relevant international organizations in Nagorno-Karabakh,” Lavrov said



Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazyan and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

after talks with his Armenian counterpart Ara Aivazyan. In that context, he stressed the importance of Russian ef-

orts to get Armenia and Azerbaijan to open their transport links after decades of conflict. He said a trilateral working group formed by the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani governments for that purpose is helping to further stabilize the situation in the Karabakh conflict zone.

“WE ARE NOT REDUCING OUR EFFORTS AT RETURNING ALL DETAINEES TO THEIR HOMES, DEMINING, PRESERVING CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE... IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH,”

—RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEY LAVROV

“The success of this work will be decisive for normalizing the overall situation and laying the groundwork for creative cooperation in the post-conflict period,” added Lavrov.

He further stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan are now also engaged in a demarcation and delimitation of their internationally recognized border. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other Armenian officials have repeatedly made statements to the contrary.

see PEACEKEEPERS, page 2

Lithuania (2005), Latvia (2021), and Estonia

The Baltic Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

RIGA, Latvia — In 2005, the year of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, five countries recognized the Armenian Genocide, with Lithuania being the last one. The parliament of this European state near the shores of the Baltic Sea adopted a [resolution](#) shortly before the end of the year. Forty-eight deputies of the Seimas (parliament) voted see BALTICS, page 4



Latvia's Conservative Party commemorates the Armenian Genocide

Former President Kocharyan Looks And Acts Like New Candidate

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenia's second president, Robert Kocharyan, took a further step towards formalizing his participation in upcoming snap parliamentary elections on Sunday, May 9.

At a press briefing for his newly-established electoral alliance, dubbed the Armenia Bloc, the former president told reporters that he decided to return to politics to rectify what he believes are great threats to the country's long-term security and stability allegedly caused by the current authorities. Kocharyan accuses Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government of failing to provide security in border regions, signing the November 9 cease-fire on unfavourable terms, and mismanaging the economy.



Former President Robert Kocharyan at his Yerevan rally

“Our goal is to establish a dignified peace,” Kocharyan said, adding that the current government is too tarnished by the shame of defeat to accomplish this.

This sentiment was shared by the leaders of the Armenia Bloc's two other parties. “This current government has done nothing but cause division in our society for three years, culminating in thousands of deaths and

see KOCHARYAN, page 3

Ümit Kurt Discusses Economic Gains Of Genocide for Ottoman Authorities

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — On April 20, the Armenian Center at Columbia University,

the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) with the co-sponsorship of the Research Institute on Turkey offered a fascinating lecture by Dr. Ümit Kurt bringing to light some of the economic aspects of the Armenian Genocide.

Kurt discussed his recent book, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in the Ottoman Empire*.

From the beginning of the talk, Kurt, a native of Gaziantep (Aintab), showed himself an engaging speaker who captures the attention of his audience with his energy and interest on the subject. His sympathies with the Armenian people are clear;

see LECTURE, page 13

NEW YORK

Knights Commemorate Genocide at Times Square

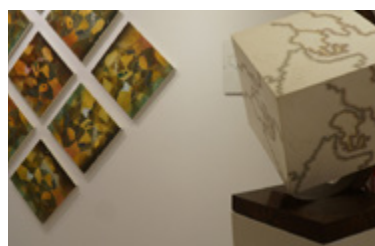
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BERLIN

Cultural Roots of Armenian Identity

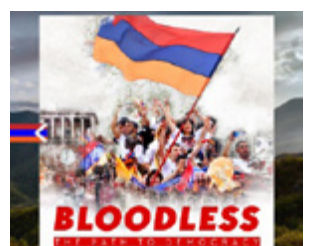
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CALIFORNIA

Beverly Hills Film Festival Awards “Bloodless” Golden Palm Award

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Karabakh: Azerbaijan Using Gravestones to Build a Road to Shushi

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijanis are using gravestones for the construction of a road, Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) Foreign Minister David Babayan has said, Sputnik Armenia reported on May 10.

“They are building roads from Hadrut through [the village of] Karin Tak to Shushi. They are building a large road with a width of 40 meters,” Babayan said. According to him, during construction Azerbaijanis destroy gravestones and use them to build the road. He described the practice as vandalism.

Both during and after the war in Nagorno-Karabakh in fall 2020, Azerbaijanis repeatedly committed acts of vandalism against Armenian cemeteries and cultural monuments.

Pashinyan: Turkey Is Our Enemy but Enmity Must Be Managed

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) — Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in parliament on May 10, that “Turkey is our enemy but that enmity must be managed.”

“That’s a historical fact. Turkey is both our enemy and our neighbor,” Pashinyan said from the parliament floor. “That enmity must be managed, because if it boils on, there is going to be an explosion one day.”

Pashinyan also said that some circles are trying to present the ruling power as pro-Turkish, which he said is not true, citing, in particular, the adoption of resolutions condemning the Armenian Genocide in recent years and its recognition by the US President.

Artsakh Foreign Minister Decries Forced Evictions of Shushi Armenians

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) — Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh David Babayan on May 5 sent letters to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and bodies within the UN on Azerbaijan’s policy of forced evictions of the Armenian population of the town of Shushi.

The letters state that the forced evictions carried out by Azerbaijan in Shushi violate, directly and indirectly, the full spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the Armenian population enshrined in numerous international instruments.

Babayan stressed that the policy of forceful reshaping of historical, cultural and architectural landscape in the occupied territories of Artsakh is a blatant form of discrimination and xenophobia. The letters underscore that the international community should stand against Azerbaijan’s unabated crimes against humanity committed against the people of Artsakh.

Parliament Votes to Dissolve Itself on May 10, Paving Way for Fresh Elections in Late June

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia’s constitution stipulates that such elections can be held only if the prime minister resigns and the parliament twice fails to elect a new head of the government within two weeks. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his cabinet formally stepped down for that purpose on April 25.

Deputies representing the parliament’s pro-government majority did not reelect him or install another premier when they first voted on May 3. They made sure that the second vote yields the same result.

This means that the National Assembly will be automatically dissolved. It will formally retain its legislative powers pending the election of a new parliament next month.

The two opposition parties represented in the outgoing legislature agreed to this scenario during talks with Pashinyan held earlier this spring.

Pashinyan first expressed readiness to hold early elections in December amid angry anti-government protests triggered by Armenia’s defeat in a six-week war with Azerbaijan. The Armenian opposition blamed him for the defeat and demanded that he hand over power to an interim government.

Pashinyan and his My Step bloc stated on February 7 that they see no need for snap polls because of what they called a lack of “public demand.” A coalition of opposition parties resumed street protests in Yerevan on February 20.

Five days later, the Armenian military’s top brass issued a statement accusing Pashinyan’s government of misrule and incompetence and demanding its resignation. The prime minister rejected the demand as a coup attempt. He went on to announce on March 18 that the snap polls will take place after all.

Pashinyan defended his track record on Monday, saying that his administration has achieved the key aim of the “velvet revolution” that brought him to power three years ago.

“I regard what I just said as our biggest achievement: the citizens of the Republic of Armenia feel that they are the masters of our country. At the end of the day, this is what the nonviolent, Velvet Revolution of 2018 was done for and that goal has been achieved,” he said, speaking in the parliament.

Pashinyan claimed to have carried out important “institutional reforms,” seriously reduced tax evasion and made “revolutionary changes” in the country’s prison system. He also insisted that the current Armenian government does not control the judiciary unlike the previous ones.

Pashinyan described the autumn war in Nagorno-Karabakh as the “biggest problem” of his three-year tenure. He claimed that the war was already inevitable when he swept to power, implicitly accusing Armenia’s former leaders of mishandling the Karabakh peace process.

The 45-year-old former journalists similarly blamed former Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan for Azerbaijan’s victory in the six-week war when he addressed the National Assembly last month.

Sargsyan and Kocharyan had led Karabakh during its suc-

cessful 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. Like virtually all Armenian opposition leaders, the ex-presidents hold Pashinyan responsible for the outcome of the second war stopped by a Russian-mediated truce accord last November.

Another former president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, charged last week that Pashinyan and his political team have “failed in all areas.”

Pashinyan scoffed at such claims. “We take many things for granted,” he said. “After that catastrophe [of November 2020] not a single gunshot has been fired in Armenia. Do you realize what this means? Could this have happened under a government that has failed in all areas of governance?”

The prime minister also said that unlike their predecessors he and other senior Armenian officials have not enriched themselves by sharing in the profits of lucrative businesses.

Taguhi Tovmasyan, an independent lawmaker who left the ruling My Step bloc in November, countered that none of the country’s former rulers has been convicted or even accused of such corrupt practices under the current authorities.

“Who and what has benefited from whose business?” Tovmasyan asked. “And how have they been punished in the post-revolution Armenia for the sake of restoring justice?”

Calls for Alliance of Former Leaders

Ter-Petrosian defended on Friday his public calls for Armenia’s two other former presidents to form an electoral alliance with him and jointly try to oust Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s “criminal and nation-destroying regime.”

Ter-Petrosian revealed on Wednesday, May 5, that he floated the idea at a March 25 meeting with the two. He said Kocharyan rejected it out of hand while Sargsyan “did not express any opinion.” He said he is “publicly repeating my proposal” because he believes Pashinyan’s reelection would spell further trouble for Armenia.

Both ex-presidents swiftly turned down the proposal, saying that they are planning to enter other alliances ahead of the snap parliamentary elections expected in June.

Ter-Petrosian’s readiness to team up with the two other ex-presidents is remarkable given the long history of mutual antagonism between them. For many years he was highly critical of his successors’ policies and track records.

The three men met in October for the first time in decades to discuss ways of stopping the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ter-Petrosian and Kocharyan offered to jointly travel to Moscow for urgent talks with Russian leaders.

Pashinyan reportedly refused to authorize them to negotiate on behalf of his administration. He later questioned the sincerity and seriousness of the ex-presidents’ initiative, prompting angry reactions from them.

Like other opposition figures, all three ex-presidents blame Pashinyan for Armenia’s defeat in the six-week war. Ter-Petrosian said in March that Pashinyan must step down and “at least temporarily” leave the country to end its post-war political crisis. The prime minister reacted scathingly to that statement.

Russia Vows No Letup in Karabakh Peace Efforts

PEACEKEEPERS, from page 1

Speaking at a joint news conference with Lavrov, Ayvazyan reiterated the official Armenian line that the conflict cannot be deemed resolved until the conflicting parties agree on Karabakh’s status, the main bone of contention.

Yerevan says such an agreement must reflect peace proposals made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-headed by Russia, the United States and France.

Lavrov, who is due to visit Baku early next week, said the group’s chief priority now must be to create an atmosphere of mutual trust.

In a joint statement issued on Wednesday, May 5, the Minsk Group co-chairs called for “concrete steps to create an atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to long-lasting peace.” They urged the parties to “fully and expeditiously complete the exchange

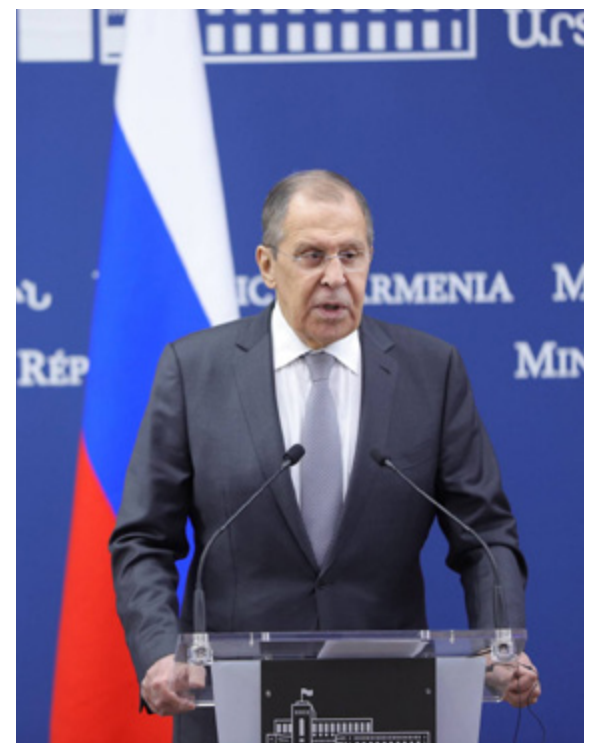
process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, and to respect their obligations to ensure the humane treatment of detainees.”

The statement came the day after Azerbaijan released three more Armenian prisoners of war.

Baku remains reluctant to set free more than 100 other Armenian POWs and civilian captives believed to remain in Azerbaijani captivity. Yerevan regards this as a gross violation of the November 9 truce accord brokered by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Meeting with Pashinyan later on Thursday, Lavrov said Russia will spare no effort to secure the release of the remaining Armenian prisoners. “We are confident that we will manage to solve this issue soon,” he said.

Lavrov also assured Pashinyan that Moscow remains “committed to ensuring the security of our ally, Armenia.”



Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov



ARMENIA

Armenian Government Pressing Ahead With University Takeovers

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian government is continuing its efforts to gain direct control of three of the country's leading state universities two weeks after President Armen Sarkissian blocked a relevant bill pushed by it through the parliament.

The bill passed by the National Assembly in late March would empower the government to appoint most members of the boards of trustees that elect university rectors and make other key decisions.

Yerevan State University (YSU) and the National Academy of Sciences strongly opposed these changes, saying that they would violate a clause in the Armenian constitution which entitles state-funded colleges to a high degree of autonomy.

Sarkissian likewise suggested that they are "contentious in terms of constitutionality" when he announced on April 22 his decision not to sign the bill into law. He also asked the Constitutional Court to rule on its conformity with the constitution.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government pressed ahead with the same changes through an executive order issued earlier last week.

The order stipulates that YSU, the Armenian State Pedagogical University and Gyumri State University will have new governing boards consisting of 20 members. Thirteen of them are to be appointed by the government and the Ministry of Education, while the seven others will be chosen by their faculties and students.

All four parties have been equally represented in the boards until now.

A senior Ministry of Education official defended on May 7 the changes sought by the government, saying that they are needed to address a "management vacuum" within the universities. She claimed that their current boards have failed to properly perform their duties.

The official argued that the current YSU board is paralyzed and even unable to formally accept the resignation of the university's acting rector.

Critics countered that the government itself engineered the paralysis by recalling its appointees from the board earlier this year.

Vahe Hovannisyan, an YSU professor, deplored the "abrupt" decision made by the government after Sarkissian's appeal to the Constitutional Court. He warned that the three universities will be thrust into deeper turmoil if the court declares the controversial bill unconstitutional.

Hovannisyan also said:



National Academy of Sciences

"Taking the universities under control or changing their boards of trustees does not serve any development purpose."

Armenia's human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, also condemned the government's executive order, pledging to challenge its legality in the Constitutional Court.

"I believe that this initiative by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports is disrespectful towards the president of the republic and the Constitutional Court," he said on Thursday, adding that the problems cited by ministry officials are "artificial."

"I have grounds to presume that the government caused a problem and is now trying to solve it at the expense of university autonomy," said Tatoyan. "I believe this is unacceptable."

Pashinyan and his associates, among them young scholars, pledged to give universities more freedom from the government right after they swept to power three years ago.



Yerevan State University

Former President Kocharyan Looks and Acts Like New Candidate

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defeat," said Ishkhan Saghatelian, who heads the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Kocharyan's main coalition partner. Saghatelian, who until recently, vehemently opposed the prospects of a snap election, will be second on the new bloc's electoral list. Vahe Hakobyan, the leader of the second coalition partner Revived Armenia, will also be in the top 5.

Following the press junket, Kocharyan and his entourage made their way on foot to a pre-election rally, accompanied by a police security detail, where they were greeted by supporters. According to an estimate by the civil rights watchdog Union of Informed Citizens, this inaugural event drew a crowd of approximately 7900, some waving the flags of Armenia, Artsakh and the ARF. Addressing his supporters at Freedom Square — incidentally the site of a bloody crackdown which the then-president allegedly ordered on the opposition on March 1, 2008 — Kocharyan declared, "Let me assure you that tomorrow everything will get better."

Kocharyan, who still faces charges of bribery, has joined two other former presidents, Levon Ter-Petrossian and Serzh Sargsyan, in blaming Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for a disastrous outcome to the almost 30-year-old frozen conflict. Kocharyan has hoped to capitalize on a wave of discontent with authorities following last year's defeat against Azerbaijan to revive his political ambitions. The former president seeks to present himself as a wise, even-handed but firm leader coming out of retirement to steer Armenia through difficult times, in contrast to the incumbent prime minister.

However, leveraging enthusiastic support among his base into tangible election gains may not come that easily. The aura he has carefully cultivated around himself relies heavily on invoking nostalgia for his time in office, and coming to terms with

a very controversial legacy which has left many Armenians bitter.

Kocharyan's supporters have long touted his involvement in the victorious First Karabakh War, along with his presiding over an unprecedented period of economic success during his two terms in office between 1998 and 2008, and his long standing personal friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin as affirmation of his leadership credentials. Nonetheless, detractors and some economists have disputed that record.

While Armenia did experience a decade-long period of double-digit economic growth which mostly coincided with Kocharyan's presidency, economists attributed this to a combination of generous foreign aid, remittances by Armenian guest workers attracted to Russia's oil boom, and real-estate speculation. As part of a 2005 policy report, the same World Bank experts who bestowed the moniker "Caucasian Tiger" on Armenia's apparent economic success story warned that without proper regulatory reform and serious attempts to reign in corruption, these figures could not be sustained.

These warnings proved prophetic when, in late 2008 and early 2009, Armenia's unprecedented economic growth abruptly turned into unprecedented economic contraction — exasperated by the sudden drying up of remittances from workers in Russia, which was experiencing its own recession. However, with Kocharyan, having left office just as the full economic impact would be felt, his successor, Serzh Sargsyan was left to handle the fallout, and the blame.

Other detractors accuse Kocharyan of undermining Armenia's statehood, both at home and abroad, having fostered instead a culture of entrenched corruption, clientelism, nepotism and brutal repression and murder, which enabled state capture by a class of oligarchs at the expense of institutions of State, and by extension, the Ar-

menian people. This legacy, they insist, has permeated every level of government, including the military, and continues to plague policy-makers to this day.

Kocharyan's legacy regarding the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict hasn't escaped scrutiny from critics either. Having toppled his predecessor, Levon Ter-Petrossian, in 1998, ostensibly to secure better terms in a then-imminent peace deal, Kocharyan ended his second — and final — term in office without delivering on the dignified peace he has built his presidency on. The closest he ever reached to a deal with his Azerbaijani counterpart Heydar Aliyev, at Key West in 2001, was heavily criticized by supporters of the ousted Ter-Petrossian as a weaker version of the same agreement which he had originally opposed in 1997, and crucially first introduced the idea of a "Meghri Corridor," which has since made it onto Azerbaijan's negotiation agenda.

Still, in his efforts to unseat the incumbent prime minister in the upcoming snap parliamentary elections, Kocharyan might be facing an uphill battle. For starters, the current parliamentary system of government — designed, ironically, under his one-time ally Serzh Sargsyan — favors competition between well-established political parties and contains safeguards to minimize the chance of sweeping electoral gains by one-man "black horse" candidates. Kocharyan, who famously declared himself to be above party politics, now has to rely on the electoral machine of his allies, while surmounting the additional hurdle against election blocs in Parliament.

This will also be the first time that Kocharyan campaigns without the aid of "institutional resources" which he had previously relied on to prop-up his candidacy. Having first ascended to the presidency in a palace coup, rather than popular vote, the two elections held under his watch, in 1998 and 2003, were both widely considered

among the least free and fair in Armenia's independent history. Stricter voter fraud laws which have been implemented since that time would make some of the feats previously observed by international missions rather difficult to replicate for the sitting government, let alone an outside candidate.

Another electoral code reform, the insistence on televised leader debates, also puts Kocharyan at a distinct disadvantage. Having grown up in the Soviet school system in his native Artsakh, Kocharyan never mastered the Armenian language. His carefully scripted televised speeches, mostly aided by teleprompters, may prove unsuited for the fast-paced live debate arena in which his chief rival, the firebrand Nikol Pashinyan, famously thrives.

Despite playing up his pro-Russian credentials, Kocharyan may not count on support from Putin either. The Kremlin has so far refrained from showing any favoritism in what it considers "an internal Armenian matter."

If recent polling figures are to be believed, Kocharyan and his political allies would have their work cut out for them to secure trust among the electorate. In an opinion survey conducted in February by IRI, only 3 percent of Armenians said they would support him as a candidate. His political ally, the ARF, garnered even less support at 1 percent. The second force in the alliance didn't even exist at the time the poll was conducted.

With the National Assembly once again failing to elect a replacement prime minister on Monday, May 10, the prospects of an election being held on June 20 is all but certain. With Pashinyan still the clear front-runner despite last year's defeat, observers fear that the upcoming campaign will be dominated by the trading of accusations between two political heavyweights at the expense of clear policy proposals to resolve the current crisis.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

OSCE Urges Release of All Prisoners

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group (Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, Stephane Visconti of France, and Andrew Schofer of the United States of America) issued a joint statement on May 5, once again urging full and expeditious completion of the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains. “The Co-Chairs welcome Azerbaijan’s release of Armenian detainees Robert Vardanyan, Samvel Shukhyan, and Seryan Tamrazyan and call on both parties to fully and expeditiously complete the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, and to respect their obligations to ensure the humane treatment of detainees. Recalling their April 13 statement, the co-chairs urge the sides to exchange all data necessary to conduct effective demining of conflict regions and to lift restrictions on access to Nagorno-Karabakh, including for representatives of international humanitarian organizations. The Co-Chairs encourage the sides to take concrete steps to create an atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to long-lasting peace by addressing the remaining areas of concern outlined in the 13 April statement of the Co-Chairs. This includes resuming high-level political dialogue under the auspices of the Co-Chairs at the earliest opportunity,” reads the statement. Acting Foreign Minister of Armenia Ara Ayvazyan noted that the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs’ format shows signs of revival, Ayvazyan said during parliament’s cabinet Q&A session.

Russian Peacekeeping Contingent Military Police Patrols Lachin Corridor

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) — Military personnel of the Russian peacekeeping contingent continue to monitor compliance with the ceasefire and ensure the safety of motor transport, transportation of food and various goods along the Lachin (Berdzor) corridor, the Russian Defense Ministry reported. Since November 12 last year, the military police unit of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh has been patrolling the Lachin corridor on a daily basis. The purpose of this patrol is to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, gather information, check areas of terrain that are not visible from observation posts, and demonstrate the presence of the Russian peacekeeping contingent. “The Lachin corridor is a road that connects the city of Stepanakert with Armenia. The Russian peacekeeping contingent, in accordance with the agreements, exercises control over it. Control is carried out not only of the road, but also of the approaches to it up to 5 kilometers wide,” said Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Kuzmin.

Lithuania (2005), Latvia (2021), and Estonia
The Baltic Recognition of the Armenian Genocide

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in favor of “marking the 90-anniversary of a genocide of the Armenian nation, condemning a genocide of the Armenian nation accomplished by Turks in Ottoman empire in 1915, calling Turkish Republic to recognize this historic fact.”

Three legislators chose to remain absentee with nobody opposing. Considering the high degree of the integration between the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), this historical decision paved way to expectations that the other two Baltic “cousins” would follow Lithuania’s lead. The author of this article was covering the news working in Yerevan back then. I recall how almost immediately after the resolution of the Seimas, talk about Latvia’s similar move surfaced. However, it took 15 years before the acknowledgement process started and another year before it was finalized.

In April 2020, Latvia’s parliamentary leading groups adopted declarations on the Armenian Genocide. A few days ago, the Seima finally joined nearly 30 other international legislative bodies which have condemned the Armenian Genocide. The 1.5-decade-long struggle highlights how difficult the path to the truth was. It also raises another question: when will the last Baltic country of Estonia take action?

Tigran Mkrtchyan worked as Armenia’s ambassador to the Baltic states between 2016 and 2021. Before him Armenia’s top diplomat to all Baltic countries was Ara Ayvazyan, the current minister of foreign affairs, during whose tenure the process of the recognition was already in place. The residence of the Armenian diplomatic mission to all three countries is in Vilnius.



From left, Ilze Paegle-Mkrtchian (ambassador’s wife), Amb. Tigran Mkrtchyan, Dagmara Beitnere-Le Galla (Deputy Speaker of Latvia’s Parliament), and her husband

us (unlike Turkey and Azerbaijan, which have individual embassies in all three capitals), which adds an extra layer of challenge for Armenian diplomats to oppose the lobbying activities of the two Turkic states aimed at preventing the adoption. The lobbying efforts and Turkey’s leverage which its participation in NATO enables, in contrast to Armenia’s lesser material re-



Artis Pabriks remembering the Turks who fell in World War I and World War II, even though Turkey never fought in World War II, while Pabriks did not commemorate the Armenian Genocide

sources, were among the key reasons that complicated the recognition in the remaining Baltic countries.

“In Latvia, two parallel resolutions were drafted: one by the Foreign Affairs Committee and one by the Armenian-Latvian Friendship group committee. They were very similar yet different in terms of emphasis. Eventually the Foreign Affairs Committee’s proposal passed,” Mkrtchyan said via Zoom. He highlighted his embassy’s active political dialogue with Latvia’s MPs and politicians that was in place during the recent years.

Among other issues that contributed to the Armenian Genocide resolution were cultural and academic grassroots activities. The director of the Washington-based Armenian National Institute Dr. Rouben Adalian spoke remotely to the Latvian audience, Turkish-American historian Taner Akçam lectured at Latvian University, and the director of the Aram Khachaturian museum, musician Armine Grigoryan, visited Vilnius several times.

In 2019, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* of Franz Werfel, a novel dedicated to the Armenian self-defense battle near the Mediterranean Sea, was published in translation in the Latvian language. The translator was the ambassador’s wife. Latvia’s Academy of Sciences supported the publication and Latvian MPs posted on social media about Werfel’s novel. “This should not be forgotten! Thanks to the Armenian Embassy for the gifted book, an excellent yet difficult message to

remember Armenian genocide victims!”, Linda Medne from the Conservative Party wrote on her [Facebook page](#).

The same year, at one of the churches the critically acclaimed Latvian Radio Choir with guest soloists from Armenia featured Gomidas’s *Divine Liturgy*. A year after, the CD-recording of this performance was released by a Latvian company, which was covered by Latvian and the international media (including the [Armenian Mirror-Spectator](#)). Often the stories related the background of Gomidas Vartabed, one of the Armenian intellectuals arrested on the eve of the Armenian Genocide in 1915, and this became part of the news.

Per Mkrtchyan, these activities and the engagement of small, but vibrant Armenian community all contributed to the final result. US President Joe Biden’s April 24 statement is described as a timely and positive push as well. Although Latvian Minister of Defense Artis Pabriks criticized Biden for his statement, this politician is often noted for his pro-Turkish and pro-Azerbaijani public statements. Interestingly, in March of this year, he tweeted about commemorating the fallen Turkish soldiers of World War I and World War II, although Turkey never fought in World War II. Pabriks made no tweets commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide last month.

“There was broad political support in Latvia for a resolution on the Armenian genocide. The debate was over timing and wording. We felt it was important to distinguish between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. I was not aware of heavy lobbying against it,” MP Ojars Eriks Kalnis, a supporter of the resolution said to the author via electronic communication. Kalnis was born in Germany’s Latvian refugee camp but grew up in the United States.

Now all eyes are on Estonia, the last Baltic country where Genocide recognition might eventually take place.

A video segment on the *Mirror-Spectator* website presents an interview with Ambassador Tigran Mkrtchyan who finished his diplomatic tenure in the Baltic countries and returned to Armenia recently.



INTERNATIONAL

Cultural Roots of Armenian Identity

Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — What does it mean to be Armenian? What is Armenia's national identity? How do its citizens perceive it? And those in the diaspora?

Over the last 30 years, the country and its people have experienced political upheaval through the collapse of the Soviet Union, the subsequent economic crisis and years of war, decades of struggle to shape a new self-conception and define a meaningful role in the regional and international context. The most recent phase of transformation, ushered in by the "Velvet Revolution" three years ago and followed by the catastrophic 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh, remains open, more questions raised than answered.

In this context, the German-Armenian Cultural Days opened in Berlin under the rubric, "Armenian Identity and its Roots." Organized by the Association of the European and Armenian Experts e.V. (AEAE), the initiative enjoys the patronage of Michael Grunst, mayor of Berlin-Lichtenberg, and the support of the Lichtenberg District Office for Art and Culture, the Kulturhaus Karlshorst, the Paul Gerhardt Evangelical Parish in Berlin-Karlshorst, former Parliamentarian Prof. Martin Pätzold and the Galerie InteriorDasein Berlin (www.InteriorDasein.de).

The program opened on May 2 with a vernissage of an exhibition at the Kulturhaus Karlshorst, curated by artist and collector Archi Galentz. The exhibition, which is accessible (at least initially) only online, due to the continuing pandemic, constitutes the unifying feature of the cultural days, which will continue until June 6. As Mikayel Minasyan, chairman of the AEAE, put it, Armenia is passing through its deepest crisis since independence, and needs support to launch a new beginning. Why the focus on Armenian identity? Because identity is the characteristic providing stability, essential for starting anew.

"Six Facets of Self-Examination" is the name of the show and these facets are articulated in six areas: Land-



Archi Galentz, "The Black Garden," 1997 and "Globe," 2003

asm") from the revolutionary year 2018.

Artist, Collector, Curator

Galentz, the curator of the exhibition is a Moscow-born Armenian who received his artistic education in Berlin. His InteriorDasein hosted well over 20 projects, seminars and film showings from 2008 to 2015. An important international reference point for Armenian artists, it has served since then as an atelier and collection room with the works of dozens from the Republic of Armenia

and the diaspora. It was here that the displays in the Berlin Cultural Days from 2015-2017 were also organized, and the current exhibition draws on that experience. (See <http://interiordasein.de/curated-projects>) In addition, the show provides the occasion for a retrospective view of Galentz's own work as a collector; the circa 40 works displayed represent the best pieces from his vast collection. And he is present as the artist as well.

In the first thematic space is

a "Time Landscape," 2004-2021, in water colors and colored pencil, which juxtaposes all the lands inhabited and governed by Armenians, from green-yellow territory in the time of Tigran the Great to red-brown regions in Nagorno-Karabakh. The area dedicated to language and writing contains his "Metz Hayk," 2009, an etching on paper.

On a separate wall, one can view Galentz's "The Black Garden," 1997, nine Litho Monotypes on paper on canvas. This work too, part of a series of "Map Prints," addresses the process of territorial loss, again expressed through color: as the artist has explained it, this series "represents a change from brown-black on one edge of a square object to the yellow-green of the opposite side and refers to the Karabakh war confrontation maps" that were current in mass media depictions during the 1990s. Next to the 9-piece composition is a small drawing from 2004 showing the borders drawn between Armenia and Artsakh. In addition, there is a Galentz sculpture resembling a globe, 2003, whose six sides show the possible phases or steps in the loss of the republic. These maps are painted in a technique used by architects, called "painting with tears," whereby water colors are so diluted with water that they resemble tears. The paint is applied repeatedly in very thin layers.

These works, we read in the official invitation, "investigate the process of identity transformation that came into

being through the collapse of the Soviet empire and the recovery of Armenia's independence.... As seldom before, now for Armenians in the diaspora, the urgent question of their identity is on the agenda. The exhibition shows the potential for renewal which, though painful, releases constructive and healing powers."

Identity through History, Theater and Music

Over the coming weeks, the Kulturhaus Karlshorst will host three more cultural events in this year's program, which examine further facets of the identity issue. On May 12, Prof. Elke Hartmann will deliver a Zoom lecture followed by discussion on "Houshamadyan: Reconstruction of the Lost, Identity and Future." Hartmann is a professor of Turkology, Ottoman History, Islamic Science and Armenian Studies who has taught at the Berlin Free University Berlin, PPKE Budapest, Bamberg and Hamburg and is currently doing research in Munich. She is founding director of Houshamadyan, a research project dedicated to reconstructing Armenian life and culture in the Ottoman Empire before the genocide.



Hakob Kodjoyan, "Bari Kentan," 1946

scapes, Language and Script, Church, State, Poetry of Ethnography and Hope. Through this thematic organization, certain fundamental questions are addressed, like Tradition, Limits of Communication as defined through language; Forced Innovation especially as dictated in the cultural realm by globalization; Injured Sense of Justice, as a distraction from self-consciousness; Appeal — to stress the socially shaping character of modern art terms — and, finally, Hope, as the motor force for vital changes.

The participating artists, from the Republic of Armenia as well as the diaspora, engage in a lively dialogue on these themes, with constellations of paintings, drawings, posters, prints and objects. Among the landscapes is "Bari Kentan" by Hakob Kodjoyan, 1946, gouache on paper, and a pencil "Portrait of Abo Parsemyan," 1960, by the legendary Minas Avetisyan. One work treating Language and Script is "Alphabet" by Narine Khachaturyan, 2005, gouache on paper. "Arzni Church" and "Gandzasar Cloister" by Zaven Sargsyan, from 2000 and exposures on photo paper, appear on the wall space dedicated to the theme of the Church, and Narine Zolyan's untitled photo under acryl and metal, 2010, expresses Hope. There are historically charged items illustrating the theme State, like a T-shirt with the slogan "I am Vahe Avetyan," 2012, which refers to the violent death of a military doctor; an Armenian coat of arms in a studio frame, 2018, and an original baseball cap with "Duhkov" ("full of enthusi-



Narine Zolyan, "Untitled," 2010

On May 21, the children of the AEAE's Armenian Sunday school will perform the play, "Battle between Hayk and Bel," accompanied by music and dance. The story, told by Movses Chorenatzi (5th century A.D.), relates the mythological battle for Armenian freedom against the Babylonian conqueror Bel.

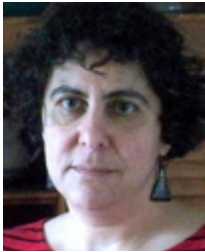
At the art exhibition vernissage, violinist David Khachaturyan played solo violins pieces by Komitas, and the closing reception scheduled for June 6, will conclude with a concert featuring two renowned opera singers, Hrachuhi Bassenz, soprano at the Dresden Semperoper, and Gor Harutyunyan, baritone in the Nurnberg opera chorus. Music, from the folk songs of the highlands and medieval church music to instrumental works and modern operas, is an integral component of the Armenian identity, and thus a most important element in cultural renewal.

Community News

Rhode Island College Professor Okoomian Reacts to Presidential Genocide Affirmation On Public Radio

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island College professor Janice Okoomian was interviewed by Rhode Island's public radio station, the local National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate, about her reaction to President Joe Biden's recent affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.

Dr. Okoomian writes, "While President Biden's declaration is important to the geopolitics of the current situation with Turkey and Azerbaijan, the focus of this interview was more about how I think the declaration might affect the psyches of Armenian American descendants of genocide survivors. I spoke about the way the declaration helps us feel visible in the U.S. and how it begins to heal some of our inherited trauma. I also expressed my hope that our Armenian genocide legacy will prompt Armenians to support those who experience racism in the US. In addition to my comments about the Black Lives Matter movement, which you will hear in the interview, I also believe there are echoes of genocidal logic in the way immigrant refugees have been characterized and treated at the southern US borders. Additionally, as I write, I am conscious of the very sad irony that I now live on land that once belonged to the Wampanoag nation, who were dispossessed of their ancestral land. A number of my students, who previously knew nothing about Armenians, have heard the interview and responded positively, many of them connecting the Armenian experience with their own experience of racism."



Professor Janice Okoomian (courtesy Janice Okoomian)

The transcribed May 4 interview on the Mosaic program follows, taken with permission from the [Publics Radio website](#).

On April 24th, President Biden formally recognized the Armenian Genocide of 1915. While the horrific events of this genocide occurred over 100 years ago, the lack of formal recognition of the violent acts has had a damaging effect on Armenian American communities. Dr. Janice Okoomian is Assistant Professor of English and Gender and Women's studies at Rhode Island College. She's also Armenian. Dr. Okoomian spoke with Mosaic host Ana Gonzalez about what this statement means to her.

GONZÁLEZ: Janice, thank you so much for being here with me.

OKOOMIAN: Thanks for having me.

GONZÁLEZ: When you heard or read President Biden's announcement that he was stating that there was, in fact, a genocide in Armenia, see REACTION, page 9



Volunteers at the St. Hagop Armenian Church (Photo courtesy of St. Hagop Armenian Church)

Annual Armenian Madagh Picnic Set for June 27 at St. Hagop Church in Racine

By Christine Vartanian Datian RACINE, Wis. — On Sunday, June 27, 2021, St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church will hold its annual Armenian Madagh Picnic at their church grounds, 4100 North Newman Road, in Racine. St. Hagop's has held this traditional event since 1938.

The word "Madagh" means offering and goes back to the time of Abraham who was willing to offer his only son, Isaac, to God to prove his love, faith and obedience to the Lord. "When God witnessed this testimony, He asked Abraham to spare his son and offer a ram instead. Today, St. Hagop's Madagh is an expression of that same love, faith and gratitude to the Lord for all that He has bestowed on us. Armenians throughout the world have designated places of pilgrimage where they go to worship and offer a meal of Madagh to the community," says Chairman Zohrab Khaligian.

Antranig Mikaelian, top, scoops some beef and onion stew into Vache Mikaelian's pot at St. Hagop Armenian Church's annual picnic in 2019 at H.F. Johnson Park, shortly before attendees celebrated the Armenian tradition of Madagh.

For over 80 years, St. Hagop Armenian Church has sustained this old-country tradition. Armenians and non-Armenians alike gather for the Madagh to enjoy a day of live Armenian music, dancing, church service, and perhaps most importantly, food. This year, the St. Hagop Armenian Church is pleased to announce that through donations from their dedicated community members and friends, they have already collected over \$7,500 for this year's amended event.

"People would travel from near and far to partake in the festivities of the day. And our church would have been well underway preparing Cheese Puffs/Penerlee (hand-rolled flaky pastry filled with gooey cheese), Sari Bourma and Pakhlava (handmade flaky layers of buttery phyllo dough filled with cinnamon-sugar walnuts and finished with cinnamon-scented syrup), and over 4,500 Sarma (delicately hand-rolled grape leaves stuffed with a vegetarian mixture of rice and vegetables), true Armenian delicacies for picnic-goers. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus epidemic, for the 2nd year in a row only the traditional Madagh (beef stew) and bulghur (cracked wheat rice) will be prepared and served as the drive-thru item in one-quart containers," says Khaligian.

The blessing of St. Hagop's Madagh will be held at 11:15 a.m., officiated by Reverend Daron Stepanian, Pastor of St. Hagop Armenian Church, and serving will begin after the blessing is completed.

Free-will donations will be gladly accepted. Donations can be made by check made payable to St. Hagop Armenian Church and mailed to:

St. Hagop Armenian Church
4100 N. Newman Road
Racine, WI 53406

Or through this Go Fund Me page at:

<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/sthagop2021madagh>
Also, visit this site to view an amazing 25-minute multimedia video created by Tali Gelenian of the "Madagh," an Armenian cultural tradition in Racine, Wisconsin: <https://racinearmenianmadagh.wordpress.com>. (This video was part of the work of Tali Gelenian's senior honors thesis at the University of Vermont.)

11TH Annual Mentoring, Networking Forum Connects Professionals From Around the World

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

NEW YORK — Armenian professionals, students and those exploring a career change converged from around the globe on April 18th at the 11th Annual Mentoring and Networking Forum, organized by The Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) and the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America Northeastern Section (AESA - NE). The free event — held virtually this year for the first time due to the pandemic — provided participants with an opportunity to consult with mentors and network with their peers. Professional disciplines represented included the fields of Law, Medicine/Healthcare, Biomedical/Pharma, Behavioral Science, Finance/Business, General Engineering, Computer Science/IT/Cybersecurity, Civil/Structural/Bridge Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical/Computer Engineering.

"It is wonderful to see so many Armenian professionals volunteer their time to help guide others in their career decisions," said AAHPO President Larry Najarian, MD. "Mentoring reflects the strength and camaraderie of our global Armenian community, where accomplished mentors strive to empower mentees to achieve career success in their own right."

"Holding the event virtually this year actually had its advantages, as it enabled Armenians worldwide to be a part of this important event," said AESA President Raffi Jamgotchian. "The Forum was so well-received that we are considering offering it more than once per year, and expanding the activities to include career building, resume writing and critiquing, and job search strategies using social media."

A brief introduction and overview of the Forum's agenda was presented by AESA Executive Board member Shaunte Baboumian. "Despite the difficulties we all faced during the past year, there was a renewed energy to work together to overcome any obstacles," she said. "The beauty of this forum is that, in addition to being helpful to those starting out in their careers, it is also beneficial for established professionals who would like to investigate a career change, which we saw a lot of this time."

After acknowledging the partnering organizations and individuals whose assistance made the event possible, Jamgotchian introduced AESA member and mentee-turned-mentor, Maral Muradian, whose story stands as a testament to the value of the Mentoring Forum. While studying Civil Engineering in college, Muradian made a networking connection at a previous AAHPO/AESA Mentoring Forum prior to graduating. "That connection led to a summer internship, which then turned into a job offer before I even graduated," she recalled. "Studying hard, communicating well with others and demonstrating a strong work ethic, along with the

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

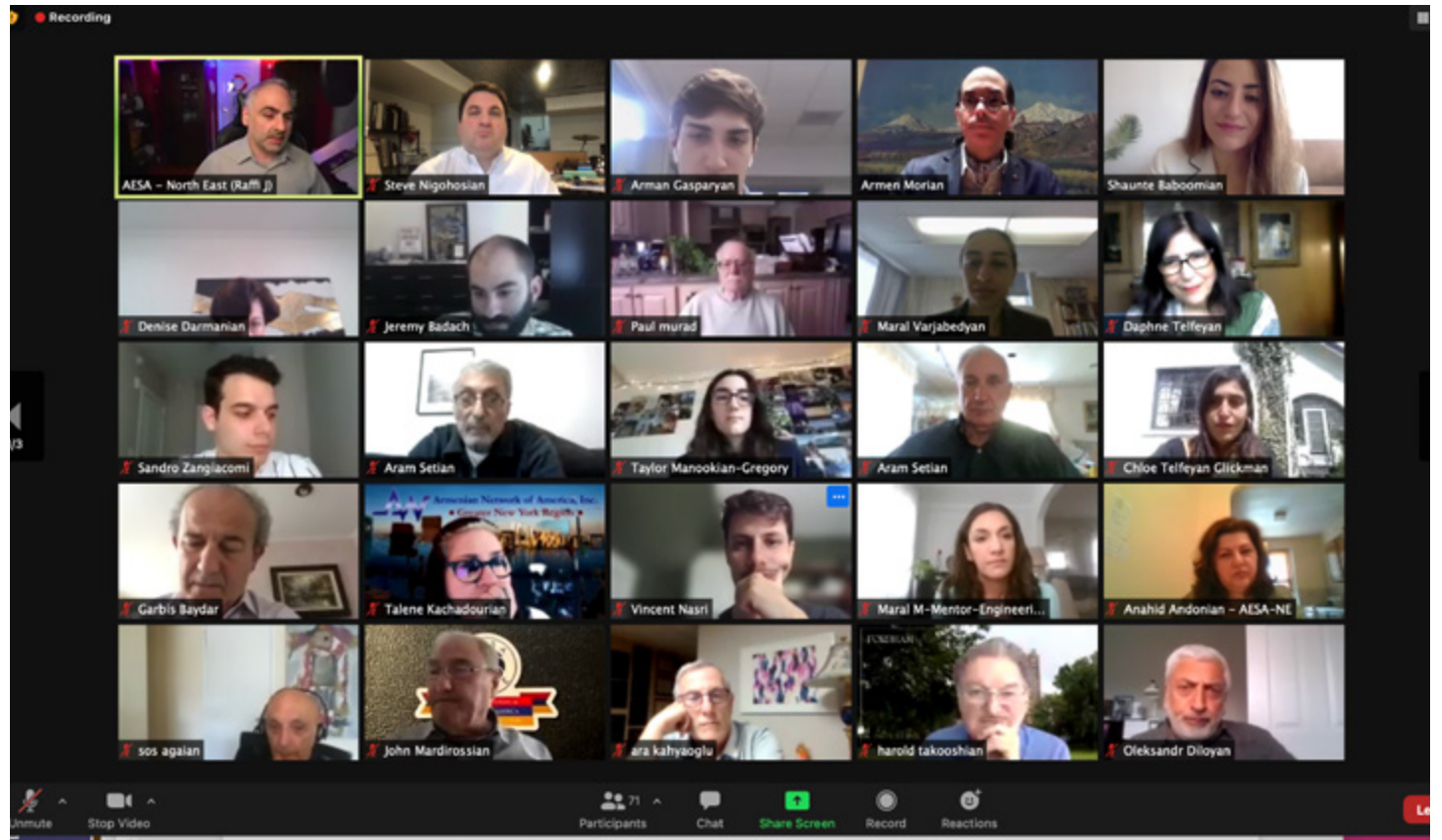
11TH Annual Mentoring, Networking Forum Connects Professionals from Around the World

from previous page

power of a networking connection, are all important elements in landing a job.” Muradian returned to the Forum this year as a mentor, to provide others with the same counsel and guidance that she received.

Keynote speaker Margarita Baghdasaryan, staff member of the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of Armenia, spoke next, describing her incredible journey as a U.S.-born repatriate now residing in Yerevan. Baghdasaryan’s “calling” to Armenia began when she first visited the country in 2013, and she subsequently became involved in several non-profit initiatives over the next few years. “After graduating from the London School of Economics with a degree in Political Science, I began to search for opportunities to work in Armenia to fulfill my interest in Armenian politics and government,” she said. “We are the generation that has a vast, untapped potential to build Armenia. Through the individual efforts of those in the Diaspora, we can collectively contribute to the strength and security of our homeland.”

Following the introductions, participants



A screenshot of the forum

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moved freely between discipline-specific breakout rooms, where they met with mentors and asked questions to explore different professional fields. Daphne E. Telfeyan, Esq., became involved in the Mentoring and Networking Forum through the Armenian Bar Association, and provided insight in the field of Law in one of the rooms. “Most professionals are eager to offer guidance to those seeking entry, and it is in this spirit that I gladly served as a mentor,” she said. “I am pleased to support Armenian students and, given my long career in legal recruitment and law school career services, channeled my efforts toward helping them in their quest for information.” Mentee Nareh Saghatelian’s affiliation with AESA, as well as her desire to expand her professional network, prompted her to participate in the event. “Connections can provide insight into companies and jobs that you may not currently have and can assist in the process of identifying the best fit for you professionally,” she said. “I met numerous individuals from diverse industries at the Mentoring and Networking Forum, proving that virtual events such as this can benefit many.”

The inception of the Mentoring and Networking Forum began in 2009, when AESA Founder Vahan Tanal and AAHPO Board member Garbis Baydar, MD, saw a need for Armenian professionals to guide and mentor Armenian youth with their career choices. What began with twenty students and five mentors from the healthcare and engineering fields has now grown to attract large numbers of people of all ages and encompass a wide spectrum of professional disciplines.

Organizations that also contributed to this year’s virtual event included: Armenian Bar Association (ABA); Armenian International Women’s Association NJ - Affiliate (AIWA); Armenian Network of America - Greater New York Region; Armenian Behavioral Science Association (ABSA); and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

Donation

Richard Aurslanian of Cleveland donated \$50 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Zaruhi Sara Chitjian

Pioneer of Teaching Armenian Genocide

LOS ANGELES — Zaruhi Sara Chitjian, a long-time benefactor of Armenian studies programs at UCLA and the founder of the Research Program in Armenian Archaeology at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, died at her home on May 3, 2021 having lived to see US president Joe Biden officially recognize the Armenian Genocide. She was 87.

Zaruhi Sara Chitjian, was born in Mexico City in 1933 to Hampartzoum and Ovsanna Chitjian, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide who had met and married in Mexico. In 1935 her family immigrated to the United States settling in Los Angeles where Sara spent the remainder of her life. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology in 1956 from UC Los Angeles and a year later went on to earn her teaching credentials. She dedicated her life to education and spent the next 40 years teaching for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

As a descendant of survivors of the Armenian Genocide she had a vested interest in preserving Armenian history and culture, but she had a unique appreciation for cultural heritage in general. As a young teacher at Monlux Elementary, Sara installed the same appreciation for culture into her young students who built models of early California, had visits for a geisha to learn about Japanese Tea Ceremony, and an Aikido sensei who gave demonstrations and taught about the philosophy of martial arts.



The late Zaruhi Sara Chitjian with the late Hrant Dink

While teaching at Dixie Elementary School, she proposed to teach Armenian history and culture for the "Mini Classes" program of the school, forever changing the landscape of the curriculum throughout Los Angeles by becoming the first teacher to raise awareness of Armenian culture through a formal course. She found exciting and creative ways to teach Armenian history and culture, such as having her students try to write their names in Armenian script as she read them about the origin of the alphabet. She also invited prominent Armenian scholars, such as Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Dr. Gerard Libaridian, and Dr. Oshin Keshishian to give guest lectures on topics ranging from art to genocide.

Sara's numerous awards in recognition for her contributions and service as a teacher are clear testament to her dedication and passion for educating children. She successfully petitioned for the City of Los Angeles to make April 24th, the day of commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide, an excusable day of absence on the school district's academic calendar. In the 1970s she created an Armenian Teacher Association and The Armenian Urban Center programs, the former trained teachers in providing aid to students who were fleeing the Syrian civil war and the latter developed scholastic curriculum for teaching about Armenian history and culture. In 2017, the Armenian National Committee - Western Region named one of its awards the Zaruhi "Sara" Chitjian Armenian Genocide Education Award which is presented to outstanding educators of Armenian descent who have gone above and beyond to teach Armenian history, culture, and about the Armenian Genocide.

Sara believed strongly in the mission of public education and in memory of her parents and all survivors of the Armenian Genocide, she established the Hampartzoum and Ovsanna Chitjian Foundation to support Armenian Studies programs in higher education. She established four endowments at leading universities each with focus on a specific aspect of Armenian her-

itage. At University of Southern California (USC) her endowment supports research and study of the Armenian Genocide, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) is the steward of the Chitjian Family archive, at the American University of Armenia (AUA) her endowment supports an entrepreneurship program, and at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) her endowment supports archaeological research in Armenia. Sara was an avid supporter and promoter of Armenian archaeology and cultural heritage. In 2006 she partially sponsored renewed excavations of Dvin, a capital and a large commercial city of early medieval Armenia, and at the world-renown Areni-1 cave site. In 2013, she donated a transformative gift to the UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology that established the Research Program in Armenian Archaeology ensuring that UCLA has a leading presence in the field.

"In my father's stories unity is the num-

ber one thing or finding a way to be united... 'Here lies an Armenian boy who suffered all his life because of Armenian dis-unity'...he wanted that on his tombstone. He was telling the Armenian community 'unite' and we still don't get that message...this is why I am doing what I am doing...not to forget." Sara carried her father's message of unity through all her life and works, preserving the memory of the past and promoting awareness was of utmost importance to her and the various programs she established ensure that the rich history and heritage of the Armenian people is preserved and passed on for generations to come.

Her memory and her life-long mission to spread knowledge and raise awareness of Armenian history and cultural heritage will be carried on in the work of the members of the Armenian Archaeology Lab whose research is made possible by Sara's generosity.

Hrant Dink School

After the announced deadline of April 15, 2021 for donations to the Hrant Dink Day school in Istanbul, Tekeyan Cultural Association has received the following additional donations as of May 3, 2021.



Photo by Harry Parsekian

Society of Istanbul Armenians of Greater Boston, Belmont, MA	2,500
Parsekian Foundation, Watertown MA	1,000
Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc., Paramus NJ	1,000
Armen Dedekian and Svetlana Ordian, Arlington, MA	100
Sylvana Mikaelian	50
Zabel I. Meklian, Providence, RI	50



Vatche Darakdjian

LAS VEGAS — Vatche Darakdjian died on May 1. He was 67.

He leaves his wife of 41 years, Helen (Elo) Darakdjian; children Raffi (Talar) Darakdjian, Tanya (Michael) Bedrossian; grandchildren Natalia, George, Jax, Sophia and Ari. Darakdjian, Septjian, Attar, Fermanian and Bedrossian families. Many dear relatives and life-long friends.

Wake and funeral services were at St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church of Las Vegas, on May 7.

Interment followed at Davis in Las Vegas.

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COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

LA Armenian Democratic Liberal and Tekeyan Cultural Association Leader Ara Aharonian Passes Away

By Hagop Vartivarian

GLENDAL, Calif. – Ara Karekin Aharonian was born in Tripoli, Lebanon on June 28, 1952 to Paylag and Mari Aharonian. He received his primary education at the Khirmian-Noubarian [Armenian] National School in Tripoli, but when his father was invited to be a teacher at the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut, Aharonian moved with his family to Beirut in 1966 and went to the secondary school for boys of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Hovagimian-Manougian School. He went then to Haigazian College, followed by the American University of Beirut, where he majored in engineering. He simultaneously pursued musical interests, including voice training.

The Lebanese Civil war led him to move to Los Angeles, where in 1978 he graduated university with a degree in electrical engineering. While a student, in his spare time he served as secretary and organized the activities of the AGBU Armenian Youth Association of the Western United States.

In Service to the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and Tekeyan Cultural Association

At an early age, Aharonian joined the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) in Beirut, where he joined the Portukalian Youth Club. After coming to the US, he was an active member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Los Angeles chapter, serving as its vice chairman, as well as chairing two different ADL chapters.

In 1980, he was elected a member of the ADL District Committee of Western America, and served in various executive positions. For many years he represented the party in inter-political party committees. In 1982 he was one of the founders of the ADL Armenagan Youth Movement, and was its first chairman. In 1987-89 he edited that movement's *Armenagan Yer-amseay* [Armenagan Quarterly] periodical. In 1996-1997 and 2003-2008, he served as chairman of the ADL Western District Committee executive.

During five years, he served first as a member in 1983, and then as chairman of the executive of the ADL Armenian Rights Council of Western America, maintaining relations with local American political figures and circles, and organizing meetings for publicity and publishing writings on the Armenian Genocide and other issues pertaining to Armenian rights.

In the large Armenian communities of the Western United States, he served as co-chairman of pan-Armenian community commemorations of the 80th, 85th, and 90th anniversaries of the Armenian Genocide.

He participated in five ADL General Assemblies and on three different occasions was called upon to serve as part of the executive of those assemblies. In the Feb-

ruary 2006 ADL 24th Representative General Assembly in Athens, he was elected a member of the Central Committee (2006-2009).

Upon the invitation of Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh Ashot Ghulyan, in September 2006 he went to Stepanakert and met with President Arkady Ghukasyan to congratulate him in the name of the ADL Central Executive on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Artsakh's republic.



Local Political Activity

Aharonian established ties with American mayors, policemen, governors and members of the House of Representatives and Senate. In 2005, upon the invitation of California State Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Aharonian went to the state capital of Sacramento to participate in the ceremony of official recognition of the Armenian Genocide on its 90th anniversary.

In September 2005, he visited Armenia together with California State Senator Dr. Jack Scott to be present at the official opening of the California-Armenia Trade Office.

He worked in an insurance company as a planner and counselor, and in 2012 was elected as vice presi-

dent of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors of California.

Publications

He frequently published pieces in the Armenian Democratic Liberal press, and in particular in the pages of the ADL organ *Nor Or* in Los Angeles, and the independent weekly newspaper *Nor Hayasdan*, where he chiefly presented brief biographies of leaders of his political party. Later, these articles appeared in two volumes, *Yerakhdavorneru Ughin* [Path of the Dedicated] (Los Angeles, 2006 and 2014). He also published *Herosagan temker RAGi* [Heroic Figures of the ADL] (Los Angeles, 2001), which was also translated into English and Spanish. He wrote the booklet *Lernayin Gharapaghi Hanrabedutiwn/The Republic of Mountainous Karabakh* in both Armenian and English (2011) and *Hayasdani Hanrabedutean Mardahraverneruh* [The Challenges of the Republic of Armenia] (2014), which was published by the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

He was invited for presentations of his books to New York by the local ADL Armenagan-Hovsepian chapter, and to Toronto by the ADL Yesayi Yaghubian Chapter (May 2003), as well as to Buenos Aires, Argentina (March 2008) and Washington D.C. (September 2011).

He passed away suddenly in Glendale, California, at home on May 5, 2021. He leaves behind

his wife Diana, daughter Rita (and Andre) Saroughian, and their children Chloe, Gabriel and Colette, son Alex Aharonian, sister Arpy (and Chahe) Ghanimian, sister's son Zohrab (and Karine) Ghanimian and their daughter Eris, sister's daughter Tamar Ghanimian, sister's son Dr. Shiraz Ghanimian, in-laws Diran and Anna Depanian, and the entire Aharonian, Depanian, Saroughian, Ghanimian, Darian, Hovsepian, Keshishian, Bilemjian, Tamer, Artinian and Poladian families and friends.

Funeral services will take place on May 20 at 10 a.m. at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank, to be followed by burial at Glendale Forest Lawn Cemetery.

(Translated from the original Armenian-language article.)

Rhode Island College Professor Okoomian Reacts to Presidential Genocide Affirmation On Public Radio

REACTION, from page 6

what did you think? What did you feel when you heard that?

OKOOMIAN: Well, I felt that this was a long time in coming. You know, this genocide is woven very, very deeply into the psyches of all Armenians. And that includes not just the survivors who most of whom have passed on, but also their descendants, people like me, who carry the weight of this past on our shoulders. It was a pretty big deal for me, sort of emotionally. And he did this on April 24, which is the day that Armenians commemorate the Armenian Genocide, because that's the day in 1915, when 500 intellectuals and leaders were rounded up in Constantinople, and it was the very beginning of the Armenian genocide.

GONZÁLEZ: Growing up, what did you learn about the genocide? Like, how did your family talk to you about it?

OKOOMIAN: Well, when I was very

little, they didn't say anything about it, because they didn't want me to be, you know, harmed, I think, by that terrible knowledge. So, I don't have specific memories of like, when my parents sat me down and said, this is what happened. But I do know that my grandfather, whose sister perished in the genocide, went to his grave without telling us what happened to her, you know. And in 1915, 1920, there was no concept of post-traumatic stress disorder. So the survivors mostly, many of them never said anything. And that takes a real toll on the psyche.

So to have the country that we live in now, those of us who, whose ancestors migrated to the United States to have our country affirm that what happens to us between 1915 and 1923 was in fact, not just random killings, not just for war but a planned program to exterminate an entire people — that's what a genocide is — you

know, it's gratifying. And it and it feels like we're being, at long last, lifted up and supported by our nation.

GONZÁLEZ: Beyond, you know that gratification and the support, are there any, I guess material impacts of this announcement? Or is that gratification, that support, good enough?

OKOOMIAN: Because I teach about gender and race in the US, as well as my work on Armenian American literature, the lessons of something like the Armenian Genocide for Armenian Americans really have to carry us towards solidarity with the peoples in the United States who are suffering now. I am thinking about, you know, the Black Lives Matter movement and the way that the treatment of black peoples by law enforcement, it's a little bit like maybe that experience of, of the denial of the genocide, it's like, the powers that be are denying the reality. Not all of them, but some of them.

And these are acts that even though we're not in a full blown genocide, right now, in the US, these are some of the kinds of, of tactics and characterizations of the racial other that are very similar. So I think that it's essential for us, Armenians and otherwise, to understand that, you know, if one group is in chains, no one is free.

GONZÁLEZ: Absolutely, yeah. It's even in the name of, like, Black Lives Matter, right? Like, that is a statement. And it's so similar to saying it was a genocide, right? Like, these lives mattered. And it's it's the same mentality or it's not. It's not raising up a life higher than another, but it's raising up a subjugated life to more of the plane of existence.

OKOOMIAN: Right. And it all begins with telling the truth.

GONZÁLEZ: Janice Okoomian, thanks for speaking with us today.

OKOOMIAN: My pleasure.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Eastern Diocese's 119th Diocesan Assembly Holds First Virtual Session on May 1

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held the main General Session of its 119th Diocesan Assembly as an online gathering, with all attendees participating remotely over the Internet, on Saturday, May 1.

Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over the assembly and delivered his annual formal address. About 150 clergy, Diocesan delegates, and parish council chairs took part in the meeting over the Zoom conference platform.

Gregory Saraydarian (of Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside NY) was elected as Assembly chair, with Alex Tobakbashian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnewood, PA) serving as vice chair, and Laurie Bejoian (Holy Translators Church, Framingham, MA) serving as secretary.

Due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 119th Diocesan Assembly maintained the remote format which had also caused the 118th Diocesan Assembly (in January 2021) and an “informational assembly” (September 2020) to be held as virtual events. Voting for Diocesan offices was also conducted online, using a secure platform successfully employed during the 118th Assembly. Diocese staffers Jennifer Morris and Kathryn Ashbahian, of the Youth and Young Adult Ministries department, capably facilitated the online meeting and helped delegates navigate the system.

The May 1 session was the start of virtual Assembly meetings that will take place throughout the month, including “breakout sessions” on three weekday evenings, and culminating in a final General Session on the evening of Tuesday, May 25.

Findikyan began his annual address to the delegates with welcoming words in Armenian. In the English portion of his address, the Primate quoted the Pauline epistles’ perspective on the perennial human problem of hardship, and its resolution in the unique hope delivered through Jesus Christ: “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:3-5).

He went on to say that after more than a year of living under pandemic restrictions, the Diocese was looking ahead to the more complete functioning of churches and facilities. He made reference to a directive he had sent to Diocesan leaders days earlier, which outlined steps to move forward with caution and concern for health and safety.

The Primate applauded parishes for the way they adapted to the 2020 crisis, and how they employed Internet broadcasts to keep parishioners together, informed, and inspired. Nevertheless, he stressed, “the church can only happen face-to-face”; the judicious use of virtual services, for example, cannot replace the active, personal experience of attending the *badarak* and receiving Holy Communion. Bishop Daniel explained that a Diocesan committee had been formed

to guide the faithful in the restoration of active church life.

Findikyan sketched a number of accomplishments of the past year, which were highlights of progress despite the difficulties 2020 presented. Chief among them, he said, were his opportunities as the year progressed to pay personal visits to parishes—often clustering a number of parish visits in a given region within a weeklong period of travel. He mentioned with enthusiasm his visits to the Diocesan churches in New England, the New York/New Jersey region, April’s long visit to the Midwest region, and within the past few days a trip to the Minneapo-

on Racial Social Justice and Repair, and cited his personal visit to “George Floyd Square” in Minneapolis one day prior to the Assembly. Referring to the nascent committee, which was established by a vote of the 118th Diocesan Assembly, he said: “This issue is at the heart of our witness as a church.”

Building Up the Body of Christ

Above all, Findikyan extolled the work being done on the vision for the Eastern Diocese called “Building Up the Body of Christ.”

Initially, this effort has focused on the creation of a digital ministries platform,

that the Diocese would be able to hire a director of Diocesan Ministries later this year, to expedite the Diocesan vision. But he also encouraged all Diocesan leaders to get involved in the project. He enlisted their support in reaching out to their respective parishes, and advocating on behalf of the “Building Up the Body of Christ” vision.

As an interlude in the middle of his address, the Primate introduced Fr. Vazken Movsesian, a venerable clergyman of the Western Diocese, to briefly speak to the delegates. Movsesian picked up the theme of justice as a part of the church’s witness, applauded the Primate’s vision for the Diocese, and offered an inspirational story from his ministry working with youth in California.

Speaking of the rich experiences of the Armenian Church, he said: “We want to share what we have with others; within the church, and within the larger world.”

In other presentations, Diocesan Council chair Fr. Krikor Sabounjian (Holy Translators Church, Framingham, MA) delivered the Diocesan Council report, briefly sketching points from the published report, and fielded questions from delegates. He expressed gratitude to his fellow council members, the Diocesan staff, and clergy for their supportive efforts through the year.

Paul Mardoian (Sts. Joachim and Anne Church, Palos Heights, IL) presented the latest data on a pilot project, which if implemented would replace the Diocese’s current “dues-paying” membership system with one based on voluntary “stewardship” contributions. He enthusiastically reported that the five parishes undertaking the pilot program were experiencing beneficial results in terms of increased membership roles as well as increased income from donations.

Elections for the various Diocesan offices and committees were conducted electronically, via the secure voting platform “Election Buddy.” Six seats on the Diocesan Council, one seat on the Board of Trustees, and seats on the Nominating, Proposals, and Auditing committees were all voted on during the session. However, in a move to adhere to the scheduled adjournment time of 2:30 p.m., the result of balloting was not revealed during the May 1 session, and will be announced to the delegates in the concluding General Session scheduled for the evening of May 25, at which point a second round of voting may take place.

On that latter occasion, the Assembly will hear reports from the Auditing Committee, receive the Financial Report of the Diocesan Council, adjudicate Proposals and New Business, and hear from the host parish for the 120th Diocesan Assembly in 2022—which is expected to go forward as an in-person gathering at the St. Mark Church of Springfield, MA.

Between the two General Sessions, delegates can attend three “breakout sessions” to engage with the Diocesan staff and organizations (May 5), review the Dues-to-Stewardship pilot project and the Diocesan Center Facilities Development plan (May 11), and participate in a Financial Presentation (date to be announced).



Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided over the Eastern Diocese’s 119th Diocesan Assembly, which is going forward this year as a virtual gathering. About 150 clergy, Diocesan delegates, and parish council chairs took part in the meeting on May 1. Additional online sessions are scheduled throughout the month.

lis community.

Another achievement of the past year, he said, was the reconfiguration of the directorship of the Diocese’s Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center into a university fellowship, in collaboration with Fordham University’s Orthodox Christian Studies Center.

The Primate also listed developments in creating a Deacons’ Fellowship in the Eastern Diocese; the ongoing work of the Diocese’s Commission on Women’s Ministry; and the ordination of a new priest last April, with additional ordinations coming up in May and June. At the end of this series of ordinations, Bishop Daniel will have consecrated five recent graduates of St. Nersess Seminary as clergymen of Armenian Church.

He also referenced early efforts of a newly-established Diocesan Committee

VEMKAR, which provides thematically-focused online educational resources to diverse demographic audiences in the Armenian Church. The Bishop mentioned that the inaugural VEMKAR module, titled “Christ as Healer,” had launched in the summer of 2020 and had sustained an educational season through the fall. The next module, “Christ as Hope,” is currently in preparation, he said, and will debut shortly.

“We are working feverishly to make the church more Christ-centered,” he said, adding that the realization of the “Building Up the Body of Christ” vision calls for “a culture-change in the way the church has often operated.” The vision “will affect everything in our church, our Diocese, our parishes, our organizations—and in our lives,” he said.

The Primate expressed his expectation



COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights and Daughters Of Vartan Commemorate Armenian Genocide at Times Square

NEW YORK — The 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, was commemorated in a limited setting in Times Square, on Sunday, April 26, 2021. Closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the private commemoration ceremony was attended by executive commit-



tee members. Brief remarks by Mark Geragos, Esq. were delivered and statements of affirmation by bipartisan Members of Congress and Senate were read out loud. Committee members laid carnations at the Tsitsernakabert replica monument to pay homage to the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide, who were massacred between 1915-1923.

The annual Armenian Genocide Times Square Commemoration will return in full force April 2022.



Armenian Heritage Park to Resume in Person Programs in June

BOSTON — Programs at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, Boston are happening in person beginning in June. Also, the first Park's Giving Day is on Thursday, May 20, a day to support the Park's care while funds are being raised to fully endow the fund for care. Every gift counts, and can be made on or before May 20, either on online at ArmenianHeritagePark.org or by mail. Donors will be acknowledged in the Park's Giving Day Thank You!

Tea & Tranquility at the Park launches the series of summer programs. This late afternoon monthly program on a Wednesday at 4pm engages all to come together, meet /greet, walk the labyrinth, view the Abstract Sculpture's 2021 Reconfiguration, and tie a ribbon with your wish on The Wishing Tree. The first Tea & Tranquility is on Wednesday, June 9 at 4 p.m. Several chefs who participated in the Celebrating What Unites Us! virtual cooking series this past year will be joining us. Boston Mayoral Candidates are joining us to meet/greet for the Tea & Tranquility on July 13, and on August 11 also something special. Tea & Tranquility series continues to be offered in collaboration with City of Boston Age-Friendly and MEM Tea Imports.

Labyrinth Walking Wellness series is monthly at the Park on Sundays at 2 p.m. The series was held virtually this past year to keep people connected, coming together, is being offered in collaborations with the City of Boston Age-Friendly, Boston Public Health Commission, The Eliot K-8 Innovation School/Boston Public School and The Greenway Conversancy Fitness program. The focus of the first program on Sunday, June 13 is Labyrinth Walking: A Mindfulness Tool, Sunday, July 11 focuses

on Labyrinth Walking: A Self-Discovery Journey, and Sunday, August 1 focuses on Labyrinth Walking: A Wellness Journey. Co-facilitators for the series are Kristin Asadourian, MSW - Leadership Coach and Founder of Living Become, LLC and Katrina Piehler, CWC, LMT - Wellness Coach and Founder of Living from Center.

Under the August Moon is set for Thursday, August 18 at 7:30 p.m.

As historic Faneuil Hall has yet to reopen, planning is on hold for the Welcome Reception for New Citizens and Their Families at the Park following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall. The annual program, hosted by the Park's Nourbar and Anna Afeyan Endowed Fund, is offered in collaboration with the City of Boston, arts and community organizations.

Programs are planned under the leadership of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park Programs Planning Team - Kristin Asadourian, Jason Behrens, Andrea Burns, Susan Deranian, Tom Dow, Manneh Ghazarians, Carol Ishkanian, Catherine Minassian, Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, Rita Pagliuca, Katrina Piehler, Tsoleen Sarian, Barbara Tellalian, Ann Zacarian, Chiara Megighian Zenati and Zareh Zurabyan.

Friends of Armenian Heritage Park is an initiative of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, comprised of representatives from parishes and organizations within the Armenian American community in Massachusetts. Honorary Chairs are Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and Rachel Kaprielian Executive Committee members are James Kalustian, Founding President; Bruce Bagdasarian, Esq. and Walter Nahabedian, Vice

For further information, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org.

Advocacy in Washington D.C.
Post April 24, 2021

ARMENIAN
COUNCIL OF
AMERICA



JOIN ARMENIAN COUNCIL OF AMERICA'S WASHINGTON D.C. REPRESENTATIVE TANIEL KOUSHAKJIAN IN A ZOOM DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RECOGNITION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE BY CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE, AND KEY ISSUES THAT ARE OF CONCERN TO ARMENIAN AMERICANS.

SATURDAY
MAY 22, 2021

10:30 A.M. PST.
1:30 P.M. EST.

REGISTER AT
[HTTPS://ARMENIANCOUNCIL.ORG/ACA/ZOOM](https://armeniancouncil.org/ACA/ZOOM)
info@armeniancouncil.org

Arts & Culture

Beverly Hills Film Festival Awards 'Bloodless' Golden Palm Award and Best Feature Documentary

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — The documentary feature "Bloodless: The Path to Democracy" snatched two of the top awards at the prestigious 21st Beverly Hills Film Festival—The Golden Palm Award and Best Feature Documentary award—during the May 2 awards ceremony, held virtually due to the pandemic.

The film by four-time regional Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker, Bared Maronian, captures the non-violent civil disobedience protests and social media campaigns during Armenia's 2018 velvet revolution when opposition leader, Nikol Pashinyan overthrew the decades-long, corrupt oligarchy power. The documentary, written by Bared Maronian and Silva Basmajian, and produced by Seda Grigoryan, Silva Basmajian, Bardig Kouyoumdjian and Bared Maronian.

"We are humbled that the jury, comprising Oscar winning industry professionals and industry leaders, extended high praise and selected "Bloodless" as the recipient of the Festival's top awards out of the 150 films," said filmmaker Bared Maronian, founder of Armenoid Productions, receiving news of the wins at Beverly Hills Film Festival.

The Best Feature Documentary Award to "Bloodless" was presented midway through the virtual awards ceremony by a panel of six film industry professionals. The Golden Palm Award—the annual Festival's most prestigious award—was presented to "Bloodless" by Nino Simone, Founder and President of the Beverly Hills Film Festival. The 21st annual



Bared Maronian

event, held virtually April 28 through May 2 due to the pandemic, livestreamed 150 non-studio films as part of its official global selections during the virtual Festival. The annual live event usually draws over 40,000 attendees.

The annual International Beverly Hills Film Festival was founded in 2001 by award-winning independent filmmaker Nino Simone. Designed to bridge the world of premiere independent cinema with Hollywood, the festival hosts online screenings, networking events and industry seminars.

Armenoid Productions is a multi award-winning international film/TV production team with over two decades of experience in producing see BLOODLESS, page 15



Violinist Samvel Arakelyan Brings Armenian Classical Tradition to Michigan

By **Harry Kezelian**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LANSING, Mich. — Violinist Samvel Arakelyan has travelled a long way away from his childhood days in Yerevan.

The 35-year-old classically-trained musician came to the United States about 10 years ago to attend Michigan State University. Now he is receiving his doctorate in music from the same school and has already embarked on a career of excellence in his chosen field.

Arakelyan's mother used to sing in a choir, and she wanted her children to take music lessons. Around 6th grade, Arakelyan realized he wanted to pursue music as a career. He attended the Ghazaros Saryan elementary school for the arts and then secondary school at the Tchaikovsky Special Music School, both in Yerevan. Among his memories are being selected as a child from the Saryan school and taken to play a piece with the famous composer Edvard Mirzoyan. At age 17, he was accepted to the Komitas Conservatory. After graduation, he performed with the Conservatory State Symphony Orchestra and the Yerevan Symphony Orchestra.

Coming to America

At age 25, Arakelyan came to the United States for further musical training at Michigan State University (MSU), at which point he was introduced to Metro Detroit's large and vibrant Armenian community as well as the strong classical music scene throughout the state of Michigan. He won a concerto competition at MSU, playing Edvard Mirzoyan's "Introduction and Perpetuum Mobile" with the Michigan State Symphony Orchestra. The video of this recital, still viewable on YouTube, displays Arakelyan's impeccable technique in a piece which to even the most casual viewer is clearly virtuosic. Most recently, he defended his doctoral dissertation on Khachaturian's *Violin Concerto in D Major* by performing the piece on April 30.

Arakelyan is an able performer and vigorous promoter of the great Armenian classical composers of the 20th century – names like Khachaturian, Babajanian, Aroutunian, Saryan, and Komitas. A favorite is Babajanian's *Violin Concerto*. "It's less known, but it's a very beautiful piece," Arakelyan says. "I am always interested to see which orchestras are interested in performing it."

His most notable concerts in the US have been in Carnegie Hall as a part of AGBU Talents, and at Merkin Hall in Manhattan. He also played at the Max Fisher Music Center in Detroit, one of the premiere venues in Michigan.

He has also performed several times at St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, including once with a chamber orchestra in the sanctuary playing Vivaldi's *Summer* and Baghdasaryan's *Rhapsody*. He also played at the church with a string quartet in 2018 with a concert of music by Komitas to mark the composer's 149th anniversary.

Venturing Further Afield

Although Arakelyan is trained in classical music, his skills have been called into use in various other endeavors. One is as a string player for rock and pop musicians.

see VIOLINIST, page 17

A CONVERSATION WITH...

Eduard Kazarian

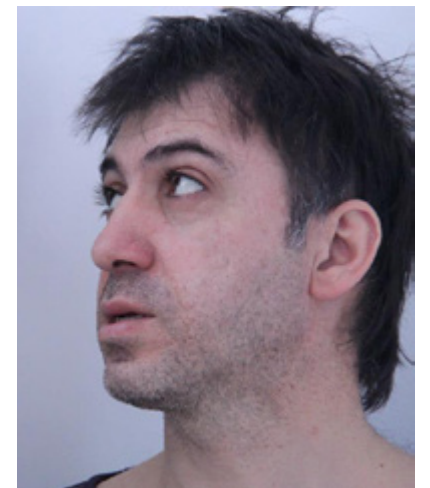
'My Work Brings Armenia And Kazakhstan Closer Together'

By **Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / ALMATY — Eduard Kazarian is a Kazakhstani sculptor who creates works ranging in size from small to monumental.

Born in 1964 in Almaty, he graduated from the Almaty State Theater and Art Institute in 1991. Since 1992, he has held more than 60 personal exhibitions in Kazakhstan and abroad, participated in collective projects, art festivals, international art residences, acted as a member of the jury of Kazakhstani and international art competitions and curator of Eurasia Sculpture Biennale, Almaty Kinetic Art Festival, represented Kazakhstan in the international project Reviving Humanity Memorial.



Kazarian is Laureate of the first independent Tarlan prize in 2000 in the "New Name: Hope" nomination in the field of fine arts. In 2012 he was Laureate of the national award "Person of the Year" in the nomination "People's Love and Creative Achievements." In 2018, he founded the Kazarian Art Center art space. It was awarded a special prize by the Organizing Committee of the annual Eurasian award "Choice of the Year" in the nomination "For creative achievements, significant contribution to the development of the cultural environment, promotion of fine arts." In 2019, Kazarian was awarded the medal of the Ministry of Culture of Kazakhstan for his contribution to the development of the country's culture.

His works are in the collections of museums in Kazakhstan, France and Spain; they have been exhibited in the US, Israel, Poland, the Netherlands, Russia, Belgium, Great Britain.

He works mainly with bronze, ceramics, steel. One of the main ideas of his work is reflections on the theme of the world, man, family, as well as the endless connection of all living things in nature.

Kazarian created a number of monumental works and public art projects see SCULPTOR, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Ümit Kurt Discusses Economic Gains of Genocide for Ottoman Authorities

LECTURE, from page 1

going beyond just using the term “Genocide” he is even willing to refer to the “Six Eastern Provinces” of the Ottoman Empire interchangeably with the term “Western Armenia.” More than this, the story of how he got involved in Armenian Genocide research and what he had to undergo to carry it out, shows the character of an individual with a deeply held belief in human rights and, perhaps more important, a dogged quest for the truth.

Kurt, growing up in the now all-Turkish modern city of Gaziantep, the former Antep or Aintab, lived in such an atmosphere of denial that he wasn’t even aware that any Armenians at all had once lived in his hometown. One almost feels this to be a kind of mixed blessing — because when the young Kurt discovered the fact of the Armenians’ presence and then disappearance from the city, his response was not the cynical attitude of knowing silence displayed by Turkey’s leaders from Mustafa Kemal on down, but genuine confusion and shock, followed by a deep interest in the fate of the Armenian community.

The young Kurt, when meeting a friend in the now-trendy Kayacik district of Antep, found himself in an incredibly beautifully refurbished Ottoman-era home serving as a coffeeshop. Upon inquiring about the history of the building, the owner quietly mumbled that “Armenians were here” and “they left.” These words changed the course of Kurt’s life and career, sending him on a quest for the history of his native region and all of Asia Minor and its indigenous Armenian population.

New Light On A Familiar Subject

Kurt’s talk focused on the contents of his book, which explore the economic aspect of the Armenian Genocide. This is something that every descendant of survivors “knows” but which has been less studied in an academic way or shown through documentation. The basic idea is that the Turkish population of the different cities of regions of the Ottoman Empire expropriated the properties, money, homes, and assets of the deported or murdered Armenians, and built modern Turkey with those financial assets as capital. Kurt shows exactly how this took place by using the city of Aintab as an example. Therefore, he explores the history of the Genocide in Aintab as a “microhistory” illuminating what was likely going on throughout the Empire. Of course, all this is the culmination of what led him into this field in the first place — his desire to know the history of the beautiful home turned coffeeshop where he first found out about the Armenian history of Aintab. The story of that house, originally owned by the Nazaretian family, is included in the book.

Another interesting fact elucidated in the talk as well as during the question-and-answer session was that the Armenians of Aintab were not deported until much later than other regions — not until the end of the summer of 1915, with the Protestant Armenians seemingly not deported until December. The various reasons are examined by Kurt in his book, including the fact that Aintab was a part of the province of Aleppo rather than Adana or one of the “Six Provinces” and it was not planned for the Armenians of that region to be displaced. In fact, Armenians deported from other provinces who ended up in Aintab were temporarily taken care of in the city by a committee of local Armenians. Nevertheless, Turkish landed gentry of the city (whom Kurt lists by name) actually requested the central government in Constantinople to include the Armenians of Aintab in the forced deportations simply in order to be able to confiscate their wealth. The idea that the Armenian Genocide could not have “succeeded” by the order of the Ittihad government alone without the com-

licity of the local Turkish leadership in the regions, including the various classes in society and not just government officials, is a key point of Kurt’s research.

The expropriation of Armenian capital took place under color of law, at least in Aintab. Kurt mentioned that in many regions outright plunder was the order of the day, while in Aintab a legal framework was drawn up to dispossess the Armenians of their property. The real estate and personal property left behind by deported Armenians was considered “abandoned property” under laws passed in 1915 and thereafter for this very purpose. The abandoned property was then sold at government auction to the already wealthy Turkish upper class at low prices. This was organized by a special committee called the Aintab Liquidation Commission, about which more below. The Turkish landed gentry became even more wealthy and poured their newfound resources into the coffers of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP-Ittihad), and later, the Kemalist movement, thus making the Republic of Turkey quite literally established with funds stolen from Armenians. Of course, this idea is commonplace among Armenians and has been a part of political rhetoric for decades, but Kurt has done the research to back it up. Kurt further explained to a one of the many queries in the Q and A portion, that even with documentation, resti-

tution of this confiscated property is nearly impossible for survivor descendants, not just because of Turkey’s political climate, but because the legal framework set up during the Young Turk period was inherited by the Republic of Turkey, the same laws were actually re-passed, and it was purposely made impossible or any claimants to the so called “abandoned property” to succeed in Turkish courts.

One of the climactic points of Kurt’s research came when he discovered a rare document regarding the fate of the personal property of a man called Sarkis Yacoubian. Yacoubian’s descendants in Los Angeles had the document among a pile of papers written in Ottoman Turkish that they could not decipher. According to Kurt, the document shows for the first time how the Aintab Liquidation Commission worked. When the abandoned property of a deported individual was sold, a register was drawn up in triplicate of all the items, how much they were sold for, and to whom they were sold. One copy was kept by the Liquidation Commission, one copy was sent to the CUP headquarters in Constantinople, and one copy was supposed to be for the individual whose belongings were sold.

Yacoubian was perhaps one of the few to actually receive the papers. The documents also show that the family’s belongings were required to be registered with the Commis-

sion and with the Ottoman Bank before their departure from the city. Apparently, many of these families willingly registered their belongings, thinking this was the only way there would be a chance to reclaim them in the future. The belongings registered were then sold at auction after the owners were deported, and so on. According to Kurt, the Constantinople copies of these documents are still in existence, because when he went to look for them in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, the authorities did not allow him to view the documents because they are “not catalogued” rather than saying they don’t exist.

All of this paints a picture of a sinister, legalistic form of Genocide more akin to the Nazi Holocaust. He shows the Armenian Genocide as cold, calculated, and drawn up under a complex legal framework.

The talk was introduced by Khatchig Mouradian of Columbia University and moderated by Marc Mamigonian of NAASR. A lively Q&A session followed the talk, in which Kurt showed his enthusiasm to answer any and every question he could, engaging with the largely Armenian audience.

Copies of Kurt’s book can be purchased from NAASR: <https://naasr.org/collections/new-titles-available-at-naasr/products/armenians-of-aintab-the>

. A video of the Zoom session is viewable on NAASR’s YouTube channel.



Groundbreaking for Armenian American Museum in Glendale on July 11

GLENDAL — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California has announced that the historic groundbreaking ceremony of the highly anticipated landmark center will be held on Sunday, July 11, from 4 to 7 p.m.

The groundbreaking ceremony will mark a major milestone for the community that has been years in the making, bringing together supporters, community leaders, and public officials from across the country and around the world in celebration and support of the cultural and educational center.

The event will be hosted as a virtual ceremony and live broadcast to a worldwide audience from the future site of the museum at Central Park in Glendale, California.

Museum officials invite the public to participate in the historic event by watching the ceremony via television, social media, and streaming channels.

The event will have a limited number of in-person participants based on current public health guidelines. Additional details will be announced as public health guidelines for outdoor gatherings are anticipated to be updated in the coming weeks.

“We are truly excited to announce the historic Groundbreaking Ceremony of the Armenian American Museum on July 11,” stated Executive Chairman Berdj Karapetian. “We look forward to celebrating the momentous milestone with our supporters from across the country and around the world as the cultural and educational center officially begins construction.”

The Armenian American Museum was born in 2014 when the Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee Western USA officially adopted the museum as its landmark project to honor the memory of the 1.5 million martyrs who perished in the Armenian Genocide and to help build and define the next centennial of the community as a message of strength, perseverance, and hope for future generations.

The Armenian American Museum will rise to a two-level 50,820 square foot museum complex built on a one-level semi-subterranean parking garage. The first level will feature the grand lobby, auditorium, learning center, demonstration kitchen, gift shop, and administrative offices. The second level will be dedicated to the permanent and temporary exhibition galleries as well as the collections archives.

The cultural and educational center’s programming plans include producing and hosting powerful, immersive, and thought-provoking permanent and temporary exhibitions, leading meaningful dialogues and discussions through engaging public programs, providing educational programs for adults, youth, kids, and families, preserving Armenian heritage through the museum’s collections and archives, and serving as an iconic venue for memorable experiences, gatherings, and celebrations.

For more information on the Armenian American Museum Groundbreaking Ceremony, visit <https://www.ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/Groundbreaking>.



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Of Days and Nights

Mood Pieces by Esther Heboyan

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

"I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world." - Socrates

Poet Esther Heboyan has led a peripatetic life. Born in Istanbul to Bolsetsi parents in 1955, she attended Armenian school there before fleeing Turkey with her parents to Germany in 1960 and then on to France. Her gypsy ways continued over the years and led her to study and live throughout Europe, with a stop along the way in the state of Iowa. She also completed a Ph.D. in American Literature from Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle and is now a professor at the University of Artois in Arras, near Lens. Multilingual by choice and necessity, Heboyan has written five volumes of poetry, fiction and essays, as well as translated both Nadim Gürsel and Moris Farhi from Turkish into French. So it comes as little surprise that the poems in her most recent book *Of Days and Nights* should also take the reader on a trip around the world. "It is better to travel well than to arrive," the great Buddha once intoned. The same may be said to be true of Heboyan's poetry, which leaves one wanting more not necessarily due to innovation of style or beauty of language — though both are present in these lines — but simply



Esther Heboyan, photographed at a book fair (2019) by Damien Guillaume

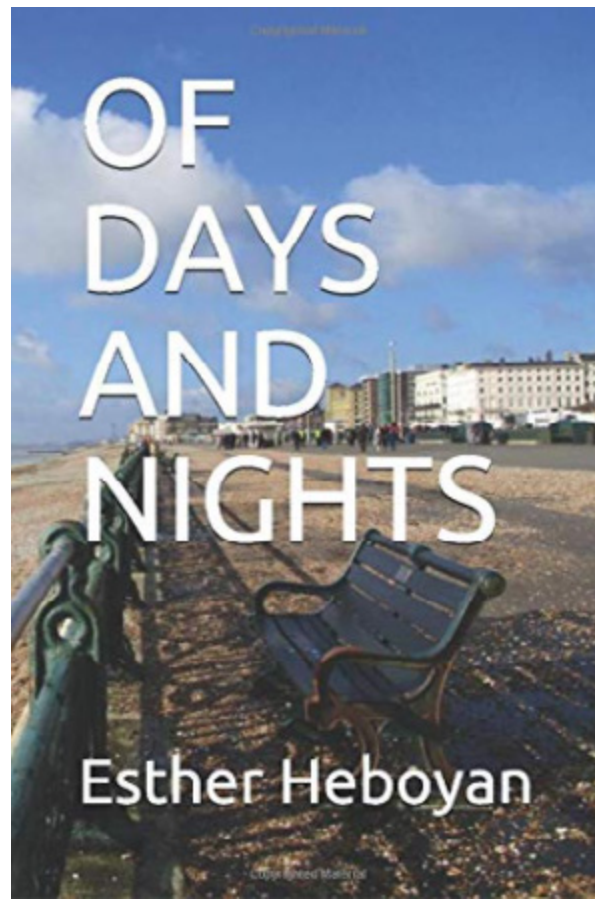
because she is able through her words to impart her own wanderlust and longing to the reader.

The themes in *Of Days and Nights* are several, although love, both its affirmation and repudiation and at times her exasperation with it, hold center stage. Descriptions of strangers meeting in the night — or missing each other — recur, as does for example the usually prosaic airport as a *locus Heboyanicus*. Take the introductory "The Waters That Bind Us," where the poet writes:

i reached the airport without you
that crosscurrent Monday you asked
how's my right
on highway 401
i thought
our kiss a spoonbridge
in the cinnamon morning

Heboyan's unrhymed verses move forward here like film stills, describing two lovers driving on the 401 and then the arrival of one of them alone, we don't know where at — LAX perhaps? And then the lovely, odd, wholly original "our kiss a spoonbridge/in the cinnamon morning."

In other places one senses that the cosmopolitan poet may also be a refugee, someone that uses love to bind



her past and perhaps her heart as well. It's a feeling that many people who grew up binational between two or more countries or multilingual between two or more languages may well recognize and empathize with emotionally and intellectually. It is in fact one of the defining qualities of diasporan existence:

displaced i became
woman sweeping leaves like Emily Carr's
whereas you
across the ocean
gazed from your garden
at the expanses
of love's finitude
that bind us

This sense of in-betweenness also leads to playful linguistic invention. In *RangeFinder* we have the lovely: "a lovers' sine qua non/in technicolor consent." And later on, in the last poem of the collection "An Evening in Golders Green" in a poem dedicated to Farhi, Heboyan (partially) rhymes:

...Theodorakis
dances the abyss
of you dearest and
chestnut lives
through Surrey and rain
let us speak again (*italics mine*)

And repeated in *Love's Labor*, the same theme of love followed by inevitable abandonment and loss:

Say S-A-C-R-E, my Love,
And we'll drink bourbon and make love
– Till you depart anyway.

Love is also at times unjust ("in love's (un) fairness") or fleeting ("The painter from Latina /Gathered his gear to rush outdoor/Said he didn't want

his head on a silvery plate/To which I replied: 'Fair enough and farewell, Love!')

But the poet whose "cardboard lovers have gone away" also suffers from what the joyous and the creative have perhaps always felt in the presence of lesser souls who inevitably drag them down:

The killjoy kills it all
In his speech such dire caution
And if you chance upon emotion
He will ransack it for you

At times the polyglot gets trapped in linguistic games or expressions that just barely miss in English such as "fermented mood" (an interesting idea, but moods do not ferment I fear, even under a poet's pen) or ("My boy is a fine fine boy/With a good sense to annoy/Any attempt at fake joy" (Can one really "annoy" fake joy"? Perhaps.)

Armenian themes appear sporadically, both where they must be divined (in the Istanbul airport) or where more explicit as in "Leo Krikorian's Implied Places": "Rue des Blancs Manteaux/there/was/ Leo's/art/studio and/there/poised/Leo with stories/of/Armenian Fresno/violet years into crop-picking urgency the longest ride East/in a brown jalopy the G.I. bill/under/Ilya Bolotowsky." And before leaving off, the gypsy/wanderer/cosmopolitan/refugee/diasporan poet takes us to Berlin after the fall of the Wall which brings

together East and West:
the Berlin Wall may well have
crumbled

time still rakes up
one Rocco Granata
crooning to his
Marina! Marina! Marina!

But it is the playful Heboyan, the joyful one that I am ultimately left with — the Heboyan who one 1989 summer in the Peloponnese writes:

But the boy stands in Tolo Harbor
cursed like a hatless sailor
clutching the railing
with a boy's strife
for what is there in life
if a boy loses his cap

Here the universal and the particular, the important and the trifling, the everyday and the spectacular merge in the boy's lost cap. And a poet who takes the time to notice that it is the small details of life, its daily losses and joys, that may ultimately make it worth living.

Purchase *Of Days and Nights*: <https://www.amazon.com/DAYS-NIGHTS-Poems-Esther-Heboyan-ebook/dp/B07VTHR6C>

Also by Esther Heboyan:
Fiction & Poetry:

Les Passagers d'Istanbul
Les Rhododendrons
Comme un dimanche d'août à Burgaz
Beyond the Galata Bridge

Translations:

Nedim Gürsel, *De Ville en Ville; Ombres et Traces*
Moris Farhi, *Cantates des deux continents*

Essays:

San Francisco mis en scène
Les Variations Jarmusch (ed.)



Inside photo from the English volume, *Of Days and Nights* (2019)



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Bulgur Pilaf with Pomegranate Molasses and Black Garlic Dressing

From Feast in the Middle East

Blanche Shaheen is an Arab American television host and reporter who reported on ABC's "View from the Bay," hosted the independent film show, "Video I" for PBS for 10 years, and reported live news daily for the Tech TV show called "Tech Live." In 2010, she began hosting her own cooking show, and sharing years of treasured family recipes preserved by her mother and grandmother. Growing up in a close Arab American household, traditional Arabic dishes were central to Blanche's family's life. However, she noticed that previous generations of her family did not document these recipes on paper, but handed down the cooking techniques only by word of mouth. So she began a mission of cultural preservation, documenting the cooking methods and exact ingredients for each of her family recipes, and her inspiring Middle Eastern website and food blog, *Feast in the Middle East*, was born.

Blanche launched her YouTube cooking show called *Feast in the Middle East* to share many recipes with her family and friends, and with the world. This Bulgur Pilaf with Pomegranate Molasses and Black Garlic Dressing recipe is a family favorite, and is featured in her indispensable new Arab cookbook, *Feast in the Middle East, A Personal Journey of Family and Cuisine*, published in 2020.

"It seems the pomegranate was domesticated more than once, in several places around Iran, the Levant and Near East, possibly starting about 8,000 years ago," says Blanche. "Pomegranates are planted in many Mediterranean countries. In Lebanon, they grow on the coast as well as mountainous areas, cultivated by rainfall. The fruit comes in sour and sweet varieties but both types have immense health benefits. The pomegranate is native to a region from modern-day Iran to northern India."

Pomegranates have been cultivated throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and Mediterranean region for several millennia, and it is also cultivated in the Central Valley of California and in Arizona. This dish is a healthy way to feature the great taste of pomegranate seeds and molasses, and makes an inviting side dish when pomegranates are at peak season, she adds.

Bulgur Pilaf with Pomegranate Molasses and Black Garlic Dressing

"A collection of fresh mint gathered from the garden, a bag of ripe pomegranates from the farmer's market, some leftover grains in the pantry, or an exotic con-

diment like pomegranate molasses all fuel my recipe creations," says Blanche. "These ingredients inspired this bulgur pilaf. Like a bowl of jewels, the flavors and textures are at once chewy, crunchy, nutty, sweet, and savory. I serve this non-perishable dish at potlucks and picnics, or as part of a holiday feast (the green and red in the pilaf add a festive touch). The dressing is simple yet robust because of the sweet and tart pomegranate molasses, and the black garlic which adds luxurious flavor.

You can use garlic powder or minced garlic cloves if you don't have black garlic. I love black garlic because it has hints of caramel, with no pungency so you can eat it as is without sautéing first."

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup bulgur #3 or #4 (larger variety)
1-2 tablespoons butter, to taste
1 shallot, minced
1 1/4 cups broth (either chicken or vegetable)
1 teaspoon cumin
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/4 cup pomegranate seeds
1/2 cup parsley, chopped
1/4 cup fresh mint, chopped
1/4 cup feta cheese, crumbled
1/4 cup sultanas (golden raisins or use any dried fruit you like)
1/4 cup shelled, roasted, and salted pistachios
1/2 cup garbanzo or cannellini beans (canned)
Salt and pepper to taste

DRESSING:

1 large bulb black garlic (or 1 teaspoon garlic powder)
1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
Salt to taste

Serves 4.

PREPARATION:

Heat butter in a saucepan. Add the shallots and sauté until translucent. Add the bulgur, tomato paste, cumin, about a half teaspoon salt, and the broth. Stir and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 20 minutes (or follow package directions).

For the dressing, in a small food processor, whirl together the black garlic (or garlic powder), orange juice, pomegranate molasses, salt and olive oil. Let the cooked bulgur cool then add the rest of the ingredients (from the pomegranate seeds to the garbanzo beans).

Add salt and pepper to taste, then drizzle the pomegranate molasses dressing over the bulgur mixture, and toss gently to combine.

Note: You can purchase ready-to-eat seeds in the refrigerated area of many supermarket produce sections. Pomegranate seeds contain a high number of antioxidants, which help protect the body against inflammation and free radical damage. Whereas the regular pomegranate season runs from October through the holidays, ready-to-eat seeds are available in grocery stores through February or March.



ORDER TODAY: *Feast in the Middle East* is a new hardback cookbook full of colorful illustrations, meticulous and detailed directions, family anecdotes, and historical information about these cherished Lebanese recipes. While many of these dishes used to take hours to make, Blanche modernized these recipes to adapt to today's modern palate and hectic lifestyles. Ancient recipes like chewy semolina date ring cookies called Ma'moul commemorate both Easter and Ramadan, while a 2000-year-old cinnamon-spiced bulgur wheat porridge called Burbarrah celebrates the Feast of Santa Barbara in the Arab Levant, Malta, and even Eastern Europe. Fusion dishes like Baklava Granola with pistachios and cardamom, Middle Eastern Nachos or "Machos" with pita chips and cucumber yogurt sauce, and Lemon Cheesecake made with creamy labneh cheese adapt Middle Eastern spices and ingredients to Western tastes.

To order, go to: https://secure.mybookorders.com/mbo_index.php?isbn=9781545675113

Check Blanche's helpful cooking video tutorials and other recipes at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/blanchetv> --- or her food blog at <https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress.com/>

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'Bloodless' Golden Palm Award

BLOODLESS, from page 12

all genres of visual story telling from inception to completion with an emphasis on documentary filmmaking and a focus on human interest, human rights and social injustices. Armenoid Productions works in collaborations with

the non-profit Cultural Impact Foundation, Inc., which helps advance and support multi-media projects that recognize and celebrate human benevolence and ingenuity, and help eradicate prejudice, discrimination, and other social injustices. Through its projects it hopes to help prevent future atrocities and genocides, and the destruction that they bring to the cultural heritage of those targeted

or oppressed. The Foundation helps advance projects that celebrate human endurance against all odds and recognize those who have triumphed over adversities by showcasing projects that highlight human rights issues, social injustices, and untold stories of human interest. For more information, visit <https://armenoidproductions.com/> and <http://culturalimpactfoundation.org/>



ARTS & CULTURE

Eduard Kazarian:

'My Work Brings Armenia and Kazakhstan Closer Together'

SCULPTOR, from page 12

in the urban and natural environment. He is also known for his tapestries, graphic sheets and jewelry. Kazarian considers exhibition activities to be a sphere that allows him to constantly experiment.

Dear Eduard, in 1998 I received a gift, a catalog of your works published in Almaty, and I really liked the reproductions of your works. Then I followed your work on the Internet and I am very glad that in Kazakhstan our compatriot is considered one of the most interesting sculptors of our time.

Indeed, thanks to catalogs and especially my works, I have many friends and connoisseurs of my work. Sometimes it seems to me that I am present in all places and countries where there are my works in collections and I am even in touch with people who see them.

About five years ago you opened your own studio in Almaty, where about 20 exhibitions are held annually. What role does it play in the cultural life of the city?

Yes, this fall the Kazarian Art Center turns six years old. This gallery has the broadest

replica of that sculpture appeared near a pub in the homeland of the Beatles in Liverpool. The Kazakh authorities demanded that the British copy be demolished as it had been an unauthorized copy. How did this story end?

Indeed, this story is both outrageous and comical. I would never have thought that England, with its strict European orders in art, would plagiarize the sculpture of the Beatles in Almaty, which had been installed 15 years ago. But the fact remains. To be honest, I do not have much experience in solving such issues and do not yet know a lawyer who knows how to proceed, so the question is still in limbo.

Your namesake from Yerevan, the late famous micro-miniaturist Eduard Kazarian (or Ter-Kazarian), created kinetic micro-sculptures. Please tell us about your own kinetic sculptures.

My parents told me that even before I was born they read an article about Eduard Kazarian, our miniaturist sculptor, and later even wrote him a letter about the impressions of his work and told that they also



anyone noticed a more specific language in your art?

Individuality and dissimilarity for creative people have always been one of the main tasks, and now this issue is no less important. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that there are a lot of artists in the world, I think that this does not require any special efforts. It is clear that we are not in an airless space and there are artists nearby with whose works you unwittingly correlate your own, just as they cannot fail to notice you, but this will never knock you down if you go your own way.

You represent the art of Kazakhstan in the world, but in 2011 you were awarded the Gold Medal of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia for your contribution to the development of Armenian culture. How does your belonging to two cultures come to light?

I was born in Kazakhstan and in many respects got my outlook on life here, at the same time traveling with my parents to Armenia in my childhood, studying the first year of the Fanos Terlemezyan art school in Yerevan, communication with friends and relatives, spending time in Sevan, long walks on Karmir Blur, of course, this is all in me. I have many close friends in Kazakhstan and Armenia. To a certain extent, knowing both cultures and considering them my own, I think that my work brings Armenia and Kazakhstan closer together. Surely, at my foreign exhibitions I act as a Kazakh sculptor of Armenian origin, and I hope my works are another facet of both the art of Kazakhstan and Armenia.

Where are your ancestors from and how did they end up in Kazakhstan?

My relatives from my father's side are mainly from the city of Sevan and the village of Varsar. In the early 1950s, the whole family was deported to Siberia, Al-

tai Krai during the Stalinist repressions. My dad went through all these tests as a child and he has a lot of stories about this time. At the same time, he did not lose optimism and very warmly recalled the people with whom they lived and went to visit these places more than once. Mom was born in Kazakhstan, in the city of Shu. Her parents were doctors and went where jobs took them. From my mother's side, I got Russian and Greek roots. And mom and dad met and got married in Armenia at the Jermuk resort and then arrived in Almaty, where my mother lived.

Apparently, art is in your family. Two years ago, in Yerevan, I met your brother Ruben Kazaryan, who works in cinematography. And the others?

My brother and I kind of shared these paths; I am a sculptor, and he graduated from video journalism and shoots many films, mainly on social themes. My grandmother also painted all her life, although she was a pediatrician, an honored doctor of Kazakhstan. Once they presented me my granny's pencil drawing: it was a professionally executed landscape. On my father's side, there were also people close to art, and although he worked most of his life in managerial positions in trade and public catering, he received his first hardening while working at a factory.

On the cover of the aforementioned catalog, your signature is in Armenian. Sometimes we also see your initials in the Armenian language.

Since 1991, I put my autograph on all my works — my initials or surname in Armenian letters. An autograph for me is also an integral part of the work, a kind of last chord and your responsibility before time. I learned the alphabet in Armenia and can write and read a little. Of course, my

continued on next page



mandate, most of which are in the planning stages, as well as an art studio, etc. I did not immediately dare to name the center for myself but how everything will turn out, is, surely, my responsibility. Moreover, it is especially valuable for me now that the place known for its cultural events in Kazakhstan is associated with Armenia.

One of your famous works is a sculpture of the Beatles. A few years ago, a

named their son Eduard, but did not receive an answer. But I have always admired his work and I even remember how in one interview he wrote with humor that the main thing for him is not to sneeze when doing micro-sculpture.

Art critic Ekaterina Reznikova once said that you are a master with your own recognizable style and language. Has



COMMENTARY



from previous page

vocabulary gives me the opportunity to speak as much as possible on everyday topics, but mastering the language deeply remains my dream.

The Armenians are not new in Kazakhstani fine arts. In late 1960s sculptor Elena Mkhitarian from Armenia worked in Almaty, Kazakhfilm made a documentary about her. I know the names of Elena Karamalova (1894-1981) and Volodia Grigoryan among the fine arts figures of Armenian origin in Kazakhstan. Now, besides you, I know the name of the artist and ceramist Elena Grigoryan. Are there others?

I can also remember Sarkis Sanosyan (1922-2004). Armenian art at the Abylai Kasteev State Museum of Arts in Almaty is represented by a number of artists such as Ivan Aivazovsky (Hovhannes Ayzvazyan), Martiros Saryan, Minas Avetisyan, Hakob Hakobyan and other Armenian artists.

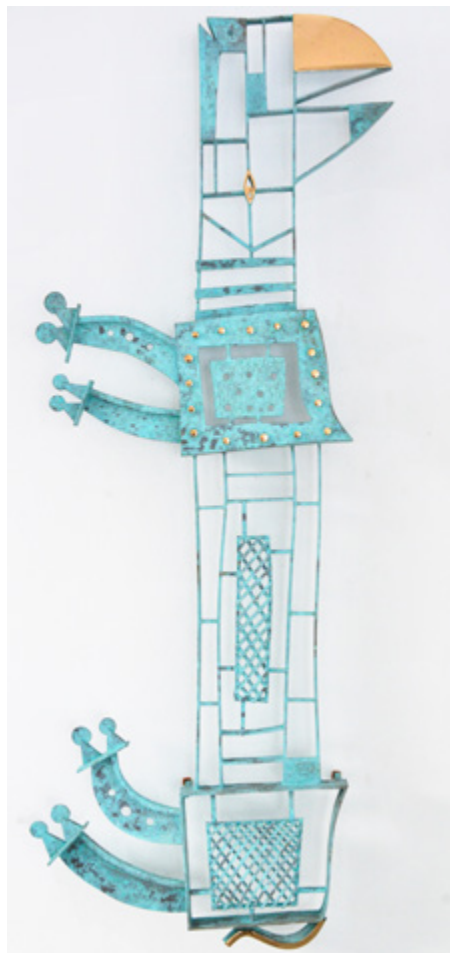
Since our newspaper is published in Boston, readers will be interested to know that your works have been exhibited in the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown. Who organized this exhibition of yours and what are your memories?

I had the opportunity to exhibit twice at the Armenian Museum of America. The first time in 1993 with graphic works and the second time in 1994, with bronze sculptures and graphics. And I am very proud of these exhibitions. I remember the impressive building of the museum and the very rich collection of carpets and other items related to Armenia. At that time, Gary Lind-Sinianian was in charge of the museum.

But in Armenia, as far as I know, you have not yet had an exhibition. Of course, organizing an exhibition of sculptures is not an easy task, but I still

think it's high time.

I hope this exhibition will take place someday. Surprisingly, it has been planned more than once and the places for the exposition have already been determined and a number of organizational issues have been resolved. Maybe my maximalism is to blame, because I thought that it was not enough just to make an exhibition, but it was necessary to bring large works and preferably more, that is, I wanted to exhibit a large-scale project, and such an exhibition requires a lot of investment and effort. Maybe it might be worth reconsidering this and starting small. Maybe.



CALENDAR

ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 20-AUGUST 15 — The Armenian Heritage Park will hold a series of events during the spring and summer:

•Thursday, May 13 at 5pm **DISCOVER ARMENIA: Cultural Fabric, Cuisine & Wine**

CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US! special virtual cooking & wine pairing program

RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Wednesday, May 20 **PARK'S GIVING DAY!** Support the Park's Care and Maintenance at ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support

•Wednesday, May 26 at 10am **CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US!** virtual series **Mediterranean Cuisine**

Oldways Instructor Register: bit.ly/32Ffcjp

•Wednesday, June 9 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Sunday, June 13 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Sunday, July 11 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Wednesday, July 14 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet the Boston Mayoral candidates at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Wednesday, August 11 at 4pm **TEA & TRANQUILITY ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Walk the Labyrinth. View the Abstract Sculpture. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

•Sunday, August 15 at 2pm **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** program. **ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY**, Boston Meet & Greet at the Park. Introduction to the many benefits. Walk the labyrinth. A part of The Greenway Fitness program. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 16 — **SAVE THE DATE: BUILDING FOR ETERNITY~ NAASR's Virtual Gala.**

Join us as we honor Edward Avedisian, NAASR Board member and philanthropist, during NAASR's Building for Eternity Virtual Gala, on Wednesday, June 16, 2021, at 7:00m Eastern / 4:00pm Pacific. Edward Avedisian is the principal benefactor of NAASR's Vartan Gregorian Building and will be recognized for his outstanding dedication and distinguished service in advancing education in the United States and Armenia. He is an extraordinary philanthropist and serves as a Director of NAASR, a Trustee of the American University of Armenia, and a Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. Special guest, New York Times bestselling author Chris Bohjalian will also join us in a unique conversation with Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Specialist at the Library of Congress.

JUNE 21 — **Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament** at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. Monday. Hospitality/Registration is from 9-10:30 am. 10:30 AM "Shotgun" start. Lunch at the 9th hole. Dinner (casual dress) is at 4:30 pm. Location: Marlborough Country Club 200 Concord Rd, Marlborough, MA 01752. Register Online: [The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament 2021 - Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston \(htaac.org\)](https://TheGregoryHintlianMemorialGolfTournament2021-HolyTrinityArmenianChurchofGreaterBoston.htaac.org) or call the church office 617.354.0632

RHODE ISLAND

MAY 14-28 — **Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence** continues programming the **Armenian Cultural Hour** programs, every Friday at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church's Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

May 14 - Armenian music and songs (Concert from Montreal, Canada)

May 21 - Our Youth Talents, issue two

May 28 - Celebration concert, dedicated to 100th Anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia

Violinist Samvel Arakelyan Brings Armenian Classical Tradition to Michigan

VIOLINIST, from page 12

Arakelyan explains that often pop musicians have string parts written into their songs, which on their recordings are performed by studio musicians. But since these artists aren't going to bring a string player on the road with them, they often hire the best local classical talent wherever they go, and in Michigan that often means Arakelyan. Since his name has gotten out into the pop circuit he has performed for

artists such as Sarah MacLachlan, Josh Groban, Idina Menzel, Evanescence and Lindsey Sterling.

Arakelyan also enjoys playing what he calls "the Old Rabiz" or "Armenian Restaurant Music." As opposed to the modern forms of Rabiz with their heavy Azeri influence, he describes the old Rabiz as enjoyable festive music with Armenian, Romanian, Hungarian and Gypsy influences, along with the *ashughakan* (troubadour-es-

que) lineage of Sayat-Nova. Arakelyan has displayed this style in his many YouTube and Facebook performances that he has created during the pandemic, along with classical, folk, and various other pieces.

"The social media videos have really gone viral. Especially Komitas' *Groung*, which I did when the war finished." The video has more than 2,000 views.

"Now I am looking for teaching jobs in universities," Arakelyan tells us. "That

way you have freedom to perform as well."

Arakelyan is currently performing with various mid-Michigan orchestras. "I love playing and creating music, and I love presenting culture and Armenian music," he says. The talented violinist says he wants to spread awareness of Armenian culture in the classical music world here in the States. "If I don't do it, or someone who is involved in music, nobody's going to do it."

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by: Baikar Association, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	\$80 one year
Canada	\$125 one year
Other Countries	\$200 one year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

Editorial

Election in Armenia: Blessing in Disguise or Emblematic of Disaster?



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia's snap elections are scheduled to take place on June 20 and the constitution allows only 12 days of campaigning before that date. However, the pre-election campaign has been shaping up for a long time and the opposition parties have been blaming Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for using government resources to conduct his campaign, particularly in rural areas, which seem to form Pashinyan's power base.

The atmosphere is so tense that the animosities, anger and rancor charge the atmosphere to a degree in which civil and civilized political discourse has become impossible.

Even from the distant vantage point of the diaspora, objective analysis shows the election seems to be tainted by extreme polarization. One can seldom detect a rational political agenda in any camp, as all sides have been banking on and capitalizing on the failure — or presumed failure of — its opponent.

For example, the debacle of the 44-day war is one of the hot topics driving the political narrative. The opposition blames Pashinyan for the defeat while Pashinyan accuses the former regime of contributing to the defeat as a consequence of 30 years of inaction while Azerbaijan was in a race to build up and modernize its armed forces.

There are no calm voices in the middle to remind both sides that all administrations, including the current and former ones, bragged all along that Armenia has the most formidable fighting force in the region.

In addition, blame goes all around for Pashinyan's humiliating loss of 75 percent of Karabakh, as well as the seven regions which were supposed to serve as a buffer or defense corridor for Karabakh. We have discovered that over the years negotiations with Azerbaijan had focused on the principle of swapping land for peace, after failing to force Baku to sign a treaty recognizing the independent status of Karabakh on May 12, 1994. Instead, at that time, a tenuous ceasefire was agreed upon, which turned into a political time bomb over the last three decades.

On May 10, 2021, in accordance with the constitution of the Republic of Armenia, the parliament tried and failed to elect a prime minister, which resulted in its dissolution, paving the way for snap elections.

During the last session of parliament, Pashinyan delivered a long and passionate speech defending the achievements of his administration.

"I regard what I just said as our biggest achievement: the citizens of the Republic of Armenia feel they are the masters of our country. At the end of the day, this is what the non-violent Velvet Revolution of 2018 was for and that goal has been achieved."

The opposition may question this achievement but it is true that the 2018 elections represent the only instance — after Levon Ter-Petrosian's first election — that corruption was uprooted and bribes did not in any way impact the outcome of the election.

That revolution also tried hard to eradicate red tape in government institutions, whereas in previous administrations, functionaries both high up and low-level performed their duties only after receiving bribes.

The Velvet Revolution also marked a generational turnover, bringing into power a young generation of legislators and administrators in Armenia, although that generation has revealed itself to be more hindered by inexperience than savvy with regard to innovation.

In his speech Pashinyan took credit for the rising of the level of Lake Sevan and the nine countries that have recognized the Genocide during his tenure.

This last assumption was disingenuous, as Pashinyan's team, like Serzh Sargsyan's, sent signals to the US administrations that the recognition of the Genocide was not a priority for Armenia, falling into the trap set by Turkey.

Pashinyan's pledge in 2018 that the revolution will not indulge in vendettas against former officials was soon turned on its head as political lynching of the members of the previous administrations became a political sport to entertain the vengeful public. That public was also duped in two more instances, one domestic and one foreign.

In the first instance, Pashinyan's administration promised to recover illegally acquired wealth, which gave hope to ordi-

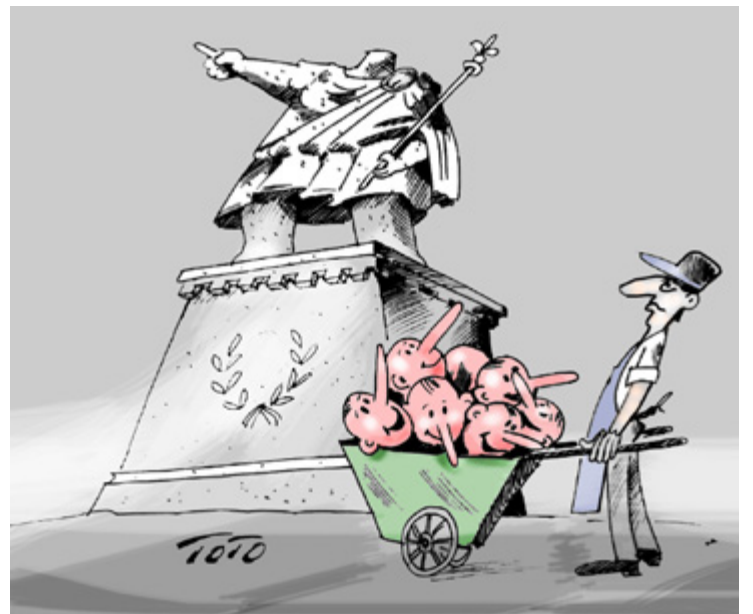
nary citizens that the program would place food on the family table, while all it did was to help chase the capital out of the country while failing to implement an economic program for the country.

In addition, Pashinyan came to power with a hidden anti-Russian plan, while claiming that the Velvet Revolution did not have a foreign policy agenda. Ironically, Pashinyan himself became a hostage to Moscow and today, Russia, holding Pashinyan in bondage, has the option of staying neutral in the parliamentary election because after the war Armenian politics themselves became a captive of Russian politics.

It is immaterial who is elected, as all the rulers are and will be at the mercy of the Russians.

Nikol Pashinyan weathered some potentially deadly political storms and now he feels reassured heading toward the parliamentary elections, especially as his opponents are not able to gain the attention of the voters. The 17-party coalition headed by former Prime Minister Vasken Manukyan, called Salvation of Homeland, once seemed poised for success, but fizzled and disintegrated quickly.

As well, President Armen Sarkissian called for Pashinyan to



resign and the formation of a transitional government to be run by technocrats fell on deaf ears.

The government was also able to control rumblings in the armed forces headed by Gen. Onik Gasparyan.

Thus, battle tested, it is ready to face any other opposition on its way.

Pre-election polls, particularly in a country like Armenia, are hardly reliable and extremely biased. One of the few polls conducted are by International Republican Institute, which predicts Pashinyan's My Step coalition will win with a margin of 33 percent. Second and third place, they predict, will be occupied by Prosperous Armenia headed by Gagik Tsarukyan and former President Robert Kocharyan, each by 3 percent. An alliance must cross the bar of 8 percent to be elected.

At this time, two major visible forces are facing each other: Pashinyan and Kocharyan.

Kocharyan's coalition has made a lot of political waves but it is very difficult to predict where it is heading.

Kocharyan's recent political rally in Yerevan brought to Liberty Square 30,000 people, which indicates that his movement is gaining momentum. His alliance, Armenia Bloc, includes the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and the Syunik-based Reviving Armenia party, headed by the former governor of that province, Vahe Hagopyan.

His association with the ARF is a double-edged sword. While the latter is the only political party in Armenia with a history and political platform, its political principles are overshadowed by its past association with an unpopular regime, where it has also been in public perception as a prime candidate for the gravy train. The ARF is also the best organized party, which can help Kocharyan's camp practically, yet may prove to be a drag on his popularity.

The other enigma is the association of the Syunik forces with Kocharyan. That region has been Armenia's Achilles heel where Pashinyan was even banned from visiting, setting a

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Why Is President of UN General Assembly Acting as A Spokesman for Turkey?

The General Assembly of the United Nations held a meeting on May 5, 2021 on the topic of “Interactive dialog to commemorate and promote The International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace.” The meeting is usually held on April 24, the date designated by the UN to celebrate “Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace.”

UN delegates from many countries, including the representative of Armenia, made remarks during the meeting chaired by the President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, a former Turkish diplomat, and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

Davit Knyazyan, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Armenian Mission to the UN in New York, made the following statement during the meeting:

“Armenia is firmly committed to effective multilateralism based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including non-use of force or threat of force and peaceful resolution of disputes. April 24 is the day, when the Armenian people worldwide commemorate and pay tribute to the victims of the Armenian Genocide, which is a stark reminder that the crisis of international order can lead to atrocity crimes.

“The global challenges caused by the pandemic are a test to multilateralism. Amidst the growth of hate speech, weaponization of the pandemic to unleash wars and violate human rights and justification of past genocides, the United Nations should serve as the guardian of international law, purposes and principles of the UN Charter and values of humanity. Strengthening the capacities of the UN to prevent and respond to these challenges is crucial for upholding human rights and human dignity.

“We would like to ask the heads of the principal organs of the United Nations: what measures can be identified to strengthen the prevention mechanisms of the United Nations in order to address the rise of hate speech, denial and justification of past atrocity crimes? And second, how to ensure efficient response of the UN system to incitement of violence and identity-based crimes on ethnic and religious grounds?”

After brief remarks by the UN Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, responded to the Armenian Representative’s statement:

“In reply to my distinguished colleague from Armenia [partly answered by the Secretary-General], Genocide is a crime specifically defined in the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. What constitutes genocide and how that is determined are clearly established in the Convention. Accordingly, the crime of genocide needs to be determined by a competent judicial body. In other words, in order to describe an incident as genocide, a competent international tribunal must make a decision to that effect. The UN’s position on what constitutes genocide is naturally in line with the Convention, and it has been repeated many times by UN officials in the past, and, most recently, two weeks ago by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, who reiterated that genocide needs to be determined by an appropriate judicial body, as far as the UN is concerned.”

There are several problems with Mr. Bozkir’s statement. First of all, he responded to Armenia’s remarks more like a Turkish diplomat than as President of the General Assembly, in violation of the norms of his UN position. This is the reason that Armenia’s UN Ambassador Mher Margaryan submitted on May 10, 2021, a letter to the UN Secretary General, to be circulated as an official UN document, expressing concern that Mr. Bozkir was “misusing” the May 5 meeting to deliver “an irrelevant, unsolicited interpretation” of the Genocide Convention. Amb. Margaryan stated that Mr. Bozkir’s “misplaced remarks... must be seen in the context of the official politics of denying the occurrence of the genocide of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire consistently promoted by the government of Turkey, as demonstrated by the fact that Mr. Bozkir’s remarks came to be immediately publicized by the state-run news agencies of that country framed in support of the official denialist narrative. Clearly, Mr. Bozkir’s actions are incompatible with the Code of Ethics for the President of the General Assembly.”

Foreseeing Mr. Bozkir’s conflicting allegiances, the Permanent Representatives of Armenia and Cyprus at the UN, Mher Margaryan and Andreas Mavroyiannis, sent a joint letter on June 2, 2020, to the UN Secretary General ob-

jecting to Bozkir’s nomination to his current post.

The joint letter, circulated to all UN member states, reminded them that Mr. Bozkir had assured the UN: “(a) to represent solely the Office to which he is elected, based on the Charter of the United Nations and the body of resolutions, decisions, rules and practices that will bind him as President of the General Assembly; and (b) to treat all Member States equally, upholding the spirit of multilateralism and the rules-based international order, at the core of which is the United Nations.”

Ambassadors Margaryan and Mavroyiannis pointed out that Turkey, the country nominating Mr. Bozkir, “threatens peace and security in its entire region by consistently violating the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including United Nations sanctions regimes, in order to realize its aspirations for regional domination. It does so by displaying a pattern of aggressive behavior towards its neighboring countries, encroaching on their territory, undermining their sovereignty and territorial integrity, questioning their sovereign rights and instrumentalizing the plight of refugees and migrants for political ends. By imposing and sustaining an illegal land blockade on Armenia for almost three decades, Turkey effectively impedes the transit through and access to the sea of the neighboring landlocked country. Turkey’s persistent policies of denying and attacking the memory and the dignity of the victims of the genocide committed in the Ottoman Empire 105 years ago continue to pose a security threat for Armenia and the wider region. Turkey invaded Cyprus and has continued to occupy more than a third of its territory for almost 50 years; continues to deny its very existence by insisting on not recognizing it, having unilaterally proclaimed an illegal, secessionist entity in the area that it occupies, which it tries to oppose the sole legitimate Government, despite the clear condemnation of its actions by the Security Council; is responsible for egregious violations of human rights in Cyprus, which it continues to deny despite being condemned by the European Court of Human Rights; and continues to violate Cyprus’ sovereignty and sovereign rights on land, sea and air on a daily basis. It is for these reasons that our delegations object to the election of Mr. Bozkir by silence procedure and request that the election of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session be held by secret ballot.”

Despite his UN position, Mr. Bozkir is acting as the representative of Turkey since he held numerous posts in his country’s Foreign Service since 1972, including Ambassador to Romania, Consul General in New York, First Secretary of the Embassy in Iraq, and Vice Consul General in Stuttgart, Germany. He also served as Chief of Cabinet and Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to Presidents Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel, and Deputy Undersecretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was also a member of the Turkish Parliament for nine years and Minister of EU Affairs.

Forgetting his commitments to the UN, Mr. Bozkir had a “Pavlovian” response to the mention of the Armenian Genocide by Armenia’s representative. It is important to note that he has denied the Armenian Genocide several times while serving as a Turkish diplomat.

On May 5, 2021, Mr. Bozkir parroted the oft-repeated Turkish line that “the crime of genocide needs to be determined by a competent judicial body.” He was indirectly reacting to Pres. Biden’s recent acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide. First of all, the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) was the first country to hold court-martial trials regarding the Armenian massacres (the term genocide was not yet coined) in Istanbul, in 1919-1920, sentencing to death the masterminds of the Armenian mass killings. Secondly, Pres. Biden along with the US Congress and over 30 Parliaments around the world have acknowledged the Armenian Genocide, not as a legal judgment, but as a political affirmation of the crime of genocide.

By claiming that “genocide needs to be determined by an appropriate judicial body,” Mr. Bozkir is ignoring UN’s own records. For example, the UN War Crimes Commission prepared a lengthy report in 1948, accusing the Turkish Government of committing the Armenian massacres. The UN report described these massacres as “crimes against humanity,” which cover “inhumane acts committed by a government against its own subjects. Mr. Bozkir is also ignoring the fact that the UN Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a report in 1985 in which the Armenian Genocide was mentioned as an example of genocide. I was present at that session and spoke in support of the UN report. Since the Genocide Convention was adopted by the UN, its acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide is an authoritative statement.

Fortunately, Bozkir’s one-year term at the UN will be over in a few months. By acting as a spokesman for Turkey, he is trying to secure another Turkish diplomatic post as he will soon be out of his current job.

from precious page

dangerous precedent for a duly-elected prime minister who should extend his constitutional power over the entire country.

The region is also in the crosshairs of Azerbaijan. The more domestic problems are fomented in that region, the more tenuous the region’s destiny becomes. On top of all those problems, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, recently visited Armenia, and suggested that Armenia and Russia sign a separate agreement, supposedly intended to protect that region. This would give a free hand to Moscow to bargain away Syunik with Turkey and Azerbaijan against any practical gains for Russia.

Another side show which involved Kocharyan was President Levon Ter-Petrosian’s initiative. Indeed the former president met with all the former presidents of Armenia and Karabakh to form a coalition. Ter-Petrosian’s purpose

was to stop Pashinyan — his former protégé — saying the latter’s return to power would be disastrous for Armenia.

Ter-Petrosian is known for his vitriolic characterizations, which has not changed, as he stated that Pashinyan’s continuing rule will be more dangerous than any threat that may come from Azerbaijan and Turkey. There are no takers for the Ter-Petrosian proposal.

Prosperous Armenia, which had the largest faction after My Step in the parliament, will participate alone. The Republican Party of Serzh Sargsyan will be headed by Armen Ashodyan and is forming an alliance with Arthur Vanetzyan’s Homeland Party. Vanetzyan was the former head of the security forces in Armenia. Ter-Petrosian’s Armenian Congress has yet to find a platform after failing to convince the two former presidents.

Russian behavior and duplicity in the recent war has provided wind for the sail of pro-Western forces. Thus, there

are three parties that openly side with the West: National Popular Axis, composed of Sasna Tserer and the European Party of Tigran Khzmalyan. The other parties are called In the Name of the Republic, headed by Arman Babajanyan, and Christian Democratic Party, led by Levon Shirinyan. These parties have vehemently anti-Russian platforms.

There are also many fringe groups looking for partners. The situation is still fluid; new coalitions may yet be formed or other parties may disappear from the radar.

There is a general apathy towards the elections because the citizens are tired of unsubstantiated pledges and the polarization ripping society apart. According to the above-mentioned polls, 44 percent of the population does not support any party and 45 percent is unhappy with the political direction of the parties. The question on everyone’s mind is will the elections prove to be a blessing in disguise or an amplification of the current catastrophe?



Goodbye Dear Friend and Mother

By Nora Armani

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“Nora we lost Nora.” Edmond’s email message was short, crisp, clear, yet characteristically poetic. Nora Ipekian-Azadian, my namesake, my friend, my inspiration, my ex-mother-in-law, and my now-mother, was no more.

It was not the news I had not expected to hear; only I wish I never did. She was, after all, well advanced into her late 90s and lived a long fruitful, and inspiring artistic life. She gave so much to so many through her teaching that spanned more than one generation and with her example she blazed a trail for us all to follow in her footsteps.

Nora was exceptionally larger than life. She was radiant and lighthearted, not letting any mishap shape her life or define her. Instead, she always saw the positive side of everything and spotted a silver lining even in the most adverse of situations.

I learned a lot from her at first by briefly observing her from a distance, but this did not last long as she left the Armenian community in Egypt, where I grew up, to embrace a new life with her soulmate Edmond Azadian in America. Later, fate brought me closer to her when I had the privilege of becoming her daughter-in-law as I married her son Gerald Paspasian. During those

years my apprenticeship continued and my admiration of Nora grew exponentially. She became my confidant, my guide, my friend, and my inspiration.

Our first encounter, unbeknownst to me, had taken place much earlier when at the age of 10 and 11, for two consecutive years, Nora had awarded me the first prize in poetry recitation in the competitions held at the Armenian Artistic Union club in Cairo. Years later she told me that she had said to her fellow jury members, referring to me, “She is a promising talent and would go far with the right guidance.” Fate had it that the guidance Nora was wishing for would come from her own son when only a few years later Gerald would direct me in my first play on that very same stage at the Armenian Artistic Union in Cairo. And thus had begun my long artistic journey in which Nora Ipekian-Azadian had played an important part along with her husband, Edmond Azadian.

I remember our Detroit years with fondness. As new immigrants, the anchor Nora and Edmond provided helped us in our integration into our new hometown of Detroit. Although about a year after arriving we moved to Los Angeles, the frequent visits prompted by performances or family occasions offered me many opportunities to grow, develop and flourish enveloped in her unique



Nora Armani with Nora Ipekian Azadian

artistic aura. I always considered Detroit and the Azadian residence hometown and home; and Nora a loving and giving mentor.

When my own mother, Arminé Ekserdjian (née Basmadjian), an artist and violinist in her own right, passed away at the young age of 62, Nora said to me, “Now I am your mother.” And years later, despite my no longer being married to her son, her sentiments towards me never changed. She was my mother. And I, her daughter. I was Bzdig (little/junior) Nora, and she was Medz (big/

senior) Nora.

We often compared our lives and found many parallels. It is strange that the resemblances were much more visible and pronounced between our lives as the two namesakes, than between my life and that of my own mother’s.

Fate had manifested itself when my mother, admiring Nora and her courage as a woman, had named me after her and after Ibsen’s heroine, as if to make up for the fact that she herself had put aside her own aspirations of becoming a concert violinist, having instead opted for married life and motherhood.

I remember how my mother had cried when she found out that her brothers-in-law had, unbeknownst to her, sold her violin along with the bric-a-brac of the apartment from which they were moving. Why had she not brought it with her to her married home, still baffles me today. Her tears had signaled the closure of an artistic journey and a dream.

A few days ago, Nora Ipekian-Azadian left this world quietly in her sleep. As I said goodbye to her through my tears I promised myself that this would not be the closure of a journey but the continuation of one. I had made a promise to my mother to continue the artistic journey for both of us. Now, I have to continue the journey together with my two mothers, and for all women who sacrifice art for motherhood.

Nora left this world, but her artistic legacy, her love, and her spirit will forever inspire those who she touched and will fill the hearts of all those who knew her for her generosity, compassion, and understanding that she so effortlessly shared with immense elegance.

As fate has it, our lives have once again crisscrossed and now we are going together on another journey, this time to Egypt, as I have taken it upon myself to transport part of her remains to Cairo, in accordance with her wishes.

As I write these lines, the photo of a little girl I have often seen in her home flashes to my mind. It is Nora Ipekian-Azadian in an affectionate embrace with her dear grandfather Mihran Damadian. Her remains will find the warmth of that embrace again, as she is laid down in her final resting place with her parents Shake and Aghassi Ipekian, next to her beloved grandfather Mihran Damadian, and her favorite poet Vahan Tekeyan whose poetry she excelled at reciting.

To quote Tekeyan, “Ինչ մասց, կէանքէն ինձի ինչ մասց...ինչ որ տուի ուրիշին տարօրինակ այն միայն:”

“What remains to me of this life, what remains? Oddly, what I gave to others. Only that remains.”

Dear Nora, what you gave to so many in such abundance over nine decades will be your legacy as it continues to enrich their lives and the lives of generations to come.

Rest in Peace for there are many who love you and who will cherish your memory for as long as they live.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association Is Rolling Up Its Sleeves Again

Before the 44-day war, we supported the development of the strategic Berdzor corridor and made large investments in the region. Berdzor and its neighboring regions (Kashatagh) have now fallen into enemy hands. All of a sudden, its residents, students and teachers were forced to become refugees and are now helplessly scattered all around Artsakh and Armenia. They have lost everything and their living conditions are less than desirable.

The good news is that once more Tekeyan is engaged to make their lives better, so that they remain in Armenia and become part of the nation-building process.

This time though the help will be achieved through investments and not through donations. The creation of a **sustainable economy** is the aim of this appeal.

Through small contributions / mass funding we will create income-generating opportunities for the displaced families. Tekeyan of Armenia in association with a local reputable NGO (Shen or Syunik or Kashatagh) will make investments in agriculture and/or housing to create income or comforts for their beneficiaries. The recipients get these funds conditional that they give back on an annual basis the equivalent in produced goods of 5% of the amount of assistance they have received.

Contributors in this funding will be gratified to:

- a) Alleviate the hardship of these forcefully displaced families
- b) Receive a 5% annual return – goods which in turn will be redirected to schools or other needy institutions.



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Tekeyan Cultural Association, memo Berdzor refugee assistance				
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