

*Armenian Soldier Killed in Latest Shoot-Outs Along Azerbaijani Border*

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — An Armenian serviceman was killed in what the country’s Defense Ministry describes as another provocation by Azerbaijani forces at the heavily militarized state border.

In a report on Monday, August 16, the Ministry said Vahan Tatossyan, a 46-year-old senior non-commissioned officer, was fatally wounded by a sniper at the Yeraskh section of the border with Azerbaijan’s western exclave of Nakhichevan in the morning.

“The Armenian Defense Ministry shares the grief over the loss and expresses support to the family, relatives and colleagues of the killed serviceman,” it said, claiming that Azerbaijan also suffered losses as a result of “retaliatory actions taken by the Armenian side.”

The Azerbaijani side has denied any responsibility for the death of the Armenian serviceman.

Later, on Monday evening, the Armenian Defense Ministry said that another Armenian soldier, 19-year-old private Arman Hakobian, was killed by fire opened by Azerbaijani armed forces in the Gegharkunik section of the border. It said Armenian forces returned fire, killing at least three Azerbaijani soldiers and wounding at least one.

Earlier on August 16, the Armenian Defense Ministry also reported an attempt by Azerbaijani armed forces to advance at the Syunik part of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, particularly in the area of Sev Lich (Black Lake).

The Defense Ministry said that the Azerbaijani side suffered at least one see SOLDIER, page 4



Tatevik Sargsyan, Chief Operating Officer of the Aznavour Foundation, with one of the grant recipients

**Beyond First Aid:**

*The Aznavour Foundation’s Grant to Wounded Soldiers Program*

By **Cristopher Patvakian**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — The Aznavour Foundation has always been committed to supporting a stronger Armenia, during times of both peace and strife. The legendary chanson singer Charles Aznavour was a champion of efforts to provide humanitarian aid dating back to the 1988 earthquake, when he led a worldwide fundraiser and created the renowned *Pour toi Arménie* song to help the victims from Spitak. As such, it comes as no surprise that the Aznavour Foundation created programming to assist with the humanitarian crisis during and following the 2020 Artsakh war.

During the most urgent period of the



Veterans at their contract signing ceremony for grants from the Aznavour Foundation

war, direct aid and short-term support was a priority for the foundation, as it collected and transported over 175 tons of humanitarian aid to Armenia and Artsakh. Chief of Operations at the Aznavour Foundation

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**New RI Law Creates Holocaust and Genocide Education Commission**

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — A new law sponsored by Rep. Rebecca Kislak and Sen. Gayle L. Goldin will create a permanent commission to promote and continually improve genocide and Holocaust education in schools.

The legislation (2021-H 5650A, 2021-S 0840A), which passed the General Assembly July 1 and was ceremonially signed into law by Gov. Daniel McKee later in July, formalizes a commission to implement a 2016 law introduced by Senator Goldin and House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian to require public schools to teach students about genocide and the Holocaust.

“Given the hate and bigotry that is common in public discourse today, it is especially important to educate students about the incredible damage that prejudice and intolerance have caused throughout history. The best way to ensure our future generations never repeat these actions is to teach them about the impact the Holocaust and other genocides have had in our world. Learning about our past provides perspective on current world events. It is also an opportunity for people to learn from one another about experiences of oppression,” said Senator Goldin, whose grandparents fled eastern Europe to Canada during the pogroms. Those of her family members who were unable to escape died in either the pogroms or the Holocaust.

Said Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence), “So many Rhode Islanders’ families are from communities that have been impacted by genocides. Listening to each other’s stories and learning about those diverse histories will help us see the hu-



From left, Sen. Gayle L. Goldin, Rep. Rebecca Kislak, Pauline Getzoyan, Barbara Wahlberg, Marty Cooper and House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian. Getzoyan

manity in one another and build stronger communities. This bill will establish a commission to provide support to our educators and raise awareness of genocides that have affected Rhode Islanders and have shaped our communities’ histories.”

Under the bill, the Holocaust and Genocide Education Commission will gather see EDUCATION, page 9



**Portantino: ‘I Am Proud of My Friendship With the Armenian Community. That’s Part Of Who I Am.’**

By **Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

GLENDALE — When I moved to California years ago, it was in time for the elections for different political offices. While the Armenian community members were doubting whether this or that fellow member will represent the community’s interests the best, one non-Armenian name was getting top marks on the ballot: Anthony Portantino.

In the case of Anthony Portantino, that devotion was anything but usual. I even thought that he might have Armenian ancestors (you know, that’s how it ends in most cases with us). But it turned out that Senator Portantino, whose ancestors are from Italy, learned about Armenians when he was a child growing up in New Jersey. His mother was the one who somehow

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**ARMENIA**

**Abovyan’s Pastor in US to Raise Support for Church, Artsakh Refugees, Armenia**

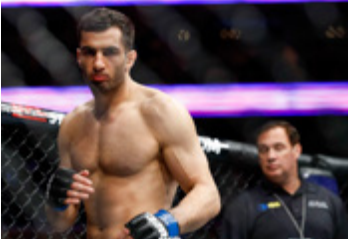
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**Dutch-Armenian Gegard Mousasi Defends Bellator Middleweight Title**

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**VERMONT**

**A Vegetable Garden? Food For the Soul**

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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Karabakh Will Never Be A Part of Azerbaijan, Says State Minister

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) State Minister Artak Beglaryan has said that Artsakh will never be a part of Azerbaijan. On August 16, he weighed in on a recent interview by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev who said only 25,000 people have returned to Karabakh after the war in late 2020. “Lies don’t become truths by repeating; Artsakh/Karabakh now has 120,000 population, not 25,000,” Beglaryan [tweeted](#). “Artsakh will never be a part of Azerbaijan, forget it.” Beglaryan noted that Karabakh expects a clear reaction from the international community to Aliyev’s confession that Azerbaijan was the one to launch the war on September 27, 2020.

### Lake Sevan Water Use Bill Passes Parliament

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The government-backed [bill](#) on allowing authorities to use more water from Lake Sevan amid a drought passed parliament at first reading by 64-19-1. The current law allows to use up to 170 million cubic meters from the lake which is an important source for irrigation water. Authorities want to increase the annual maximum volume to 245 million cubic meters for this year.

### UK’s Boris Johnson Reiterates Support for Peaceful Settlement of NK Conflict

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Boris Johnson on August 17 sent a congratulatory message to Nikol Pashinyan on the occasion of the latter being appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. In it, he declared, “The United Kingdom deeply values our bilateral relationship and shares your vision for a sustainable economic and democratic future for Armenia. Your recent parliamentary elections demonstrated the Armenian commitment to building strong democratic foundations. I was pleased to send UK electoral observers to build confidence among voters, and we remain committed to providing ongoing practical support for your reform programme.” He added that he hoped to see Pashinyan in Glasgow for COP26 in November this year. As for the Karabakh situation, he said, “I would like to reiterate my strong support for a fully negotiated, sustainable and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group. After the 2020 conflict, the United Kingdom was the first country to provide humanitarian support through our work with the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross].”

# Armenian Government Seeks To Intensify Coronavirus Vaccination Drive

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — In a bid to stimulate a more active vaccination drive employers in Armenia may be required to demand Covid-19 vaccination certificates or negative test results every two weeks from their employees beginning on October 1, the country’s health authorities have said.

Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan described the current coronavirus situation in Armenia as “quite tense” as she spoke during Monday government consultations on the subject hosted by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Armenia’s Ministry of Health said in the morning that 256 people had tested positive for the coronavirus during the past day and seven patients died from Covid-19.

Overall, nearly 235,000 coronavirus cases have been identified in Armenia since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, with over 4,700 deaths caused by the disease.

Avanesyan said that at this moment Armenia has 10 medical establishments treating Covid-19 patients. According to her, of 929 hospitalized patients, 483 are in heavy condition and 100 are in critical condition.

As quoted by the government’s press office, the minister said that a growth dynamics is being currently observed in the vaccination process. So far, Avanesyan said, the number of vaccinations against Covid-19 in Armenia has exceeded 220,000, of which about 100,000 were ad-

ministered in the last month.

Referring to official statistics, Prime Minister Pashinyan reported a 35-percent increase in the weekly number of new coronavirus cases, noting a growth dynamics.

Pashinyan reportedly said that the analysis of the statistics shows that the coronavirus situation in Armenia is getting tense and that control over the observance of anti-epidemic rules should be tightened.



Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan gets the COVID vaccine in Armenia (Eurasianet.org photo)

## Armenia Reaffirms Support For India’s Territorial Dispute With Pakistan

YEEVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia has reiterated its support for India over its decades-long territorial dispute with Pakistan and expressed gratitude to New Delhi for its “targeted statements” regarding the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

“Armenia has always supported India in the issue of Jammu and Kashmir,” acting Foreign Minister Armen Grigoryan said in remarks on August 15 during an event in Yerevan dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the independence of India.

“At the same time, we appreciate the targeted statements of the Indian authorities regarding the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression against Artsakh (the Armenian name for Nagorno-Karabakh), the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters to the region, as well as the encroachments on the Armenian borders,” Grigoryan added, according to his press office.

Grigoryan also spoke about an existing “untapped potential” of bilateral relations with India, including “political, security, military, economic, business, cultural, and educational cooperation.”

India’s Ambassador to Armenia Kishan Dan Deval and a member of the Indian parliament, Vinay Sahasrabudhe, attended the event.

The predominantly Muslim-populated region of Jammu and Kashmir is a territory that has been claimed by both India and Pakistan since the partition of India in 1947. After a 1972 agreement that followed an Indo-Pakistani war, India has controlled nearly two-thirds of the region.

In 2019, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government stripped the region of its semiautonomous status, annulled its separate constitution, and split it into two federal territories.

Armenia has no diplomatic ties with Pakistan, which refused to recognize Armenian independence in the early 1990s

because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Along with Turkey, Pakistan openly supported Azerbaijan during last year’s 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh in which nearly 7,000 people were killed. The war resulted in Baku reestablishing control over seven districts around the disputed region and capturing two districts of Soviet Azerbaijan’s former mostly Armenian-populated autonomous region proper.

Like Ankara, Islamabad has denied any

direct involvement in the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pakistan, however, has been involved in a series of joint military drills with Azerbaijan and Turkey since the end of the armed conflict.

India angered Azerbaijan in May when it described Baku as a transgressing side during border tensions with Armenia and called on it to “pull back forces immediately and cease any further provocation.”

## Armenian Soldier Killed in Latest Shoot-Outs Along Azerbaijani Border

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casualty during the skirmish, while there were no casualties on the Armenian side.

Official Baku denied any casualties on the Azerbaijani side in that incident, but reported a ceasefire violation in the Nakhichevan part of the border, placing the responsibility on the Armenian side.

The latest escalation at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border comes amid intensifying claims by Baku about ceasefire violations by Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh where Russian peacekeepers were deployed after last autumn’s 44-day war in which Azerbaijani forces reestablished control over all seven districts around the disputed region as well as chunks of Soviet Azerbaijan’s former autonomous oblast proper.

In an interview with CNN Turk television on August 14, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev claimed that under the terms of the November 9, 2020 ceasefire brokered by Moscow Armenia must not deploy troops within Nagorno-Karabakh.

He further stated that Russia should not rearm Armenia which lost much of its military hardware in last year’s war.

Aliyev again urged Armenia to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan by which the two neighboring South Caucasus countries would recognize each other’s territorial integrity as well as open transport corridors — a railroad and a highway — for Azerbaijan to be connected with its exclave of Nakhichevan and further to Turkey via Armenia’s southern Syunik province.

Earlier, on August 12, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Armenia was ready to engage in talks on reopening transport links between the two states and to embark on a demarcation of the border. He again insisted, however, that Azerbaijani should first withdraw from Armenia’s border areas.

Baku has ruled out such a withdrawal, saying that its troops took up new positions on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier.

On several occasions earlier Pashinyan also rejected Azerbaijan’s demand for a “corridor,” stressing that the Russia-brokered ceasefire deal commits both sides to reopening transport links and has no reference to any specific transport link with the status of a corridor through Syunik.





# Abovyan's Pastor Zohrabyan on US Trip to Raise Support for Church, Artsakh Refugees and Armenia

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

TEWKESBURY, MA — Vazgen Zohrabyan, the pastor of Abovyan City Evangelical Church, is visiting the United States this summer. He and his church helped refugees from Artsakh who had reached Abovyan during and after the Artsakh war at the end of 2020. Zohrabyan is giving talks and sermons about the situation in Armenia and Artsakh in various parts of the United States, and part of his trip is in collaboration with Mission Eurasia.

## Abovyan City Evangelical Church

Though his church, and a recently established NGO called MIAK (*Manukneri inknazarkatsman yev arajentatski kentron* [Child Development and Progress Center]), Pastor Vazgen has spearheaded efforts to help refugees from the recent Artsakh war. The Abovyan church had sent a few youth as missionaries to preach in Artsakh and they returned right before the 2020 war broke out. As noted in a March article this year in the *Mirror-Spectator* (*Mission Eurasia Brings Humanitarian Aid and Evangelism to Artsakh War*), the church hosted refugees in its own building as well as helped find places for many more in hotels, restaurants and private homes in Abovyan during the war. The number reached around 2,000 in this small city not far from the Armenian capital of Yerevan, and the organization Mission Eurasia, headquartered in Tennessee, stepped in to help.

Zohrabyan related that throughout the war, he repeatedly told the refugees, “You are safe here. You are secure. The frontline is so far away from here.” Yet one night, on October 1, 2020, during a church meeting at night, suddenly the city was under attack by a drone or rocket from

## Aid to Refugees Today

Zohrabyan estimates that there are more than 20,000 refugees from Artsakh still living in Armenia, with a large number of them living in the province of Kotayk, in which Abovyan is located. Some live in hotels in the resort town of Tsaghkadzor. They are mostly women and children, along with elderly men. Most of the younger men, Zohrabyan said, are serving in the army in Artsakh



Pastor Vazgen Zohrabyan (photo Aram Arkun)

now or working in construction there, renovating apartments. Others are in agriculture.

The government of Artsakh is trying to encourage refugees to come back by building them new houses for free, as is the government of Armenia and various Armenian organizations. At the same time, as negative incentive, the Armenian government limits the amount of support it provides the refugees remaining on its own territory, Zohrabyan said.

This puts the refugees in a very difficult situation, as they fear what will happen if Russian forces leave Artsakh in four or five years. This is particularly true, he said, for refugees from Hadrut, who lost their homes and property in Artsakh to Azerbaijan. The refugees are not living comfortably in Armenia due to the abovementioned reason. Consequently, some have left to Russia, as they know the language and many have relatives there, Zohrabyan said, though in Russia, the path to assimilation is very short. Emigration to Russia is also a great temptation for youth in Armenia in general, he added.

Zohrabyan's church and NGO try to encourage the return of the refugees, but Zohrabyan stresses that most of them remain very anxious due to the uncertainty of the future status of Artsakh. He exclaimed, “The main thing is not financial – it is psychological. Sometimes I ask myself, okay, I am encouraging them to go back, but what if they face another war in the future. But then, what if they don't go? This is our land and we have to protect it. I spent two years of my own life protecting Artsakh through my military service, so this is very dear to me.”

Zohrabyan and his church members visit the nearby refugees from time to time, and bring them bread and other supplies. They work with the children, and sometimes

bring their own youth on these visits to provide

friendship and Christian fellowship.

Through MIAK, which is supported by Mission Eurasia, several bakeries were established in Armenia, which use refugees from Artsakh as workers and provide free bread to other refugees. The church and MIAK help pay for utilities expenses (gas and electricity) for some of the refugee families in Armenia.

The main focus now of the assistance by MIAK and the church is the children of the refugees, through afterschool education and summer camp. Zohrabyan explained that most of the refugee families are not motivated to send their children to school, as they lost everything and are in shock. They do not know how long they will remain where they are now, and don't see the benefit to sending

their children to a new school.

To counter this, Zohrabyan said they provided free transportation via bus to and from public school. Furthermore, he said, “School is not enough for them. They need some fellowship, which is why we bring them to our building and take them to some sites in the countryside.” Some of the children have lost one or even both parents, and are suffering from serious post-traumatic stress disorders.

The afterschool program provides the children with food, free of charge, and even gives them food boxes for them to take to their parents. There are five days of classes during the week, including on English, home economics, Bible study and Armenian literature and language. Teaching English, Zohrabyan said, was a priority in order to give the children an alternate source of information besides Russian media.

Bibles were printed for children in both Armenian and English, with illustrations and in a very simple language, to be used to teach English and at the same time religion. About 25,000 copies were printed. There were also Bibles printed for adults.

The children are from time to time taken on field trips to historic Armenian sites like Garni, Geghart or Sevan, as many of them, Zohrabyan said, don't know much about Armenian history or religion. The children also get to play games together and have fun. Zohrabyan's wife is in charge of these programs, and they will continue after a one-month break in August.

Their summer camp program in Abovyan hosted about 300 refugee children in July, and benefited from the help of a team from sister evangelical Armenian churches in Lebanon.

## In Artsakh

In addition to working with refugees in Armenia, the Abovyan church group also tries to keep in touch with



Don Parsons, at left, with Pastor Vazgen Zohrabyan (photo Aram Arkun)

those who returned to Artsakh. Most are in Stepanakert. Zohrabyan said, “I encourage them, telling them, we remember you. Any time you wish, you can visit Armenia. Know that you have so many families here. Don't worry — if you need any help, we will come and stand by you.” From time to time, the church sends them supplies and at Christmas, it sent Christmas gifts. Zohrabyan said that recently, a group of young people from the church went to Artsakh to visit them.

MIAK is trying to establish a bakery in Stepanakert similar to the ones it has in Armenia, but is having difficulty finding suitable free space there, due to the crowding in the city with an increased population from lost territories like Hadrut and Shushi. Rent for an apartment has risen to almost the same price as in Yerevan. However, Zohrabyan said, in general, the returning refugees get sufficient support in Artsakh from various governmental and nongovernmental groups and there is enough food.

Zohrabyan said he would like to create a branch of MIAK to work with children in Stepanakert, in addition to the bakery, with the support of Mission Eurasia.

## Mission Eurasia

Don Parsons, ministry director for unreached people groups for Mission Eurasia, is accompanying Pastor Vazgen on the first leg of his US trip. When asked about what forthcoming work Mission Eurasia is planning with Zohrabyan and MIAK in Armenia, he exclaimed, “We continue to support their work in every way, including

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Bread distributed to refugee children from Artsakh

Azerbaijan. Zohrabyan said people speculate that the fuel tanks underneath Abovyan may have been a target.

The refugees became anxious again and for many days on end, Pastor Vazgen had to try to reassure them that they were safe, yet even he was nervous. He said his children were in the church building during the incident. Fortunately, the Armenian armed forces intercepted the rocket or drone and neutralized it.

In all, Zohrabyan summarized, his church and supporters were able to help more than 12,000 families get food supplies, and they also provided spiritual support whenever possible. Many of these families have already left Armenia to return to Artsakh and the church building itself no longer hosts refugees.





## ARMENIA

# Pastor's US Trip to Raise Support for Church, Artsakh Refugees and Armenia

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summer camps and educational programs. This fall, we will launch some more training, in particular training young people from the ages of 18 to 30 in a variety of different leadership roles in life; most particularly how to be an intentional Christian in a secular society (in the broad sense), and being an intentional believer in Christ and living for him in the midst of your business, doctoring, or life in general."

Parsons added, "The foundation of all that training is the word of God. That is the only solid truth that there is. ...If people have a purpose to live outside themselves,



Refugee children from Artsakh enjoying their summer thanks to activities organized by the Abovyan City Evangelical Church

then everything else falls into place."

Pastor Vazgen pointed out that the Armenian educational system started with the bible in Mesrob Mashtots' time, when it was necessary first to translate it into Armenian with a new alphabet for the Armenian language. He said, "Christianity thus brought education to Armenia. We need to perhaps go back to our roots now."

## Zohrabyan Finds His Calling and Keeps Going

Zohrabyan was born in Yerevan in 1981. When he was in a summer Pioneer Camp, at the age of nine, his life was changed after a visiting Armenian missionary from France gave him a Bible for children. He related, "I grew up in an atheistic family. My grandparents, my mother and my father didn't believe in God, so I never heard about it. This was my first experience with Christianity." His parents saw the book and took it away from him, saying this is not for children, but it had already changed his life. Ever since then, he prayed that he would have the chance to meet that missionary again and thank him.

Several decades later, Pastor Vazgen was preaching in Los Angeles at the biggest Armenian Evangelical church there, and as he introduced himself, he related this story. He noticed the local pastor was affected. The pastor approached him after his sermon and asked him whether it was in August, 1990 at Tsaghkadzor, and when Zohrabyan affirmed that it was, the pastor hugged him, began to cry, and said that he was the missionary.

Zohrabyan went to Yerevan State University after high school to get a degree in international relations (1998-2004). He said, "It is helpful because I travel a lot. I traveled to Turkey and I used to travel to Iran." He has also traveled in much of Europe and has been to the US several times prior to his current trip.

Zohrabyan became a pastor and founder of Abovyan City Evangelical Church in 2003, while still a student, after he and his wife were invited for bible study in Abovyan, but he then went to serve in the army of the Republic of Armenia from 2004-2006. There he founded a newspaper and library. While still in the army, in 2005 he began to translate the theological works of Derek Prince into Armenian, and in 2006 became a director of Derek Prince Ministries and its representative in the Caucasus region for its publishing, printing and distribution work. In 2009, he be-

gan studying through distance learning at Global University, based in the Pentecostal tradition and located in Springfield, Missouri, and received a bachelor's degree in theology from it.

Fluent in Armenian, Russian and English, he has translated many works, and authored his own Armenian-language volume, *Kez hamar huys ka* [There Is Hope for You], published in 2016. He has his own blog: <https://vazgenarseni.com/>.

Among his interests, Zohrabyan said, "I have a passion to reach the Hamshen [Hemshin] Armenians because they are left alone and forgotten, and many Armenians are not even aware of them. I was in Istanbul and had some contacts with priests there. I noticed some Turks used to come and visit the church during the liturgy, and that some of them had gotten baptized by this Armenian priest. I asked the priest, who was my good friend, and he said they were from Hamshen. Some are Christians and others Muslims, but many speak Armenian and understand us." He added that for some reason, the Armenian government has no policy concerning them, perhaps out of fear of Turkey.

## In the USA

Mission Eurasia invited Pastor Vazgen for the first 12 days of his current US trip, after which on August 17, he is scheduled to visit Armenian Protestant churches in Los Angeles with which he is in touch. Traveling with his family, he went first to New York in early August, and then to Nashua, NH, where he gave a sermon at Trinity Baptist Church. He went on to give several sermons and had meetings in Nashville, Murfreesboro, Chattanooga,

and Lenoir City in Tennessee, including at Mission Eurasia headquarters and at Baptist and Pentecostal churches which have been involved with Mission Eurasia. Some of the sermons are available online already, and he gave an interview to Moody Radio



Supplies distributed to a refugee family

in Nashville on August 16.

Zohrabyan said that he would be informing his East Coast audiences about Armenia and its problems, and involve them in the process. He said that they so far appeared interested, especially after hearing that Armenia is a Christian nation. Parsons observed that people don't really even know where Armenia is, or that there are close to 200 million Muslims in the region surrounding its territory.

Zohrabyan is doing fundraising on this trip not only for his Abovyan church but also for the MIAK NGO. He said, "Everywhere I go, I tell people about my nation, my history, and my country, and motivate them to come and visit Armenia. If we have many tourists in my country, this will produce a good income and also safety. If you have tourists from America there, then the American government will also be interested in Armenia's stability."

# The Aznavour Foundation's Grant to Wounded Soldiers Program

AID, from page 1

Tatevik Sargsyan explained that after the immediate crisis, the organization recognized the important reality that, as she posed it, if "we really want to help those deprived of basic livelihood means, we need to ask ourselves 'How will they carry on once our mission is over? Have we created a strong enough base for their long-term prosperity?'"

This led to the creation of the Grants to Wounded Soldiers program. The project aims to help volunteers who were injured or/and disabled during military service or/and hostilities through a grant to create their own businesses. This program is a collaboration with the Support to Wounded Soldiers NGO, which supports not only the physical and mental rehabilitation of gravely wounded soldiers but provides all types of available support to war veterans. In addition to a grant of 5,000 Euros, the initiative includes professional consulting, training throughout the implementation of the business idea, and monitoring of the business.

"This supervision measure allows us to make sure that the grantee is supported not only during actual groundwork, but also the operation stage. This is crucial for the sustainability of any entrepreneurial idea, since the first year is usually the most challenging for any new business," Sargsyan added.

Sargsyan noted that the foundation realized the social and economic rehabilitation

of Armenian veterans was as important as their physical and mental well-being. She said that "through months of cooperation, we realized that by the end of their rehabilitation cycle many young men become extremely anxious about their future and the future of their families. For many, war led to various disabilities, which did not permit them to go back to the work they used to perform before the war." Furthermore, while in rehabilitation, many young men shared their hopes, dreams, and vision for their future post-recovery. "Basically, the veterans themselves inspired this project and nudged us in the right direction!", Sargsyan explained.

Grant specialists from the Aznavour Foundation, in partnership with the Support to Wounded Soldiers NGO, are directly involved in the consultations with soldiers interested in the initiative. Both guide veterans through the application process and provide further support in all steps of project implementation. Furthermore, external business consultants are involved, depending on the specificities of a given project, to help shape the idea and secure long-term sustainability.

The call for applications was open for approximately a month and resulted in the submission of over 400 applications. Sargsyan said she believes this exemplifies the "true potential of the initiative" and showcases

the young men's desire to take back control of their lives after the war.

So far, seven grants have been awarded, while several more will be provided in the future. However, the call for applications is closed and there is a substantial waiting list of high-quality projects eligible for financing. To secure financing for the remaining applications, the Aznavour Foundation has partnered up with fundraising platform AYO! to give agency to those who seek to contribute to this initiative. The stories of beneficiaries are available on their website, [www.weareayo.org](http://www.weareayo.org), where donors can contribute directly.

One of the grant receipts was 20-year-old Leo Baghdasaryan. Originally born in Stepanakert, Artsakh, Leo moved to Yerevan at the age 10, and dreams of becoming a well-known composer. In his own words, Leo says that "Music is the only thing through which I can express myself."

When the war began, he was already serving in the military for his mandatory service, and on the second day of the war was moved to the frontline near Hadrut. Later he was moved to Martuni, where he was wounded on November 4. He received injuries to his hand from shrapnel.

After treatment, Leo was able to get back to music again and even composed a song, 44, which is dedicated to the Artsakh war and its martyrs. With the grant, Leo plans to

pursue a musical education and establish his own recording studio in the future.

Among the other business ideas proposed, the most popular category was agriculture, with ideas ranging from bee farming to smart greenhouse initiatives. Three agricultural projects have already been funded and many more are in the waiting list.

Other projects that the Aznavour Foundation has financed include the creation of a photo atelier, the manufacturing of laces and braids, and a woodworking shop. Sargsyan noted that they "welcome all ideas and believe that this approach allows us to inspire war veterans to pursue entrepreneurial ideas in all fields and spheres."

The projects currently funded will be implemented in four different regions of Armenia and include three urban and four rural locations (including border settlements). The Aznavour Foundation hopes that with future projects they will be able to further extend coverage to more towns and villages in both Armenia and Artsakh.

Given the clear demand and importance of the program, Sargsyan stated that "once the current projects are fully financed and ongoing, we consider launching the second call for applications." The new businesses have only been in operation for periods of times ranging from two to six months, but the foundation expects to record the first tangible results in the near future.





INTERNATIONAL

# Armenia Eyes Infrastructure Cooperation with Iran

By Artur Manukyan

YEREVAN — As Armenia seeks to develop a new national security framework following the defeat in the 2020 Artsakh War, relations with Iran could play an increasingly important role.

The two neighbors have longstanding ties and a strategic partnership that includes a natural gas pipeline critical for the diversification of Armenia’s energy needs. The Iranian section of the 141-km pipeline, which became operational in 2007, runs from Tabriz to the Armenia-Iran border; the Armenian section runs from Meghri to Kajaran.

Developing and strengthening strategic ties with Iran is crucial, taking into consideration that Armenia has closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Armenia cooperates with Iran in the fields of transportation, environment, healthcare, agriculture, science, education and culture, including interregional cooperation. Despite not yet gaining momentum, the establishment of the Meghri Free Economic Zone in 2017 on the Armenian-Iranian border seeks to lay a foundation to strengthen economic ties with Iran and simultaneously address the socio-economic challenges of Armenia’s Syunik region.

Although Armenia is one of the shortest options for connecting Iran to the Black Sea, Armenia has not been able to realize its potential to become a transit country since gaining independence. The Persian Gulf-Black Sea International Transport Corridor, which has been under development for years, is currently being actively discussed. Armenian officials are engaged in negotiations with Iran, Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece over plans for the landmark infrastructure project. An agreement is expected in the near future that could form the basis for strategic intensification of Armenia’s bilateral ties with Iran in particular. The blueprint for the project envisages construction of a transport corridor from

Iran to the Black Sea via Armenia and Georgia, with Bulgaria and Greece set to serve as gateways to the European Union from there. During a visit to Armenia in May 2021, speaking about bringing the Persian Gulf-Black Sea International Transport Corridor back to life, Iran’s Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammed Eslami expressed Iran’s interest in expanding auto and rail communication with Armenia and potentially being involved in the construction of the southern parts of Armenia’s North-South highway.

Iran views Armenia as a natural transit route to the Black Sea region and ultimately to European markets. As Tehran seeks to make progress toward the relaxation of international sanctions, parallel efforts are also underway to develop this route. Iranian policymakers are believed to seek alternatives to existing Azerbaijani and Turkish corridors, and are eager to counter efforts by Moscow and Ankara to marginalize Iranian influence in the region. Both Russia and Turkey consider Iran a regional competitor and are motivated not to see it strengthen its position in the region.

One of the core objectives of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea International Transport Corridor initiative is the strengthening of commercial and economic ties throughout the region. In addition to the international transit function, the corridor would also lead to standardization and improvements of management and warehousing functions. It would help facilitate a remarkable change in road safety standards across the region, improving efficiency.

Recent changes in the geopolitical climate make this initiative significantly more feasible. Following the 2020 Artsakh War, the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia stipulates the unblocking of economic and transport links in the region. According to the terms of the agreement, Armenia is obliged to facilitate unimpeded transport links between Azerbaijan and its Nakh-

ichevan exclave.

Azerbaijan wants this connection link to be a corridor over which it will have sovereign rights. Armenia opposes that concept, arguing that its sovereignty over its own territory cannot be compromised. Currently, most transport to and from Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan travels through Iran. Thus, travel through Armenia would reduce Azerbaijan’s dependence on Iran.

In contrast, the Persian Gulf-Black Sea infrastructure project is in line with the interests of both Iran and Armenia. Crucially, it has the potential to serve as a lifeline for Armenia. As the project has both economic and security dimensions, it is possible to argue that it would increase cooperation and strengthen regional security. This is in the interests of all potential participating countries, and is also arguably the best way to guard against future attempts to destabilize the South Caucasus region.

The future of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea International Transport Corridor depends on a number of geopolitical factors. The Iranian economy is currently facing major challenges due to the ongoing impact of international sanctions, but the prospect of sanctions relief remains. If sanctions are relaxed or removed by the Biden administration, Tehran would have access to significant funds to finance construction works tied to the corridor.

The lifting of sanctions would also open the door to a further deepening of Armenia’s own engagement with Tehran. Sanctions have long served to limit the scope of cooperation with Iran, but the removal of this obstacle would provide new impetus for Yerevan and Tehran to intensify their ties. The ambitious plans for a major transport road would necessarily form a central part of any negotiations on a strengthening of the strategic relationship.

(This article originally appeared in EVN Report [evnreport.com] on August 10.)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Turkey Says It Welcomes Taliban Statements Since They Seized Control

ANKARA (Reuters) — Turkey is in talks with all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, and views positively the messages of the Islamist militants since they took control of the country, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on August 17. Cavusoglu was speaking a day after Turkish security sources said Ankara had dropped plans to guard and operate Kabul airport following the withdrawal of other NATO forces from Afghanistan because of the chaos which accompanied the Taliban victory. The sources told Reuters Turkey was instead ready to provide technical and security assistance if the Taliban requested it. “We are keeping up dialogue with all sides, including the Taliban,” Cavusoglu told reporters on a visit to Jordan. “We view positively the messages that the Taliban has given so far, whether to foreigners, to diplomatic individuals or its own people. We hope to see these in action as well.”

### 4.5-Magnitude Earthquake Hits Armenia-Georgia Border Area

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A 4.5-magnitude earthquake struck the border area between Armenia and Georgia on August 16, the Armenian Ministry of Emergency Situations reports. The tremor happened at a shallow depth of 10 kilometers below the surface. It has not caused any damage, but was felt by many people as light vibration in the area of the epicenter. Faint shaking was felt in certain communities of Shirak, Lori and Tavush provinces of Armenia.

### Russian Envoy Visits Hotspot on Armenian-Azerbaijani Border

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin on August 17 visited a number of border checkpoints in Yerashk, Ararat province, the Russian Embassy reports. Kopyrkin has met with the Armenian and Russian border guards of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia in Armenia. Visiting one of the outposts, Kopyrkin and his family laid flowers at the bust of border guard A.P. Koryakov, who died when fighting saboteurs who had infiltrated from Turkey in 1948.

### Azeri Shooting at Border

GEGHARKUNIK, Armenia — On August 16, at around 18:10, the subdivisions of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces once again resorted to provocations, firing from various caliber firearms on the Armenian positions in Gegharkunik province. Armenian serviceman Arman Hakobyan, born in 2002, received a fatal gunshot wound as a result of an intense firefight. According to the Armenian Defense Ministry, the Azerbaijani military suffered at least three casualties and wounded.

# Russia Accuses Azerbaijan of Violating Ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Ani Avetisyan

MOSCOW (Open Caucasus Media) — The Russian Ministry of Defense has accused Azerbaijani forces of violating the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh as tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to rise.

“Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire violation has been recorded. On August 11, 2021, at 07:29 and 07:58, the Azerbaijani armed forces carried out two strikes using strike-type quadcopters [drones] on a position of the armed formations of Nagorno-Karabakh,” the ministry said in a statement on Thursday, August 12.

Since the end of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War brought the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region, clashes have continued to take between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. However, Thursday’s statement was the first time Russian authorities have

explicitly blamed one side for violating the ceasefire.

Wednesday’s clashes were previously reported by the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army, which said that combat UAVs were used by Azerbaijan forces.

On Thursday, the Defense Army reported that Azerbaijani troops had attempted to cross the line of contact in the east of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijani authorities have responded by accusing Armenia of deploying more troops to Nagorno-Karabakh and of “committing a provocation.”

Since the end of the war, isolated clashes have continued to take place around Nagorno-Karabakh and along much of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

According to Armenia, since late May several hundred Azerbaijani soldiers have advanced their positions into Armenia proper. The clashes have resulted in casualties from both sides and at least six

Armenian soldiers have been taken captive, with three remaining missing.

Armenian officials have expressed increasing frustration with a perceived lack of response to the clashes from Russia and the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), of which they are a member.

By contrast, the European Parliament, the United States, and France all called for Azerbaijan to withdraw its troops.

During a visit to Armenia on 10 August, the General Secretary of the CSTO, Stanislav Zas, did concede that the clashes along the border were a “threat to Armenia” and to other CSTO member countries. He added that the CSTO hoped for a non-violent solution to the issue.

Armenian Defense Minister Arshak Karapetyan responded that Armenia was in favor of peace, but that “our patience is not inexhaustible either.”





## INTERNATIONAL

## Artist Archi Galentz Marks a Half Century with What He Loves Best: Art

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — If you are an Armenian artist living in the German capital and you are about to turn 50, how should you celebrate the occasion?

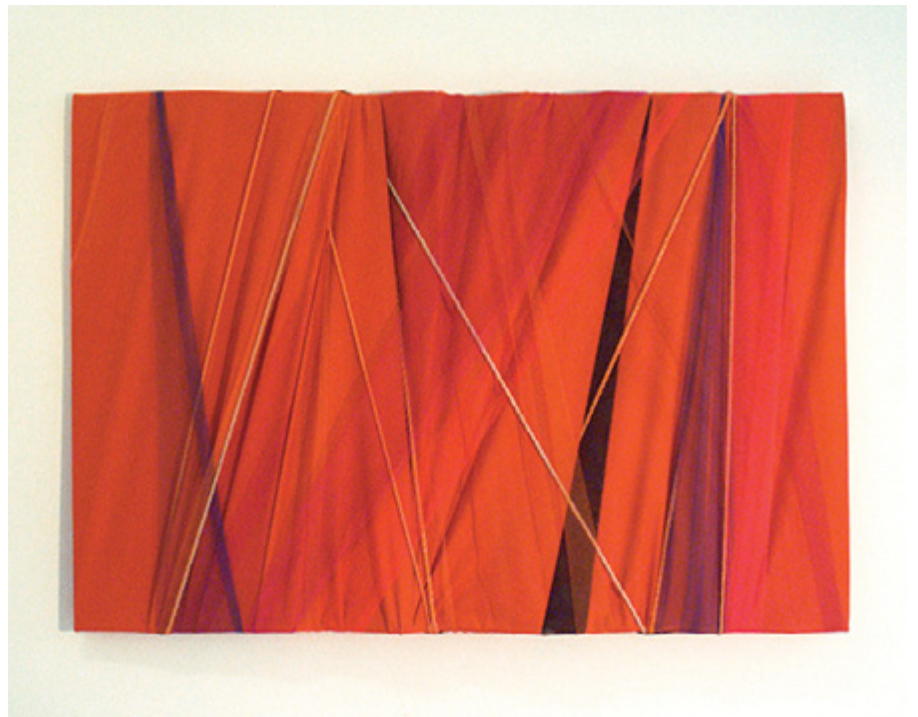
Archi Galentz has decided to mark the event with an exhibition of a special kind.

Among the working titles he considered were “The First 50” and “Stages of Formation of the Midlife Crisis of an Arriereguardist,” but the show was not to be a retrospective. Another possible name was “My Spasm,” to indicate (the artist explains in a brochure prepared for the event) “the process of giving birth to this brainchild of mine in the form of a personal exhibition of my most important projects.”

But the final title chosen was “Private Club” — not an exhibition like others, but a discreet gathering, a private function for friends and associates to come together, because the moment is not like any others, and not only due to the pandemic. There is a broader context. Galentz writes that “it is inappropriate to celebrate loudly and brightly at the moment when your homeland self-destructs and dissolves in dreams of hidden potentials and obvious allies that can be revived by the magic spells of prehistoric ancestors.” This, however, is not the theme of the exhibition. Unlike previous shows, here there are no works with maps of Armenia, imaginary maps, or those of the historic homeland, no visions of a national republic. The context has changed. He feels fettered by the “complete bankruptcy of governance and, even worse, civil society and intellectual thought.” But, despite the lack of viable alternatives for building a new society, the artist refuses to turn the beautiful gallery into “a wailing wall.”

Instead, the friends and colleagues attending the birthday gathering will see eight projects from different creative periods still inhabiting Galentz’s thoughts and activity. They are works of the past but continue to live. One installation, “Survival Kit,” incorporates drawings and paintings by other artists, Achot Achot, Silvina Der Meguerditchian and Nishan Kazazyan. It was first shown at the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art in 2005 in an exhibition titled “Situating Self. Confused, Compassionate and Conflictual.” Another work, “Not Red Banners,” begun in 2003, studies the phenomenon of color transformations in silk fabrics in purple, orange and red, which oscillate depending on the viewer’s perspective. There are also photographic works, for example a 2002 printout of a “Distant View on Kremlin,” one of a series of images of the city made through a camera obscura. A smaller room hosts figurative compositions (“Painting is the queen of visual arts,” writes Galentz), and they include mystical compositions referencing antiquity. “The Flaying of Marsyas” is a piece he has been working on for six years.

Archi Galentz was born in 1971 in Moscow, into a family of Armenian artists. After attending schools in the Russian capital, he entered the State University of Arts



“Red Banners” by Archi Galentz

and Theater in Yerevan and three years later began attending classes as a visiting student at the University of Arts in Berlin, then completed his studies for a master’s degree in 1997. His first solo show took place in Berlin in 2000 and since then he has been active as a freelance artist and curator. In 2008 he founded the artist-run space InteriorDasein in Berlin, which has promoted cooperative art projects with Russia and Armenia, and, with Andreas Wolf, co-founded Wolf & Galentz gallery there in 2019. In 2012 he received the Arshile Gorky medal from the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. He has taken part in over 80 group exhibitions, curated over 20 exhibitions since 2000 and held numerous solo shows.

At 50, Archi has remarked, one usually begins to look back in time. But he “feels like a beginner who’s dreaming of having his own atelier, so he can finally start painting.”

Best wishes for the next fifty!

## Syrian Homes, Businesses Destroyed in Turkish Capital amid Rising Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

By Amberin Zaman

ANKARA (AL-MONITOR) — Millions of Syrians who found shelter in Turkey from the violence that has raged in their country since the start of the civil war there in 2011 are now facing growing hostility from their Turkish hosts amid a sharp economic downturn exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The brewing resentment toward an estimated 3.7 million Syrian refugees turned violent in the Turkish capital of Ankara on Wednesday, August 11, as hundreds of locals chanting slurs swarmed to the working-class suburb of Altindag and embarked on a vandalism spree, overturning cars, shattering windows and looting shops said to be owned by Syrians.

At least 76 people were detained in connection with the rampage, which was triggered by the death of an 18-year old Turkish man, Emirhan Yalcin. The teen was stabbed in a brawl between Syrian refugees in Altindag, a stronghold of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Turkey has long been lauded for hosting so many Syrians, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. Refugees account for 5% of its population of roughly 83 million.

Turkish patience is beginning to run thin amid rising joblessness, spiraling inflation and a pervading sense that the country is being invaded, foremost by Syrians, even as Turkish forces occupy big chunks of Syria and are accused of being invaders by the Syrian regime. “The educated ones go to Europe and we are left with the detritus — savages who spread their legs wide, pick their noses and talk loudly with an

army of children on public transport. We have become a minority in our own land,” complained Serap Ozturk, a pro-secular housewife from Istanbul’s Goztepe district.

Ozturk says she votes for the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP). Scenting the public mood, the party has in recent months cynically played on the public’s fears to squeeze Erdogan and the AKP. The CHP leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, has vowed that once in power he will send the Syrians back home within two years.

Presidential spokesman Omer Celik took aim at Kilicdaroglu on Thursday. “Competition is of course necessary in politics. But divisive and polarizing hate speech can never be construed as competition,” Celik tweeted. He added that Turkish security forces were in full control of the situation and that Yalcin’s killers had been apprehended. Celik urged the public to “not succumb to provocations targeting our national unity.”

Ankara police said individuals who had allegedly helped stoke violence against the Syrians through social media were among those being held in custody.

Many Turks have said they felt shame and horror upon seeing the hate being showered on the Syrians. Turks shared photographs of a Syrian boy who was wounded by the mob.

“Let us not surrender ourselves to inhumane ideologies such as racism and fascism,” tweeted a user who goes by the handle @Enveryan in typical commentary.

Others pushed back, insisting they are not against refugees but against “uncontrolled migration.”

Syrians are gripped with fear and some believe their assailants are motivated by greed. An unidentified Syrian speaking

to the left-leaning online news portal Sol Haber was filmed amid the wreckage of his home in Altindag, saying, “I will have to leave because they said they would come back. They will come back to steal.”

Yildiray Ogur, a columnist for the mildly oppositionist conservative Karar newspaper lamented the Syrian’s plight, tweeting, “He opened a shop, learned Turkish, is supporting his family, is paying taxes. ... Why do you want this man to return to his country. Why is he being held responsible for a murderer’s crime? There is only one name for this groundless unease: racism.”

Political scientist Nezih Onur Kuru, who is studying public sentiment toward Syrian refugees, noted that anti-Syrian violence in Altindag, which is home to large numbers of unskilled and impoverished Syrians, is “neither new nor surprising.”

Places like Altindag, which have sprung up on the periphery of large cities, draw a steady stream of unemployed Turks from the countryside as well, making it a tinderbox. Kuru said he had recorded 246 separate incidents of violence against Syrian refugees since 2011.

In the early days, the government’s usage of the term “guests” resonated favorably with the Turkish public but over time, as it became apparent that many of the Syrian guests are here to stay, attitudes hardened. Kuru’s research suggests that no more than a quarter of Syrian refugees say they want to go back.

Erdogan’s sporadic reminders that Turkey has spent as much as \$50 billion on them and occasional hints that they may be granted Turkish citizenship haven’t helped.

Nor has the European Union’s perceived treatment of Turkey as a holding pen for Syrians and other refugees the EU doesn’t

want on its own soil. Since 2016, the European bloc has been giving Turkey billions of dollars to help with the maintenance of Syrian refugees.

They are now being joined by a growing number of Afghans as they flee Taliban forces. Between 500 to 1,500 Afghans are thought to be slipping into Turkey via Iran daily. Those numbers are set to rise as the Taliban continue to capture large swaths of territory from government forces. The Taliban claimed to have wrested Kandahar and Herat, the second- and third-largest cities respectively, Thursday.

Now, “Brussels has a plan to bribe Turkey to keep refugees from Afghanistan away from Europe. Estimates shows that there is a risk of 500,000 or a million Afghan refugees [coming],” Kilicdaroglu claimed July 25. Austrian Prime Minister Sebastian Kurz lent credence to his claim, telling the German newspaper Bild on July 26 that Turkey was a “more suitable place” to host Afghans than either Germany, Austria or Sweden.

Erdogan dismissed the claims in an interview with private broadcaster CNNTurk on Wednesday, asserting that Turkey was not a “roadside inn” for illegal migrants and that reports about the influx of Afghans were exaggerated and that over half a million foreign nationals were prevented from entering the country illegally last year. Ankara says it will build a 295-kilometer-long (183-mile) wall along the Iranian border to prevent human trafficking and other illegal activities.

(<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/08/syrian-homes-businesses-destroyed-turkish-capital-amid-rising-anti-immigrant#ixzz7314pclbj>)





# Community News

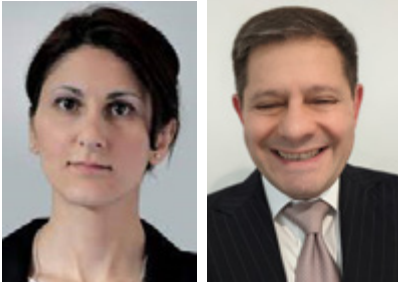
## Regional Experts Underscore Russian Appeasement and Surrendered Armenian Agency as Key Factors In 44-Day Catastrophe

By Viken Araz

FAIR LAWN, N.J. — On Wednesday, June 30, St. Leon Armenian Church hosted a virtual forum titled, “A Master Plan? Russo-Azeri Strategy for Armenian Pacification.”

The event examined Russia’s role in the 2020 Artsakh War and across the South Caucasus in order to shed light on what is happening, what is at stake, and where Russian and Armenian interests diverge on fundamental issues.

The event was jointly sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Armenian Bar Association, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party-Ramgavars, Armenian Network of America—Greater NY, Daughters of Vartan-Sahaganoush Otyag, Justice Armenia, Knights of Vartan-Bakradouny Lodge, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, and Saint Leon Armenian Church.



Lilit Gevorgyan, Armen Kharazian

The discussion, which was recorded and may be viewed at <https://bit.ly/StLeonEvents>, was moderated by Ara Araz. Panelists included Lilit Gevorgyan, security and political analyst at IHT, and Armen Kharazian, a former diplomat and principal attorney at Kharazian Law.

The discussion probed the 44-day catastrophe and its aftermath within a wider context of Russo-Armenian relations and shifting geopolitical currents across the South Caucasus. Gevorgyan and Kharazian discussed the alignment of Russian and Azerbaijani interests behind Azerbaijani state-building and economic regional initiatives, to the detriment of Armenian sovereignty both in Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia. The discussion came at a critical time for Armenia and the diaspora, as Araz underscored, “It is critical that our community better understand the contours of a world where Russian and Armenian interests might diverge on fundamental issues and the degree to which racial hatred or the occupation and further pacification of Artsakh coincide with—but are not the sole drivers of — Azeri aggression and policy.”

Gevorgyan poignantly emphasized the causal relationship between Armenia’s diplomatic isolation and over-dependence on Russia for its

see APPEASEMENT, page 9



## A Master Class In Music for Holy Martyrs Church

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — The installation of a new Rodgers Organ at Holy Martyrs Church in Bayside, NY, became an occasion for choir members and accompanists to benefit from a “Master Class” in Armenian Church music.

Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, the Eastern Diocese’s Sacred Music Instructor (and a virtuoso organist in his own right), visited the Bayside parish on Sunday, August 8, to join parishioners for badarak and meet afterwards with the choir, in the company of pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan.

During his discussion of ways to enhance the beauty and musicality of the liturgy, Fr. Kiledjian stressed the critical role of the choir — which not only engages with the priest and deacons on the altar, but also sets a serene, meditative mood for the worshippers.

He also addressed practical issues of vocal performance, explaining techniques of breathing that would produce stronger, richer tones in the singing voice. Fr. Kiledjian shared his expertise in conducting, and led practice exercises for select pieces.

Many of his insights sparked animated discussion among the participants.

“Hayr Sourp taught us there is no such thing as ‘sad’ Armenian Church music,” said Maral Jamgochian, who serves as one of the organists of the parish. “It should be joyful and celebratory—and ultimately transformative. He said that the altar servers, choir, and organist are a channel to change the lives around them.”

She added: “Throughout the class, Hayr Sourp’s delightful sense of humor and love for our church music touched everyone’s heart.”

The purchase of Bayside’s new organ was made possible by a donation from Juliet Jamie Gregorio in memory of her mother, Lucy Jamie. Fr. Kiledjian helped the parish select a suitable instrument of the church: a technologically advanced Rodgers organ

see ORGAN, page 10



Diocesan Sacred Music Instructor Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan, and parishioners of Holy Martyrs Church (Bayside, NY) stand in the choir loft of the church sanctuary alongside their new Rodgers Organ, a gift of Juliet Gregorio in memory of her mother, Lucy Jamie. Pictured above (l-r): parish council chair Greg Saraydarian; choir members Robert Haroutunian, Anjel Tahmisyan, Hilda Sheshedian; Fr. Kiledjian; Fr. Malkhasyan; choir director Carol Loshigian, choir member Tamar Kayserian, and organist Maral Jamgochian. (Missing: choir director Ruthann Drewitz; organists Nevart Dadourian and Karen Smaldone.)

## Dutch-Armenian Gegard Mousasi Defends Bellator Middleweight Title

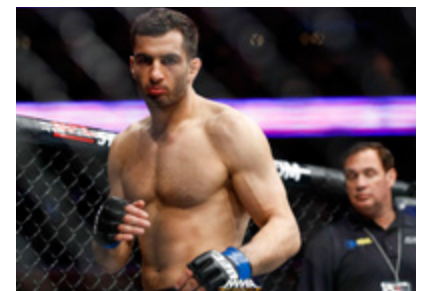
UNCASVILLE, Conn. (ESPN) —Dutch-Armenian mixed martial artist Gegard Mousasi’s near-perfect run as a Bellator MMA middleweight continued on Friday, August 13, as he defended his 185-pound (84 kg) championship against John Salter in Uncasville.

Mousasi (48-7-2) earned a TKO finish at 2:07 of the third round, via unanswered strikes on the ground. The 36-year-old veteran weathered an early, grappling-heavy approach from Salter (18-5) before dominating him from top position in the second and third rounds.

The middleweight fight headlined Bellator 264 inside Mohegan Sun Arena.

A former NAIA national wrestling champion, Salter went for broke in the opening round with takedown attempts. He did manage to get Mousasi down, but appeared to wear himself out in the process. Mousasi was clearly the fresher of the two after the opening five minutes, and easily imposed his will the rest of the way.

“I didn’t want to put myself at risk [in the first round],” Mousasi said. “We were still fresh, not slippery, not sweaty. I didn’t want to give him my back. I felt I was pushing his head down and I knew that conditioning was on my side. I’m stronger than people think. Maybe I look skinny,



Gegard Mousasi (photo courtesy of MMA Fighting)

but I’m a lot stronger physically. I just put my pressure on him and hurt him with punches.”

A former champion in multiple organizations, including Strikeforce, Mousasi has compiled a record of 6-1 since he signed with Bellator in 2017. Prior to his arrival in the Bellator cage, Mousasi was one of the top middleweights in the UFC, and was well on his way to earning a title shot in that promotion before accepting an offer with Bellator.

He is a two-time middleweight champion for Bellator. He won his first belt in 2018 and defended it once, before losing a grappling-heavy matchup to Rafael Lovato Jr. The Dutch champion reclaimed his title by defeating former welterweight champ Douglas Lima last October.

Mousasi expected to face undefeated No. 1 contender Austin Vanderford (11-0), who was in attendance, in his next defense.

“He’s a legend in the sport,” Vanderford said. “I thought he went in there and took care of business. I’m excited to get out there and test myself.”





COMMUNITY NEWS

St. Mark’s Annual Armenian Fest Returns; Features Authentic Armenian Cuisine, Music

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — St. Mark Armenian Church’s Annual Armenian Festival that has become a favorite in the Greater Springfield area will return to the church grounds on Sunday, September 5 from 12 noon to 5:30 p.m., 2427 Wilbraham Road in Springfield. The parish’s biggest event for over 25 years will feature delicious hot meals, a live Armenian band, dancing, authentic Armenian and International pastries, Armenian coffee, and more.

The St. Mark Armenian Festival draws hundreds of patrons from Springfield and surrounding suburbs that enjoy great food, entertainment and a wonderful social atmosphere. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the culture and enjoy all that is offered.

St. Mark’s parish priest, Father Nigoghos (Nicholas) Aznaviourian, will be giving tours of the church at the Festival, and will explain the Armenian Apostolic faith and its history for those interested in learning more.

This year, patrons can pre-order their favorite Armenian baked goods on the parish’s website, [stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://stmarkarmenianchurch.org), through August 25. Pre-ordered baked goods will be available to pick up on Fest day, and baked goods will also be available for sale at the bake table.



Scenes from picnics at St. Mark’s Armenian Church



A new treat that has become a festival favorite, Soorj, or Armenian coffee, will be available at this year’s Fest. The International booth will feature a variety of savory and sweet treats. There will also be a cultural booth. St. Mark’s very own instructional cooking DVD, featuring parishioners demonstrating how to make traditional Armenian delicacies, will also be available for purchase.

Last year, St. Mark held a drive-thru Fest-to-Go in lieu of their traditional festival due to COVID-19. The parish looks forward to being able to host members of the community on their church grounds once again.

All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. Sponsorship opportunities are also available, and donations can be made through the donate button on the church website, [stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://stmarkarmenianchurch.org). More information about the Fest can be found on the Facebook event page, on the church website, [stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://stmarkarmenianchurch.org).

Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (there will be plenty of seating under the tents). St. Mark is located at 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield.

St. Mark Armenian Church is located at 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield. For more information visit [www.stmarkarmenianchurch.org](http://www.stmarkarmenianchurch.org).

OBITUARY

Rose Krikorian  
Assistant to State Supreme Court Chief Justice

WATERTOWN — Rose Krikorian died peacefully at home at age 96 surrounded by her friends and dedicated caregivers on August 9, 2021.

She was the daughter of the late Panos and Arisdine Krikorian. She was predeceased by her brother, Harold, and her sister, Sybil.

Rose was born in Watertown and graduated from Watertown High School. For many years, she lived in Belmont with her

mother and sister, where her family hosted many dinner parties for her friends.

Rose was proud of her Armenian heritage. She and her family were benefactors and active members of St. Stephen’s Armenian Church in Watertown.

Rose spent her entire career in public service, first having served as an assistant to Elliott Richardson, then United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts and later the Attorney General of the United

States. She was also the executive assistant to the Honorable G. Joseph Tauro, Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts until Justice Tauro’s retirement.

From 1975, until her retirement in 1989, Rose served as the executive assistant to the Honorable Edward F. Hennessey, Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court. Rose was greatly admired and respected by the judges on the Supreme Judicial Court and was beloved by the many law clerks who served the court. The law clerks were her extended family. She never missed a law clerk’s reunion. Rose was known for her sophisticated style, humor and class.

On Rose’s retirement in 1989, *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* penned an editorial entitled, “A Rose By Any Other Name ....” It read, in part, “Many of us at the bar have known for years who really has been responsible for the smooth sailing of the ship of justice through the rough waters of the commonwealth. Rose. She efficiently and modestly guarded the door to the corner lobby for all those years and did so in such an effective manner that no one ever was offended and no one ever believed that the chief did not think his opinion was important enough to be heard.”



Funeral services were held at Saint Stephen’s Armenian Church, 38 Elton Avenue, Watertown on Wednesday, August 18. Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

# Giragosian

F UNERAL H OME

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Regional Experts Discuss Key Factors In 44-Day Catastrophe

APPEASEMENT, from page 7

security and economic interests and the current security crisis facing Armenia today. Gevorgyan pointed out that the Russia-propped security status quo was failing prior to the 44-day war — something that was further exposed during and after the fighting.

Armenia’s over-dependence on Russian security measures could be attributed to its miscalculated desire to appease Russia, often times sacrificing its own agency in the process, for fear of a Russian backlash that would threaten Armenia’s security and economic interests. While Gevorgyan noted that Armenia’s tendency to appease Russia has beyond a doubt contributed to the dire predicament the country faces today, she also underscored that Armenia has found itself on the wrong end of a shift in regional power dynamics.

Gevorgyan identified the 2008 Georgia war as a turning point in Russo-Azerbaijani relations, as Russia sought to cement its position and influence in the Caucasus. The shift in the power dynamics has also resulted in growing cooperation and an alignment of interests between Russia and Turkey in regards to Azerbaijan. Gevorgyan noted, “Russia is happy to deal with the West so long as the West is represented by Turkey... in the eyes of the Russians,

Turkey has become an independent player and it is so independent that it is ready to defy the US and NATO, it helps to keep the West at bay in regional conflicts”. Stronger bonds between Moscow and Baku should be of grave concern to Yerevan. This warming relationship emphasizes the importance of Armenia regaining its agency that it has surrendered to the Russians following years of diplomatic isolation and reducing an over-dependence on Russian preventative security measures that have failed to live up to Armenia’s expectations.

Kharazian elaborated on Armenia’s urgent need to regain its agency and described how the country found itself in this precarious position. Kharazian touched upon countless missed opportunities that would have helped Armenia build up independent capacity, as well as failed policy choices that deprived it of one, such as handing over secure government telecommunications to the Russians in the mid-to-late 1990s. Kharazian stated, “We gave up incremental parts of our agency and core competences. We gave into Russian pressure to not build an Iran Armenia gas pipeline with a large enough diameter that would have served a regional purpose, we surrendered ownership and management of the nuclear power plant, declined multiple opportunities from international partners,

particularly the US, to build a new nuclear power plant, Armenia rejected opportunities to partner with Western companies like Cisco who wanted to help Armenia establish secure communication and networks etc. ..., any reasonable country would have seized on these opportunities but we didn’t because we didn’t want to get the Russians mad and face repercussions from them, so we pleased them by giving them our agency and the Russians were complicit in helping the Azeris take Artsakh.”

Kharazian also blamed Armenia’s diplomatic isolation and its failure to build an equitable relationship with the West as a driving force behind the lack of support Armenia received from Western powers in the 2020 Artsakh War; he pointed out that Armenia even failed to request military assistance from the West during the war. This is consistent with Armenia’s track record of denying itself the critical capacity required to build agency.

Kharazian added valuable insight on how Armenia might go about regaining its agency, he stated that, “If we are to get out of this situation Armenians need access to knowledge and modern technology not found in Russia, but in the West. Armenia continues to rely on a flawed understanding that if it keeps pleasing Russia it will be able to rescue what it wasn’t forced to give away as

a result of the war, but the reality is it will have to surrender what it still has if we continue with the same flawed strategy.”

Gevorgyan and Kharazian will expand on this discussion in a follow-up event, “Part II: Crisis in Armenia’s Russia-Only Security Doctrine.” The event will take place on Wednesday, August 25 at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) on Zoom and will be broadcast on YouTube. Topics to be discussed include Key Armenia-Russia security, defense and border protection treaties; collective security arrangements under Russia-led military bloc CSTO; the application of Armenia-Russia security treaties during the 44-Day War; consequences of the 2016 transfer of air defense capabilities to Russia; Armenia-Russia border protections treaties and Azerbaijan’s creeping annexation of Armenian territories; Armenia’s future under the “Russia-centered” security doctrine and finally what can be done to mitigate current risks and manage future crises

To register on Zoom for Part II: Crisis in Armenia’s Russia-Only Security Doctrine with regional experts Gevorgyan and Kharazian, go to <https://bit.ly/Diverging-Interests-Part2>. To watch live on YouTube, go to <https://bit.ly/StLeonEvents> at 7:30 PM ET on August 25. For more information, contact Ara Araz at [ara@edrcorp](mailto:ara@edrcorp).

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New RI Law Creates Holocaust and Genocide Education Commission

EDUCATION, from page 1

and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information, work with the Department of Education to update and promote statewide Holocaust and genocide education programs, and promote public awareness of issues relating to Holocaust and genocide education.

“As hate crimes have been rising in our own country over the last few years, it’s particularly important that students are taught about the catastrophic atrocities that have been committed when the seeds of hate are planted,” said Representative Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence), who cosponsored this bill. All eight of her great-grandparents are survivors of the Armenian genocide. “My family’s own history involving the Armenian genocide has shown me that these events in history should never be forgotten. It is important that our children recognize and understand how such terrible events can occur in society, and more importantly, how to stop them from happening.”

Sen. Thomas J. Paolino (R-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield), a cosponsor of the Senate legislation, also lost family in the Armenian genocide.

“My relatives have a keen understanding of how hate and bigotry can escalate to reverberate through generations,” Senator Paolino said. “It is important that we educate society on the warning signs of genocide. Learning the history about these atrocities and how to prevent them will best protect our future.”

Rep. Nathan W. Biah Sr. (D-Dist. 3, Providence), who fled Liberia in 1991 at age 20 to escape a war in which genocide occurred, is also a cosponsor.

“I have experienced the horrors of genocide firsthand. It’s a very tragic fact that genocide continues around the world today. Our students are citizens of the world, and need to understand the impacts of genocide on their brothers and sisters wherever it occurs,” said Biah.



## COMMUNITY NEWS



**Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.**

## Dr. Nubar Berberian 2021 Annual Awards



Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 15, 2021**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2021** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2021**.
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 15, 2021

### A Master Class in Music

ORGAN, from page 7

in the company's "Inspire" series, with a wide array of sounds options, volume controls, recording and playback features.

"It creates a depth of sound that powerfully reverberates through the entire space

of the church," said Maral Jamgochian. "It's a beautiful enhancement to our celebration of badarak and our spiritual life."

As the Eastern Diocese's Sacred Music Instructor, Fr. Kiledjian welcomes all manner of inquiries about Armenian Church music. Contact him via email at [frmami-gon@armeniandiocese.org](mailto:frmami-gon@armeniandiocese.org).

## Portantino: 'I Am Proud Of My Friendship with the Armenian Community'

FRIENDSHIP, from page 1

knew about the Near East Relief and the Armenian Genocide and she passed all her knowledge to Anthony as well as about New Jersey native son President Woodrow Wilson.

He carried all these memories with him when he moved to California in 1999 and was elected to the La Canada City Council. After that, one thing led to another. He was invited to a Genocide commemoration event at the Sisters' Academy, a private Armenian school in Glendale. Some of the Armenian community members at the event were from New Jersey. "That's how I started to get involved in the community. One relationship led to another. Arda, who works for me now, I met her father at that meeting. It's been a wonderful relationship; people say welcome, you say welcome back!" Portantino said.

Portantino represents California's 25<sup>th</sup> State District starting 2016 after winning the race against Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich. Public education, mental health and gun control are the priorities that his office has been focusing on for years.

Along with hosting the Armenian Select Committee in his district, Portantino supported the Armenian community through various legislations, securing funds and assistance, condemning violence and spreading the awareness about the Armenian Genocide. On June 1 Senator Portantino signed a memorandum of Understanding with the Governor's office and Impact Hub Armenian Social Innovation Development

Nikol Pashinyan, in a context formalizing a "positive economic relationship." When asked about his comment and whether he still thinks the same way considering the latest developments, Portantino answered diplomatically.

"War is the worst thing that can happen to a people. I don't think anybody hasn't been deeply affected by that. But as you and I walked around GiniFest [Portantino was referring to the Armenian Wine and Spirits Festival on July 25] to see the entrepreneurs, the Armenian businesses both-based in Armenia and here in California, I think on that economic vitality there is a sense that everyone has to help the Armenian economy. I think there is continued to be that endearment."

Portantino has been invited to and visited Armenia and Artsakh three times. "I've loved it, from the food to the people! It breaks my heart what happened in Artsakh," he said.

He remembers when the last time he was in Shushi with the Glendale City Councilmember Ardy Kassakhian and the High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs of Armenia Zareh Sinanyan. They "crashed" a wedding at the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, met with the bride and groom and took pictures with them. "And to think that that cathedral is now desecrated, it breaks my heart," Portantino added with noticeable sadness.

In 25<sup>th</sup> Senate office's five employees are Armenian. "Beyroutsy, Hayastanci and Bolsahay," Portantino said, proudly using the Armenian he learned at the Glendale



The shelf with all Armenian and Armenia related stuff at the district office of the Senator Portantino

Foundation to establish a Trade and Services Desk in Armenia.

"Coming out of what happened in Armenia (Senator is adamant to use the Armenian name Hayastan) for the last four years both politically and also with the war, it's important that California and Armenia have a good partnership. There is a mutual benefit: we share democracy, we have nearly a million of citizens of Armenian heritage in California, so many of our business leaders have businesses there and here." Senator calls it symbolic and also a complimentary relationship.

Portantino was one of many who embraced the new government in Armenia in 2018. He commented earlier about "excitement" and "optimism" in Armenia under the leadership of the Prime Minister

Community College by taking special classes for non-Armenians. How did it happen? "I hire talented people," he said.

On a more technical note, he underlined the importance of having Western and Eastern Armenian speakers in the office. "That's the single biggest piece of the puzzle, to make sure that we speak both dialects while working with Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora," added the senator.

Friendship with Armenians certainly couldn't avoid one of the most important components: food!

"I eat all the food from hummus to Khinkali!" exclaimed Portantino, "Friday night I am going to eat at Raffi's, I've done take-outs from Khinkaly [House], and I love the lentil soup at Carousel," he said.

*continued on next page*





COMMUNITY NEWS



The Karbi Tekeyan School with a statue of Vahan Tekeyan

Sirop and Maro Bedrosian Support Renovation of Tekeyan School Cultural Hall in Karbi, Armenia

KARBI, Armenia — The Vahan Tekeyan School of Karbi, Armenia, is in the process of renovating its cultural hall, where students present their educational knowledge throughout the year to their parents and relatives, as well as the population of the village. This is the only cultural hall in this village, where the inhabitants primari-



The plaque at the Karbi Tekeyan School stating Tekeyan Cultural Association Sirop and Maro Bedrosian Hall

ly work in agriculture. Sirop and Maro Bedrosian of Houston, Texas, decided recently to support the renovation of this essential hall once again. They are purchasing 120 new chairs for it as well as sponsoring its renovation. In 2004, the school, located in Aragatsotn District, named its cultural hall after the couple when they made



2021 graduates of the Vahan Tekeyan School of Karbi, Armenia

a similar gesture of renovating the hall and buying new chairs. Maro Bedrosian not only serves as treasurer for the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA), but also has been the project director since its inception in 2001 of the TCA Sponsor a Teacher program, which supports the teachers and staff of four Tekeyan Schools in Armenia, plus a fifth school in Berdzor, Artsakh, which fell to Azerbaijani forces during the recent 44-day Artsakh war. This program provides extra incentive to educators to not emigrate and continue in their jobs despite difficult economic circumstances.

from previous page

He added he thought it was important that he is willing to learn everything about the Armenian community. And the community never ceases to teach him back. “Let me show you something,” he said, inviting this writer to approach the special shelves in the office where everything is about Armenians: on the top shelf is a photo of the Genocide monument in Yerevan, in front of it there is the symbolic art work of Mount Ararat. He then shows the sign of the Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial and a white cap with a picture of Pope Francis from his visit to Armenia in 2016. “I was there, you know,” he said, and moved to the other room where the collection of photos shows his travel to Armenia and Artsakh, and his participation in Armenian events. He then speaks about the renaming of Maryland Street in Glendale to Artsakh

Street, which triggered many non-Armenian Glendalians to express their anger through social media, newspapers and any other outlets they could find. Almost the same mood prevailed after the groundbreaking ceremony of the Armenian American Museum in downtown Glendale. Portantino said he found the roots of this kind of predisposition even deeper. “For the last four years we had a leader in the White House who was very polarizing, who legitimized hate speech and demonized people. The impact that the Trump administration has had on the rhetoric has been poisonous. The demonization of the immigrants started in the White House,” he noted. Portantino is confident that the remedy to confront the “top down anger” is to be a “good neighbor”. “I am proud of my friendship with the Armenian community,” Senator adds, “That’s part of who I am.”



Photos of the Senator featuring his work with the Armenian community

Dr. Nerses Kopalyan To Discuss Armenia’s ‘Democratic Resilience Amidst Security Crisis’

FRESNO — Political scientist Dr. Nerses Kopalyan will speak on “Democratic Resilience Amidst Security Crisis: Armenia’s Political Climate after the 2020 Artsakh War” at 7 p.m. (Pacific time)/10 p.m. (Eastern time) on Thursday, September 2. The presentation is the first of the Fall 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and will be an online presentation. The consequences of the 2020 Artsakh War produced two expansive modes of crises in Armenia, one specific to the country’s security architecture, and the other specific to domestic political stability. The latter was primarily resolved through the 2021 snap Parliamentary elections, as the incumbent party in power, led by acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, dominated the electoral field and secured, to the surprise of many, a parliamentary majority. What accounts for the electoral success of Prime Minister Pashinyan’s Civic Contract Party, considering the security and political crisis that matured under the tenure of the Pashinyan administration, and how did a Prime Minister, whose Government lost a war and a faced formidable and well-financed opposition, manage such an electoral success? Utilizing polling data conducted prior to the elections, including disaggregated data on regional voter outcomes, as well as conceptual models borrowed from the political culture literature, a multi-tiered explanatory framework will be provided that addresses these salient issues. Further, the current consolidation of political power by the Pashinyan administration will be assessed through the lens of Armenia’s continued security crises that is being perpetuated by Azerbaijan’s irredentist policies. Kopalyan is an assistant professor-in-residence of political science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His fields of specialization include international relations, geopolitics, political theory, and philosophy of science and he has conducted extensive research on polarity, super-power relations, and security studies. He is the author of *World Political Systems After Polarity* (Routledge, 2017), the co-author of *Sex, Power, And Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and co-author of *Latinos in Nevada: A Political, Social, and Economic Profile* (2021, Nevada University Press). His current research concentrates on geopolitical and great power relations with an emphasis on Eurasia. He has done extensive work on political developments in Armenia prior and subsequent to the Velvet Revolution, has authored several policy papers for the government of Armenia, and has served as an advisor to the government. Most recently, he undertook a polling project in Armenia, conducting a pre-election survey on the 2021 Parliamentary snap elections. The Zoom Registration Link is: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudieskopalyan> For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



Dr. Nerses Kopalyan





# Arts & Culture

## Documentarian Sophie Chahinian Is Making A Film About Robert Longo and Spending Time by the Pool

NEW YORK (Artnet) — Sophie Chahinian, a filmmaker and the founder of the Artist Profile Archive, which produces documentaries on contemporary artists for museums and galleries (David Salle and Marnie Weber have been among the subjects), has the kind of art-filled abode many of us dream of. And what better place to spend time than in a well-appointed home?

We caught up with Chahinian about how she spends her relaxation time, what she’s working on next, and what she’s always got the fridge stocked with.

**What are you working on now?**  
I am the founder of the Artist Profile Archive, a multi-media platform that produces short documentaries on contemporary artists. We just launched a new video on Modernist Virginia Jaramillo for her first solo museum exhibition at the Menil Collection in Houston. I’m also working on new short films on Marnie Weber and Alexandra Grant, as well as a longer format documentary on Robert Longo to accompany his exhibition “A History of the Present” opening at East Hampton’s Guild Hall on August 7.

**It’s Friday night and your favorite restaurant is packed. What’s your backup plan?**

Takeout from 1770 House in East Hampton. You might think as a fine dining option they don’t do takeout, but they do, and it’s fantastic. The chilled pea soup is perfect on a warm summer night and their burgers are the best in town.

**It’s Sunday and your calendar is completely clear. How do you spend your morning?**

Tennis and then lounging over iced coffee by the pool with my partner in ALL: art, love, and life. To me, there’s no better way to refresh and recharge before the week ahead.

**You’re on a desert island and you can only stream one TV series. What do you choose?**

I could watch forever The Planet Earth series by Sir David Attenborough. It is so beautifully shot and so educational, reminding us that our natural surroundings are an endless source of fascination and inspiration.

**What is your favorite part of your house and why?**

Our living and dining room is a light, bright and airy space where we hang most of our art, which is all by artists known to us. One of the best parts of running the Artist Profile Archive is building relationships with so many incredible artists, like Robert Longo, Shirin Neshat, and many more. I feel so lucky to get to wake up to such beautiful works each and every day.

**What three things is your kitchen always stocked with?**

A myriad of cold brew coffee options, Iacono Farm eggs, and a bottle of Billecart-Salmon rosé champagne. I can’t wake up without coffee, an omelet makes an easy meal in a pinch see DOCUMENTARY, page 14



Photography by Sara Barcaroli for Sehnsucht Atelier Fucina Series

## Aline Derderian ‘Defining My Roots Is Both Simple And Difficult’

**By Artsvi Bakhchinyan**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN/PARIS — Dancer and choreographer Aline Derderian was born in Marseille. Graduating with a BA (with honors) in performance design and practice from the Central Saint Martins University of the Arts in London, Derderian spent a year in Paris studying dance. In 2016, she received the Leverhulme Grant for the Arts enabling her to pursue her path for an MFA in the choreography program at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Many trips to the United States and Armenia created a vivid wish to connect her performance art background, Armenian roots and postmodern dance influences in order to develop a choreographic process that questions and challenges the archetypal female dancing body as a catalyst for contemporary feminine performance writing and cultural survival.

Currently on her third year of a PhD thesis at Rennes 2 University supervised by Marie-Noëlle Semet-Haviaras, Derderian is exploring innovative ways to envision a feminist historiography of dance through the lens of postmodern choreographer Anna Halprin, Southern California feminist activist performance art pedagogy, and Armenian female artists in diaspora.

An associate lecturer at Central Saint Martins from 2016 to 2020, Derderian taught as an associate lecturer/tutor in set design for dance and choreography at the occasion of modules such as Dance Lab or Design for Dance in collaboration with Rambert School of Contemporary Dance & Ballet, Central School of Ballet and London Studio Centre. Aline currently choreographs, dances and performs with the company Consensus & Aline Derderian, she founded in 2014 and teaches choreography on the Fine Arts department of Rennes 2 University. Dance works include performances for Bouchra Ouizguen, Mette Sterre, Anatalovi Vlassov, Scatter Dance Company, Dimitra Petsa and Corinne Lansell, among others.

**Aline, you both dance and direct, also design costumes for your choreography. This is something that female dancers often do. Have you ever heard about a male dancer who designs his own stage costumes?**

Absolutely. When entering Central Saint Martins’ Performance: Design & Practice BA course, I had the chance to be immersed in an environment where the majority of students shared a common interest in both set design/costume making and performing arts regardless of our gender. For my peers and I the creation of a choreographic piece and its efficacy always relied in how these design factors interacted with our dances

*continued on next page*

## An Armenian Triptych Retraces The Past — a Nostalgic Look at The Genocide and Family History

**By Christopher Atamian**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

NEW YORK — This second experimental video collaboration among artists Aram Bajakian, Kevork Mourad and Alan Semerdjian comprises a poem by Semerdjian titled “Writing about It Again” about his grandfather, while Mourad deftly sketches in pencil drawings about the Armenian past, set to an original haunting musical composition by Bajakian.

All three parts of this triptych were composed independently and meant to carry equal weight.

As Semerdjian narrates his poem, the video shows Mourad creating scenes that are erased and recreated in order to illustrate the history of the Armenian Genocide, which affected the families of all three artists.

The trio first collaborated in 2020 on another historically-based work titled “Grandchildren of Genocide,” a composition by Semerdjian and Bajakian, titled “The Serpent and The Crane” and cover art by Mourad.

A once-in-a-lifetime event ensued as the album and video garnered hundreds of thousands of views/plays when Kim Kardashian and Serj Tankian both tweeted about it to their fans. Here in this second, ten-minute



Kevork Mourad by Sterling Batson

work, family history and personal biography intersect in both obvious and subtle ways.

There’s talent here in droves, mind you. Bajakian is a guitarist and composer who has toured with the likes of Lou Reed and Diana Krall. Mourad is a performance/visual artist and member of the famed The Silk Road Ensemble, while Semerdjian is an award-winning writer, musician, and educator. The present collaboration is inspired in equal parts by German writer Heinrich Boll’s notion that “the artist carries death with him like a good priest his breviary,” by Armenian Genocide recognition, and see TRIPTYCH, page 15





from previous page

and the dancers' physicality. Saul Nash, Londoner break-dancer and choreographer for example, ended up joining a fashion course that allowed him to mix his performing background to his menswear fashion interests. He now owns his own brand, SSAN, and gets to choreograph the presentations of his collections.

**Jasper Winn says that dancing is all about wordless communication. But oral speech seems to be often present in your work. When does body language become not enough?**

I am all up for multisensorial works. Therefore, I believe that oral speech can be very effective in adding up layers to the wordless content of a piece, or in adding up elements that the body does not say. In "Jacket of Memories (Or how to hold the dulcimer)," Jean Ritchie's voice over teaches how to play the dulcimer referring to technical words about the body parts solicited such as how to seat or use our fingers. Spectators find themselves confused between what the dance is trying to communicate and what they are hearing which I believe creates a surreal grid of lecture depending on what aspects of the piece you are focusing on while watching. To me, the use of verbal elements can be as essential as the design, they can equally structure the trajectory of the dance both for the performers and the audience. In *Kanayk*, the Armenian phrase that is being shout, works more as a feminist manifesto that contrasts with the extremely slow pace of the piece.

**Few dancers combine theory and practice. What are your main interests in choreology?**

Dance theory helped me to better understand what it is that I wanted to say through my choreographic practice. My mainly British academic experience in the arts trained me to understand research as a support to articulate a performing practice that is theoretically rooted. This drove me to push the main features of my pieces further and most importantly, to be able to address these same topics to a universal audience. I do not want to create work that only matters to me, or my collaborators. If someone tells me after a show that the complexity of the subject took over the poetic it aimed to convey, I instantly question how I could have been more direct without losing the essence of the idea I wanted to express. That is when theory comes into play and supports in again contextualizing your concerns in a wider range of passed works, historical facts, sociologic issues ...

**My impression is you offer gender and identity issues in your work. For instance, in "Jacket of Memories (Or how to hold the dulcimer)" a male dancer wears an Armenian headdress and plaits. It is beautiful, but how is this justified?**

Throughout my MFA research and currently with my PhD thesis, I am looking at how in the late 1960s American women artists-teachers developed pedagogic tools for young female art students to express their femininity and issues through creative practices. In "Jacket of Memories (Or how to hold the dulcimer)," I was very much interested in questioning how what you wear as well as when and where, affects your everyday physicality. Putting that reflection in mirror to the gendered codification of folk dances made me want to explore whether this worked both ways. As in, can the dance and its interprets affect what their costumes and in the case of Armenian headdress and plaits suggest, in terms of cultural traditions and collective imagery.

**Some your projects have Armenian titles, for instance, "Karmir arev" (Red**

**Sun) or "Kanayk" (Women). How much your Armenian inspirations and heritage shape your artistic image?**

My Armenian heritage has a major impact on what I guess can be defined as my artistic aesthetic. It started quite early on at Central Saint Martins, while creating "L'antigonie" and sort of increased since. I am yet not entirely sure whether my social and cultural concerns influenced that fact but it definitely became conscious while studying at Trinity Laban where Tony Thatcher, my research supervisor, subtly made me realize how present it was in what I was saying, the way I looked, my influences and what I was choreographically experimenting with at the time.

**Your choreographic tribute to "The Prophetess by Anna Halprin," the recently-deceased American postmodern choreographer, is entitled "Hayastan Dancer. But we hear an Armenian song at the end, while most of the choreography reminds one of the movements of whirling dervishes. So where is Hayastan?"**

This tribute to Anna Halprin was made while looking at how can a dance heritage

clear that it was not a trial to recreate a piece I missed fragments of, but a result of what I have imagined could be the content of that solo filled with my own imagery, references and beliefs.

**Last year you organized a digital colloquium entitled "Dancing Beyond Memories: Armenian Women, Cultural Heritage and Corporeality (South Caucasian approaches creative practices)." How did it go?**

The colloquium was a very long process. It was intended to take place at the University of Chicago Center in Paris who supported my project, mixing performances, film screening and research communications. The sanitary crisis made us decide to go for a digital format that eventually gave us the opportunity to gather panelists from Armenian heritage or with an interest in Armenianness across six different time zones. This would have otherwise been impossible. I was so moved by the quality and generosity of the artists, scholars as well as the coordinating team. This event gave us the chance to reflect on the differences and similarities between diasporic and extra-western artistic problematics whilst celebrating Armenian

course leaders when I moved to London, and these people became a sort of artistic family whom I am still in touch with and that I can reach out to whenever I need advice or expertise.

**You once wrote: "I now believe in the idea that we as people cannot contrive our true essence or fragility: they are both things you cannot learn: the roots." Please tell us about your roots.**

I was born in Aubagne (southern France) to an Armenian father and a French mother. I have always been very attached to the Armenian side of my family spread across France, Armenia and California. France to me is very much connected to childhood. Defining my roots is both simple and difficult since I believe that the family you belong to and the one you choose are key to whatever you decide to undertake and the choices you make. When my grandfather Kevork passed away 10 years ago, I felt he left me without knowing everything I should and this sort of created my wish to deepen up my understanding of Armenianness. On the other hand, spending 10 years of my life in the United Kingdom had most definitely influenced me in numerous



Jacket of memories (or how to hold the dulcimer) (2017), photography by Izzie Capper

be celebrated without visual traces of the original work. "The Prophetess" is one of Halprin's first solos she created in 1947 on a music by Alan Hovhaness, "Mihir" (Ancient Armenian Fire God). It only has a few pictures and a 30-second footage shown in Ruedi Gerber's biopic "Breath Made Visible" as visual documentation. These resources actually show her performing a whirling Sufi dance that encapsulates her wish to connect the sacred and the earth through movement. Also this particular technic resonates in me, and my dance in many ways. Halprin explained on numerous occasions how spirituality was at the core of her practice and how the memories of watching her grandfather at the synagogue inspired her to become a dancer. My tribute was performed with a particular interview she gave about faith, what it meant to her and how this intertwined with her art as a soundscape mixed with Hovhaness's piano. I gave it the title "Hayastan Dancer" for that; the solo concluded a bigger project that was "Karmir Arév (Or the sun reddens at night)" and that had to do with Armenianness and identity quest. I wanted to make

historical, literary, artistic references that inspired some of our works. I was and still am very much attached to the fact that this colloquium could be the starting point for a female collective bridging choreographers, dancers, artists and theorists around the topics of South Caucasian heritage, corporeality and the different ways these parameters can be addressed through visual and performing arts.

**Becoming a dancer and musician is often a family tradition. Does this apply to you?**

Absolutely not. None of my parents, grandparents or siblings has anything to do with an artistic field. It is going to sound tacky, though I strongly believe that this has forced me to work as hard as I could to fight for my dreams. For example, I understood very early on that I was going to have to move from Marseilles after my A-levels if I wanted to open up professional perspectives, as the city did not offer much opportunities culturally speaking back in the days. I also was very lucky to cross path with amazingly inspiring lecturers and

ways either artistically, culturally and as a mixed-heritage woman.

**Always being inspired by your Armenian heritage, I think it is time to initiate a project in Armenia, where we have a proper soil for innovative choreography.**

I actually did in October 2015, on the occasion of the Yerevan Performing High Fest. We were performing "L'antigonie" with Consensus at the National Chamber State Theatre. I got to spend several weeks in the city and this only made me want to come back as soon as possible and create site specific work. It also was the idea behind the wish to connect with Armenian artists and scholars while curating Dancing Beyond Memories colloquium last year. I digitally met Hasmik Tangyan who played an essential role in introducing me to other choreographers and I am forever thankful we managed to make this happen despite the sanitary situation. So I would most definitely love to initiate a creative project in Armenia and everything seems to point in that direction for the next two coming years, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed.



ARTS & CULTURE

Two World Premieres by Composer Hayg Boyadjian Performed in Argentina

ROSARIO, Argentina — On August 7, the Rosario Chamber Ensemble of Rosario, Argentina University presented, under the direction of Marisol Gentile, a virtual concert with no audience due to the critical pandemic condition in Argentina. The concert is available on YouTube and other internet outlets.

The ensemble is dedicated to performing modern compositions, especially of living composers.

The August 7 concert included three works by Grammy nominee composer



Hayg Boyadjian of Lexington, Mass. Two chamber compositions received their world premiere and were written for the Rosario ensemble, *Reflections* for flute, clarinet, bassoon, guitar, violin, viola, cello, and double bass and *Mysterium* for flute, clarinet, bassoon, violin, viola cello, and double bass. Also on the program was Boyadjian’s *Cancion de Cuna* (Lullaby) for guitar solo. The concert included also works by Douglas DaSilva’s (New York) *Feliz Cumpleaño 2021* and *El Tragico Regreso a la Milonga*; Leandro Ariel Mantinan (Buenos Aires) *Tres Ragas Op. 49 b* and Marisol Gentile’s (Argentina) *Ginei* and *Carpi*.

Boyadjian has written about his compositions the following, “the music of *Mysterium* (Mystery) is mostly concentrated in the low register of the of the seven instruments that often play long held notes giving a sense of suspension, it is a piece that deals mostly with somber moods. *Reflections*, by contrast, is a piece that moves at a faster pace, the set of notes or chords, as the tile says, are reflections of each other, as examples, a high note or notes, a chord or chords get reflected in a low notes or chords, like two balls bouncing in opposite direction.

“A note or notes, a chord or chords become reflected like on a mirror. Like two balls, one goes up while the other comes down. Having eight instruments bouncing notes or chords at different speeds or intervals the piece receives an animated or almost chaotic end result. But at the end of the piece the eight instruments agree in short staccato chords to join together and leave the mirror out of the picture.”



Documentarian Sophie Chahinian Is Making a Film about Robert Longo and Spending Time by the Pool

DOCUMENTARY, from page 12 (Iacono Farm in East Hampton has the freshest eggs ever), and you never know when you might have an occasion to celebrate!

**The art world can be all-consuming. How do you create boundaries for yourself?**

By delegating to the A-Team: Matt Hindra and the wider team we work with at the Artist Profile Archive. We’re so passionate about what we do and are communicating constantly but also know that rest is essential to fueling our own creativity.

**What’s your favorite work of art in the house and why?**

All of the art in our house is my favorite! But right now, I really am loving “Parrots” (2020) a sublime work by Austin-based artist Troy Brauntuch, whose artist profile we’re hoping to launch later this year. We also have an exquisite assemblage “Prone” (2020) by Sheree Hovsepien. They are on either side of a door and they complement each other very well in terms of how simply gorgeous and ethereal they are. Getting to



Artist Sophie Chahinian (Photo by Robert Longo. Courtesy the Artist Profile Archive.)

know both of the artists through the Archive just adds to the feeling I get when I engage with their works at home.

**What’s the best advice you’ve ever received? And the worst?**

The best advice I’ve received is, just because something isn’t happening on your timetable doesn’t mean it’s not going to

happen” — which is a longwinded way of saying never give up. And the worst is, if you don’t know how you’re going to monetize something, don’t even get started. Paths have an organic way of revealing themselves if you are committed and have passion for what you do.

**What’s the best change in habit you’ve**

**acquired over the past year? What’s the worst?**

The best change is that I now actually use my home office to work (mostly at night and when it rains), and the worst is that I work too much from the kitchen island, completely taking it over — mostly because it has a view of the garden.

**Senekerim Khederian**

***A Brief History of Nirze Village of Gesaria***

translated from Armenian with annotations and introduction by

**Gerard J. Libaridian**

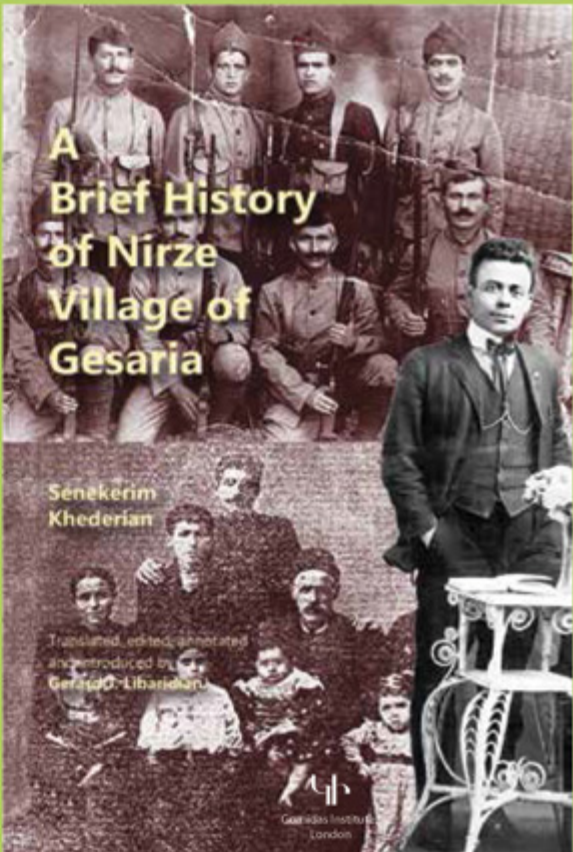
(London : Gomidas Institute, 2021), xiv + 90 pp., map, photos, tables, ISBN 978-1-909382-66-4, pb., UK£16.00/US\$22.00

This work is the first Armenian compatriotic study that records the life of an Armenian community as a memorial to its existence in the wake of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. It was written in 1917 and published in 1918 when the destruction of Armenians was still in progress. It captures this critical, uncertain moment in Armenian history, as it relates what had been the life of Armenians in Nirze, in the Gesaria [Kayseri] plain of the Ottoman Empire. A significant part of the work focuses on the emigration of Armenians from Nirze to the United States, where the author, Senekerim Khederian, resided when writing this book.

*A Brief History of Nirze Village in Gesaria* (Համառոտ պատմություն Կեսարիոյ Նիրզէ գիւղի) has been expertly translated from the original Armenian and introduced with a critical introduction by Gerard J. Libaridian.

**GOMIDAS INSTITUTE**

**NEW PUBLICATION**



**A Brief History of Nirze Village of Gesaria**

Senekerim Khederian

Translated, edited, annotated and introduced by Gerard J. Libaridian

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# An Armenian Triptych Retraces The Past — a Nostalgic Look at The Genocide and Family History

TRIPTYCH, from page 12

by 2020's Forty-Four Day War in Artsakh. This work seems somehow more personal than its predecessor, describing both the general memory and erasure of the genocide and its many orphans/victims, and more specifically Semerdjian's family. Topics include the historical towns that the poet has not yet visited, marches that he imagines but cannot quite fathom, as well as the long process of cataloguing his grandfather's many paintings. At one



Alan Semerdjian by Luke DeLalio

point, the narrator says "I know it seems old-fashioned": and indeed this is well-trod territory. But the approach here is different. Mourad's delicate pencils and Bajakian's sensitive slightly off-key musical composition combine to create an oddly compelling and highly artful piece. Close your eyes for a bit and simply listen, and the mesmerizing quality of the composition and Semerdjian's deeply felt verse sinks into you. For Semerdjian truth — or the lack of it — is the central issue to understanding past and present both: "Sorry, indecipherable code. Oh truth, where is your hide? Why must we seek you in the debris?" The poem decries the past while describing one man's longing to understand what his grandparents experienced in 1915 during the deportations — and how his grandfather in particular was able to recover from such a tragedy. Meanwhile Mourad

sketches an original, historical Armenian door, which serves as an entry point into Semerdjian's memory of his grandfather, as well as into Armenian memory in general. An Armenian manuscript — a traditional symbol of the culture is included as a symbol that crosses time and place both.

Like many works that deal with the issues at hand, An Armenian Triptych is almost by necessity nostalgic. As the cultural theorist Svetlana Boym has pointed out nostalgia involves a relationship between personal memory and collective history. One might argue that the Armenian gaze itself is inherently nostalgic — it not only takes in the genocidal event (and attendant intergenerational trauma), but also looks back to an imagined past or Golden Age

of Armenian existence. In its most acute (nationalistic) form it dreams of a new "restored" Greater Armenia. In its more benign form it wallows in the longing for this past — the diasporan in Glendale or Paris who recreates a culture that is a kind of projected common phantasm or dream. "Restorative nostalgia," writes Boym "stresses *nóstos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives in *álgos*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming — wistfully, ironically, desperately. Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity (while) restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking

are not opposed to one another, just as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection."

I would argue that "An Armenian Triptych" represents a most compelling version of reflective nostalgia. It posits both a deep love and reverence for Armenian culture, while realizing from the start in the poem title that this respect for the artists' shared Armenian past is inherently nostalgic. Or



Aram Bajakian by Emma Joelle

as Aleksandr Stevic concludes in his essay Intimations of the Holocaust from the Recollections of Early Childhood: "Nostalgia, in other words, serves not only as a mechanism for working through traumatic memories, but as a catalyst for a critical examination of the past." A critical examination of the past and here, one that also open new avenues — artistic or otherwise — for others to follow.

Armenian Mirror-Spectator readers can view the video for free until August 31, 2021 at: <https://vimeo.com/407827624> and listen to a discussion of a private screening with the artists through The Armenian Institute of London at <https://www.armenianinstitute.org.uk/news-text/armenian-triptych>.

## CALENDAR

### ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

#### MASSACHUSETTS

The Armenian Heritage Park is hosting a series of events this summer.

**August 22 at 7:30pm UNDER THE BLUE MOON Meet & Greet Enjoy Black Sea Salsa Combo** RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**September 9 at 10am CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US! All About Grains, virtually with Oldways** RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**September 19 at 2pm SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARK! Meet & Greet Enjoy Hye Guys Ensemble** RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**AUGUST 21-22 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic Two Day Event. Saturday 12 – 5 pm and Sunday 12-5 pm. Live music on Sunday with the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh & Chicken Kebab, Kheyma, Pastries and Beverages. Cash raffles and cooking demonstrations for Armenian Lavash & Jingalov Hatz. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. For more info visit [www.hypointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hypointearmenianchurch.org) or call (978) 372-9227. 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill**

#### NEW JERSEY

**AUGUST 22 — Ardashad Tahlj and Shooshanig Otyag of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan (Philadelphia Chapters) annual TAVLOO TOURNAMENT AND PICNIC on Sunday, 3 to 6 p.m., Battlefield Park, 100 Hessian Avenue, National Park, New Jersey 08063. Cost is \$15 (kids under 12 free) – register through our secured PayPal account: PHILLYKOV5 @ GMAIL.COM or contact Gerald Najarian ([najarian@remgrp.com](mailto:najarian@remgrp.com) 609-933-3990) or Gabrielle Meranshian ([gabriellemeranshian@gmail.com](mailto:gabriellemeranshian@gmail.com) 856-725-2260). Battlefield Park is a beautiful waterfront park with walking trails and playgrounds for the children. This event helps us publicize our charitable and service endeavors in the local and national Armenian communities.**

**NOVEMBER 13 — Save the Date: Saturday. 12 Vocations, Fulfilling the Promise of St. Nersess Seminary. Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and the vocations of the first 12 priests who graduated from St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries and were ordained. This is the first in a series of events to recognize the alumni of St. Nersess, both ordained and lay, who are in service to the Armenian Church, in any capacity. The celebratory dinner will be held at the Old Tappan Manor in Old Tappan, N.J. For more info, go to [www.stnersess.edu](http://www.stnersess.edu).**

#### RHODE ISLAND

**AUGUST 21 — Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson St, Providence, ARMENIAN FESTIVAL "Picnic" 12:00 – 6:00 pm Featuring: The Mugrditchian Band, Greg Krikorian - Oud and vocals, Kevin Magarian - Guitar and vocals, Arthur Chingris – Dumbek, Special Guest Artist: Mal Barsamian on Clarinet, Live Music, Dancing and Delicious Foods. Performance by the Nazali Dance Group, Mister Twister, the Balloon Man, Variety of Pastry available at the Festival. Pre-paid orders to be made at: <https://tinyurl.com/2021STSAHFest> Or order by calling the church at: 401-272-7712. Order By Wednesday, August 18 to Guarantee Meals**

## 'Daylight After a Century: Dr. George Djerdjian's Collection of Photographs of Pre-1915 Ottoman Life' Screening and Discussion

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, the Armenian Institute (London), and Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives present a screening of the video documentary "Daylight After a Century: Dr. George Djerdjian's Collection of Photographs of Pre-1915 Ottoman Life" and discussion with author George Jerjian, grandson of Dr. George Djerdjian, on Saturday, August 21, 2021, at 1 p.m. (Eastern)/10 a.m. (Pacific). The program will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel.

Dr. George Djerdjian (1870-1947) took 240 photographs of his hometown of Arabkir and his college town of Erzerum between 1900 and 1907, of which only about 100 survive. These photographs capture the way of life of a people that within a decade would become extinct in their homeland for over 3,000 years.

For more than a century, these photographs were stored in a grey steel box, which migrated from Arabkir to Alexan-



George Djerdjian

dria, Egypt, where it stayed for almost 50 years. Then it moved with descendants to Khartoum, Sudan, where it stayed for 20 years, then onto London, England, for 30 years, and then to Washington, D.C., for about 10 years. Now this collection of photographs has finally been exposed to daylight after a century of darkness.

For more information contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# A Vegetable Garden? Food for The Soul



(Award-winning author Chris Bohjalian was a columnist for Gannett's *Burlington Free Press* where the following story ran on May 17, 2015. He graduated from Amherst College and lives in Vermont with his wife and daughter. This story was also posted on May 20, 2015 at Chris' website: <https://chris-bohjalian.com/a-vegetable-garden-food-for-the-soul/>)

By Chris Bohjalian

Why garden today?

Note the verb. In your mind's eye, conjure a backyard vegetable plot. Imagine activity and effort. Visualize stooping. Lifting. Tilling. Seeding. Planting. Watering. Weeding. Thinning. (I abhor thinning. I haven't the heart to rip from the soil the small, fragile leaves that will become lettuce or carrots or beets.) There are more — many more — words that buttress that single verb, “garden,” but you see my point. There is a lot of work before you get to harvesting. Savoring. And (yes) eating.

Moreover, I imagine if I added up the costs of my wife's and my vegetable garden, it would not be a profitable venture. The rototilling, seeds, manure, pots, tomato cages, fertilizer, and hay alone might cost more than if we had bought the same vegetables at a farm stand or grocery store between July and October. But even if that's not the case, when you factor in the hours and hours of our labor, our vegetable garden can't possibly make fiscal sense.

And yet neither of us can imagine a summer without it. The same, I am sure, goes for all of our neighbors in the center of Lincoln, Vermont. Most of us have vegetable gardens, and many of us have some combination of blueberries and strawberries and raspberries, too.

The irony in my case is that I grew up loathing all vegetables except petit peas from a can and corn on the cob. I'm not sure I ever ate fresh vegetables other than corn until the summer I was 18 years old, when the woman who would become my mother-in-law taught me that peas didn't actually come from a can.

Consequently, I had never gardened (there again is that verb) until my wife and I moved to Vermont in our early twenties. My wife did not have to drag me into the effort kicking and screaming, but I remember watching our neighbor Clark Atkins — who had to have been well into his seventies by then — as he used wooden planks to walk a pretty serious rototiller off the back of his pickup, and thinking how I might have seriously underestimated how much work this garden might be.

But I have never regretted it. I know my wife feels the same way. Gardening is much like biking for me. My mind wanders and I find myself solving problems. Think of that great expression, “the shower principle.” I first heard the term from the fictional Jack Donaghy on the now defunct sit-com, “30 Rock.” How does Donaghy define it? “The shower principle is a term scientists use to describe moments of inspiration that occur when the brain is distracted from the problem at hand — for example, when you're showering,” Donaghy explains. I have certainly corrected flaws in whatever book I am writing while gardening, and understood some of my characters a little bit better.



The author's garden

Moreover, I wouldn't say I approach gardening with a Zen-like serenity, but only because I approach nothing with a Zen-like serenity. Still, I grow a little calmer than usual in the garden, I become a little less intense. I take an almost parental pleasure in nurturing the plants as they grow, and the work is never a chore.

And I know that I enjoy the garden most in the first half of the summer, before the lettuce has gone to seed and the first cherry tomatoes are ready to pop into my mouth. After all, by August, despite our ministrations and care, the garden will start to look a little ragged and unkempt. By late September, when we are pulling the last of the carrots and the beets from the soil, it will look downright terrifying. The tomato plants will be dangling from the cages like the tentacles of dead man o' war jellyfish on the beach.

But then we will put the garden to bed for the winter and allow it join a world that all around it is growing quiescent. The parallels with our lives are, for better or worse, inescapable.

So why do we garden? Because it connects us to that very world and reminds us on some level that we are a part of it. Because it feeds our soul as well as our stomach. Because, pure and simple, it makes us happy.

## Aunt Rose Mary Muench's Boeregs

Admittedly, Bohjalian happens to be a vegetarian and could live on cheese *boeregs*, *kadaif* and *tahn*. Here is his Aunt Rose Mary Muench's treasured recipe for Armenian cheese *boeregs* that is one of his favorite foods.

“My Aunt Rose Mary is a daughter of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and a granddaughter of survivors of the Hamidian Massacres,” said Chris.

“Over the years, this recipe has changed a lot. It is a combination of Armenian and Greek flavors, and it's been like that for over 25 years and probably more, but it always tastes the same way when I make it...and my family enjoys it very much,” says Aunt Rose Mary.\*

## Ingredients:

- 1 pound phyllo dough (in two packaged sheets inside or one full sheet)
- 1 pound Muenster cheese, chopped
- 1 pound melted butter
- 1 package farmer cheese
- 2 eggs
- 3-8 oz. packages chopped defrosted spinach, with liquid squeezed out
- 2 onions, chopped and sautéed in olive oil with one large utility spoon until limp
- 1 large utility spoon of flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon black pepper

## Preparation:

Except for phyllo dough and the butter, mix all ingredients together thoroughly in a medium bowl. The filling should be ready the minute you are ready to make the triangles.

Place finished triangles on a nonstick baking pan and

bake at 425 degrees for about 15 minutes. Do not butter the baking pan because the triangles are already buttered.

Triangles may be made in sets of eight for freezing in a plastic container — first in wax paper and then aluminum foil.

\*Cooking tips from Aunt Rose Mary regarding phyllo dough: “Do not plan to prepare the triangles for at least two to three whole days. From the supermarket to refrigerator or from the freezer, once the dough is in your refrigerator, turn the box over every three or four hours to a different side. All four sides for two or three days. Why are you doing this? The dough inside is frozen. The dough is paper thin. Once you open the dough you better be ready to make about 42 triangles and do nothing else. The box may tell you to cover with a slightly wet towel. Don't. Sometimes there are rips and holes. You can use the melted butter to paste it together.”

Chris Bohjalian is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 22 books. His work has been translated into 35 languages and three times become movies. He is the author of his latest novel, *Hour of the Witch*. His other novels include the *New York Times* bestsellers *Flight Attendant*, *Midwives*, *The Sandcastle Girls*, *The Guest Room*, and *The Double Bind*. *Hour of the Witch* is a tale is an historical thriller set in 1662 Boston — inspired by the first divorce in North America for domestic violence — and America's original witch hunt.

*Hour of the Witch* reviews include:

“Hour of the Witch is historical fiction at its best... *Insightful and empathetic... Thick with details as chowder is with clams... handled with great skill and delicacy. The book is a thriller in structure, and a real page-turner, the ending both unexpected and satisfying.*” -- Diana Gabaldon, the *Washington Post Book World*

“Harrowing...In the hands of a master storyteller like Bohjalian, [*Hour of the Witch*] is an engrossing tale of a woman who insists upon the right to navigate her life, and the consequences when she does...” -- Danielle Trussoni, the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*

“Bohjalian does an admirable job of bringing his numerous players to life in all their complexity. Mary, so mistreated by her milieu, begins to wonder if she may indeed be possessed. *HOUR OF THE WITCH* -- part courtroom thriller, part psychological suspense novel -- holds a reader's rapt attention all the way to its startling conclusion.” -- Tom Nolan, the *Wall Street Journal*

For more information, go to:

<https://chrisbohjalian.com/>  
<https://chrisbohjalian.com/hour-of-the-witch/>  
<https://bookoftheday.org/hour-of-the-witch-chris-bohjalian/>

*continued on next page*





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## Apricot Blackberry Kuchen from *For the Love of Apricots*

*For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley* by Lisa Prince Newman is now in its second edition and available online at [fortheloveofapricots.com](http://fortheloveofapricots.com). Lisa grew up in Saratoga, California, a village tucked away in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, where her family was living farm to table “long before that term was invented, when the landscape was still dotted with bountiful orchards.” In her cookbook, she tells the amazing story of apricot farming history in the Santa Clara Valley while sharing enticing and fruit-focused recipes. “This colorful and unique cookbook will satisfy your love of apricots through over 60 recipes that begin with breakfast and end with desserts and cocktails. These recipes use apricots in every form: fresh, dried, preserved, and liqueurs so you can enjoy the wonderful taste, brilliant color, and health benefits of apricots all year long,” says Lisa.

“I have loved apricots for as long as I can remember. They color my fondest memories of growing up in Saratoga. In the 1960s, orchards still extended in every direction, and as a child, I assumed they always would. Today this area is known as Silicon Valley, the world’s greatest engine of innovative technologies. But not long ago it was a magical landscape known as the Valley of Heart’s Delight,” says Lisa.

“The Valley of Heart’s Delight flourished for 100 years, from the California Gold Rush until World War II, with family farms spreading across 125 square miles. Then, as now, the area enjoys coastal cooling through its northern border with the San Francisco Bay and inland warmth from the protective Coast Range Mountains that frame it to the east and west. Blessed with some of the richest topsoil in the world and a nearly year-round growing season, the Valley of Heart’s Delight was unique for its agricultural productivity and fruit orchard production.”

California once boasted 18,600 apricot orchard acres, but agriculture and housing priorities shifted dramatically, with apricots getting the short end of the stick.



San Francisco Bay Area author and food blogger Lisa Prince Newman

As of 2017, the Bay Area’s Santa Clara and San Benito counties combined had just 696 acres of apricot orchards remaining, down from their peak of 8,800 acres in the 1940s. “The season for apricots is mainly from early May to August. Approximately 85 percent of the U.S. crop comes from California and 15 percent from Washington -- so you can consider them a west coast treat. Fresh apricots are petite, round fruits that are pale yellow to bright orange in color, depending on the variety and how ripe they are when picked,” adds Lisa.

Lisa’s Apricot Blackberry Kuchen recipe is featured in her cookbook and comes together in a few minutes. It makes a colorful show of these peak of summer fruits. “Cornmeal gives this Austrian coffee cake a slightly sandy texture. Fresh apricots and blackberries share the limelight in a delicious morning or mid-afternoon snacking cake,” she adds.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon (1/2 ounce) butter, to grease the baking dish
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 5 fresh, ripe apricots, halved and pitted
- 10 large fresh blackberries
- 2 tablespoons sugar

### PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F, and position a rack in the lower third of the oven. Grease an 8-inch round cake pan. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, cornmeal, and baking powder.

In a small bowl, beat together the egg, brown sugar, buttermilk, and melted butter until blended. Add to the flour mixture, stirring until evenly moistened. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Press the apricot halves, cut side up, decoratively into the batter. Place a blackberry in the center of each apricot half.

Bake until the cake feels firm when pressed gently and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool 15 minutes.

Before serving, loosen the edge of the cake from the cake pan with a small, sharp knife and invert the cake onto a plate. Place the serving platter over the cake bottom and gently invert the cake onto the platter. Sprinkle with sugar and serve warm or at room temperature.

Serves 8.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.losaltosonline.com/special-sections2/sections/food-a-wine/60394-apricot-blackberry-kuchen>

*For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley* is available at [fortheloveofapricots.com](http://fortheloveofapricots.com) as well as select farm shops, history museums, and independent bookstores. Order today at: <http://fortheloveofapricots.com/>

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# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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## COMMENTARY

# Editorial

## Kremlin's Strategic Tilt Favors Armenia



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

For several tangible reasons, the political pendulum in Moscow is swinging back in favor of Armenia. There are many signals and political statements which need to be analyzed to chart a pattern that indicates a movement in the right direction.

Armenians who have favored and believed in Russia's friendship for the last two centuries were beginning to get frustrated in view of Russia's inaction in the face of exist-

tential threats in the past year.

No matter how authoritarian Russia may be, it could not fail to understand Armenia's democratic election's message this spring. Former President Robert Kocharyan's sound defeat during the last election cycle was a rebuke to Russia by the Armenian populace. Kocharyan unabashedly symbolized the pro-Russian policy, and there was even talk that after an eventual Kocharyan victory, the road would be paved toward the formation of a state bringing into a federative structure Russia, Armenia and Belarus.

President Vladimir Putin, in the aftermath of the disastrous Azerbaijani victory over Armenia, had declared that any party failing to fulfill its obligations undertaken in the November 9 tripartite ceasefire declaration would be committing suicide. But as time passed, that suicide pact was relegated only to Armenia, as Azerbaijan refused to release Armenian POWs, began border conflicts with Armenia and above all, did not sign the mandate to allow Russian peacekeeping forces on its soil.

Since the November 9 ceasefire, Armenia has been under intense pressure to acquiesce to Russian demands in allowing Azerbaijan to join the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) structures. But Ankara dampened Moscow's hopes in ensnaring Azerbaijan within its zone of influence. Instead, Azerbaijan signed an agreement to station Turkish military base on its soil to counter Russian presence in the region and with the Shushi Declaration last month, laid the foundations of a federated state with Turkey.

While Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu was bragging about the Russo-Turkish agreement in the Caucasus, Ankara was stabbing Moscow in the back by arming Ukraine with Bayraktar drones which had defeated the Russian armaments in the recent Karabakh war, while additionally joining Ukraine to help snatch Crimea from Russia's grip.

These were the successive moves that brought to bear Russia's frustration with the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem.

Russia was trying to win over Azerbaijan at Armenia's expense. However, as Russia's frustration with Azerbaijan was building up, Europe began to court Armenia openly. The successive visits of European Union representatives to the region and the offer of 2.6 billion euros to build up Armenia's infrastructure, along with 500 million euros allocated for the development of Syunik, the most vulnerable region of Armenia, suddenly enhanced Armenia's strategic position for the major powers. The planned upcoming visit of French President Emmanuel Macron, with the clear intention of intensifying efforts by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group to lead peace negotiations, contrary to Azerbaijan's determination and Russia's reluctance, created a diplomatic storm in the Caucasus. In addition to the French initiative, the foreign ministers of Romania, Lithuania and Holland visited Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, demonstrating Europe's intention to return to the Caucasus.

For a long time, on all occasions when Azerbaijan instigated a cross-border provocation, the Minsk Group co-chairs, Russia, France and the US, issued warnings to both sides, calling for restraint. However, for the first time, the European Parliament, the United States and France called for Azerbaijan to withdraw its troops.

In addition to these diplomatic moves, some symbolic

actions came to play a political role. For example, US Ambassador Lynne Tracy vacationed in Syunik, which has been targeted by Azerbaijan on a regular basis recently. That was followed by Russia's Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin vacationing in the Armavir region and visiting the Russian forces stationed there.

These visits were followed by that of Iranian Ambassador Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri — accompanied by the country's military attaché Colonel Bahman Sadeghin — who declared that the Iran-Armenia border is the red line for Tehran. This announcement brought Tehran out of its equivocation in the face of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. During the 44-day war, even Iran's Supreme Spiritual Head Ali Ahmad Khomeini had praised Azerbaijan's Islamic forces for conquering their "rightful" territory.

Soon, however, they realized their mistake: Azerbaijan's conquered lands broadened Israel's surveillance capacities and Turkey's military presence in Shushi and Nakhichevan, with the avowed intention of dismembering Iran along demographic fault lines, helped them see in which camp their interests lay.

All these developments present an opportunity of which Armenia's foreign policy establishment may take advantage.

Even before Armenia acted to reap dividends from these developments, Moscow read the handwriting on the wall and



signaled a turning point in its policy. Thus, the first salvo came from Konstantin Zatulin, the head of the Eurasian Integration Committee in the Russian Parliament. He made a private visit to Armenia on August 4-5 to gauge the popular sentiment. Upon his return, he announced: "Armenia is experiencing its most difficult times. We will be betraying ourselves if we fail to help Armenia."

That was followed by the visit of Stanislav Zas, secretary general of the CSTO. We need to remember that when Armenia had appealed to Zas a few months ago about the incursion of 1,000 Azerbaijani soldiers around Sev Lake, Zas had dismissed it as an insignificant border skirmish. This time around, Zas had a different message for Armenia's leaders. According to him, "The current tensions fell adversely on Armenia's security and the security situation in the CSTO zone of responsibility in general."

Zas also stressed that "one of the CSTO's key priorities is to ensure sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states."

Before meeting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Zas had met with Armenia's new defense minister, Arshak Karapetyan, who had reprimanded him by saying, "We were waiting for you here last May."

Incidentally, it was Karapetyan who gave the order to the Armenian forces to shoot back at the Azerbaijanis anytime they crossed the borders. Indeed, someone, somewhere had given the green light to the new minister of defense to be more assertive. Up until recently, Pashinyan's order was not to retaliate against Azerbaijani provocations, so as not to provide a pretext to Baku to wage a new war.

For the first time, the Russian Ministry of Defense accused see TILT, page 19





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Turkey Banned Armenian Overflights; Why Didn't Armenia Reciprocate?

I just became aware that the government of Turkey banned Armenian aircraft from overflying its air space as of a year ago. This was disclosed earlier this month by Hetq.am website's investigative reporter Vahe Sarukhanyan.

I was surprised to hear this news. How could it be that the Turkish government banned Armenian-registered planes from flying over its air space and no Armenian official has bothered to inform the public? Even more surprising, a whole year after Turkey took such a hostile action, particularly during the recent war, the Armenian government did not reciprocate by banning Turkish flights over Armenian territory.

The last Armenian plane Turkey allowed to overfly its skies was on August 29, 2020. Beginning on Sept. 9, 2020, Turkey banned all Armenian flights from its skies. Interestingly, this was shortly before the joint Azeri and Turkish attack on Artsakh. Turkey subsequently rejected Armenian overflight requests on Sept. 18 and 25, 2020 and on March 19 and 23, 2021.

Hetq's reporter contacted Armenia's Civil Aviation Committee (CAC) to inquire if Armenia and Turkey had placed restrictions on their mutual airspace during and after last year's war. "The CAC responded that Turkey has not published any air navigation information (NOTAM) [Notice to Airmen] banning the entry of Armenian-registered aircraft into its skies." In other words, Turkey refused Armenian overflight rights without registering any formal objection. Thus, Turkey added a ban on air travel to its land blockade of Armenia.

In response to a question from Hetq on whether "Armenia had banned the entry of Turkish national aircraft, and if not, why not, the CAC replied that it has not imposed any restrictions in accordance with Article 9 (b) of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, stating that every Member State of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) cannot discriminate against the use of its airspace." This is somewhat incorrect. Article 9(b) states that countries can restrict the use of their air space "on condition that such restriction or prohibition shall be applicable without distinction of nationality to aircraft of all other States." How is it legal for Turkey to ban Armenian aircrafts and not legal for Armenia to do likewise?

I have been tracking the flight paths of various planes originating from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey on the website "flightradar24.com," which shows all flights around the world. I have made four interesting observations:

- 1) No Armenian-registered plane has flown over the territory of Turkey in the last 12 months as result of the Turkish ban.
- 2) Turkish Airlines, however, regularly fly over the Armenian air space on

their way to Azerbaijan and beyond.

3) Turkey does not obstruct the flights of foreign airlines that travel to or from Armenia over Turkey, probably not to trigger a retaliatory ban by the governments of these airlines.

4) Armenia and Azerbaijan do not travel across each other's air space even though there has been no formally-registered ban by either country.

Armenia's Civil Aviation Committee told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that it "is not in a position to challenge the Turkish ban in international aviation bodies. The Armenian Foreign Ministry did not clarify whether it has dealt with the matter." Regrettably, the CAC did not explain why it is not willing to challenge Turkey's ban of Armenian overflights. This is a major failure by Armenian officials.

Despite the negligent attitude of the Armenian government regarding the protection of Armenia's national interests, Turkish airplanes, of their own volition, avoided flying over Armenia during the Artsakh War, preferring to carry their soldiers, military equipment and the Islamic Jihadist terrorists to Azerbaijan over the skies of the Republic of Georgia.

There are many such examples of the negligence and incompetence of Armenian officials leading one to wonder if there is a functioning government in Armenia. Two successive Foreign Ministers of Armenia have resigned since last fall. They could not accept the amateurish behavior of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who unilaterally made all decisions on foreign policy without consulting his Foreign Ministry.

More surprisingly, after Pashinyan's reappointment as Prime Minister, he has yet to appoint a new Foreign Minister, even though he is required to form the cabinet of ministers within five days of his appointment, a deadline that has passed long ago. The Foreign Ministry's spokesman clarified that the five-day requirement applies to the appointment of two-thirds of the ministers, not the entire cabinet. However, the spokesman failed to explain why Pashinyan has managed to appoint all the other ministers, but not the Foreign Minister. One would think that, given Armenia's critical situation after the war, appointing a Foreign Minister would have been one of his top priorities.

Since Pashinyan has ignored the input of the previous two foreign ministers, I suggest that he simply appoint himself as Foreign Minister in addition to being Prime Minister. Furthermore, since the Prime Minister has been running the government single-handedly, he should also get rid of the remaining ministers, establishing a one-man rule. All three branches of the government — executive, legislative and judiciary — are in the hands of the Prime Minister. The President of the country has no decision-making powers. He is a nominal leader, a figurehead. The Parliament, with a majority composed of Pashinyan's political party, is basically a rubber stamp body which simply carries out his wishes. The judiciary is also under the heavy influence of the Prime Minister. Thus, there is no separation of powers, one of the key tenets of a democratic government.

## Kremlin's Tilt Favors Armenia

TILT, from page 18

Azerbaijan of violating the ceasefire in Karabakh as tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to rise.

The most significant meeting took place between the ministers of defense of Armenia and Russia, Karapetyan and Shoygu. Karapetyan described the situation along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, emphasizing the importance of Russia's mediation. He added, "Armenia's patience is not inexhaustible."

The Russian minister responded that Russia is ready to assist Armenia in modernizing and reforming Armenia's armed forces. "The Russian 102nd Military Base stationed in Armenia is well-equipped and is a guarantor for stability."

That statement was reassuring since the Russian military base was assumed to guarantee Armenia's borders, but it had failed to act in the past.

Mr. Shoygu presented a symbolic gift to his Armenian counterpart — a sword for Armenia to defend itself and then the two ministers reached a number of important agreements on the forthcoming cooperation.

It is already being put in place as an airlift of Russian armaments has arrived in Armenia.

Arming Armenia with modern weapons also serves Russian self-interest. As Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev refuses to sign the mandate on Russian peacekeeping forces, he holds Russia hostage to be ousted any time. A formidable fighting force in Armenia equipped with state-of-the-art technology will provide a strategic alternative for Russia. The moment Aliyev disinvites the Russian peacekeepers, he might face the enhanced Armenian forces. Despite Armenia's defeat, the country has the most competent fighting force in the region and most probably would have defeated Azerbaijan's army one more time had the latter not been reinforced by forces from Turkey, Pakistan and Syrian jihadists and Israeli war technology.

The Armenian army carried the war in this disadvantageous situation and caused more casualties than it incurred.

At this time, all these processes are in their developing stages. The challenge for the country's foreign policy establishment is to navigate through them skillfully and extract maximal strategic benefits for Armenia.

## Lessons for Armenia And Artsakh from Afghan Debacle

By Raffi Elliott

As I watched footage of Taliban fighters entering the vacant presidential palace in Kabul from my living room in Yerevan on Sunday, swiping through my smartphone, I came across a post on the r/armenia subreddit entitled: "What can we learn from the Taliban?" I rolled my eyes as I tossed my phone onto the couch, sighing at the prospects of yet another feeble attempt to weave associations between Armenia and a far-off current affairs issue where there was none.

But that was three days ago now. In the meantime, that question somehow managed to cling to my thoughts. In the space of eight months, I witnessed, in real time, the fall of two important cities which held such significance to me both as an Armenian and a Canadian.

I was still learning to walk and talk when Shushi was liberated in 1992. While I have since visited Shushi dozens of times since then — the last time being mere days before its capture — the other city, I have never set foot in. If Kabul has changed hands four times in my lifetime, the start of my adulthood, like many others of my generation, really started on October 2001, when the Afghan capital was liberated as part of NATO's Operation Enduring Freedom. The Foreverwar that followed over the next two decades has become such a ubiquitous presence on the political, cultural and professional definition of my generation that its sudden end feels...uncomfortable.

Yet I couldn't help wondering whether the sacrifice of 150 fellow Canucks, and 3,350 other Coalition servicemen and women was worth it as the Taliban rolled into Kabul, seemingly reversing 20 years of effort. In much the same way, we soured at the thought of the

thousands of Armenian lives forfeited, tens of millions of dollars and three decades of collective Armenian effort undone as the stormtroopers of the Caspian Dictatorship unfurled their flag in Shushi's newly-renovated town hall a mere eight months prior.

But upon revisiting the question, I like to think that perhaps the lessons of Afghanistan should reverberate among Armenians in subtle, yet non-negligible ways. Despite the circumstances, historical underpinnings, and geopolitical stakes being widely different, the outcome of "America's longest war" in Afghanistan does provide round-about answers to questions that Armenians have been reeling over since last autumn's war.

I've identified four such lessons:

### Resting on Our Laurels

In a July 28 piece for *Foreign Policy* magazine which now reads as laughably aged, columnist Anchal Vohra insisted that fears of an imminent collapse of the Afghan state were overblown. Hailing the capabilities of the western-trained and equipped Afghan National Army, the veteran journalist argued that the line of battle was "far more balanced than most outside observers seem to believe." She also pointed to the remobilization of militias by famed warlords Abdul Rashid Dostum, Karim Khalili and Ahmad Massoud (Son of the legendary Majaheed Ahmad Shah Massoud) — known for having defeated both the Soviets in 1989 and the Taliban in 2001 — as evidence of mounting resistance against their onslaught.

Within days of the piece going to print, Kabul had fallen yet again, Khalili reappeared in Taliban captivity and Dostum had fled into Uzbekistan. Only the young Massoud appears to be fighting on, rallying those willing to fight the Taliban to his stronghold in the Panjshir Valley.

The fact that such legendary commanders who had literally brought down empires would be routed so completely in a mere two decades is as shocking as it is telling. While there are many complex tribal and strategic matters that are particular to Afghanistan, it's hard not to draw parallels between these Afghan warlords and the brilliant Armenian generals of yester-war see LESSONS, page 20



# Lessons for Armenia and Artsakh from Afghan Debacle

LESSONS, from page 19

— the very same generals who would live to see their legacies undone within a mere 26 years.

Just like their Afghan counterparts, the victors of Armenia’s 1988-94 David-and-Goliath struggle against the Azerbaijanis helped themselves to the spoils. They appointed each other to high-ranking government posts, built opulent mansions overlooking Yerevan and Stepanakert, and accumulated vast amounts of wealth, power, influence, and girth, while the military and state apparatus they helped create suffered from chronic neglect. The Azerbaijanis would never fight back, they insisted, as the history of Armenia’s 1994 victory was mythologized to the point where it had become a foregone conclusion in our collective memory. But much like the Taliban, the Azerbaijanis bid their time, regrouped, and tried again as Armenia’s superpower protector stood idly by. Generals and politicians attempted to replicate the strategies of 1994 across the battlefields of 2020 with predictable (in hindsight) results.

Last year, Armenia learned the hard way that it could not afford to rest as its enemies brooded.

## Skin in the Game

If news of Dostum’s flight proved a de-

moralizing blow to the floundering Afghan Army, President Ashraf Ghani’s escape proved the final nail in the coffin. It should come as no surprise that the corrupt kleptocrats who diverted millions of international aid money over their decades of rule over post-Taliban Afghanistan had an exit strategy. While such a complete structural collapse did not happen in Armenia, rumors were ripe of high-ranking officers leaving their posts, and certain generals having fueled private jets ready on the tarmac at Zvartnots to take their families to Russia or whichever Schengen country they had quietly received dual citizenship from or opened bank accounts in.

It’s no secret that Armenian officers and government officials have accrued large investments in property, business interests, and other assets abroad over the years. Some might question the commitment of such people to a cause as important as the physical defense of their nation when such escape routes remain an option to them. But officers and politicians should not be the only ones expected to have skin in the game. It is not uncommon for Armenians to apply for, and receive second citizenships as a “security guarantee” while repats occasionally hesitate to apply for Armenian Citizenship to avoid conscription.

But the future of Armenia should not be a half-assed effort. We’re either committed to moving Armenia’s status from survive to thrive, or we’re not. To achieve these goals, Armenia needs our funds, yes, but it also needs our trust, and above all, us.

### Technology Doesn’t Win Wars

When the Turkish-built and piloted Bayraktar drones first appeared in the skies over Artsakh last September, they did more than spread havoc on the battlefield. They also shattered a long-held conceit among the Armenian public that brave, patriotic men armed with the duty to defend their homes would outmatch any foe. Such misplaced trust in the martial abilities of our warrior-culture blinded us to the danger posed by a decades-worth of an increasingly sophisticated military build-up across the Line-of-Contact.

Yet if the war revealed one thing, it’s that the bravery of underequipped, and poorly commanded militias is insufficient to deflect drone strikes, or sustain military operations in a 5th generation battlespace where the enemy enjoys the advantage of integrated command and information logistics.

But a lightning offensive by fighters in sandals packed on Toyota pickup trucks armed with AKs against an enemy trained,

equipped, and coordinated by the most effective military powers on the planet does make me wonder if the conclusion that technology wins wars may be premature.

Out of context, the success of the Taliban strategy may be puzzling military analysts and observers alike. But in battlefields scattered across the Middle East, examples of small, ill-equipped militias giving the most sophisticated militaries in the region a run for their money are not hard to come by. Israeli strategists still struggle to explain their blunders against Hezbollah in 2006. Seven years into the Yemeni Civil War, a coalition of wealthy Gulf States has yet to subdue the scrappy Houthi insurgency. Despite boasting NATO’s second largest military, Turkey has scored few gains in its four decades-long struggle against the PKK.

Clearly, technological advantage alone does not determine the course of wars. While personal bravery, sacrifice, *Elan*, and patriotism do play a role, they are no substitute for strategy, discipline, diplomacy, and logistics.

Closer scrutiny of the Afghan National Army’s performance (or lack-there-of) provides an answer to another “what-if” scenario oft-presented by Armenian armchair generals since the war. Those speculating as to whether the course of last autumn’s war would have been altered had the Armenian military establishment invested in a particular anti-aircraft system, picked drones over traditional aircraft or any one of the *Wunderwaffen* often suggested on the internet are missing the point.

Weapons are tools, and tools are only as good as their users and the tasks they’re suited for. Much of the sophisticated machinery that the ANA inherited from Coalition Forces lay idle in warehouses for the Taliban to seize because the ANA lacked personnel who could read or write, let alone trained to survive or operate these systems. So could a full battery of Pantsir-SM medium-range surface-to-air missile systems, as some claim, theoretically defeat Bayraktars? Probably. If we ignore the exorbitant operational cost involved, the probability of success depends heavily on crew training and the development of appropriate defensive doctrines suited to their capabilities.

Thus taking sophisticated weapons into a warzone does not, a victory make. This isn’t to downplay the urgent necessity for the Armenian Armed Forces to modernize their capabilities in a cost-effective manner.

### Graveyard of Empires


“Afghanistan is the Graveyard of Empires,” President Joe Biden said of US troop withdrawal as he addressed the nation on Monday. This old aphorism, long (mis)used in reference to the failure of a succession of foreign powers to control the patch of mountains at the heart of Central Asia.

Yet, it wouldn’t be much of a stretch to apply that same adage to Armenia as well. For a nation whose wars have all been fought and lost (As Saroyan put it), it has managed to endure. While the Neo-Assyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Soviet Empires now exist only in the annals of History, Armenia definitely remains a living, breathing sovereign state in the modern world. If this past serves as any indication for the future, it shall outlive current enemies as well.

If there is one way in which the people of Armenia may see eye-to-eye with the Taliban is that the resilience of Mountain people, combined with resolve around a shared goal and patience proves impossible to overcome.

As the saying goes: They tried to bury us, they didn’t know we were seeds.

(Raffi Elliott is a Canadian-Armenian political risk analyst and journalist based in Yerevan, Armenia. As a correspondent for the *Mirror-Spectator*, his focus is socioeconomic, political, business and diplomatic issues in Armenia.)






## 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 Syunik NGO will make investments in agriculture to create income for their beneficiaries. The recipient gets assistance conditional that within 2 years they give back on an annual basis the equivalent of 10% of their produced goods to other needy families.



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