



TOKYO
2021



Artur Aleksanyan



Artur Davtyan



Simon Martirosyan

Armenia Athletes Win 3 Medals This Week at Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO (Panorama.am) — Armenia won three Olympic medals in Tokyo this week: Artistic gymnast Artur Davtyan won the first medal for Armenia. He scored 14.733 points in the men's vault event to win the bronze medal on August 2.

Greco-Roman wrestler Artur Aleksanyan won a silver medal on Tuesday, August 3. Aleksanyan took on Russia's Musa Evloev in his final bout but was defeated 5:1, partially due to a hamstring injury he suffered in his previous fight.

Finally, Simon Martirosyan, one of the strongest and most celebrated Armenian weightlifters, won silver in Tokyo on August 3, raising the medal count on the country's balance to three at the Olympic Games.

Pallone Amendment Prohibiting Military Assistance to Azerbaijan Passes

WASHINGTON (RFE/RL) — The U.S. House of Representatives voted late on Wednesday, July 28, to restrict U.S. military assistance to Azerbaijan because of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

A bipartisan amendment co-sponsored by about two dozen pro-Armenian lawmakers blocks any such aid that can be provided under Washington's Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training programs.

"This bill sends a clear signal that we will not aid or tolerate authoritarian regimes that threaten peace and security, especially when those actions are aimed at a fellow democracy," said congressman Frank Pallone, the main author of the measure hailed by Armenian-American lobby groups.

"The House today took a principled, bipartisan stand against Azerbaijan, overwhelmingly voting down U.S. military aid in response to Baku's ethnic-cleansing of Artsakh (Karabakh) and ongoing aggression against Armenia," said Raffi Hamparian, the chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

"This amendment sends the right message that Azerbaijan will not be rewarded for its hostile actions against the Armenian people," said Mariam Khaloyan of the Armenian Assembly of America.

The bill does not bar the U.S. Department of Defense from continuing to transfer military equipment to Azerbaijan.

The U.S. Congress had banned any kind of direct assistance to Baku through Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act passed in 1992. But a decade later it allowed U.S. administrations to waive the ban to help Azerbaijan's military and security agencies.

The administration of former President



Rep. Frank Pallone

Donald Trump significantly increased the security aid to Baku, reportedly providing over \$100 million worth of equipment and other assistance to Azerbaijan's State Border Guard Service in 2018-2019 alone.

Azerbaijani border guards also participated in last year's Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Karabakh. Many of them are now deployed along Azerbaijan's border with Armenia where serious cross-border skirmishes have been a regular occurrence for the last two months.

During the autumn war, then Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden urged the Trump administration to freeze U.S. aid and "stop the flow of military equipment to Azerbaijan."

But Biden too waived Section 907 in April this year three months after being sworn in as U.S. president.

Pallone also praised the \$50 million in assistance earmarked for Armenia that will bolster economic, governance and rule of law reforms, as well as an additional \$2 million for demining in Artsakh.

see PROHIBITION, page 11

Armenian National Assembly Holds First New Session, Pashinyan Reappointed as PM

By Raffi Elliott
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The eighth convocation of Armenia's National Assembly held its first session on Monday, August 2. President Armen Sarkissian officially opened the reconvened parliament which now includes 107 representatives of the three parties which won seats in the June 20 snap election. The vote, which had been triggered as part of a political agreement to end weeks of political tension in the wake of Armenia's defeat in the Second Artsakh War, was hailed by local and international observers as "free and fair."

Based on a complex equation for calculating seat distribution, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, which won just under 55 percent of the ballot, sent 71 representatives to the National Assembly on Monday — one seat shy of an absolute (two-thirds) majority.

In fact, the Armenian Electoral Code's Effective Opposition provision specifically prevents the formation of absolute majority governments by adapting the number of seats in favor of the opposition. Such checks and balances in the electoral code are designed to foster cooperation across the aisle on important matters such as constitutional amendments.

Following a failed appeal to the Constitutional Court, both the Armenia and "I Have Honor" Alliances, which finished see PARLIAMENT, page 2

Senator Carl Levin Leaves Lasting Legacy of Friendship

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

DETROIT — Carl Levin (D-Michigan), one of the longest serving Senators in American history and a steadfast friend of the Armenian community, died on Thursday, July 29 from lung cancer. He was 87.

Levin came from the old school of public servants whose guiding principle was not ideology but integrity. Respected by colleagues and constituents alike on the right and the left, his re-election five times by the people of Michigan

see TRIBUTE, page 9



Lilit Makunts Named Armenia's Ambassador To the United States

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A senior but politically inexperienced member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party was appointed as Armenia's new ambassador to the United States on Monday, August 2.

President Armen Sarkissian formalized the controversial appointment of Lilit Makunts with a decree initiated by Pashinyan.

see AMBASSADOR, page 3



MYNAMAR

Activist, Aurora Laureate Kyaw Hla Aung Passes Away

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BURBANK, CAL.

Armenian Wine and Spirits Festival Finally Takes Place in Person


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STUDIO CITY, CAL.

LGBTQ+ Open Air Market Meets with Success

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Students Win 3 Bronze Medals in Chemistry Olympiad

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Students from Armenia won three bronze medals in the 53rd International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO), held July 25–August 2, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport reports. More than 300 students from 79 countries participated in the competition. This year's event was slated to take place in Japan, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic, students logged into the week-long Olympiad virtually. Composed of Hayk Aghekyan, Leonid Asatryan, Seveda Nersisyan and Tigran Harutyunyan, the Armenian team secured three bronze medals. In the previous edition of the International Chemistry Olympiad, Armenia had won one silver and one bronze medals.

Pashinyan Speaks with Macron

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with French President Emanuel Macron on August 3.

Macron congratulated Pashinyan on his appointment to the post of prime minister and praised the uninterrupted implementation of democratic processes in the country. Macron announced the decision to provide 200,000 doses of the COVID vaccine to Armenia and Pashinyan thanked him.

The prime minister provided information on the recent border provocations by Azerbaijan, as well as Azerbaijan's aggressive rhetoric, emphasizing that their purpose is to destabilize the situation in the region. He also considered inadmissible the fake trials of Armenian captives in Azerbaijan.

Macron attached importance to the delimitation and demarcation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Agreeing with this idea, the Armenian Prime Minister stressed that the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict are not intersecting processes in any way. He reiterated the proposal to deploy a Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) observation mission along the border, or in case of impossibility of such a decision, as an alternative, the deployment of an observation mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairing countries.

Macron reaffirmed his readiness to continue efforts to establish lasting peace in the region.

Pashinyan expressed confidence that the initiatives and steps within the regional context can be successful if they are approved by all the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries. Pashinyan stressed that the Armenian government welcomed the statements made by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs after November 9, including the resumption of the negotiation process, and was ready to be fully involved in the negotiation process.



Armenian National Assembly Holds First New Session, Pashinyan Reappointed as PM

PARLIAMENT, from page 1

second and third, respectively, have agreed to take up their seats in parliament. Twenty-six representatives of the Armenia Alliance, which includes the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and the little-known Reborn Armenia party, took their seats on Monday, but their leader, Robert Kocharyan, was not among them. Following weeks of speculation, the former president, who continues to face corruption charges dating to his time in office, announced his intention to decline his seat on July 20. Justifying his decision, Kocharyan claimed that he was not well suited for a role in opposition; "by virtue of my character I have always been a person of executive power." He did say he would continue to lead the alliance from outside the parliament. General Seyran Ohanyan, a former Minister of Defense and a close ally of the former president, took his seat in his stead.

Having won 5.2 percent of the vote, the other opposition alliance, dubbed "I have Honor," managed to grab the remaining seven seats. The alliance which includes the formerly-ruling Republican Party and headed by the one-time head of the Security Service Arthur Vanetsyan, took up its seats despite not meeting the minimum electoral threshold due to another loophole in the Effective Opposition provision which stipulates a minimum of three political blocs in Parliament.

In his speech on this occasion, President Sarkissian addressed the convocation of returning and freshmen parliamentarians. "Armenia's future must be built around a strong, egalitarian and forward-thinking vision," the president said, adding that the government must do everything to protect and preserve an independent statehood as a foundational Armenian value, both for the sake of our children, and our ancestors. He added that the new parliament must value professionalism and a strong work ethic. "Populism and demagoguery are a dead end," he added.

These words were not, however, enough to dissuade members of the opposition "Armenia Alliance" from causing a ruckus minutes after the President exited the Assembly chamber. Interrupting the session, members of the alliance wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the faces of four Syunik

mayors currently facing corruption charges, called on the Speaker of the House to help release fellow would-be-MPs Mkhitar Zakaryan and Arthur Sargsyan, whom they insist are political prisoners.

"Mkhitar Zakaryan and Arthur Sargsyan are not present at his session not because they don't want to be here, but because they're prevented from being here," said Armenia Alliance MP Aram Vardevanyan, insisting that the two mayors were not absent, but "hostages."

Mkhitar Zakaryan was the mayor of Meghri in southern Syunik until being charged with abuse of power earlier this year. The former mayor allegedly used his influence to illegally sell municipal property for personal profit. Arthur Sargsyan, the former mayor of Sisian, another Syunik town, allegedly signed non-competitive tenders with companies personally affiliated to him at higher-than-market prices, and embezzled state funds in the process.

Both men, as well as several other Syunik mayors once affiliated with the former-ruling Republican Party of Armenia (and officially registered as candidates for the Armenia Alliance), have called for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation following last year's war, leading the opposition to slam their arrests as politically motivated.

However, the Central Election Commission greenlit the arrest warrants which were served before either of the candidates had officially been called to serve at the National Assembly, meaning that they were not yet covered by parliamentary immunity.

Gegham Manukyan of the ARF insinuated that Speaker of the House Knyaz Hasanov was acting hypocritically by not condemning the arrests. "You and I have long-been vocal about the persecution of Kurdish ethnic officials by the Turkish government," Manukyan told Hasanov — himself an ethnic Kurd and a well-known Kurdish rights activist, and continued, "You once decried the imprisonment of the Kurdish parliamentarian Leyla Zana as an act of fascism on the part of Turkish authorities, how do you then describe the absence of two Armenian parliamentarians today?"

Another Armenia Alliance MP, Andranik Tevanyan, compared the legal proceedings against the former mayors to Azerbaijan's attempt to use remaining Armenian POWs in their custody as hostages.

Arsen Torosyan, the prime minister's former chief of staff, and leading MP for the governing Civil Contract party, lamented the opposition's insistence on non-cooperation with the government. In an [interview with Radio Free Europe](#), he equated this decision to telling voters that they will refuse to represent their interests in parliament. "If not, they should accept their mandate, be present at parliamentary sessions and work with the government," Torosyan responded. He also made it clear that the government has enough votes to push through key reforms with or without the opposition's cooperation.

On August 2, President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian [officially signed](#) an order re-appointing Nikol Pashinyan Prime Minister of Armenia.

New Batch of 50,400 AstraZeneca Shots Delivered to Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A new batch of 50,400 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been delivered to Armenia, health authorities reported on Tuesday, August 3.

The new shots were purchase through the Covax vaccine-sharing facility to be used in the country's vaccination program.

It was reported earlier that Lithuania was going to donate 27,500 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Armenia. The country is also planning to purchase Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson's shots, and possibly a batch of the Novavax vaccine.

Armenia is currently using AstraZeneca, Sputnik-V and CoronaVac vaccines to inoculate people aged above 18. The vaccination program rolled out across the country in mid-April, with health authorities also setting up mobile vaccination facilities near shopping malls and on major streets in Yerevan.



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Proposes Russian Border Guards For Entire Armenia-Azerbaijan Border

By Joshua Kucera

YEREVAN (Eurasianet.org) — Armenia is seeking to deploy Russian border guards along its entire border with Azerbaijan as tensions and violence between the two countries continue to fester.

“This would allow the possibility of conducting delimitation and demarcation [of the two countries’ border] without the risk of armed clashes,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at a July 29 cabinet meeting.

Russian border guards already patrol the southernmost part of the border, along Armenia’s Syunik province, and there have been talks about expanding that effort into the next Armenian province to the north, Gegharkunik. (The governor of Gegharkunik said July 29, however, that he didn’t know whether those discussions had advanced.)

Pashinyan’s proposal comes as Azerbaijan continues to push the advantage it won in last year’s war, steadily ratcheting up pressure in the hopes that it will force Yerevan into a final resolution of the conflict on terms favorable to Baku. In particular, Baku is seeking the handover of the remaining parts of Karabakh that are still under Armenian control, a demand Yerevan finds unacceptable.

“The situation along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border is not stabilizing, regardless of the efforts of the Armenian government and the international community,” Pashinyan said. “Azerbaijan is continuing its aggressive rhetoric and actions.”

The military pressure has steadily been increasing, as this week saw the single deadliest fighting since the two sides signed a ceasefire statement in November. On July 28, three Armenian soldiers were killed in a shootout between Gegharkunik and neighboring Kelbajar in Azerbaijan,

flying over Gegharkunik, but Azerbaijan denied the reports.

The deteriorating security situation continues to demand attention from foreign actors. The U.S. State Department called on the two sides to immediately stop the fighting and to return to negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. “[O]nly a comprehensive resolution that addresses all outstanding issues can normalize relations between the two countries and allow the people of the

“ARMENIA IS COUNTING ON RUSSIA, BUT RUSSIA HAS OTHER PRIORITIES: UKRAINE, AFGHANISTAN, NATO. [...] RUSSIA DOESN’T HAVE EXTRA ARMED FORCES TO SEND FIGHTERS TO HELP ARMENIA.”

—PAVEL FELGENAUER
RUSSIAN MILITARY ANALYST

region to live together peacefully,” department spokesman Ned Price said in the July 28 statement.

Iran’s foreign ministry similarly called on “both sides” to stop shooting, and offered its own mediation services.

Pashinyan’s request for an expanded Russian border guard presence, though, seemed to fall on deaf ears. Asked about the proposal, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dodged the question. “Contacts with Yerevan are continuing, we have nothing more to add,” he said.

Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenauer said that Moscow was unlikely to be interested. “Armenia wants to draw Russia into the conflict because it lost the war, it has no more strength, no more soldiers, it’s

manship of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Russia-led post-Soviet mutual defense bloc. Yerevan has been appealing to the CSTO as Azerbaijani forces have crossed the (as yet not formally delineated) border between the two countries. Armenia says that amounts to a foreign invasion of the type that is supposed to trigger the CSTO’s collective defense provisions, though the organization’s leadership disagrees.

Ruben Rubinyan, the head of the Armenian parliament’s foreign affairs committee, said Armenia will assume the chairmanship of the CSTO (currently held by Tajikistan) on September 16. Will that help Armenia get anything more out of the CSTO than it has been able to so far? Rubinyan was noncommittal.

“The international community must respond appropriately to these actions of Azerbaijan, which is trying to blow up regional stability. [...] There is a process under way in the CSTO, and we will continue to make use of the tools available to us,” Rubinyan told Armenian public radio. “We think that the CSTO should respond accordingly to these situations, because it is the CSTO obligation.”

Meanwhile, another international military bloc is holding exercises close by: NATO kicked off its regular Agile Spirit drills in neighboring Georgia on July 26. Armenia and Azerbaijan both have on-again-off-again relations with NATO and its multilateral exercises, and this time Azerbaijan is taking part while Armenia is not. It’s not too surprising why: NATO member Turkey, which provided substantial support to Azerbaijan in last year’s war, will be there.

The Kremlin’s Peskov was asked about Azerbaijan’s participation, and his disapproval was clear. “We value our relations with Azerbaijan,” he said, before adding

of Armenian soldiers who had crossed into Azerbaijani-held territory in Karabakh after the ceasefire was agreed last fall. The 13 soldiers were sentenced to six years in prison on charges of illegal border crossing and weapons possession. Another group of 13 soldiers was convicted for the same crimes and received the same terms a week earlier.

The sentences are likely merely a bargaining chip. Azerbaijan has been trying about 60 such soldiers in groups, and some of them have already been sent back to Armenia in exchange for maps of land mines that Armenia laid in the territories Azerbaijan retook during the war.

The prosecutions amount to a breach of the Geneva Conventions on war crimes, said Giorgi Gogia, the associate director for Europe and Central Asia for Human Rights Watch.

Lilit Makunts Named Armenia’s Ambassador To the United States

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Makunts, 37, taught English at Russian-Armenian University in Yerevan and did not engage in political activities before being appointed as Armenia’s culture minister in the wake of the 2018 “velvet revolution” that brought Pashinyan to power.

She held that post until being elected to the Armenian parliament in December 2018 and becoming the nominal leader of the parliamentary group of Pashinyan’s My Step bloc.

Makunts will replace Varuzhan Nersesyan, a career diplomat who handed his credentials to then President Donald Trump in January 2019. Nersesyan was appointed as Armenian ambassador to Britain last month.

Pashinyan’s plans to replace Nersesyan with Makunts were first revealed by Armenian media outlets in January, prompting strong criticism from opposition lawmakers and other critics of his government. They pointed to her lack of political and diplomatic experience.

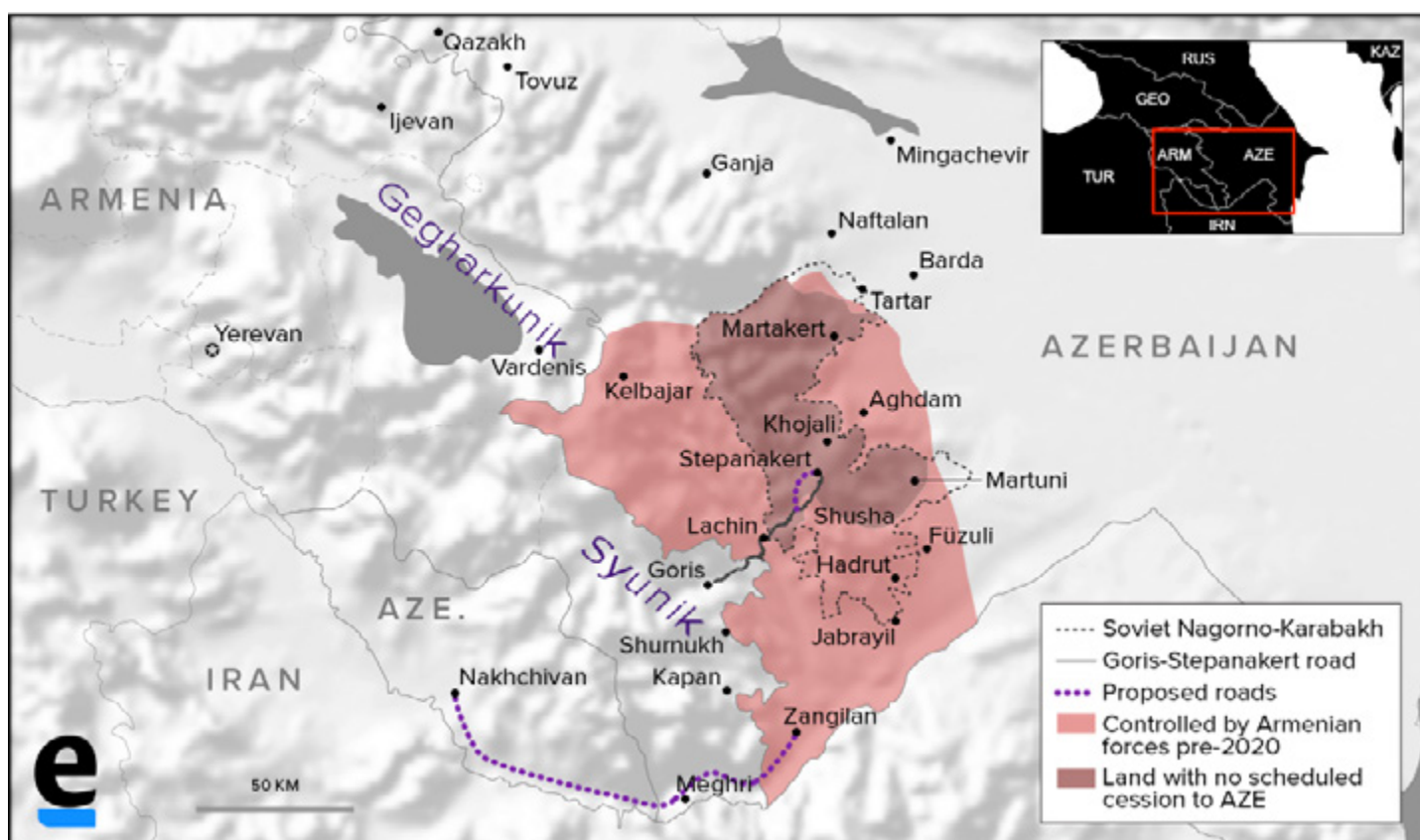
“She is not a diplomat. I don’t know what she will be doing there [in Washington,]” said Gevorg Gorgisyan of the opposition Bright Armenia Party.

One of the two main Armenian-American lobby groups also criticized at the time Pashinyan’s choice of Armenia’s ambassador in Washington.

“With the stakes so high and the need for serious, seasoned professionals so very clear, we cannot afford on-the-job-training, political sinecures, or anything other than our very best in high level diplomatic postings,” Aram Hamparian, the executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, wrote on Facebook.

Similarly, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) issued a [statement](#) against the appointment. Citing the difficult situation of Armenian post-war, the ADL letter to the foreign minister stated, “we firmly and forthrightly oppose the ill-advised appointment of Lilit Makunts, a divisive political figure who has no formal diplomatic experience, to replace Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan as Armenia’s Ambassador to the United States.”

“Experience is certainly very important, but in some cases it does not play a central role,” she said.



in fighting that reportedly involved heavy artillery and tank fire. On July 23, an Azerbaijani soldier was killed in the same region.

Following the heavy fighting, Russia mediated a return to the ceasefire, but shooting has continued intermittently since then. Armenia reported on July 30 that it had intercepted two Azerbaijani drones

unable to rebuild its armed forces,” he told the news outlet Caucasian Knot. “Armenia is counting on Russia, but Russia has other priorities: Ukraine, Afghanistan, NATO. [...] Russia doesn’t have extra armed forces to send fighters to help Armenia.”

Some form of international help could be coming Armenia’s way: Starting in September, Armenia will assume the chair-

that “it’s important [for Moscow] that these exercises do not suppose any veiled activities with respect to our country [...] NATO sets the scenarios for these exercises and the alliance does not hide who is the enemy in them.”

Military pressure is not the only lever Azerbaijan is using against Armenia. A Baku court on July 29 convicted a group



ARMENIA

Deputy PM Resigns, Cites Differences With Ruling Party

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan on Monday, August 2, announced his resignation and revealed that he had differences with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during the recent parliamentary race.

Avinyan, 32, is a senior member of the ruling Civil Contract party who actively participated in the 2018 mass protests that brought Pashinyan to power. He was appointed as deputy prime shortly after the “velvet revolution.”

In a Facebook post, Avinyan said he did not participate in Civil Contract’s parliamentary election campaign because he objected to its list of candidates for the snap polls held on June 20. He said he felt that it may be at odds with the “separation of business and politics” championed by Pashinyan’s political team.

“Nevertheless, I am convinced that the separation of business and politics will remain an irreversible principle for our team and that it will manage possible risks,” he wrote. “I will stay on as a member of Civil Contract’s board and do my best to help ensure that all reforms launched by us in 2018 continue.”

Avinyan appeared to refer to the presence of at least two wealthy businessmen on the party’s electoral list. Both tycoons, Khachatur Sukiasyan and Guren Arsenyan, were elected to the parliament.



Tigran Avinyan

Pashinyan stated shortly after the 2018 regime change that Armenian entrepreneurs no longer need to hold parliament seats in order to protect and expand their assets.

Avinyan also defended on Monday his and his government’s track record, saying that they have managed to prevent a “collapse of the economy” during the coronavirus pandemic and last year’s war in Nagorno-Karabakh. They have also created “real prerequisites for development,” he said.

The statement came a few hours after Suren Papikyan, another senior Civil Contract figure who has served as minister of territorial administration and infrastructures, was named deputy prime minister. Papikyan was in turn replaced by Gnel Sanosyan, the governor of Armenia’s Gegharkunik province.

Pashinyan also reappointed his ministers of environment and labor and social affairs and installed Major-General Arshak Karapetyan as defense minister. Karapetyan’s appointment has been widely anticipated in recent weeks.

There were no indications that Mher Grigoryan, the other vice-premier appointed in 2018, will lose his job as a result of the ongoing cabinet reshuffle. Grigoryan is a former banker not affiliated with any party.

The reshuffle began after President Armen Sarkissian formally reappointed Pashinyan as prime minister following the start of the inaugural session of the new Armenian parliament. Pashinyan’s party has a solid majority in the parliament, having won the recent elections.

Armenian Journalists Face Major Restrictions in Parliament

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Armenian authorities deployed scores of security officers on Monday, August 2, to seriously restrict journalists’ freedom of movement inside the parliament building in Yerevan.

The unprecedented restrictions were imposed at the start of the inaugural session of Armenia’s new parliament elected in June.

Journalists accredited to the National Assembly discovered that they can no longer interview lawmakers coming out of the parliament chamber or approach the offices of deputies from the ruling Civil Contract party located in a large section of the parliament compound.

A corridor leading to that section was tightly guarded by uniformed officers of the State Protection Service, an agency that provides bodyguards to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other senior state officials. They did not allow any reporter to walk through it.

Parliamentary correspondents managed to briefly talk to Alen Simonian, a close Pashinyan associate elected parliament speaker later in the day. Simonian claimed that no restrictions have been imposed on their work.

Taguhi Tovmasyan, an opposition lawmaker and a former reporter who warned of such restrictions last week, said the parliament administration likewise assured her in writing that the rules for press coverage of the National Assembly have not changed.

“If there is no such decision then it cannot be enforced. But to my surprise, even after this published document we can see that you really have trouble moving

around,” Tovmasyan told reporters.

Tovmasyan, who edited a major newspaper before being first elected to the parliament in 2018, again argued that Armenia’s former, supposedly less democratic governments never dared to take such measures against the parliamentary press corps.

“The restriction of journalists’ freedom of movement is yet another manifestation of [the current authorities’] fear, impotence and weakness,” charged Aghvan Vartanyan, another opposition parliamentarian and former newspaper editor.

“Keep fighting, don’t cave in. Go to all places [in the parliament,]” Vartanyan told his former colleagues.

Artur Vanetsyan, a former National Security Service director who now leads the opposition Pativ Unem bloc, said the parliamentary opposition will try to have the restrictions scrapped.

The restrictions seem to be part of a broader tightening of security in and outside the parliament building, which was also guarded by an unusually large number of riot police on Monday.

In particular, the authorities placed metal detectors at the entrances to the main parliament auditorium also guarded by security officers. This means that from now on deputies will be searched when entering not only the sprawling compound but also the chamber itself.

“This is simply ridiculous,” said Vanetsyan. “There are two possible explanations. Either these authorities want to get on the opposition’s nerves in this way or they are just terrified of the opposition.”

Denovo Sciences and Zoomerang Win EWC Armenia 2021 Heading to Global Finals

YEREVAN, Armenia — The Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC) of the American University of Armenia (AUA) along with the National Leadership Committee of the Entrepreneurship World Cup (EWC) Armenia 2021, proudly announce that the two teams to represent Armenia in the EWC Global Finals are Denovo Sciences as the National Champion and Zoomerang as the National Runner-Up. Both winning startups were awarded \$20,000 each and will advance to the Accelerate 2 phase, subsequently competing in the EWC Global Finals. The other winning startups in the Idea Stage and Early Stage were Robodel and MedPoint Technologies, respectively, which were awarded \$10,000 each.

The EWC Armenia National Finals took place on July 24 at the Synergy Business Center in Yerevan with 12 teams pitching their startups and competing for prizes totaling over \$100,000. The startups competing in various categories were: Idea Stage — Mr. Fast, Robodel, Streamal/Rooshe; Early Stage — Cyber Tech, Denovo Sciences, MedPoint Technologies, Tac-tun/RAFA Solutions, rBlock; Growth Stage — SmartClick, Heltun, Revalcon, Zoomerang/Zoom Apps. Detailed information on these startups is available on EPIC’s webpage. The event was hosted by Narek Ghazaryan, AUA Chief Communications Officer.

“I am impressed by all the collaboration that has led up to what we see here today. Evidence of outstanding teamwork which many actors are involved in led by Michael, Nejdeh and the EPIC team is crowned by the fact that Armenia has been invited to send two startups to the EWC Global,” stated AUA President Dr. Karin Markides in her opening remarks.

In his turn, EPIC Director Professor Michael Kouchakdjian noted: “When we got the request from the leadership of the Global Entrepreneurship World Cup asking us, for the first time, to organize the national events in Armenia, we decided not to do this alone, but use the event as a vehicle to work with all of the ecosystem partners in Armenia, consistent with our vision and strategy at AUA of engaging external stakeholders and community members.”

Next on the podium was Aram Pakhchanian, chairman of the Board of Ayb Foundation, whose keynote speech titled “Armenia; Contributing to the future by supporting a culture of contribution” set the tone for the event. Pakhchanian emphasized the importance of working together to support collective goals while giving generously. The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion on “How to speed up the startup ecosystem maturity process in Armenia?” The discussion was moderated by Davit Baghdasaryan, the co-founder and CEO of Krisp. The six panelists were Minister of High-Tech Industry Hayk Chobanyan, Project Advisor for Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development and Tech Ventures in ITTD project Mariam Babayan, Founding CEO of FAST Dr. Armen Orujyan, founder of Startup Armenia Foundation Hakob Hakobyan, Executive Director

of UATE Raffi Kassardjian, and Kouchakdjian.

Minister Chobanyan greeted the startups participating in the competition. “It is already a success to be part of this event. I hope that all of you will find your roadmap to success. You have already won and are part of our real ecosystem, and I hope in the near future we will see all of you in your offices to discuss your success stories. I am sure that the process is moving forward in Armenia,” he emphasized.

The last two hours of the program were devoted to the National Finals competition. While the competing teams were channeling their nervous energy in preparation for the pitch, the audience grew in anticipation of hearing from some of the most exciting startups in Armenia. The six jury members of the National Finals were: Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry Dr. Davit Sahakyan, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Granatus Ventures Manuk Hergnyan, Co-founder of FAST Artur Alaverdyan, CEO of Synergy International Systems Ashot Hovanesian, CEO and Founder of Podcastle Artavazd Yeritsyan and SoftConstuct’s representative Inga Vardanyan.

The final pitching session was marked by tense competition among the startups, as the teams were not only competing for the established prizes in this national event, but also for the chance to represent Armenia in the EWC Global Finals. Each team had a unique value proposition and an innovative approach to solving an important public need or business problem. During the earlier week-long training sessions at AUA led by pitching expert and consultant Jesus (Chus) Lozano, the teams had worked intensely to optimize and polish their pitching and presentation skills.

Serving as the National Organizer, EPIC, together with the National Leadership Committee and support from 40 sponsors, co-organizers, university and ecosystem partners, was successful in effectively organizing the EWC competition in Armenia working with over 100 startup applicants and hundreds of entrepreneurs. The event attracted a large audience at the Synergy Business Center and hundreds of others watching the EWC Armenia 2021 event online.

The EWC 2021 Global Finals will take place in November in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The 100 startups will participate in the EWC Accelerates Program for an intensive startup bootcamp and the two winning startups will compete in the EWC Global Finals.

The Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC) is a platform of the American University of Armenia (AUA) for promoting entrepreneurial education, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and startup venture incubation. EPIC provides an ecosystem for emerging entrepreneurs consisting of first-class facilities and collaborative workspace, programs and events, and a network of mentors, advisors, and investors. EPIC fosters the understanding and application of entrepreneurship in students and faculty at AUA to craft high-impact multidisciplinary ventures.



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Hands 20-Year Jail Terms to Two More Armenian POWs

BAKU (Combined Sources) — Armenian prisoners of war Lyudvig Mkrtchyan and Alyosha Khosrovyan were sentenced to 20 years in prison by Azerbaijan on Monday, August 2.

In a grave violation of the international humanitarian law, Azerbaijan prosecuted Mkrtchyan and Khosrovyan and accused them of allegedly “torturing Azerbaijanis during the First Karabakh War.”

According to a decision from the Baku military court, the two will spend the first 10 years in a prison, the rest in a maximum security correctional facility.

In July, an Azerbaijan court sentenced 39 Armenian prisoners of war to six years in prison, finding them guilty of “illegally crossing the border and weapons possession.”

Earlier in July, Azerbaijan sentenced 14 members of Armenia’s armed forces to various jail terms, while Viken Euljekjian, an Armenian captive and a citizen of Lebanon, was handed a 20-year jail term in mid-June.

Azerbaijan is refusing to return all Armenian prisoners of war, in violation of the statement on the cessation of hostilities

signed by the parties in November 2020. The Armenian side has information about some 200 Armenians still in Azerbaijan’s captivity, but Azeri President Ilham Aliyev claims that persons being kept in Baku are not PoWs, but “terrorists and saboteurs”. At least 19 of the hundreds of Armenian captives have been tortured and killed, according to their lawyers.

Former Minister of Justice Gevorg Danielyan urged the Armenian authorities to make active efforts to defend Armenian prisoners of war (POWs) facing trial in Azerbaijan, stating their repatriation is a matter of Armenia’s “international dignity.”

“The issue of prisoners of war does not only concern themselves or their loved ones, it has long ceased to be just a humanitarian issue, it is primarily a matter of our country’s international dignity, and also a very serious issue of responsibility in the future,” the lawyer wrote on [Facebook](#) on July 30.

Danielyan stated the Azerbaijanis will present the sham trials of POWs “to everyone as a fact of Armenia’s aggression, confirmed in court” in the near future.

“Even if there was no possibility of freezing all negotiations on the key condition of the return of prisoners of war, even if there was no possibility of involving Armenian lawyers in the sham trials of POWs, it was necessary (now, albeit late, but it is still possible) to hire foreign lawyers for these people to feel at least the slightest bit of protection and attention on the part of their state, so that these so-called sentences are appealed and well-substantiated complaints are lodged with the ECHR as soon as possible,” he said, deploring the “observer’s role” assumed by the authorities.

Danielyan warned against the division into groups of “whites” and “blacks” “former” and “current” in the country, underlining “time is running out.”

“Prisoners of war are not only a target of pity, it doesn’t even matter whether their parents are forgiving and treat what happened with understanding, they just need to be properly protected, which is possible,” the lawyer said.

(PanARMENIAN.Net and Panorama.am contributed to this report.)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Armenia and Jordan to Cooperate in Tourism Sector

YEREVAN (Arka) — Armenia and Jordan will cooperate in the field of tourism, Jordanian expert on international tourism Adel Amin said at a press conference in Yerevan on Friday, July 30, after the sides signed a memorandum on cooperation between the tourism associations of Armenia and Jordan in Yerevan on that date.

“Armenia has great potential in tourism, including gastro-tourism, adventure and cultural tourism. Armenia meets all the requirements for Jordanians, including in terms of price-quality ratio,” Amin said.

According to him, the tourist flow from Jordan to Armenia’s neighboring countries is about 1 million a year. He said in order to present the tourism potential of both countries, mutual study tours for tour operators and journalists will be conducted.

He said lack of direct flights between the countries is an obstacle for the development of bilateral tourism.

For his part, the head of the Armenian Tourism Association Mekhak Apresyan called these opportunities promising in terms of diversification of tourism markets, adding that the statistics of mutual visits is still low, but the potential is high.

Over 1,000 pilgrims and Artsakh residents visit Amaras monastery with Assistance of Russian Peacekeepers

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — The servicemen of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) ensured the safety of more than one thousand pilgrims and local residents visiting the Amaras monastery complex during the week.

On the eve of the pilgrim’s visit, the servicemen of the Russian peacekeeping contingent regularly ensure the safety of visiting the Amaras Christian monastery, located near the demarcation line of the sides, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a [statement](#) on Monday, August 2.

As part of the implementation of the trilateral statement of the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia of November 9, 2020, Russian peacekeepers continue to assist in the restoration of peaceful life in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Amaras is one of the early medieval Christian monasteries and is located in the Martuni region. In medieval Armenia, it had the status of a famous religious and cultural center.

As a result of the signing of a ceasefire agreement, after the end of hostilities, the early medieval Amaras monastery was in the immediate vicinity of the demarcation line. Servicemen of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh on a regular basis ensure the safety of pilgrims wishing to visit this shrine.

Iran Ambassador, Military Attaché Visit Gegharkunik Border



Ambassador Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri on the Armenian border

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Armenia Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri and Military Attaché of the Embassy of Iran in Armenia, Colonel Bahman Sadeghin, visited the Gegharkunik region on August 3 accompanied by representatives of the Ministry of Defense.

The commander of the military unit, Major General Arayik Harutyunyan, briefed the ambassador on the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, after which a visit was organized to Verin Shorzha section of the border.

Zohouri, expressing concern over the continuation of border disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, stressed the need for restraint on both sides and the need for a peaceful settlement of disputes. He expressed his condolences to the families of the servicemen killed during the recent clashes.

Explaining the need for all parties to respect internationally recognized borders, Zohouri said that ensuring local peace in the South Caucasus is in the interests of the peoples of the region and expressed the Islamic Republic of Iran’s readiness to assist in establishing local peace in the region.

Gorbachev: Karabakh Conflict Didn’t and Doesn’t Have Simple Solution

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict did not have a simple solution during the Soviet period and does not have one now, first president of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev said in a fresh [article](#) published on August 2.

“Under [Joseph] Stalin, the multinational state began to shift into a rigid super-centralized unitary system. The center decided and controlled everything. In addition, Stalin and his associates cut the borders arbitrarily, as if expecting that no one could even imagine themselves outside the Union. National issues were pushed deep down, but they did not go anywhere. Acute problems were hidden behind the façade of “the rapprochement of the Soviet peoples,” with no one even looking for solutions. Stalin took any national claims and interethnic disputes as anti-Soviet and suppressed them without wasting time on admonitions,” Gorbachev wrote.

“I must admit that at first we underestimated the scale and severity of the problem. But when it arose, we could not resort to old methods of suppression and prohibitions. We believed that we had to take a different path, look for thoughtful and balanced approaches, and use methods of persuasion.” According to Gorbachev, the conflict has long-standing roots: “It did not have a simple solution then and does not have one now...” he said.

Rohingya Human Rights Activist, Aurora Laureate Kyaw Hla Aung Passes Away

YANGON, Myanmar — Rohingya human rights defender Kyaw Hla Aung (Mohammed Kasim) passed away in Yangon on Saturday, July 31, 2021. He was 80.

He had been receiving medical treatments for his chronic health ailments in Yangon after leaving Sittwe, the refugee camp where he lived.

He was the 2018 Aurora Prize Laureate.

In a statement, Noubar Afeyan, Ruben Vardanyan, Aurora co-founders, Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Dr. Tom Catena, chair of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, noted:

Though imprisoned for a collective 12 years for ‘crimes’ including filing petitions and protesting peacefully, Kyaw Hla Aung had never stopped using his skills as an attorney to seek justice for the millions of Rohingya Muslims subject to persecution in and fleeing from Myanmar. Mr. Aung had faced both personal and systemic challenges in protecting a community threatened in his own homeland, but never backed down.

After being named the 2018 Aurora Prize Laureate, he had chosen to allocate the \$1,000,000 award to three international organizations providing medical aid and assistance to Rohingya refugees across Southeast Asia: Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and MERCY Malaysia. Overall, their efforts have benefitted approximately 375,000 Rohingya refugees to date, giving them a second chance and hope for a better tomorrow.

Kyaw Hla Aung had witnessed and felt firsthand the effects of suffocating regulations constantly inflicted upon the Rohingya community. Armed with little more than his knowledge of the law and a tireless determination, he had been successful in battling the inequalities of the system in Myanmar and helping his fellow Rohingya brothers and sisters seek justice.

Aurora offers our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Mr. Kyaw Hla Aung’s family. He will be greatly missed by the global humanitarian community and his treasured memory will live on in our hearts.

To read an interview with him, visit <https://auroraprize.com/en/2018-aurora-prize-laureate-kyaw-hla-aung>



(Aram Arkun photo)



INTERNATIONAL

Gerard Guerguerian Works to Promote Educational and Cultural Life in Stepanakert

By Siranush Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

STEPANAKERT — It has been 10 months after the war ended last year, and Artsakh is still struggling for its existence. Uncertainty about its future and a swirl of concerns over security, social, housing and other issues seem to have sidelined all aspirations aimed at the reanimation of educational and cultural life. Nevertheless, Gerard Guerguerian, a French Armenian who has long worked in the field of international and business law, is actively working in Artsakh for this revival.

At different times, Guerguerian held the positions of president and executive vice-president in various major American and European corporations. He also lectured and published writings on international law. He is the author of the book *Le Nagorny Karabakh - entre sécession et autodétermination* [Nagorno Karabakh: Between Secession and Self-determination], several other volumes, and many articles.

As a member of the Paris Bar association, he has always been proactive in advancing the Armenian cause from the position of international law and the adoption of pro-Armenian resolutions, including the adoption of the resolution on the Armenian Genocide in the European Parliament.

It seems his connection with Artsakh has been connected somehow with all the recent wars of the region. In 1991, during the first war in Artsakh, he provided humanitarian assistance, medical supplies and equipment, and after the war, he made it a rule to visit Artsakh every few years. When he started writing his book about Artsakh, his visits grew more frequent, he explained. During these visits he could not fail to note the scarcity of cultural and entertainment venues for young art-lovers in Artsakh.

To change this situation, Guerguerian launched his “Roots” project, through which he wished to introduce the culture of European cafes, with its atmosphere of music and art. This would be the venue of small concerts, film shows and discussions, meetings and talks with various experts.

The activity of “Roots” coincided with the April 2016 four-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while his new initiative, the Paul Eluard Center of Francophonie, which is meant to be the ideological



is supposed to serve not only as a language and tourism center. It is supposed to recreate the ambience of a ‘boulangerie’ [French bakery] and French cuisine with the best traditions of French and Armenian wineries in

want your projects to get ahead, you should stop getting obsessed with it. Today Shushi is not ours, but history has witnessed this more than once. We should think less about Shushi under control of the enemy, and think more about how we can turn the odds in our favor. And we will, definitely.”

Guerguerian thinks the secret of his success lies in two realities, exclaiming: “Any vision, any aspiration for the future, is doomed to failure, if you do not show enough will and determination to go all the way.” And, of course, he has more plans connected with Artsakh. He thinks that even if the Francophonie Center succeeds, it is not enough. New ideas and new projects are needed, and one is the idea to rebuild the drama theatre in Stepanakert.

“It is really important to understand why we need to rebuild it. In our post-war reality, the Azeri plans are crystal-clear. Their strategy involves terrorizing, discouraging, and squeezing us out at any cost. We have to stand up to it with an even stronger strategic plan. In this respect, the role of the theater can’t be underestimated. Not only do the locals need its reconstruction, we need to conquer the world with our culture. If culture is a weapon, then the theatre is the most mighty one. The restoration of the theater should be in line with the ideas of modernism,” he says, adding, “Artsakh needs modernism. The people don’t have to leave the country in search of it. Instead we need to bring these ideas here, and we can do it via theatre.”

In response to the question as to what he finds sur-



The Paul Eluard Center of Francophonie in Stepanakert



continuation of “Roots,” overlapped with the recent war. If previously the Francophonie Center saw its task chiefly in teaching French, now this is not enough.

Giving more details about the idea of the center, he notes: “You should first have the vision. Implementation comes next. The main idea is a mix of business and culture; they should complement each other, and evolve in tandem. It may be hard to keep such projects going only through funds and donations. The center

the KINI restaurant. Only by combining these two projects, business and culture together, can we succeed.”

Undoubtedly, the war hindered the timely realization of the project. When asked if he hadn’t changed his mind after the war, he smiles, and a little surprised, adds that the war, on the contrary, gave him a nudge to speed it up. He declares: “War is terrible, especially, in terms of human and territorial losses, but it is not the ‘end’ in itself. This is a new reality, and if you

prising in the people of Artsakh, what makes them different, he replies: “The attachment that the people of Artsakh have to this land is incredible. I have never in my life seen that anywhere, in any country. Lebanese Armenians, French Armenians, even Armenians living in Armenia are not attached to their land like these people are. Elsewhere, if they have an opportunity to leave the country for education or better professional promotion chances, they never hesitate and easily settle in a new place. I have met lots of promising smart young people, who can easily find their place in life, living abroad, but they cannot imagine their life without Artsakh. People living abroad won’t understand it.”

Guerguerian wants put to use the experience Armenians obtained abroad in order to allow Armenians to live and thrive here. It is the only way to work our way back to normal.

Siranush Sargsyan is an expert of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia’s Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

Community News

AIWA 30th Anniversary Celebration, Symposium Scheduled for October 2

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) is announcing the organization will celebrate its 30th Anniversary with a symposium on Saturday, October 2, 2021 at the Balboa Bay Resort, Newport Beach, from 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., followed by a social hour. The theme of the event is "Uniting Women Globally" and will feature noted guest speakers as well as panel discussions to address key issues of interest to women in Armenia and worldwide and the challenges they face today. AIWA is a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting and elevating Armenian women globally through programs and initiatives focusing on the interests and needs of Armenian women.

Co-Chairs of the event Diane Cabraloff and Arsine Phillips have been working diligently in contacting guest speakers, as well as moderators and panelists for the following topics: Women Affecting Change, Women Influencers and Women in Technology.

The special guest luncheon speaker will be Nadia Owusu, the award-winning author of *Aftershocks*, a memoir about her life as a child of a Ghanaian father and Armenian-American mother. The co-chairs state that after the panels, there will be a jewelry exhibit and talk by Lucine Almas, and Wine Tasting and discussion with Victoria Aslanian of Armas Winery.

The planning committee members



are hopeful that this will be an actual gathering of AIWA members and guests. However, when looking back to 2020 they can never forget the unpredictable turmoil and devastation that reached every corner of the world. To reach attendees that cannot travel, the symposium will also be held virtually and will permit them to quickly pivot if situations and local rules change for all to remain safe.

The Board and members of the Los Angeles Affiliate are pleased and send special thanks to the Central Board of AIWA, under the Presidency of Ani Kharajian, for selecting Southern California to celebrate the 30th anniversary of AIWA. The symposium will provide a precedent to the much-sought AIWA Conference in the near future. Previous international conferences have been held in London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Geneva, San Francisco and twice in Yerevan. Each conference offered perspectives on historic and current issues and provided a rich forum for information, discussion and further research.

For registration and information for the Symposium contact info@aiwainternational.org

or through the website at www.aiwa2021symposium.org.



Alexandra Kaprielian, Takri Wines

GiniFest Is Back

Armenian Wine and Spirits Festival Finally Takes Place in Person

By Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BURBANK, Calif. — After rescheduling several times and instead holding virtual events, the team behind GiniFest was finally able to hold the third annual Armenian Wine and Spirits Festival in person on July 25. Tickets were sold out one week before the event. The outdoor patio of Castaway, a restaurant and event center in Burbank, CA, was transformed into a huge tasting center full of exquisite wines and spirits from Armenia and California. Winemakers were paired with stations serving cheese, fruits and snacks, sweets and pastries by various brands. All this delivered with live Armenian romantic songs and showcased artworks makes for a perfect Armenian event with a breathtaking view of Los Angeles.

This year's GiniFest is especially meaningful. Anush Gharibyan-O'Connor, the executive director of the festival, finds an empty chair inside the restaurant to rest her feet after a long but successful day and shares with me the stories of the hardship that the winemakers went through due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Artsakh in 2020. She says: "The imports have been pretty much nonexistent, and consumption in Armenia was very low as well. Then, when they were coming finally out of COVID, the war hit. A lot of people who worked in wineries had to go and fight in the frontlines. And we, being here and introducing Armenian wine to non-Armenians, make people buy wine and get excited about wine, [which in turn] gives the opportunity to people [in Armenia] to make more wine and keep their jobs."

Due to the circulating new Delta variant, most of the winemakers from Armenia could not attend GiniFest. The importing and distributing companies took on their roles with the utmost responsibility. The festival made it possible for three wineries from Artsakh to present whatever product is left after November 9. Apris, Takri and Aran lost everything during the war in Artsakh.

Takri means roots in the Artsakh dialect. The biggest loss for the Kaprielian family was the loss of their employees of many years, young boys who perished during the war. In some ways, Takri is fortunate to have a factory in Stepanakert. The winery was in Banadzor village in Hadrut province which is now under the control of Azerbaijan.

see GINIFEST, page 10



Anush Gharibyan-O'Connor and Stepan Partamian

Continued Genocidal Threats Posed by Azerbaijan Subject of Hearing in Congress

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) commended the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC) for holding a hearing on July 28 titled, "Ending Genocide: Accountability for Perpetrators," and submitted a statement for the record.

The aim of the hearing was to determine how the international community can hold perpetrators of genocide and mass atrocities accountable for international crimes committed against religious communities, despite the adoption of the 1948 Genocide Convention, which codifies genocide as a crime.

In his opening remarks, Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) referred to the Armenian Genocide when he stated that the "20th century was replete with the most horrific of genocides, including the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust." He underscored that the US Congress passed the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in October 2019 "in a totally comprehensive way" and affirmation from the US Senate on December 12, 2019, and President Joe Biden on April 24, 2021 followed.

In a statement submitted by Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, the Assembly linked past atrocities committed against the Armenian people to the present day, when Christian Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh continue to be targeted, most recently during the 44-day war last Fall launched by Azerbaijan, with the full and open support of Turkey. The Assembly cited a July 25, 2021 article from the *New York Times* titled, "In Nagorno-Karabakh, Land Mines, Bulldozers and Lingering Tensions," in which Azerbaijan says, "Armenians there must accept its rule if they want to remain long-term." This follows a statement earlier this month by Azerbaijan's president that in effect Azerbaijan will take Armenian lands, including Armenia's Syunik province, and that Yerevan is historically Azerbaijan's, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In addition, Ardouny highlighted the Assembly's concerns about the "ongoing destruction of historic, religious and Armenian cultural heritage sites by Azerbaijan which has been documented by Caucasus Heritage Watch, and urges USCIRF and TLHRC to explore avenues to safeguard and protect cultural heritage."

Highlighting the significance of genocide recognition, the Assembly underscored that U.S. affirmation of the Armenian Genocide by Congress and President Biden "have charted a new course" and "enhances America's credibility, recommitments the United States to the worldwide cause of genocide prevention and represents America at its best." The Assembly concluded by emphasizing the importance of holding perpetrators of genocide accountable "under the full weight of existing international human rights law, to help prevent future crimes and human rights abuses, to safeguard and protect vulnerable populations, and to assert America's leadership in the regard for the betterment of humanity."



COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

Rolf Hosfeld

By Muriel Mirak
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

POTSDAM, Germany — It was with sadness that we learned from the Lepsiushaus in Potsdam, Germany, that Dr. Rolf Hosfeld passed away on July 23. Hosfeld, who was 73, served as academic director of the Lepsiushaus for the last ten years. Under his direction, the research center, located in the former residence of Johannes Lepsius, hosted lectures and seminars, becoming a meeting-place for students and researchers.

Hosfeld launched transnational academic networks and research projects which enhanced the regional and international role of the institution. Above all, his work contributed to disseminating knowledge about Armenians, their history and culture, and the genocide.

Rolf Hosfeld was born in 1948, and attended universities in Frankfurt and Berlin, focusing on German studies, political science and philosophy. He did his doctoral work on German poet Heinrich Heine. He

engaged in editorial and journalistic activities as well as cinema, and made numerous documentaries. Hosfeld had been a member of the German Writers' Union since 1982, and published articles as well as fifteen books, some of which have received awards. In addition to Heine, he wrote a biography of Karl Marx which won the "Das politische Buch" (the political book) prize in 2010, and in 2012 he released his work on Jewish-German satirist Kurt Tucholsky.

His history of the Armenian Genocide appeared in 2005 and 2009, and a 2015 revised edition was translated into Turkish (2018) and Armenian (2021). His study of "Operation Nemesis" appeared in 2005. He also edited, co-edited and contributed to works on Johannes Lepsius, a "German exception," and the German Empire.

As Lepsiushaus director, he organized conferences and symposia, most recently, a project entitled, "Ideas & their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919," in collaboration with the AGBU Europe, the European Union of Jewish Students (EJUS) and the Roma organization Phiren Amenca. Co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union, it began with a series of online events in June, and will be followed by an international conference in late August. The initiative examines two opposing processes in Europe in the wake of the First World War: the ideas of humanitarianism and international justice as opposed to radical extremist political ideologies. The Ottoman genocide of 1915 occupies a central role in this context. Hosfeld opened the series of webinars (held in English) on June 2 with a lecture on "The Rise of International Law: The Talaat Pasha Trial in June 1921."

Establishing networks for such cooperation goes back in time. In 2012, Hosfeld signed an agreement with Prof. Johann Hafner, dean of the Philosophy



in many countries, featuring literary texts of Armenian authors. The Lepsiushaus collaborates also with the Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan as well as the State University in the Armenian capital.

Among the many events Hosfeld organized, those aimed at educating especially the younger generation have had an important impact. One such was a seminar and workshop with students from Berlin and Potsdam in November 2013. The guest speaker was genocide scholar Taner Akcam, who shared his experiences and the fruits of his groundbreaking research with two classes of high school students. Such educational interventions are all the more valuable

in Germany, where a parliamentary resolution on the Armenian genocide was to pass only in 2016, and where classroom instruction very rarely includes the subject. To be sure, not only the leadership and staff at the Lepsiushaus, but also students and researchers who have benefited from its facilities, will carry on the work of Rolf Hosfeld. They are signaling their commitment to do so by dedicating the international conference in August to him and his academic achievements.

Department of the University of Potsdam, aimed at expanding studies on the Armenian Genocide. The Lepsiushaus enjoys a working relationship in Potsdam with the Moses Mendelssohn Center. In 2013 they held a three-day international conference on "Rediscovering Franz Werfel." In January 2015, Hosfeld joined with Ulrich Schreiber of the International Literature Festival Berlin, to launch a worldwide reading in commemoration of the centenary of the Genocide. Readings took place on April 24

Nevart 'Norma' Apigian Haroian

DEARBORN, Mich. — Nevart 'Norma' Apigian Haroian passed away on July 19, 2021 at age 92.

She was active in St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Dearborn.

She was a former resident of Farmington, MI. Four years ago, after the passing of her husband, Haigas, she moved to Connecticut to live with her daughter and family.

Nevart was born and raised in Pontiac and was the third child of Mamigon and Takouhi Apigian.

In 1949 she married Haigas "Gus"



and moved to Dearborn.

Norma is survived by her children: her daughter, Denise (Daniel) Sullivan, and her son, Thomas (Roberta) Haroian; her five grandchildren; as well as her siblings, her brother, the late Apraham "Abe" (the late Connie) Apigian; her two sisters Kasvart "Alice" (the late Carny) Demerjian and Surpouhi "Betty" (the late Bob) Kessel; as well

as many nieces and nephews and cousins. A private service will be held in the future.

Giragosian

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Additional Donations to TCA Sponsor a Teacher Program

During the month of July, Tekeyan Cultural Association's Sponsor A Teacher Program in Armenia and Artsakh has received the following additional donations;

In Memory of Nora Azadian Sonig Kradjian, Boca Raton, FL	\$200
Roupen and Annie Kiredjian, Waltham, MA	\$100
Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, Southfield, MI	\$100
In Memory of Missak Alexanian Evereg Fenesse Educational Society, Commerce Township, MI	\$25



COMMUNITY NEWS

Senator Carl Levin Leaves Lasting Legacy of Friendship

TRIBUTE, from page 1

was a testament to the fact that ultimately, true dedicated public service and getting the job done matter more than divisive political issues. A strongly liberal Democrat, he gained the confidence of the majority of Michigan's middle-of-the-road electorate and deep respect from both Democrats and Republicans who viewed his tenure as a United States Senator as model of how to serve in public office. He lived his life in a way that before being a Democrat, he was an American and a Michigander.

Born to a Jewish family in Detroit, Levin's exceptionally strong support of Armenian issues was a mirror of the strong relationship between the Jewish and Armenian communities in Michigan. From the joint legislative push for a Holocaust and Armenian Genocide educational mandate in Michigan's public schools to the community collaboration spearheaded by the late Fr. Diran Papazian, dean of Michigan's Armenian clergy, and the martyred Rabbi Morris Adler from their respective Southfield-based congregations, the Jewish-Armenian friendship runs deep in the Metro Detroit area.

Levin was a man with deep ethnic roots who was loyal to the values instilled by immigrant grandparents. The Jewish community has referred to him as a "mensch," the Yiddish word for "human" which similar to the Armenian expression "martgoutiun" (humanity), connotes integrity and coming through for friends in need. For Levin, the Armenians were counted among those friends. The Armenians who saw in him the embodiment of the best old-world values and who continually supported his re-election financially or through networking (the late captain of industry, Alex Manoogian, was a strong supporter), were the beneficiaries of his solid advocacy on Capitol Hill and in numerous large and small ways.

Elected to the Senate in 1979, his maiden speech on the legislative floor was on the Armenian Genocide, a fact that he used to mention in conversation throughout his career. The brotherhood he clearly felt with Armenians, as a people who had suffered a Holocaust as horrific as that under the Nazis, was always apparent. Fr. Garabed Kochakian, retired pastor of St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield, MI, recalls that he often saw Levin in the airport when they were both travelling on business. "The minute he would see me, the conversation about the Genocide would come up," Kochakian recalls. "Things that Turkey was doing and so on. He would always say

'They're still at it.' It was something that was always on his mind. Seeing me and knowing me to be an Armenian clergyman, as a person carrying the same burden as his [Jewish] people, this would come to the surface."

Levin's relationship with the Armenian-American community was strengthened during his time as a Detroit City Council member before he was elected to national office, and as a Senator represent-



ing Michigan. This period coincided with a time of exemplary generosity of Armenian Americans for the betterment of Metro Detroit, including Alex and Marie Manoogian's gifting of their home to the City of Detroit in the mid-1960s, Edward and Helen Mardigian's major contributions to the University of Michigan-Dearborn resulting in the establishment of the Mardigian Library on campus in 1987, Richard and Jane Manoogian's remarkable contributions to the Detroit Institute of Arts, which dedicated its American Art wing in honor of Richard Manoogian in 2007, and Alex and Marie Manoogian's contributions to Wayne State University resulting in the establishment of Alex Manoogian Hall and its Ethnic Heritage Center in 1970.

Levin taught law at Wayne State University, whose law school currently houses the Levin Center, an academic institute which aims at advancing the vision and legislative legacy of the Senator.

John Jamian, the Metro Detroit political figure who was a former executive director of the Armenian Assembly, used to sit with Levin on their flights back and forth to DC when Levin was a Senator and Jamian was director of the Assembly. Although a Republican, Jamian worked with Levin on numerous issues both in local politics (including when Levin was a Detroit City Council member) and on Armenian issues in Washington.

Jamian recalls that in 2002 he received a frantic phone call from Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Torkom Manoogian. In response to the Second Intifada, the Israeli government had decided to build a wall separating Israeli-controlled territory from the West Bank. "The wall was going to right through the Armenian Church's property," Jamian recalls. "We had olive trees that were 300, 500 years old that the monks used to press for olive oil to light the lamps in the church. The IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] showed up and started bulldozing olive trees."

After receiving the call from the Patriarch, Jamian went right to Senator Levin's office, at the time, across the street. As a Jewish-American Senator who was a supporter of Israel and chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, Levin held enormous sway in Israeli governmental circles. Jamian asked him what could be done about the situation and, as he recalls, Levin "got on the phone and called some Israeli general. Levin told him to pull out right now — find some other way, but stop knocking down olive trees. The IDF was gone in a matter of hours. This is the kind of guy he was."

Jamian added that "Anytime I wanted to see him for Armenian Assembly issues, he would help," and in regard to local politics, "I worked with him when I ran the [Detroit] Port Authority. He displayed and showed his affection for our people and his concern for our people's issues."

Edmond Azadian of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Tekeyan Cultural Association also shared his strong appreciation of Levin's work on behalf of the Armenian cause. "He was extremely helpful to the Armenians," Azadian said. "Anything we asked for, any personal favor, or for the community, he was ready."

Azadian relates that Levin was responsible for one of the most consequential decisions in regard to Armenian immigration to the United States. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian Jews fled to the US under the immigration laws of the time that allowed Jews from the USSR to claim refugee status. Simultaneously, Armenians were fleeing Azerbaijan after the pogroms in Baku and Sumgait. An Armenian man from Baku whose wife was Jewish had come to the US under her refugee status and settled in Detroit. He tried to bring the rest of his Armenian relatives who were scattered throughout the Soviet Union, to America, but Armenians were not covered under the same law. Azadian wrote a letter

to President George H.W. Bush and got nowhere. But when he asked Levin for help, the Senator "walked to the State Department and complained 'why aren't the Baku Armenians being given refugee status?'" He was able to get the resolution passed," Azadian noted, and thousands of Armenians fleeing Azerbaijan were able to settle in the United States.

Over the years, Levin accepted numerous Armenian-American college students as summer interns through the Armenian Assembly. He supported Armenian issues and the Armenian community, particularly in the State of Michigan, in so many ways that they can scarcely be enumerated.

State Rep. Mari Manoogian mentioned his mentorship as an elder statesman in local Democratic Party circles: "I saw Senator Levin at a campaign event for now-Rep. Haley Stevens at a home in Birmingham just a few days before the 2018 Election — my first general election as a candidate — and he gave me an incredible pep talk that calmed my nerves and gave me the confidence to finish our Get Out the Vote effort strong."

Manoogian added, "Sen. Carl Levin embodied what it means to do the work of the people. Throughout his life and work in the United States Senate, Senator Levin never compromised his principles or values, holding folks accountable and looking out for the American people. Yet, he also deeply understood the value and importance of reaching across the aisle to not only build trust, but also genuine friendships. His example is one that we should all follow as Michiganders and Americans."

The respect in which the Metro Detroit Armenian community held the late Senator is profound, both as Armenians and as residents of the State of Michigan. It is difficult to summarize the Levin legacy, but Nancy Malkasian Banks, former City Clerk of Southfield, Michigan, had the following to say: "Carl Levin was an extremely genuine man who truly cared about all people with dignity. He told it like it was, was always prepared, and always followed through in his 36 years of service in Congress."

Carl Levin married Barbara Halpern in 1961, and they had three daughters and six grandchildren. He retired from the senate in 2015 and was succeeded by Gary Peters.

Carl Levin is already missed, not only by Americans in general, Michigan residents in particular, and his own Jewish community, but by the Armenian community and especially the Armenian-American community of Michigan.

NAASR Chairman Announces Retirement of Executive Director

BELMONT, Mass. — Yervant Chekijian, the chairman of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), announced this week that Executive Director Sarah Ignatius is retiring this year, now that she has turned 70. Starting in 2016, she has been the first person to serve as executive director full time. NAASR has opened a search for a new candidate to fill the position.

"Sarah is an extraordinary person who has brought a high level of professionalism to our organization and done an exceptional job," said Chekijian. "She played a major role as the project manager for the development of our spectacular new headquarters and as an integral part of the fundraising effort. She also ably led us through the pandemic, working with Marc Mamigonian, and helped us to reach an expanded global audience. With

the support of her team, Sarah launched our first ever virtual gala and helped close the funding gap for our building so that we will soon be able to pay off our loan to the bank. It has been a pleasure to work with her, and we are grateful for her hard work and devotion to NAASR. We look forward to continuing to work with her as we search for a highly qualified successor to build on our achievements and continue our progress."

NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian added, "Sarah has been instrumental to the great progress NAASR has made in the past five years. She has great respect for the history and mission of NAASR while always propelling us forward. It's been a privilege and also a joy to work with her every day."

"The past five and a half years at NAASR have been the most fulfilling of



Sarah Ignatius

my career," said Ignatius. "NAASR is an inspiring organization with a long history of integrity to its mission as one of the foremost organizations in the world

advancing Armenian Studies. I am profoundly grateful to NAASR for giving me this opportunity. The challenges were exhilarating, and the remarkable successes we achieved together are intensely rewarding, not to mention the deep friendships that will stay with me forever."

NAASR has created a search and hiring committee and is commencing a nationwide search for qualified candidates. To ease the transition, Ignatius will serve as executive advisor to the new executive director. Priority consideration will be given to applications received by September 30, 2021, although the application process may remain open beyond that date until the position is filled. For a detailed description of the required qualifications, duties, and application procedures, visit <https://naasr.org/pages/job-opportunities>.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Wine and Spirits Festival Finally Takes Place in Person

GINIFEST, from page 7

“We have now acquired new lands and we will start cultivating them. But unfortunately, the taste of Takri will not be the same,” Alexandra Kaprielian of Takri Wines observes with sadness.

Emilia Bagdassarian of Apris Wines was presenting its 2018 vintage, the only wine that was saved. Over 50,000 bottles are estimated to be lost. All the white and rosé wines were bottled with corks in them and not labeled yet. Red wine was in the tanks and barrels. The vineyards of Sireni are the ones that are left in Martuni and Amaras, the area which is controlled by the Russian peacekeepers. Only with their support can the Bagdassarian family go and work there. She exclaims: “It’s very emotional and difficult. We are not going to be able to produce the same wine: Vines need a lot of care and attention. Since we’re not there every day, we’re unable to do this. However, when we are there, we are doing it with the best of our abilities. We may be able to have some sort of collection. We are more focusing on harvest and preservation.”

The family is in the process of rebuilding the brand in Armenia. They managed to bring over and replant some indigenous vines like Sireni and a few other grapes. For the Bagdassarian family, Apris was a project of passion more than a business. Keeping people in Artsakh busy and giving them the opportunity to live and work in their motherland was and still is essen-



The Napastak Winery stand

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PASADENA
GLENDALE
CHAPTER

The Armenian Vote

in 2018 and the upcoming elections
in Lebanon

Presented By

Roupen Avsharian , Esq.

Thursday, August 12 ,2021
7:30 pm at TCA
Beshgeuturian Center
1901 N Allen Ave , Altadena

tial to Apris. “We have to keep going. If we don’t, there will be no opportunities,” Emilia adds.

Apris is one of the favorite Artsakh wines of Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles. Despite all the losses and struggle these wineries went through, he is hopeful that the skills and the art of winemaking that they developed will be continuous. “They must find other ways and we all must do everything for Armenian wine to have its unique place under the sun,” the consul general states determinedly. Baibourtian finds very significant the fact that not only wines from Armenia are represented in GiniFest but also Armenian winemakers from Napa Valley are here.

He is talking about one of the Armenian wineries in Napa, Napastak. Lusine Hartunian and her family expanded the winery’s purpose by turning it into an epicurean boutique, a “gourmet lifestyle brand.” That means that the winery came to GiniFest with an entire spectrum of gastronomic experience: bread soaked in balsamic vinegar, olive oils and mustards paired with a red wine kept the stand occupied the entire evening.

After the hardships of the pandemic, busi-



Emilia Bagdassarian, Apris Wines

ness started to improve for the Napastak winery over the last couple of months. Its supporters are mainly from the Armenian community, people who drive all the way



Stepan Partamian, founder of GiniFest, speaking

COMMUNITY NEWS



The Napastak Winery stand

from San Francisco just to see the winery, notes Lusine, proclaiming: "My goal is to get the Armenian name out there and let the world know who we are, what we are capable of. It makes me proud to have an Armenian brand in Northern California where there are not many Armenians."



Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, the Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles

Napastak's name is much loved also among non-Armenians, who enjoy the winemaker's hospitality. Together with her husband, Lusine also owns a distillery which produces

brandy and vodka. But it's for "before and after dinner." "The wine is part of the dinner," declares Lusine, smiling.

Stepan Partamian, the founder of GiniFest, shares the festival's ambitious purpose to involve non-Armenians. He and Anush invite many restaurateurs and wine specialists to taste the Armenian wine at the festival. "We are very self-enclosed as a community. We can introduce our prod-



Lusine Hartunian, founder of Napastak Winery

ucts to all the people in Southern California with its population of 11 million. The Armenian wines are so advanced that it is important to present them to non-Armenians," quickly adds Stepan, and moves on to greet his special guests.

Part of the proceeds from the festival are being donated to support students in Armenia with their tuition costs. The next, fourth annual GiniFest will take place on Sunday, May 22, 2022.

Pallone Amendment Prohibiting Military Assistance to Azerbaijan Passes

PROHIBITION, from page 1

"This unprecedented commitment in funding will go a long way in helping continue economic, governance and rule of law reforms which further strengthen America's strategic partnership with this young democracy," said Pallone.

In addition to Rep. Pallone, other supporters of the Amendment include: Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), David Valadao (R-CA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Judy Chu (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Jim Langevin (D-RI), Andy Levin (D-MI), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Devin Nunes (R-CA), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), and Dina Titus (D-NV).



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.

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.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: 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

**ADVERTISE
IN THE MIRROR**



Arts & Culture

Goshgarian’s Latest Book Gets the Power Of Amazon Behind it

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Author Gary Goshgarian, a professor of English literature at Northeastern University, is a prolific writer under the pseudonym Gary Braver. He has released many fiction and non-fiction titles under both names.

His most recent effort, *Choose Me*, a collaboration with longtime friend and fellow author, Tess Gerritsen, is a *New York Times* bestseller mystery. (Gerritsen, a physician by training, is the author of the successful Rizzoli and Isles series of detective novels, which have been turned into a long-running TV series on TNT.)

The book (see accompanying review) offers a cautionary tale of forbidden love while being a damned good page turner. It is about a college student in Boston, Taryn Moore, who ends up having an affair with her professor, Jack Dorian, and not too long after initiating the affair, dies under mysterious circumstances. The victim, a brilliant yet troubled young woman, at the time of her death, seemed on the verge of losing everything, including her longtime boy-



Author Gary Goshgarian

friend, and thus had decided to pursue her professor as a sort of exercise in confirming her desirability.

“The idea came out of a conversation at a Christmas cocktail party at a bookstore in Needham,” he said, which he and Gerritsen were attending.

“It was the height of the ‘Me Too’ movement. Lots of people were being disgraced — Harvey Weinstein, Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose — and then Matt Damon had made a statement that sexual impropriety is on a spectrum from an uninvited kiss to rape and he got badly criticized. Tess and I were talking that it would be interesting to write a novel together that looks at both sides of an illicit relationship,” he said.

Finding the right setting was next.

“I said how about a university setting, an illicit relationship between a professor and a student. That’s an old trope that goes back to Abelard and Heloise in the 12th century but we will put new wine in an old bottle and examine each side of the affair and make legitimate, layered complex characters out of them so we’re not totally condemning or condoning it,” Goshgarian said.

(Abelard was hired by Heloise’s uncle as a tutor in France in 1115. The

see GOSHGARIAN, page 13



Marina Terteryan Presenting Sh!t My Armenian Grandma Says at Queernissage

LGBTQ+ Open Air Market Meets with Success

By Michelle Mkhlian

STUDIO CITY, Calif. — On Saturday, July 24, 2021 the GALAS LGBTQ+ Armenian Society held its first ever Queernissage — an open-air pop-up market by LGBTQ+ Armenians and allies at the Studio City Pop-up. An homage to “Vernissage,” the open-air market in Armenia that has been a gathering place for artists and merchants for decades, Queernissage was a space for community members to express and share their creativity with each other and with the public.

The event was extremely successful with tons of folks of all ages and backgrounds turning out to support the eclectic array of vendors including artists, bakers, writers, craftspeople, and more! As a testament to the event’s success, many vendors actually sold out of their merchandise and by popular demand, GALAS hopes to plan another market for this Fall.

GALAS Board Member and Armenian artist, Natalia Sookias explained, “Our intention for Queernissage was to support creatives to try something new, foster community, and share the creative brilliance within our community with the public. All this set within the hustle and bustle of a marketplace bazaar like many of us know from Armenia and the countries we immigrated from to LA. The continued vision for Queernissage is to create a regular marketplace where craftspeople, artisans, the community and greater public can gather, exchange and celebrate the richness of our intersecting cultures.”

Queernissage was a meaningful and remarkable experience for both vendors and attendees alike. Queer Armenian-Irish-American artist, Jessi Knox, who shared her art-



Queernissage, July 24, 2021 (Photo: Ani Ishkhanian)

work at Queernissage noted, “For whatever reason, I’ve always felt like my queer identity and my Armenian culture had to remain separate. I never imagined a space where I could comfortably celebrate these significant pieces of who I am in unison. I am still discovering ways to connect with my Armenian culture, the illustrator within me, and my queer identity. Being supported and surrounded by many other LGBTQIA+ Armenians and allies inspired me and showed me that it’s possible to blend all these parts of myself in my everyday life and arts. Queernissage felt like being home.”

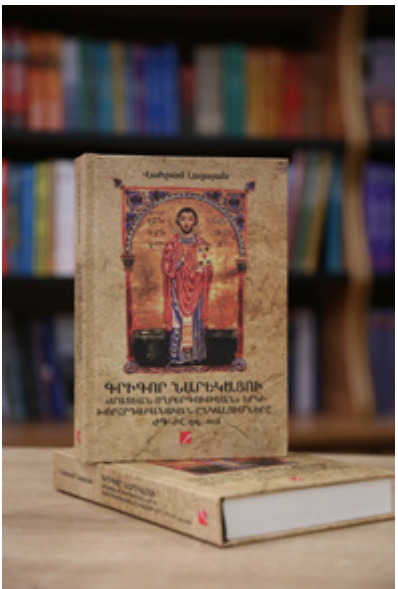
see LGBTQ+, page 16

Society for Armenian Studies Publishes Late Dr. Vahram Lalayan’s Mystical Perception of the Book of Lamentations by Grigor Narekatsi

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) has posthumously sponsored the publication of Dr. Vahram Lalayan’s book, *Mystical Perception of the Book of Lamentations by Grigor Narekatsi in the 13th – 18th Centuries*. Dr. Lalayan was a medieval theologian and the head of the Department of History at Grigor Narekatsi University in Artsakh. He was killed by Azerbaijani forces in Meds Tagher village in Hadrut during the 2020 war.

Mystical Perception of the Book of Lamentations was published in Armenian by Antares Press in Yerevan and deals with Narekatsi’s *Book of Lamentations*. *Mystical Perception*, edited by Lalayan’s colleague, Dr. Amalya Grigoryan of Narekatsi University, consists of an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, and a list of primary literary sources.

The first chapter deals with the “Medieval Commentaries of the *Book of Lamentations*” and discusses the research of Poghos Khachatryan’s work on the first and fourth editions of the *Book of Lamentations*. The second chapter deals with the commentaries of the *Book of Lamentations* and analyzes the mystical interpretations.



“The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) is honored to have been able to sponsor the publication of Dr. Vahram Lalayan’s book,” stated SAS President Prof. Bedross Der Matossian. “It is the dream of every scholar to see the fruits of their years of hard work published. Unfortunately, Lalayan did not get that chance. As a scholar and a human being, he believed in the cardinal right to defend his land during the Artsakh War of 2020. He believed in the right of the Armenians of Artsakh to self-determination and was killed by the Azeri forces because he chose to remain in his home village. His book on Narekatsi is a testament to his character as a medieval theologian and historian and an Artsakhtsi defending his homeland. His name will remain eternal in the pages of history and for future generations.”

Lalayan’s colleague, Dr. Grigoryan, commented on the publication

see LAMENTATIONS, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Goshgarian's Latest Book Gets the Power of Amazon Behind it

GOSHGARIAN, from page 12

two started a passionate affair, resulting in the birth of a son. They wed secretly but shortly thereafter, the uncle's goons attacked and castrated Abelard. The latter decided to become a monk and encouraged his beloved to enter a convent. The two were frequent correspondents and their love letters have been studied and loved by scholars.)

The book, released on July 1, has plenty of four- and five-star reviews on Amazon.

"We got the mighty Amazon machine behind us. Starting June 1, they had a massive campaign behind us," he said. "We had a quarter million downloads!"

A lot of interest is being generated to bring the book to the small or big screens, he said.

"I think the Jack vs. the Taryn chapters are distinguishable. Taryn is more needy and comes across as more aggressive and determined to get Jack. She is also quite wounded. Jack's distinction is in his sense of guilt and regret, having crossed the line. I have a tendency to telescope the moment. Tess's writing is much more incisive and direct. I had Jack think more about things in detail," he said.

"When we finished the book, we went through it and tried to make it seem seamless, hoping you could still distinguish the voices. Frankie the cop is quite distinct, being a middle-aged mother of twins and more cop-ish," he explained.

As crazy as the character of Taryn is, she has been drawn with empathy.

"We did not want to make this a 'Fatal Attraction' ... where she is loony tunes. We wanted to make her flawed and obsessed and to give her a background of having been rejected by men, and used and abused by men. Her father abandoned her, her boyfriend abandons her, and then Jack, they become lovers briefly and then he says 'I'm out of this and want to go back to my marriage.'"

He added, "I needed her to be a student of his and come up with a course that she would be in, small and intimate and I came up with the idea of Star-crossed Lovers and give it some kind of artistic unity."

He continued, "There are two tropes in the novel: one is adultery, which is the oldest story ever told, and the second is a student-professor relationship, which goes back to Abelard and Heloise."

Goshgarian added that "You can go back to classical literature. Medea is wronged by Jason, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Queen Dido is abused, loved and abandoned by Aeneid, right up to *Gone Girl*. She's like the characters she is reading about."

Goshgarian stressed that this is strictly a work of fiction and not one of his experiences.

"When I started teaching half a century ago, professors dated students and would socialize with students, some married them and there wasn't any kind of university rule against that," he said.

Then Title XI came up, he said, which is an anti-discriminatory rule, including gender, putting an end to "trading sex for grades, and that had been done for many years. If you have an affair with a student, you give that person an A."

"That has put the kibosh on all the free-wheeling romanticization that was going on," he explained.

"We really worked to make the characters realistic," he said. "Most people don't like Taryn, but you can empathize with her plight. Jack, I wanted to make guilty. I didn't want to exonerate him and I wanted to make the reader empathize with him."

As for the police procedural end of things, Goshgarian said, "You can't let yourself be influenced by cop shows but have to go to the real thing."

As for designating a murderer, Goshgari-

an noted, "There are two kinds of unstated rules that writers know about. In the Agatha Christie school, take the person who is the least visible, the least suspicious and is always there, or take the one who is the most suspicious and clear that person and then, oh my God, he or she really did do it!"

Goshgarian and Gerritsen each decided to take a chapter on the characters of their gender to "get a balanced point of view."

The two sent chapters back and forth for a year and a half, with each contributing suggestions and changes.

"It's kind of an unusual and fun task to do," he added.

As for the possibility of a sequel, it does not look good. Goshgarian said that Gerritsen has "several irons in the fire. I would love to do another one with her but it is probably not going to happen."

Other Books in the Works

Goshgarian has been a professor of English at Northeastern for 52 years and will retire in December, to give himself more time to travel and write.

Goshgarian teaches courses in horror fiction, science fiction, modern bestsellers, and fiction writing. In addition, he has taught fiction-writing workshops in the US and Europe.

Asked where his ideas come from, he was not sure, though he noted that he has his antennae out for topics.

"I'm not sure where they come from," he said. "I can narrow the genre to a mystery or a thriller, a whodunnit kind of thing, which is a puzzle, and thrillers which are driven by dread."

The ideas can come from anywhere.

"I have a whole file of story ideas," he said.

He stated that he writes every day. "I am a morning person. I usually get up at 4.30 and I start right in. I break it up by a bike ride. I usually read at night and that sometimes generates ideas," he added.

"The first step is to constantly read. Read people you would like to grow up and be or emulate and have curiosity about other people, people who are not you, because we all have inner lives and empathizing with someone who isn't you, gives you a capacity to create characters outside of yourself," he said.

"Look at another person's book the way a carpenter looks at a house," he said. "Get an overall sense of structure," he said.

"Come up with a 250-word synopsis of your story. It forces you to define the arc of the story and define the change in your character. The character at the end has to be sadder and wiser than at the beginning of the story," he noted.

He said he often reads Michael Connolly, Chris Bohjalian ("a literary page-turning novelist"), Lisa Unger, Stephen King and Dean Kuntz.

"I think I have been influenced by almost everyone I've ever read or taught," He said. "I don't have favorite authors but favorite books by those authors."

Among those he loves is King's *Pet Sematary*, which he calls a "masterpiece," Elizabeth Strout's Olive Kitteridge series of short stories "beautifully written," and Ian McEwan's *The Children Act* and *Atone-ment*.

He is working on two other books, *Served Cold*, about a writer who has just finished his third book and he and everyone hope and expect that this will be a big breakout book and be a bestseller. However, he is shredded by a reviewer from the *New York Times* and then "he goes after this guy," Goshgarian said.

"Anyone who's ever gotten a bad review would like this storyline," he laughed.

The other one is called *Primitive*, based on a biking trip he took to Sardinia five years

ago. The island sits in the Blue Zone, meaning its citizens routinely make it to age 100.

"They have very old pre-Christian secret rituals and this gets into that. It's an isolated island in the Aegean and some guy is recruited because he has 'golden blood.'"

Both are ready to go based on the sales of the previous book.

Goshgarian's previous novels have been more focused on a medical horror bent.

His first book was *Rough Beast* about medical progress gone wrong. "When Cathy [his wife] and I moved into this house 40 years ago, she was pregnant with our first son. We went through the house and got rid of all the lead paint, all the asbestos, we had a radon test done. We really scoured this place. The fear you have as a mother is what

if something bad gets into your child."

At the same time, he added, his father-in-law had a company in Woburn when Woburn "was a carcinogenic swamp."

The ideas gelled into the medical thriller.

"The publisher said give us more of this, a high-concept thriller centered on the family, with some kind of breakthrough science with bad effects," he said. That "became my most Armenian book," *Gray Matter*, featuring Det. Greg Zakarian working on a cold case.

"I've always had an Armenian character in my books," he said.

His other works of fiction include *Skin Deep*, *Flashback* and *Elixir*; he has several textbooks to his credit, including *Exploring Language*, *The Contemporary Reader* and

Review: Twists and Turns Galore, Plus 'Me Too' Propel *Choose Me*

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

When you catch yourself talking to a character in a book, that indicates the writer(s) have drawn it well enough so that you feel invested, even moved by the character.

Well, in *Choose Me*, the new book by Gary Goshgarian (using the penname Braver) and Tess Gerritsen, I found myself yelling quite often at English Professor Jack Dorian, who by inches and miles, heads headlong into a disastrous relationship with a student who is not exactly on an even keel. We all know it cannot possibly end well.

And boy, does it not end well for anyone.

A pretty house in the suburbs, a Volvo in the driveway, a successful spouse and a prestigious job still can't keep the main character, Jack, out of trouble.

Jack, feeling alone because his physician wife is working crazy hours, and worn down by their unsuccessful attempts to have a child, is vulnerable to the charms of the unstable and obsessive yet drop-dead gorgeous student who has no intention to take no for an answer.

The student, Taryn Moore, has a hard time accepting that her longtime boyfriend from her small town, now a fellow college student in Boston, has broken up with her for good. She can't let go of his youthful promises to love her forever. In a haze of anger and dejection, amplified by her precarious emotional, financial and social situations, she decides to train her laser-like focus on another man, her English literature professor.

We think that the adult in the room should know better than to engage in this unhealthy relationship since after all, he holds the power, but in this case, our tweedy professor is too busy feeling sorry for himself. And that is where the "Me Too" issues come in.

Before long, Taryn ends up dead. Was it a suicide or murder?

Taryn is drawn well, as a character whose strength and possibly core, have been chipped away by life as well as the many men in her life. She is hanging precariously at the edge of an abyss: she has the mind of an English Lit professor, the face of a model and the bank account of a pauper. Her working-class mother cannot understand why her daughter is pursuing higher education, though she is doing all she can to send her money, and Taryn knows that if she does not make it at school or loses her high school sweetheart, who happens to be from the right side of the tracks in their little town, she will end up in a hardscrabble life much like her mother.

Still, the book makes it clear that Taryn is not just hurt by life but her perception of reality. She thinks nothing of stalking her former boyfriend and breaking into his apartment to steal little trinkets or to embarrass him and his new love at a restaurant.

Here, it is clear this young woman does not make the best choices and is headed for a fall — in this case literally.

Is it her callous ex who has already moved on to another lithe beauty or could it be her classmate who despite getting ignored and put down repeatedly by Taryn, can't get himself to accept that she does not hold much affection for him? And what about Professor Dorian, who is about to lose his career and marriage if news of the affair comes to light?

Doing the heavy lifting is detective Frankie Loomis, who hides her first-rate brain from suspects by wearing dowdy suits and playing second-banana to her lieutenant during interviews. Her internal dialogue makes her one of the most interesting characters in the book. We know she will sniff out the guilty party and with her calm manner, will see to justice.

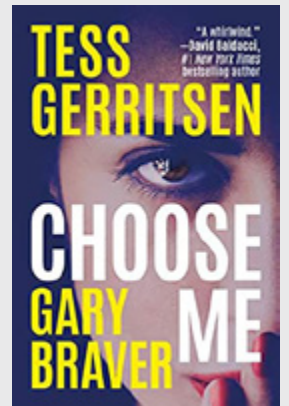
It is clear she has a backstory, one I can only hope can be explored further in a subsequent novel.

Each chapter in the book focuses on one character, in a way that really makes us get inside the characters' minds.

The narrative keeps one turning pages to find out who killed Taryn and why. It is also an interesting study in how one bad decision can lead to another, resulting in a disaster.

Choose Me is a page-turner. As Jack and Taryn get together, it is clear it will be cataclysmic for both.

Choose to read it.



Choose Me,
Tess Gerritsen
and Gary Braver
Thomas & Mercer
July 2021



ARTS & CULTURE

A CONVERSATION WITH...

Keith Garebian

Relationships Between his Life and the Forces of History

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special for The Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / MISSISSAUGA (Ontario, Canada) – Keith Garebian, born in 1943 in Bombay, India, is a widely published, award-winning author, poet, biographer, and literary, dance and theatre critic. He has lived in Canada since 1961. He studied English at Sir George Williams University, Montreal (M.A.) and Queen's University, Kingston (Ph.D.), after which he taught part-time at McGill, Concordia and Trent universities. He is the author of 10 books of poetry, 19 books on Canadian literature and theater, as well as thousands of reviews, interviews, and features in over 100 international periodicals, newspapers, anthologies, and on digital websites.

His poetry books include: *Reservoir of Ancestors: Poems* (2003), *Frida: Paint Me as a Volcano/Frida: Un Volcan de Souffrance* (2004), *Blue: The Derek Jarman Poems* (2008), *Children of Ararat* (2010), *Moon on Wild Grasses* (2013), *Georgia and Alfred* (2015), *Poetry is Blood* (2018), *Against Forgetting* (2019), and the forthcoming *In the Bowl of My Eye* (2022) and *Finger to Finger* (2022). He also has two poetry chapbooks to his credit, *Samson's Hair and Other Satirical Fantasies* (2004) and *SCAN: Cancer Poems* (2021). His non-fiction books include production histories of classic Broadway musicals (*My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Cabaret*), as well as an acclaimed, definitive biography of famous Canadian actor, the late William Hutt.

Among his many awards are the Canadian Authors Association (Niagara Branch) Poetry Award (2009), the Naji Naaman Literary Honour Prize (Lebanon) (2009), the Mississauga Arts Award for Writing (2000, 2008, 2013 and 2019), and the Dan Sullivan Memorial Poetry Award (2006). His poem "Elegy for William Saroyan" from *Children of Ararat* was selected Poem of the Month by the Parliamentary Poet Laureate in 2009. Garebian won First Prize in the Canadian Authors Association Poetry Contest in 2009 (for "Dikranagerd"), writing grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council, and numerous nominations and awards for poetry and non-fiction in national and international contests.

Some of Garebian's books are in the Library of Congress (US) and some of his work has been translated into French, Armenian, German, Chinese, Romanian, Bulgarian and Hindi.

Guernica Editions is projected to publish a book in 2023, edited by Bruce Meyer, about his literary works.

Keith, you say, that poetry is blood — blood as origin, belonging to a certain culture and heritage. Your Armenian legacy is vividly expressed in your poetry. What about your Anglo-Indian heritage? Are there some inspirations, motives, moods that come from that side of yours?

Pain contained a field of discrete ideas and feelings about my being "a divided river beneath a bizarre zodiac." To quote from this memoir: "Even in Bombay, where I was born, I was never fully of a single place." "I was exogenous to Armenia, having grown up ignorant of my father's origins and language; and I was embarrassed at the wastefulness of much Anglo-Indian life."

Against Forgetting (its title taken from Carolyn Forché's anthology) has discrete poems (with wounded and wounding words) circumscribed by the larger narrative of my Anglo-Indian background and my family's immigration to Canada in 1961. The collection illuminates attendant issues, such as cultural and psychic identity, displacement, voluntary exile or expatriation, and the feeling of alienation in a new world. I still feel, at times, like "a resident alien," my Anglo-Indian side rubbing against a less defined Armenian side, and with both of these elements in friction against my Canadian life. I am still asked "Where did you come from?" some 60 years after landing in Canada. If the question had its roots in metaphysics, it would mean something significant, but it generally im-

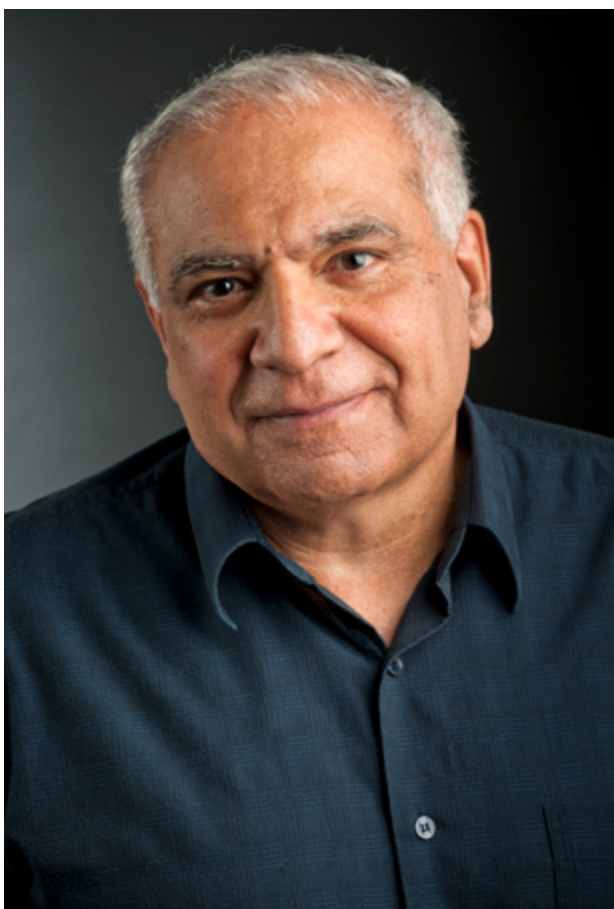


Photo by Elisabeth Feryn

plies that the interrogated is the Other.

We have not met (still), but years ago you presented me a copy of your book, *Children of Ararat*. I usually avoid reading fiction about the Armenian genocide (and of the Holocaust), because I am skeptical about the fictionalization of national tragedies and bloody scenes, especially from the point of view of "victims." However, despite many brutal scenes or moments, your book was an opportunity for me to hear another talented voice from the Diaspora. I liked your lines:

*The stars of the universe aren't all diamonds.
Some burn us as they fall.*

But on the other hand, it is unimaginable to have a three-headed monster, the organizer of the Genocide remembered in a poem, as you have done, so let me quote:

*Are you free, then, Talaat, free of everything
but your cruelty and Armenian ghosts?*

*And you, Enver, child-killer, scum hero,
are you buried with a harem of virgins?*

*Jemal completes the murderous trinity.
What new atrocity are you planning from Hell?*

*Peasants, bureaucrats, and ministers, shrinking from
truth,
explain the unforgivable to bribed sympathizers.*

*Your protests against Armenian tears
mock your pretensions of humanity.*

While writing on such a painful subject, how do you manage to not "harm" poetry?

Art can be degraded and betrayed by poor form, but when considering poetry of witness, the critical terrain is affected by the nature and process of ingesting history and violence, as Peter Balakian has explained in a brilliant essay in his *Vise and Shadow: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, Poetry, Art, and Culture*. Balakian makes a strong case for poetry of witness by arguing that "there is a relationship between a poet's life and the forces of history in which that life is lived, and which also can affect the nature of the poet's art." As he argues, the relationship between certain historical events (atrocities) and the imagination can take various forms, such as the "lyrically confrontational," "discursive and oblique," grotesquely visceral, fragmentary, epistolary, cataloguing, and so on. Essentially, witnessing is truth-telling, and as I was writing about historical trauma, I was using historical documentation as a sort of vehement "post-memory" to expose and condemn. This poem, like others in the book, are confrontational, but my strategies differ from case to case. I mix the poignant with the raw, the subtle with the bold, the didactic with the lyrical. Sometimes, these contrary elements are mixed in a single poem.

It is unusual for Armenian Genocide survivors to appear in India as happened to your father. I am not

familiar with your autobiographical memoir, *Pain: Journeys Around my Parents*, where I assume there is an answer to this question.

There were Armenians in India long before the 1915 genocide. *Pain* points out that Armenians were in India long before the British. Armenians played important roles in various professions, including publishing. In South India two Armenian authors published ground-breaking works, including the first work of Armenian political philosophy, and the first manual for a democratic Armenia of the future. However, there is no extensive record of the entry, domicile, or collective Indian experience of the Armenians.

As for my father's life in India, there are many unanswered questions. I know that it took two letters from his older sister Rose, who had married a Goan and started a family in Bombay, to convince him to leave Basra (where he had learned some English and a trade from the British) for Bombay. I do not know how or when his sister got to Bombay, the year he entered India, what jobs he had at the time, who his friends or lovers were at the time. All I know is how he met and married my mother.

You spent, roughly, the first 18 years of your life in India. At that time there still would be some Armenian life in your birthplace, Bombay. What do you remember from the Bombay Armenian community of that period?

Very little because, as I showed in *Pain*, I was in hostile resistance to my father and, therefore, to most things Armenian. My father did love his wife and children, but having been orphaned at less than five years of age, he had no way of knowing how to demonstrate his love for them. He was, of course, severely affected by what is now recognized as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. There was an Armenian church, which we attended on special occasions, but because I spoke or knew no Armenian, the rituals were all completely strange to me, apart from the general contours of High Holy Mass. Our Armenian friends were few but one family in particular was highly memorable: the Sanossians, who ended up in Buffalo, New York. I loved Mrs. Sanossian, who read tea-leaves (or pretended to) and called us children "dollinks." I also remember vaguely her husband, Leon, who made me a fine ring with gemstones. There were also the Kulhanian sisters and their Indian mother. Mr. Kulhanian was a jeweler, born in Turkish Armenia. Alas, he died in middle age from cancer when I was very little, so I do not remember him. The small Armenian community displayed the usual Armenian tendency to quarrel among itself, but, as usual, there was a deep-rooted sense of a shared tragic history and whatever bonding that grew out of this.

You visited Armenia once, in 2013, where you participated in the 6th conference of Writers of Armenian Origin Composing in Other Languages and received the William Saroyan Medal from the Ministry of Diaspora. After that you wrote an essay, "My Passage to Ararat," which was published by Keghart.com. Could you please share the most outstanding memories of your journey?

I have written about this momentous visit in my (partial) autobiography *Pieces of My Self*, which is under consideration by three Canadian publishers, so I cannot steal too much from this unpublished manuscript, except to give you fleeting impressions of my brief time in Armenia. Really, I can offer little more than a rough montage. Passing views of a harsh, rugged landscape, hills, plains, pock-marked stone churches, eroding *khatchkars* in rural cemeteries and churchyards, massive sculptures, a female shepherd with her animals, the ornate décor at our high-elevation hotel in Tsaghkadzor. Then Yerevan, bustling with variety and life. The usual tourist highlights: Echmiadzin Cathedral; the ancient temple at Garni; Geghard monastery with its icy fresh spring water flowing out of black rock; the eroding *khachakars* of Noratus; the Opera House; the Paradjanov Museum with its intriguing collages made from hairpins, dolls, ladies' hats, and religious relics; Matenadaran (the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts); Lake Sevan where hardy swimmers dared the cold water; and festive Republic Square with its musical fountains. And then, the human factor: diaspora Armenians of contrasting backgrounds and languages; new Armenian friends (Lucine Kasbarian; Hermine Navasardyan; Kinga Kali; the late Levon Ananyan); the gracious hospitality of the Ministry of Diaspora; a palpable division in perspective between older-generation diaspora Armenians who hailed from countries under Russian sway and younger generation diaspora Armenians; an instinctive bonding with many of the Conference delegates; and my lamentable failure to view the Mountain because of fog.

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

If I were to select the most extraordinary experience (apart from receiving the William Saroyan Medal), it was my emotional breakdown at the Genocide Memorial. I wrote about this on Keghart.com and have repeated it in my unpublished autobiographical manuscript. I also memorialized it in *Poetry is Blood*:

...twelve tablets—inward leaning
khatchkars carved with crosses
figures mourning, twelve
lost provinces

holding restless heart
and mind,
within the stony circle
where the stairs

lead down to fire
from sunken stone.
Raising spirits from sleep's
rapt quiet.

Something snaps
makes hot tears spurt,
yet there are no words
to measure pathos.

What surfaces are sounds
that claw the wretched
tones that break
the throat.

This dirt we call earth,
can you taste what I'm saying?
This requiem
ill with carnage of a people.

In conclusion, I would like to remember that in an interview you claimed not to know of any other Garebian family member anywhere in the world (well, except your son), assuming that it is very possible that none of your father's family survived the genocide. Actually, your surname can be spelled variously as G(h)arebian/G(h)aribian, a common Armenian surname, deriving from the Persian word *gharib* – pilgrim. In spite of this, we Armenians are a big family wherever we live, and I wish this feeling is passed to your son too.

I hope so. I think it has.

Mystical Perception of the *Book of Lamentations* by Grigor Narekatsi

LAMANTATIONS, from page 12 saying, "Dr. Lalayan's contribution to the field of theology and history is of utmost importance. More than ever Grigor Narekatsi's teachings are relevant today to all Armenians. Lalayan in his book has explored the subtext of the religious identity of Armenians through an analysis and interpretation of the Book of Lamentations. It was Lalayan's wish to present the final version of his book to readers. Unfortunately, he couldn't, as he was killed in the 44-day war and his book was published after his martyrdom." According to Grigoryan, Lalayan has made an important contribution to the field Narekatsi studies and his research will be an important source to future generations of scholars."



Dr. Vahram Lalayan

The publication of Lalayan's book is the first result of a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in different aspects of academia signed earlier this year by SAS and the Narekatsi University in Artsakh. To order a copy of the book visit <https://daran.company.site/>

To support SAS's cooperation with Narekatsi University contact Bedross Der Matossian @ bdermatossian2@unl.edu.



TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group meeting at the Tekeyan Center in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group Prepares For New Season, Initiates Children's Program

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — After a long break due to the covid pandemic, the Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group had its first meeting to begin its fall theatrical season. It will begin a new program to provide lessons for children interested in studying Armenian theater this fall.

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

translated from Armenian with annotations
and introduction by

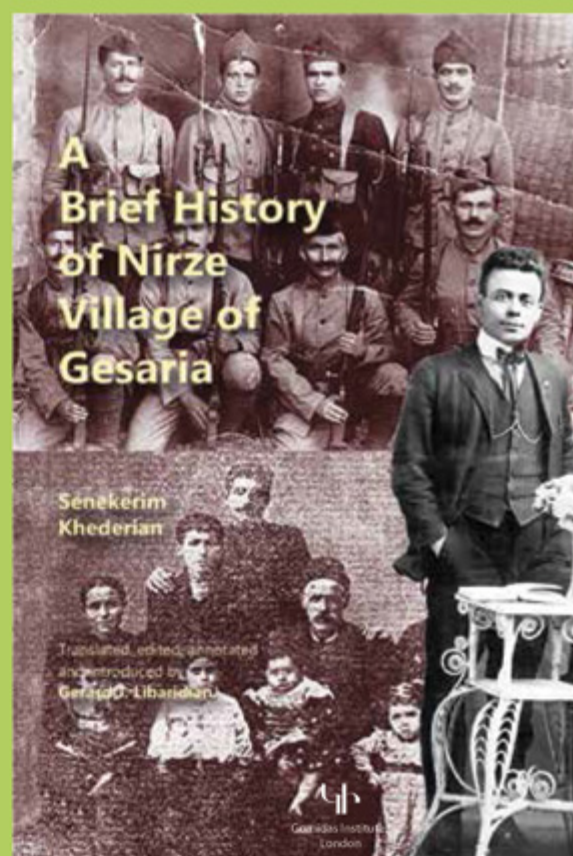
Gerard J. Libaridian

(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



For more information visit www.gomidas.org/books

LGBTQ+ Open Air Market Meets with Success

LGBTQ+, from page 12

For many vendors like author Marina Terteryan, Queernissage was their first opportunity to share their work and merchandise with people in person. Marina is the author of *Sh!t My Armenian Grandma Says*, a collection of stories, wisdom, advice, and jokes of her beloved grandmother she began compiling ten years ago and of-

“AS AN ARMENIAN WOMAN WHO IDENTIFIES AS QUEER, I’VE NEVER QUITE FELT LIKE THERE WAS MUCH SPACE FOR ME AND PEOPLE LIKE MYSELF IN MY ARMENIAN COMMUNITY.

—MAKEUP ARTIST, HAYLEY HASSESIAN

ficially debuted at Queernissage. Marina shared, “I can honestly say my book may not have made it to the world anytime soon if it was not for this event and the encouragement of the GALAS community. This was more than a place to be a vendor and share my work. It was an immediate welcome into a thriving community. It was advocacy for my art. It was a generous sharing of resources to make sure my project succeeded. It was encouragement to make sure I didn’t give up on my vision.”

Queernissage was defined by a sense of joy, belonging, and gratitude that was shared by all those who took part in the market. Attendee and queer Armenian makeup artist, Hayley Hassessian shared, “As an Armenian woman who identifies as queer, I’ve never quite felt like there was much space for me and people like myself in my Armenian community. The oth-



Jessi Knox Presenting her art work at Queernissage (Photo: Ani Ishkhanian)

safety. Thank you, GALAS.”

GALAS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that has been the leading voice in advancing equality for LGBTQ+ Armenians worldwide since 1998. GALAS was formed in Los Angeles by a group of LGBTQ+ Armenians who were looking for friendship, support, and a sense of belonging in the community. As the informal gatherings gave way to formal meetings, the infrastructure of the organization started taking shape. In the past 23 years GALAS has provided community and vital resources for its members, such as its education-



Sooki Studio Ceramics at Queernissage (Photo: Ani Ishkhanian)

er queer Armenians I’m lucky to know, I hold very close to my heart, in a way that feels like family. Attending Queernissage, and seeing other queer Armenians happily gathering and enjoying our culture in a safe space showed me a sense of comfort and

al conferences and workshops, access to counseling, parent support groups, scholarships, and so much more. If you’d like to learn more and donate to the GALAS LGBTQ+ Armenian Society visit galasla.org.

CALENDAR

ON-LINE EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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

August 11 at 4pm TEA & TRANQUILITY Meet & Greet RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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

September 9 at 10am CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US! All About Grains, virtually with Oldways RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

September 19 at 2pm SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARK! Meet & Greet Enjoy Hye Guys Ensemble RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

AUGUST 19 — Armenian museum Save the date! The sixth Online Concert is coming up on Thursday, featuring, David Harutyunyan (shvi) Lusine Karapetyan (piano). The concert will be shown online at 7:30 pm EST (4:30 pm PST). This concert series is supported by the Dadourian Foundation and is curated by Maestro Konstantin Petrossian, artistic director, composer, and conductor. It is free, open to the public, and pre-registration is not required.

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.hyepointearmenianchurch.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 609-933-3990) or Gabrielle Meranshian (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.



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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

Baika Association, Inc.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

**Other than the Editorial, views
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newspaper do not necessarily
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publisher.**

COMMENTARY

Editorial

Armenia Is in an Undeclared War



By Edmond Y. Azadian

The escalation of violence along Armenia's borders continues. The incursions began on May 12 by Azerbaijani forces in the Syunik region, where around 1,000 soldiers surrounded Sev Lake and they still remain there in violation of Armenia's sovereignty. Protests from the Armenian side did not help the situation; on the contrary, they even encouraged Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev to commit further violations by resorting to violent clashes in the Gegharkunik region.

More recently, hostilities have moved closer to Yerevan, to Yeraskh, resulting in Armenian casualties and the shooting down of an Azerbaijani drone.

Behind the scenes of this military confrontation, a political tug-of-war is taking place between Azerbaijan and the international community; the latter is represented by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. The Minsk Group still maintains that there is unfinished business in Karabakh, meaning the final settlement of Karabakh's political and legal status, countering Aliyev's claim that he has settled the conflict by force and that no questions remain regarding the status.

President Aliyev's demand from Armenia to sign a lopsided peace treaty, whereby Armenia is requested to renounce any claim on Karabakh, intends to preempt the OSCE's efforts to settle the conflict on the basis of the principles it has advanced all along. Once Armenia gives in to Aliyev's demands, the OSCE's contention of arriving at a peaceful solution will be undermined.

The Minsk Group co-chairs had issued a statement on April 13 calling for the parties to resume negotiations but no action was taken. They issued another call for action on July 29, which was welcomed by Armenia's Foreign Ministry. The statement this time calls on the parties to deescalate the situation and refrain from incendiary rhetoric and actions and fully comply with their obligations under the November 9 ceasefire agreement.

If negotiations are resumed, this time around, the OSCE will have to entertain an entire slew of

new agenda items which the Azerbaijani side has accumulated through its actions. Indeed, the issue of Karabakh will come at the very end of that agenda, because Baku has aggravated the situation by refusing to release Armenian prisoners of war, staging sham trials of those prisoners, killing almost 60 Armenian soldiers since the beginning of the ceasefire and laying claim to the sovereign territory of Armenia.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia recently invited Nikol Pashinyan for urgent consultations, asking him to make "painful compromises."

One would wonder where the limits of those compromises end for the Armenian side after the loss of 5,000 young people and the wounding of an additional 10,000 soldiers, as well as the loss of 75 percent of the territory of Karabakh. It seems the issue is the Zangezur corridor, which Pashinyan insists is not up for discussion, yet Aliyev is pursuing in almost all his statements.

Incidentally, President Putin talked to President Aliyev after his meeting with Armenian prime minister and thanked Aliyev for "finding solutions or compromises."

This political hypocrisy is driven by the fact that Aliyev has not yet signed the mandate for stationing Russian peacekeeping forces on Azerbaijan's territory. Therefore, the presence of those forces is on tenuous legal ground and Aliyev can disinvite them any time he wishes to without waiting another four years for their term to expire.

Pashinyan asked for Russian military monitors to be stationed on Armenia's borders as part of the defense agreement by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) but he was turned down; adding insult to injury, he received a reprimand from Leonid Kalashnikov, chairman of the Committee for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Affairs in

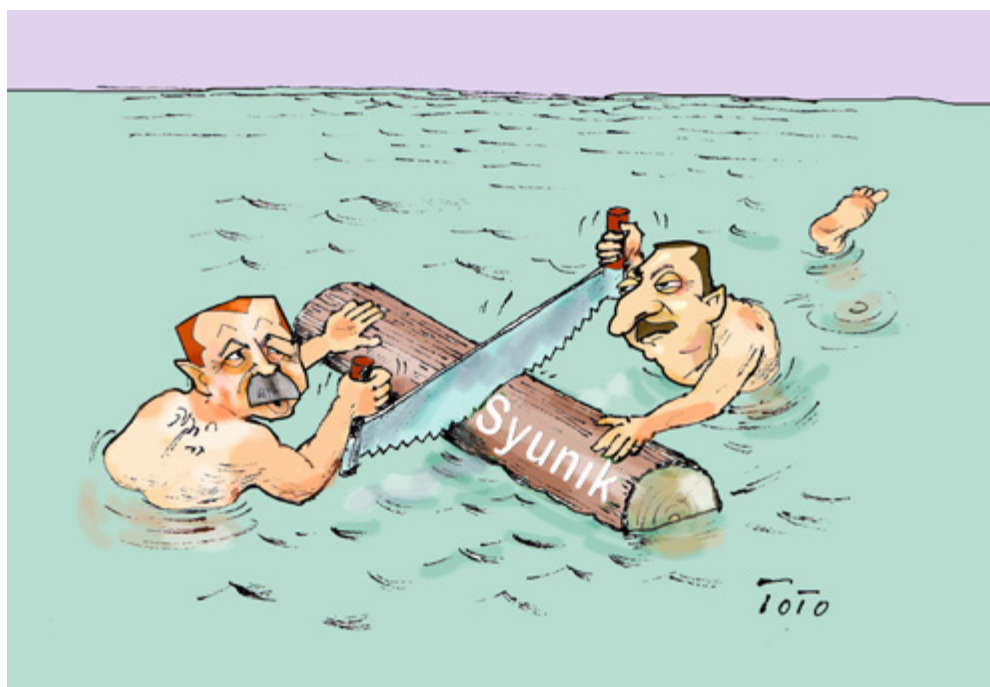
Russian's parliament, who declared, "Such security matters are most often resolved in silence. Statements in the presence of the press are made when you need to score political points to establish yourself in the government or elsewhere."

However, Pashinyan's plea did not fall on deaf ears and France responded. The French ambassador in Yerevan, Jonathan Lacote, in an interview with Azatutyun Radio, offered his country's military assistance to guard Armenia's borders. This statement became a topic of serious discussions in the media and raised hopes. But all the political analysts and commentators neglected the conditions attached to the offer: Armenia and France are in different alliances, and thus in order for Armenia to get that help, it has to quit CSTO. In addition, the French military presence can only happen after a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, which is hard to come by.

The topic of the 44-day war was shot down from the UN agenda by a veto from Russia or China, though it is not yet clear which one, therefore it is hard to imagine that subsequent issues arising from that catastrophe would make it to the agenda.

Therefore, Armenia and Armenians can thank France for its theoretical generosity.

The reason negotiations have not moved forward is that they are hampered by a stalemate in international relations.



Any initiative by the OSCE, France or the UN is considered a threat to the hasty arrangements made between Russia and Turkey.

Armenia's appeals to the West have become instruments of scare tactics for Baku, with the latter warning Russia that Armenia is becoming a conduit for Western influence in the region.

Commenting on this situation, analyst Pavel Dallakyan writes: "Moscow is threatening Baku with Yerevan and Baku also, in its turn, is threatening Moscow with Yerevan and all Yerevan needs is not to fear itself."

Russia's failure to fulfill its part of the November 9 ceasefire declaration and its inability to meet its treaty obligations through the CSTO and its military base in Armenia alone cannot explain what is taking place on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. There are broader global developments that pose existential threats to Russia, namely the emergence of the Turanic-Muslim empire planned by Turkey and encouraged by the West.

Turkey had no business in joining a monitoring center with Russia in Azerbaijan, but Moscow acquiesced to the demand to have a greenlight for its peacekeeping forces. Next, Turkey did not seek the Kremlin's permission to move its military contingent to Nakhichevan, whereas Moscow has a say on the status of that exclave as a signatory of the Treaty of Kars in 1921. Russia's silence after Turkey's aggressive posture in the region and Azerbaijan's belligerent activities is an ominous sign of its weakness. In this context, Rep. Adam Schiff's statement offers a hopeful window for Armenia. He stated that Armenia is dependent on Russia. "Therefore, I want to strengthen Armenian-American relations so that Armenia see UNDECLARED, page 18



COMMENTARY

Armenia Is in an Undeclared War

UNDECLARED, from page 17

becomes more independent both from an economic point of view and from a security point of view.”

However, time is racing faster than such developments can be achieved as Turkey is creating realities on the ground which do not seem to be reversible.

First, Erdogan visited Shushi, where he signed a declaration along with President Aliyev that has more dangerous content than apparent at first.

The Shusha Declaration lay the foundations of a federal state under the slogan of “one people, two states.” For all practical purposes, Aliyev is allowing his country to be swallowed up by Turkey, with its oil wells and economic potential.

Erdogan’s visit was followed by that of Mustafa Sentop, chairman of Turkey’s Grand National Assembly. He announced that Azerbaijan and Turkey have been planning to create a Turkic army, in addition to the Turkish military base that was announced earlier by President Erdogan.

The plan for a Turkic army must be viewed through the context of frequent visits by Turkey’s Defense Minister Hulusi Akar to Central Asian countries, which are buying Turkish military hardware with their petrodollars and are being trained by Turkish officers. If anyone still has any doubts about the prospects of a pan-Turanic empire, it has to take into account those activities and draw appropriate conclusions.

These actions, of course, are in preparation of challenging Russia throughout its zones of influence, with the ultimate goal of dismantling the Russian Federation. In addition to building a Turkic belt around the southern underbelly of Russia, Ibrahim Kalin, Erdogan’s chief of staff, has already threatened to blow up Russia from within, by militarizing the 25 million Muslims in Russia. Countries like Armenia have proven to be the first casualties, as collateral damage during such global conflagrations.

It seems that Russia is powerlessly watching these developments on its borders as evidenced by a statement from the Kremlin. Indeed, on June 18, Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary of the Russian president, said that the Kremlin is closely monitoring information about the possible creation of a Turkish military base in Azerbaijan. According to him, Russia is cooperating with Turkey “in the matter of stabilizing the situation in the Transcaucasia.”

If the potential conflict between Russia and the future Turanic empire seems remote, Azerbaijan and Pakistan have brought the threat to Armenia’s borders. Indeed, the presidents of the national assemblies of Turkey and Azerbaijan were joined by their Pakistani counterpart, Asad Qaiser, who had also signed the Baku declaration. On this occasion, Sahiba Gafarova, chair of the Azerbaijani national assembly, announced, “The Zangezur corridor will become a new corridor from fraternal Pakistan to Turkey and Azerbaijan.”

Thus, Zangezur is offered as war booty not only for Turkey and Azerbaijan, but also for Pakistan, which had participated in the 44-day war with its jihadist freelancers as well as regular air force. As the two Turkic nations plan to share Zangezur with Pakistan, the latter will bring its nuclear bombs to the triumvirate.

The Baku declaration blamed Armenia for withdrawing the minefield maps from Azerbaijan and congratulated the latter for having liberated its own territories from “Armenia’s occupation.”

It is visible to the naked eye that behind Azerbaijan’s border incursions there is an immense geostrategic buildup to support Aliyev’s arrogance.

When Armenia applied to the CSTO to contain Azerbaijani aggression, the appeal was dismissed and the incursions were minimized as “simple border incidents.”

Armenia’s last hope is pinned on the OSCE initiative. Recently, France, joined by the US State Department, called on the parties to resume negotiations under the OSCE Minsk Group auspices. Aliyev has been dragging his feet for the reasons outlined above. The OSCE position is still to find a negotiated settlement of the Karabakh issue and define its legal status, a claim that Aliyev dismisses out of hand. Armenia must also insist on Baku’s accountability for violating one of the OSCE principles: use of force.

In theory, Armenia still maintains hope to recover Karabakh but in view of the gathering of storm clouds in the region, that theoretical hope can hardly be an achievable goal.

Regulation of Armenian-Turkish Relations

A New Attempt or a New Hotbed of Tension?

By Davit Safaryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Experts interested in the improvement of Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations supposed that early parliamentary elections in Armenia would lead to intense processes of re-opening of closed communication routes and borders, and to launching various new projects of economic cooperation in the South Caucasus. President Vladimir Putin is consistently implementing a policy of reopening communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the goal of unlocking the full potential of trade and economic cooperation between Russia, Turkey and Iran. In this respect, it would be interesting to analyze how the process of Armenian-Turkish dialogue might develop, considering that not too long ago the main obstacle in its way was the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Under these new circumstances it is worth recalling some basic details of the “Football Diplomacy” of 2009-2011, which may serve as a precedent for our diplomacy and political thought in the course of renewing that process.

Current State of Regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

At the summit of Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) held in 2010, the foreign minister of Turkey was attempting to convince his Armenian counterparts to concede just one district of the “Liberated Areas” so that Turkey could announce the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border and its positive attitude towards the establishment of diplomatic relations. He was turned down. Thus the Protocols signed in Zurich were suspended by the Great National Assembly of Turkey.

Presently, as we all understand, there is a qualitatively different situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. The Armenian forces have surrendered 7 districts that passed under Armenian control as a result of military operations that took place 27 years ago, and the entire frontline between Artsakh and Azerbaijan is controlled by a Russian peacemaker brigade. At first glance, it seems that there is no obstacle for Turkey to announce the establishment of diplomatic relations and open its borders with Armenia. However, let me remind readers that both diplomatic initiatives – the so-called “Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation Commission” and “Football Diplomacy,” had been pushed forward due to the urging of the US as well as diplomatic pressure on Armenia, and Turkish enthusiasm was greatly conditioned by a desire to neutralize the influence of American mediation by the simulation of an active process.

Currently although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group formally continues to be a mediator in the Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation process, all mediation is practically realized by the Russian Federation. Our monitoring of the Turkish and Azerbaijani media during the years of “Football Diplomacy” indisputably showed that on the way to establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia, Turkey was under the strong influence of Azerbaijani public opinion and would never take any step that contradicted the declared interests of Azerbaijan. We have been quite confident while stating it a few years ago and it came true.

Generally, readers should know that as regards Armenia, Turkey from May, 1918, had steadily oriented itself in line with Azerbaijani political and public opinion and had not taken any step that could to even the smallest extent weaken Azerbaijan’s positions. It proved true in June, 1918 in Batumi, then on December 2, 1920 in Alexandropol, and afterwards while signing the Moscow and Kars Treaties.

That is why, despite the radical and substantive changes of the situation in the Karabakh conflict zone, Turkey will not hurry to start the process of normalizing relations with Armenia unless there is complete consensus with Azerbaijan. We should also understand that Azerbaijan is sure that legal economic collaboration between Armenia and Turkey will strengthen Armenia. That is why official Baku will do whatever it can to hinder Turkey from taking any step in Armenian direction without its consent. On the other hand, there

is no American mediation or pressure now. On the contrary, tensions in Russia-US relations compel the US to think twice about the necessity of taking Turkey’s interests into consideration and at the same time to possibly obstruct the development of the current Russian-Turkish “partnership/rivalry” ties.

As regards Russia, based on its special relations both with Armenia and Azerbaijan, it will be a consistent mediator and will steadily push forward the process of regulation of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. We should also bear in mind that in view of such special relationships there is a strong desire in Russia to see Azerbaijan in the Eurasian Economic Union and in the Organization of the Collective Security Agreement or in some newly formed post-Soviet integration processes, even though Azerbaijan and Turkey have exclusive alliance within the ideological frames of “one nation two states.” A well-known Russian political analyst, Vladimir Lepekhin, believes that Turkey is going to establish a military base in Azerbaijan but even in these circumstances Russia does not stop rapidly developing relations with Azerbaijan and looking for the ways of strengthening its influence there. Therefore, the Turkish signal for regularizing Armenian Turkish relations may be expected only under the conditions of the successful development of some serious dialogue aimed at Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation in the South Caucasus.

The Process of International Recognition and Condemnation of the Armenian Genocide

As we know the second strongest prerequisite of Turkey on its way to establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia was the demand to abandon the Armenian policy of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. US President Joe Biden finally recognized what happened with the Armenians in 1915 as Genocide. This recognition may bring forward many changes in international political and public opinion. At this point, we should note that the Republic of Armenia is pursuing the issue of international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide for the sake of protecting its national security and disallowance of any further genocidal actions in respect of Armenians. If the further recognition of the US and other countries contribute to our security, then we may consider the process is successfully going on. But the official recognition of the fact of Armenian Genocide even at that highest level, while ignoring or not taking seriously the present dangers threatening the Armenians in Armenia and Artsakh, may mean that our cause would be just a small and dirty bargaining chip in the complex and unfavorable diplomatic games.

So the question arises as to whether the Armenians in Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora are able to pursue, with a new and strenuous collective effort, the process of Armenian Genocide recognition under the new political conditions in the South Caucasus. It means hard work both in the states that have already recognized and condemned the Genocide and in the states where it should be still done. It seems very difficult under the conditions of the current fragmentation, internal intolerance and unprecedented disorganization of Armenian society. In his Facebook post, one of our Americanists, Suren Sargsyan, even described a pessimistic scenario according to which Armenia will be compelled to abandon the cause of Armenian Genocide recognition though it seems that even the turbulent state of the regional policy cannot radically change the Armenian vision. That is to say, concerning the development of a new Armenian-Turkish dialogue, we haven’t yet shaped a better approach than normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and opening of the border without any preliminary conditions. If the Armenian authorities suddenly decide to go along the path of least resistance and agree to abandon this strong position, the gap between the motherland and diaspora will be still deepening and Armenia will be left even in a weaker position in front of the Turk-Azerbaijani tandem. Thus, it would be useful to start a new intra-Armenian discussion about the fundamental values based on which we could move forward and settle the problem of our relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Emotional Approaches and the Imperatives of Real Politics

Beginning with the signature of the infamous Agreement of November 9, 2020 between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, there is a strong concern in Armenia that re-opening of communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan may practically lead to the possibility of unimpeded communication between Turkey and Azerbaijan through Armenia as was presumed by the

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Erdogan's Huge Mosque Near Washington Is a Trojan Horse for Turkey's Interests

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated one of the largest mosques in the United States in April 2016. It is officially called the Diyanet Center of America (DCA), a massive complex that is located on 17 acres in Lanham, Maryland, just 15 miles from Washington, DC.

Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) paid \$110 million to cover the expenses of constructing the Diyanet Center of America. The DCA, registered as a non-profit in the United States, has \$93 million in assets, according to its latest tax return.

This center is affiliated with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling political party AKP. DCA's website states that it "works in full coordination with the [Directorate of] Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (Diyanet)" which receives a huge amount of funding from the Turkish government under the title of "Representation and Promotion Expenses," an odd category for a religious institution. The Diyanet's annual budget is \$2 billion, exceeding that of most Turkish ministries. It is an official governmental institution that directs 85,000 mosques throughout the country and over 2,000 mosques overseas. It prepares a weekly sermon that must be read by Imams in all mosques inside and outside of Turkey. It imposes odd practices on the Turkish public, such as bans "on feeding dogs at home, celebrating the western New Year, lotteries, and tattoos." The Diyanet's Imams are instructed by the government's intelligence services to monitor the activities of members of the Gulen movement and PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party). The agency has created multiple Diyanet mosques or field offices in countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States.

According to Ahmet Yayla, a former senior Turkish police officer, the Diyanet now has thousands of affiliated mosques, dozens of schools, and official councilors assigned in 52 countries. It also maintains "faith attachés" in 38 regions globally. The Diyanet maintains the Turkish regime's monopoly on religion and has become a mouthpiece for the state's propaganda efforts.

In his article titled, "Erdogan, the Diyanet, and its Field Office near DC," published in the Providence Magazine, Adam Smith wrote: "In the West, Diyanet institutions also work with proxies and supporters of other Islamist movements

supported by Ankara, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.... The Diyanet also demands full endorsement of Erdogan from its partners and congregants, and propagates the idea that all opponents of the AKP are 'traitors.' European governments have noticed the Diyanet's efforts to enforce loyalty to Ankara among European citizens, with Western officials criticizing Diyanet and AKP efforts to 'conduct political propaganda in their mosques'" outside Turkey.

According to Smith, "the DCA is the head of 28 other Diyanet branches across the United States. Every one of these 28 branches has a president that is unflinchingly loyal to Erdogan and the AKP."

In Smith's opinion, "the DCA must be compelled to register under the Foreign Agents Restriction Act, which regulates agents of influence for foreign nations operating on American soil. Turkish Diyanet officials and imams across the US are working for and advancing the interests of a foreign government without ever having registered as foreign agents...." They "zealously pledge allegiance to the AKP.... Across America, these agents consistently campaign for Erdogan's agenda and aim to proselyte the Turkish regime's interests. In addition, DCA officials are increasingly involved in efforts to partner with and influence senior American politicians. Erdogan has acknowledged such outreach, even at one point claiming before an American Islamist audience that the AKP regime has directly supported efforts to elect Muslims in America."

Furthermore, Smith reported that "other Turkish NGOs and various Islamist proxies also play a major role. For example, agents of Erdogan have reportedly established 'camouflaged shell' organizations to create a conduit for a 'problem-free funds-transfer' in the US, to lobby politicians and move money. Wikileaks documents reveal one Turkish regime operative in the US stating, 'with this type of structure, funding regulations and tax barriers that limit lobbying activities in the US will be overcome.'"

Smith also claimed that "there is plenty of other evidence of criminal activity linked to the regime and the Diyanet. For instance, two of many of the regime-linked tax-exempt US front organizations, the Turkish Heritage Organization (THO) and Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC), were under investigation by the FBI, with leaked emails suggesting the group was conducting espionage operations for Ankara. Nonetheless, all these Turkish proxy groups continue to operate with impunity."

We have no issue with Islamic mosques or Turkish centers in the United States. However, if it is proven that these non-profit institutions are engaging in political activities and lobbying on behalf of Turkey, the U.S. government should take appropriate legal steps to ensure that they are operating within the law.

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Batumi and Alexandropol treaties. To let Armenia also benefit from the proclaimed advantages of the proposed agreement, Armenia needs internal public consolidation on which our military and diplomats might rely on. To reach such consolidation, we must be able (under international urges and possibly also pressure) to shape a consensus in regards to Turkey and Azerbaijan. Such a consensus may be reached only if it is professionally grounded and results from politically literate, scholarly, expert and political discussions, simply provided that such discussions will not weaken us or turn into a new reason for hatred, but will strengthen us, turning the state into a more efficient instrument.

At this moment there seems to be a very good alternative of preparing our society for a deliberative referendum where Armenian citizens should answer two questions: whether they agree to start peace negotiations with Azerbaijan about normalizing our relations; and secondly, whether they agree to restart negotiations with Turkey for establishing relations and opening the borders without any preconditions. This referendum might stimulate pan-Armenian discussions and show which inner forces could Armenia rely on while pursuing its official interests.

Davit Safaryan, PhD in History, was born in 1989 in Yerevan, Armenia. Graduate of the Department of Turkic Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Yerevan State University (bachelor and master degrees), post-graduate of the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA, co-author of one monograph and author of a number of articles, and participant of international conferences, he worked at the National Assembly of Armenia, Ministry of Diaspora, Noravank Scientific-Educational Foundation and at the provost administration of Yerevan State University.

IN MEMORIUM:

The Rev. Dr. John Markarian

By Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

The Rev. Dr. John Markarian, the oldest member of the Armenian Evangelical ministerium and the founding president of the Haigazian University, went to be with the Lord on June 29, 2021, at the age of 104.

Born in Windom, N.Y., he was the son of Rev. and Mrs. Jacob and Dora Markarian. A graduate of Princeton and Drew universities, Dr. Markarian was an ordained minister. In 1946, he joined the faculty of Lafayette College.

Sometimes, God elects and calls special individuals to implement His plans in certain places. Looking back, more than 66 years, I believe the Rev. Dr. John Markarian was the person God had selected to be the founding president of the first and only University for the Diaspora Armenians, Haigazian University. Along with this selection, God called some people to be Markarian's mission partners both in the United States and in the Middle East. One such mission partner was one of Dr. Markarian's students, Harry Balukjian, who introduced his professor to the Armenian community in the Greater Philadelphia area. Another mission partner was Stephen Philibosian, who became a good friend to the Markarians. Still, other mission partners were Stephen and Mary Mahakians, who had the vision of being the benefactors of an institution of higher learning in Beirut, Lebanon in memory of Mrs. Mahakian's father, Prof. Armenag Haigazian, the president of the Apostolic Institute of Konya, Turkey, who was martyred in 1920 during the Armenian Genocide.

The Mahakians were visiting the Philibosians in Radnor, PA to discuss the feasibility of such an institution. The idea was conceived in the Philibosian's hilltop home. With the initial gift of \$25,000 from the Mahakians, Stephen Philibosian worked diligently to implement the challenging details. Along with the financial plans, there was a burning issue in mind; the future president of the college. Suddenly, it dawned on Mr. Philibosian that Dr. John Markarian would be a most viable candidate for such a position.

Without delay Mr. Philibosian called Rev. Markarian and strongly appealed to him "to abdicate his Lafayette College professorship in favor of being the founding president of the new college." This powerful appeal became a serious consideration and a subject of prayer for the young educator. The challenge sounded like a divine call, one similar to that of Isaiah, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" John Markarian's response, like that of Isaiah, was, "Here I am. Send me."

Not too long after this call, John Markarian together with his

wife Ruth and their five-year old daughter Joanne, set sail from New York to Beirut, Lebanon. There, he embarked upon the colossal task of organizing the new college. And thanks to the hard work and financial and moral support of his colleagues and friends in the United States and the Middle East, Haigazian College became a vibrant reality. During his tenure in 1966, the college was accredited by the Lebanese Ministry of education as a four-year institution of higher learning. Dr. Markarian served Haigazian College for two terms 1955 to 1966 and May 1971 to 1982.

My association with Dr. Markarian goes back to 1955. My late wife Juliette was one of his students at Haigazian College; He was also my professor of Systematic Theology at the Near East School of Theology (NEST). Thus, we both were privileged to be Dr. Markarian's students.

Dr. John Markarian was an educator, par excellence. Besides, his official duties as president, he taught religious courses at Haigazian, and some theological courses at the Near East School of Theology. His students admired him for his infectious enthusiasm, rigorous scholarship, and for the excellence of his teaching. They always knew that, when he walked into the classroom, they were about to embark upon a serious intellectual venture. He was never offended by opposition; on the contrary, he was delighted by it. His mentorship was especially important to many seminarians, including the writer of this article.

Markarian was a man with executive talent. The ability to organize was innate in him. He was an individual who was full of energy, dreams and plans. He was a visionary, but he never stopped with dreams; he always sought for practical solutions.

Dr. Markarian was an excellent communicator, whether he was in the pulpit, in the classroom or in fund-raising campaign. He was an eloquent preacher, speaker and motivator. He had a persuasive tongue and an engaging personality — two major powers with which he could captivate the hearts of his listeners and direct their minds.

For his many students, Dr. Markarian was, in many ways, a larger-than-life personality. He was, truly, an outstanding individual, a man of staunch faith with a kind and gentle spirit. He certainly left a mark on us all and a rich legacy that hands of time cannot erase.

The Rev. Dr. John Markarian lived a very long and accomplished life. God had richly endowed him with remarkable talent and energy, which he used for His Kingdom and for the wellbeing of his fellow humans. His uncommon strength of character and resolve, which has been the hallmark of the Armenian race, became a source of blessings to many.

Dr. Markarian is survived by his wife of 47 years, Inge, daughter Joanne, and grandson Michael, who lives in Australia with his wife and two children.



TCA Sustainable Assistance to Berdzor, Artsakh Displaced Families Project

With the generosity of the following individuals, as of June 30, 2021, we are helping displaced families in Armenia, one family at a time.

Tekeyan has signed an agreement with SYUNIK NGO to supply hives and bee colonies to Artsakh displaced multi children families.

8 such Vayots Dzor families will soon get some income from the beehives and colonies they have received.

Now that the bee season is over, we are helping other families with similar agricultural assistance.

We are not done yet and every dollar is being used to make these vulnerable families benefit from in this SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY effort. Donation efforts continue. Please donate. See the ad in this issue below.

Thank you.

Donations in US Dollars

Berge Boyadjian, Long Beach, CA	5,000.00
William and Araxie Terian, Milford, MI	100.00
Elizabeth Ganjian, Watertown, MA	100.00
Nevdon Jamgochian	100.00
Nadine Ariyan	100.00
Charles Paskerian	50.00

Donations in Canadian Dollars

TCA Saro Manoukian Fund	2,500.00
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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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Government Bill on Armenian Universities Declared Unconstitutional

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The Constitutional Court has declared unconstitutional a controversial bill giving the Armenian government direct control over state universities. The bill passed by the National Assembly in March would empower the government to appoint most members of the boards of trustees that elect university rectors and make other key decisions. Most of their current members were chosen by university faculties as well as student councils.

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

President Armen Sarkissian likewise suggested that they are “contentious in terms of constitutionality” when he decided in April not to sign the bill into law. He also asked the Constitutional Court to rule on its conformity with the constitution.

The court sided with the critics of the legislation in a ruling handed down on August 2. It backed their view that the new mechanism for the formation of university boards is unconstitutional.

The Armenian Ministry of Education did not comment on the ruling as of August 3. Education Minister Vahram Dumanyan said earlier that he will accept any decision by the court. The government kept trying to control YSU and two other state-run universities even after Sarkissian’s appeal to the Constitutional Court. An executive order issued by it in May stipulates that they will have new boards consisting of 20 members mostly appointed by the government and the Ministry of Education.

A senior ministry official defended the measure, saying that it is needed to address a “management vacuum” within the universities. She claimed that their current boards have failed to properly perform their duties.

Vahe Hovannisian, an YSU professor, said on August 3 that the ministry itself has contributed to the turmoil. He argued that his university, which is the largest and oldest in Armenia, has not had a rector for more than two years.