



### Armenia Marks Anniversaries Of Independence and Disastrous Azerbaijani invasion of Karabakh

**By Raffi Elliott**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — Armenia marks two historically significant anniversaries this week: Thirty years of independence from the USSR on Tuesday September 21, and the start of last year’s Azerbaijani invasion, on September 27.

September 21 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a fateful referendum in 1991 in which Armenians voted overwhelmingly in favor of regaining sovereignty from the USSR. The Armenian Supreme Soviet — by then already renamed the National Assembly — formalized the results of this referendum two days later on September 23 when it declared the independent Republic of Armenia. The Supreme Soviet had already declared Armenia’s independence in August of 1990.

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**Armenian, Azerbaijani FMs Meet On Sidelines of UN Meetings as OSCE Peace Efforts Ratchet Up**

NEW YORK (Combined Sources) — The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in New York late on Friday, September 24, for talks hosted by the US, Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

It was their first face-to-face meeting since a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh last November.



Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, left, and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan

The three mediators described it as a “sign of the resolve of the two countries to reengage in the peace process through direct dialogue.” They also held separate meetings with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov on the sidelines of a session of the UN General Assembly.

“The co-chairs and foreign ministers discussed a wide range of outstanding unresolved issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan,” they said in a joint statement. “The co-chairs proposed specific focused measures to deescalate the situation and possible next steps.”

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**Stained Glass Windows Smashed at St. Peter Armenian Church in Van Nuys**

**By Aram Arkun** VAN NUYS, Calif.  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff* — Eight stained glass windows were broken by a vandal at St. Peter Armenian Apostolic Church in Van Nuys, Calif., late during the night of September 22, according to the [Facebook page of the church](#) and information provided to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* by Fr. Shnork Demirjian, pastor of the church.

According to video footage from the church’s surveillance cameras, at 1:30 a.m., a masked white male in his 20s, with a backpack on, destroyed the eight stained glass windows with a baseball bat and then walked away. The stained glass windows were adjacent to the main street of Sherman Way, and a significant amount of glass fragments are now on the property.

There was also vandalism done to the sign of the neighboring church on the property. No one has been harmed, and the church reports that the [LAPD Headquarters](#) is actively investigating this incident, while the parish priest and parish council are taking immediate measures to secure and protect the church.

Technically vandalism would be considered as destruction of property, whereas writings or graffiti messages on property would be categorized as a hate crime.

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One of the damaged window panes


### Online Platform Hopes to Get Diaspora to Help Armenian Veterans

**By Alin K. Gregorian**  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

BOSTON — A new organization seeks to provide an online fundraising platform that according to its co-founder, Adam Kablanian, hopes to bridge the gap between the diaspora and soldiers and their families in Armenia through regular donations.

The Friends of the Armenian Soldier and Family (FASF) kicked off a 44-day fundraising campaign on September 27, the one-year anniversary of the start of the second Karabakh war. The goal of the campaign is to raise \$100,000 as part of its first grant to IFS (The Insurance Foundation for Serviceman or 1000plus), ultimately to be used in support of the veterans and their families.

Kablanian, the CEO of CYNORA, said in a recent interview, “Since May, see VETERANS, page 4



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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Agreements on Nagorno-Karabakh Help Establish Stability, Lavrov Says

MOSCOW (TASS) — The agreement ending military activities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which were reached by the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan last year, helped establish stability in the conflict zone, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a press conference on September 28.

“The main thing that was achieved in nearly a year since November 9, 2020, is that stability was established and has been maintained, the presence of Russia’s peacekeeping forces helps prevent violent acts, which is what we see now. The minor incidents that occurred at first were promptly resolved. I would like to reiterate that the situation is stable there though there are a lot of issues,” Lavrov noted. According to him, a mine clearance operation has yet to be completed in Karabakh, as well as an operation to return detained persons.

### Freedom House Slams ‘Unconstitutional’ Anti-Defamation Law

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Freedom House has expressed concern about the recent criminal case opened against a Facebook user who insulted Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in a comment. “This comes only two months after the Parliament passed amendments criminalizing “serious insults” against government officials, and signifies a clear degradation of democratic norms in Armenia, including freedom of expression,” the organization said on September 28, adding, “We call on the Armenian authorities to immediately cease enforcement of this unconstitutional legislation criminalizing defamation.”

Authorities are investigating a case against a social media user for insulting Pashinyan.

### Artsakh Ombudsman Publishes Updated Report

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh on September 28 published an updated version of the [Report on the cases of the killing of civilians in Artsakh](#) by Azerbaijan.

The report summarizes the data collected through fact-finding work of the Artsakh Human Rights Ombudsman’s staff from September 27, 2020 to September 27, 2021 on the civilian killings either by targeted strikes or after their invasion of the civilian settlements of Artsakh.

According to the data, the identities of 80 civilians killed by the Azerbaijani forces were revealed. Forty-two civilians were killed by long-range strikes, and 38 civilians were killed in captivity or at least under the control of Azerbaijan from physical violence. Out of 80 civilian victims, 68 are men and 12 are women.

# Armenia Marks Anniversaries of Independence And Disastrous Azerbaijani Invasion of Karabagh

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Despite this year’s event coinciding with the 30th anniversary of this historic event, the traditional celebration schedule usually reserved for the quinquennial — which involves a military parade, concerts, and a massive fireworks display — was considerably toned down given its close proximity to the more somber anniversary of the Second Artsakh War. Indeed, the impending 30th anniversary celebrations became a bitter subject of debate among Armenians in the runup to last Tuesday with some calling for the event to be cancelled all-together out of respect for the victims of last year’s brutal Azeri invasion. Others, however, argued that the sacrifices of Armenia’s defenders made the celebration of independence that much more potent.

Bitter divisions aside, the events of the September 21st celebrations apparently moved both detractors and proponents with its somber, and respectful tone. Dispensing with the usual fanfare, this year’s anniversary included a beautiful open air concert by the Armenian State Ballet which performed interpretive dances evoking scenes from Armenia’s modern history, accompanied by classical and traditional hymns by the Armenian philharmonic Orchestra. The outer walls of Yerevan’s imposing Republic Square served as a canvas on which colorful Armenian national symbols were projected.

The anniversary celebration was formally dedicated to the memory of the martyrs of the 2020 War, and this fact was not ignored by the Prime Minister. In a speech inaugurating the concert, Pashinyan said “The burden of the 44-day war in 2020 is hovering over this square, and perhaps this circumstance is the symbol of the crossroads that the great Tumanyan spoke about.” Speaking of the victims of the war, “They fell so Armenia could live on, they fell so Artsakh could live on. And as long as Armenia lives, as long as Artsakh lives, they are alive,” Pashinyan added. The Prime Minister also announced the forma-

tion of a memorial park on the site of Yerevan’s Botanical Garden to immortalize the fallen soldiers.

Below the podium, several rows of trees, wrapped in Armenian flags, were scheduled to be replanted at the botanical garden. Invoking yet again the theme of rebirth from death, Pashinyan stressed that the new park would not be a cenotaph, but a place where “children will be able to run around, have fun, and make noise.”

President Armen Sarkissian, Armenia’s nominal head of state, also attended the concert. Earlier in the day, he had presented medals to servicemen who had served with distinction during last year’s war. “The roots of statehood lie in unity, solidarity and national accord,” Sarkissian told guests.

Among the absent at the concert were Levon Ter-Petrosian, Robert Kocharyan, and Serzh Sargsyan — Armenia’s first, second, and third presidents, respectively. Despite receiving official invitations, they chose to boycott the commemorations entirely. They place the blame for last year’s military defeat squarely on the Prime Minister’s shoulders. Pashinyan, who has accepted responsibility for the war, has nonetheless claimed that his predecessors also share blame for its outcome, due to years of corruption and flawed negotiations which left the country ill-prepared to face the impending threat.

Catholicos Karekin II, Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan and Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan were similarly absent, attending similar celebrations in Stepanakert.

In lieu of a fireworks display, which Pashinyan had already announced would not be taking place out of respect for the dead and those suffering from PTSD, a unique spectacle was formed by a formation of LED-covered drones which arranged themselves to form the shapes of different Armenian historical figures, as well as the Armenian coat of arms which was visible in the night sky across Yerevan.

“They used drone technology to kill, we

use it to create art” one commentator was heard saying in Yerevan’s Republic Square as crowds—which had otherwise remained relatively silent — began to cheer. Another commentator critical of the government said “while the budget for this event is hard to swallow, at least it’s not a trophy park” referring to Azeri dictator Ilham Aliyev’s inauguration of a racist triumph park in Baku several months ago.

Just a few days later, Armenians were once more marking an anniversary, this time, one year since Azerbaijan — backed and coordinated by Turkey — launched an unprovoked invasion of the Republic of Artsakh.

The war, which lasted 44 days ended on November 9 with a Russian-brokered ceasefire in which Armenia agreed to cede 4 of the 7 provinces still under its control around the Soviet-era borders of Artsakh, an exchange of prisoners and saw the entry of Russian peacekeepers into the region to protect the Armenian civilians in Artsakh.

The war cost the lives of 3,781 Armenian soldiers and civilians. 253 remain missing including 45 who are believed to be in Azeri captivity. Casualties on the Azerbaijani side are more difficult to determine. Azerbaijan enforced a much tighter control on media during the war and refused to provide casualty lists until the end of offensive operations. Azerbaijan’s official claim of 2,879 killed has been questioned by experts and Azerbaijani civil society groups, many of whom estimate the real number to be closer to six thousand.

On the morning of September 27, Pashinyan and other government officials visited Yerevan’s Yerablur pantheon, where most of the martyrs of both the First and Second Artsakh wars are buried to pay respects to the fallen. Other prominent Armenian political figures also followed suit. The government pledged to strengthen Armenia politically, economically and militarily to ensure that the children and relatives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice would live in a country worthy of them.

## Armenian Speaker’s Brother Wins Government Contracts

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A road construction company run by parliament speaker Alen Simonyan’s brother has won in the last few months two government contracts worth \$ 1.4 million, raising suspicions of a conflict of interest and even corruption.



Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan

The investigative publication Hetq.am revealed this week that the relatively small firm called EuroAsphalt won a recent government tender for paving rural roads around Aparan, a small town in Armenia’s central Aragatsotn province. It signed a relevant contract with the local government on September 19 after pledging to carry out the road works for 287 million drams (\$ 595,000).

In June, EuroAsphalt was contracted by the Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures to repair country roads in northwestern Shirak province. The repairs were supposed to cost the state 386 million drams.

EuroAsphalt had an authorized capital of

just over \$100 when it was founded by two little-known individuals in 2018. Simonyan’s brother Karlen became its executive director early this year.

Karlen Simonyan also manages another construction company called EuroAsphalt-1. It was registered in February 2021 and was worth 140 million drams at the time.

Deputy Prime Minister Suren Papikyan, who served as minister of territorial administration until recently, insisted on Thursday that EuroAsphalt won the two contracts as a result of transparent and fair tenders, rather than its chief executive’s government connection.

“If people have information about corruption schemes, let them make it public, for God’s sake,” Papikyan said.

Civic activists see a cause for concern, however. Varuzhan Hochtanyan of the Armenian affiliate of the anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International said that the integrity of tenders won by individuals linked to state officials has long been in serious doubt in Armenia. He said an Armenian Finance Ministry division in charge of state procurements must therefore scrutinize the contracts granted to EuroAsphalt.

“When such tenders are won with amaz-

ing consistency by relatives or cronies of state officials there are corruption risks involved,” agreed Artur Sakunts, a veteran human rights campaigner. “This must definitely become a subject of investigation.”

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for years alleged corrupt practices in the administration of tenders won by such individuals when he was in opposition to Armenia’s former governments. He claimed to have eliminated “systemic corruption” in the country after coming to power in 2018.

Alen Simonyan is a close associate of Pashinyan. A spokeswoman for the parliament speaker told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service on Friday that he will not comment on his brother’s business activities for now. She said at the same time that he is ready to answer questions submitted in writing.

Simonyan also raised eyebrows when he appointed a businessman and friend of his as chief of the Armenian parliament staff days after becoming its speaker in August.

The businessman, Vahan Naribekyan, owns a company supplying furniture to the National Assembly and various government and law-enforcement agencies. According to Hetq.am, the company has won 148 supply contracts since the 2018 regime change.





## ARMENIA

# The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War Anniversary: Shosh Village Between War and Peace

By Lilit Shahverdyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SHOSH, Artsakh Republic — This is Shosh, a village in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) that today lies along with the new borderline between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. From their balconies, the locals have a clear view to observe the movements of the enemy. It's a stark reminder of what they lost in a war that started exactly one year ago.

On September 27, 2020, Baku launched a major offensive against the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, resuming the unresolved territorial issue of the former Soviet Union. A ceasefire between the sides was signed on November 10, with the intervention of Russia.

The population of Shosh was 621 prior to the war. The village municipality asserts that today there are only 480 people living in the village, 37 of them being displaced people from occupied regions in Artsakh. Shosh was heavily shelled during the first Karabakh war (1991-1994), and also during the last one. Andreas Margaryan, a 64-year-old white-haired man, was the head of the village during Soviet times and now engages in agriculture and bee-keeping. He rebuilt his 150-year-old stone house twice and assures he will do it again since he owes it to his offspring.

"Everyone has a duty to fulfill in the village. If you do not have anything to do, then you do not belong to this community," repeats Andreas. He still contributes to the prosperity of Shosh and puts his best foot forward as long as he lives within the walls of his ancestral house.

Children in Shosh already acknowledge the danger they are living through and do not dodge their duty. Last year, the morning of September 27 was not a horror movie for Artyom, but rather something new and unwanted: he heard shootings and saw the smoke of burning military equipment.



Two grandsons of Andreas Margaryan are playing with a telephone in their bedroom, whose wall is damaged.

Artyom is 10 years old but imagines himself as a soldier from bygone times, and on that awful September 27, he didn't take fright. Instead, he took shelter only after bringing back their cows from a neighboring village that was in the same danger.

Suren Babayan's roots in the village dates to mid-19th century. He has lived his six decades with a dedication to Shosh, went through two wars, and witnessed a lot, from amity with the Azerbaijanis to expecting the next bomb to target his house. He lost pasturelands and animals, friends and relatives, but his hope hasn't utterly expired since the villagers are still adjacent to their lands. The village has started to revive after being heavily shelled in the recent war: the damages are gradually eliminated due to state support and people have returned to their homes and the normal rhythm of life. However, Suren assures, the destiny of this tiny corner is hidden in the haze.



The Babayan family is known in the village as "Hurunts azg" (the nation or people of Hurunts), and they settled in Shosh around 150 years ago. Their family tree was painted in 2017 for a competition and took second place. Samvel says he underwent the war sitting on the same sofa, expecting that his house will be shelled next.

"I'm a man of a certain age and comprehend everything," states Babayan, "but how can the youth have faith in the future, seeing their lands under enemy control? We cannot control our future. It's vague and still unresolved."

The Republic of Armenia provided a budget of 90.5 billion drams (\$187 million) to overcome the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, from which 3.6 billion drams (\$186,000) will be invested into the development of the economy. Minister of the Economy of Nagorno-Karabakh Armen Tovmasyan asserts that all the branches of the economy are currently in decline except construction, which has increased by 106 drams due to the widespread destruction the war caused. As the village of Shosh suffered significant losses in infrastructure, around 150 buildings are gradually being reconstructed.

However, Shosh is now deprived of lands for agriculture; the animals cannot freely graze as crossing the border is hazardous. According to the municipality, in June 2021, it was still possible to get two horses returned due to negotiations through the Russians, but more recently, four horses were taken away by the Azerbaijanis. Local authorities also affirm that seven men from the village died during different military operations around Shosh.

Currently, there are no major issues with electricity and water supplies, but what will happen in the future remains unclear. The president of Nagorno-Karabakh Arayik Harutyunyan has announced that the state will implement new projects for the development of agriculture, particularly focusing on the provision of new lands for sowing. Serious measures have been taken towards increasing the number of livestock, providing 10,767 animals to the Shushi region, which encompasses the village of Shosh. According to the Ministry of Economy of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, livestock regulation and pasture management programs have been initiated in 11 communities, including Shosh.

The villagers conducted themselves differently during the war: women, children, and the elderly found temporary residences in safer spots in Armenia, while men prioritized the protection of their homes. According to an official international report, Armenia hosted around 109,000 refugees and asylum-seekers as of October 2020, while this number was reduced to

37,000 by May 2021.

Babayan and Margaryan did their best to maintain relative stability in the village, which was constantly shelled by the Azerbaijani forces. Margaryan invested his energy and capabilities in supporting military storage, while his sons were at the frontline, together with the local group of fighters. Stressing the importance of commitment for the fatherland, he quotes a movie: "At the end of the day, we will all die, but we will be envious of those who fell for the protection of their homeland. Death for liberty is a holy death." Margaryan is certain about his commission to defend Shosh since the vigor of the inhabitants pushes each other to move forward. "My grandchildren will live in this house as long as I find their living safe," he declares, sharing the opinion of his peers.

Artyom, who dreams about becoming a soldier, lives with his parents, grandparents, and young cousins. His grandmother, Julietta Grigoryan, is 59 and works at the local school as a cleaning lady. She had to leave the village during the war for one reason: her sister-in-law was giving birth. The baby was born in early October in Masis, Armenia, where their family had temporarily settled. She recalls the days spent in Masis with warmth as she was affably welcomed by the locals. "Our neighbors were Yezidis," she remembers, "and they would bring products for us every Friday: meat, coffee, and sugar — they shared everything with us."

Despite the lack of proper living conditions, Julietta's family returned soon after the ceasefire, with her newborn grandchild. They have received support from international NGOs, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the state but still believe the immediate menace is not eliminated since she can see the Azerbaijani troops right from her balcony. The villagers are concerned about their livestock as the location of the village prevents people from farming and pasturing. The Azerbaijani often take away the animals that cross the border, while sometimes the Russian peacekeepers intervene to return them. Grigoryan cultivated land on the other side of the border but now the access is very limited and is possible only with the intervention of Russians. Julietta explains: "Once I went there with my husband but the Azerbaijani didn't let us in. The second time, they shot in the air

to frighten us. Yes, we can collect our harvest with Russians, but we cannot freely cultivate."

The presence of Russian peacekeepers doesn't inspire that much hope in the villagers, and Margaryan recognizes the value of self-governance which has been impeded by the recent war. "Independence, anthem, and flag are values for which the Armenians struggled for hundreds of years. Now we are losing it," he says. "I feel like a subordinate person in my own house. I have the keys, but my home doesn't belong to me." This opinion matches the viewpoint of Babayan, who believes that Nagorno-Karabakh will not belong to anyone. It will remain an apple of discord forever. However, he finds that there's no alternative to the presence of Russians. "We should trust them as long as we have a chance to have our voices heard. If they leave, on whose door shall we knock?" states Babayan.

Babayan was among the ones who endured the sleepless nights and all the horrors of war, residing in the village which was so close to being taken over. His rock during those sinister days was his wife who left Shosh only in late October, as every second spent there became fateful. "I was sitting on this sofa with my wife, hearing the rumbles from neighboring houses that were destroyed, and waiting for the next bomb to target our house," he remembers. However, the shadow of death following him did not prevent Babayan from taking measures. While his three sons were at the frontline, he would take care of the villagers' livestock or take people to Stepanakert by his car. Animals suffered and died because of shelling and lack of care, but Babayan made it possible to keep safe some of the livestock.

Despite the difficulties the villagers undergo to maintain their rhythm of life, they still feel deeply attached to Shosh, and the notion of leaving the village for the sake of a better life is odd to them. People comprehend the abundance of issues in the village that need to be solved and are inclined to take measures and fulfill them. Margaryan is willing to complete the reconstruction of his destroyed roof to overcome the challenges of approaching winter frost and doesn't hesitate to improve the living conditions for his grandchildren. "The one who is bonded to the village will dedicate his last gasp to Shosh," assures Margaryan, adding, "This is our fate and we shouldn't try to escape it."

Hope springs eternal also for Samvel Babayan, whose silver lining lies in his son's courage to create a new life after losing his watermelon fields. His eldest son cultivated lands in Aghdam (now in Azerbaijan) to grow and sell watermelons, but the war turned out disastrous for him as all the fruits of his labor was handed to the Azerbaijanis. "I lost my faith in the future for a moment," states Babayan, "but lucky for me, my preconceptions were vague." His sons overcame this setback and began to cultivate new lands in Askeran, which remained Armenian. This fact consoles Babayan, and he is now convicted that the game is not over. "My sons could leave for Russia like many others who lost pasturelands, but they didn't. If they still hold out hopes, I'm proud of my sons," says Babayan. He believes that if one desires to ensure the next day and the future, he should get a grip and work.

"Death is inevitable," he says. "Today, we have to live."





ARMENIA

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Foreign Minister Meets with UN Refugee Commissioner

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan this week met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi within the framework of the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Mirzoyan briefed Grandi on the humanitarian issues and the situation which was created as a result of the Azerbaijani-Turkish aggression against Artsakh. Particularly, the Armenian FM underscored the necessity to create conditions for the return of Artsakh IDPs and care for their needs.

Mirzoyan especially underscored the importance of the implementation of humanitarian missions by international organizations in Artsakh, and he stressed that Azerbaijan's politicization of this matter and creation of artificial obstructions are unacceptable.

## Film about Armenian Army Left out of 'Eurasia DOC 2021' Festival after Azerbaijani Threats

MINSK, Belarus (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armen Khachaturyan's documentary "Unfinished Memories" (co-production between Hayk Documentary Film Studio and Margins Media Production Company) has been left out of the "Eurasia DOC 2021" Documentary Film Festival.

The film had been scheduled to screen on October 1 at Belarus cinema in Minsk.

The film telling the story of brave women serving in the Armenian army was partially shot in Artsakh. On September 25, the team got notified that the film was removed from the program due to threats from the Azerbaijanis. The management of the festival stated that can't do anything in the situation.

## Armenian Placed Under House Arrest After Attacking Turkish Consulate in France

MARSEILLE, France (News.am) — One of the two participants in the attack on the Turkish Consulate General in the French city of Marseille in 2016 was sentenced to 6 months of house arrest, announced Anadolu on September 26.

According to the newspaper, the attacker is an ethnic Armenian.

The case was heard in the Court of Appeal of Marseille on Friday September 24.

The basis for the guilty verdict was the data of a fingerprint examination, which proved that one of the bottles with Molotov cocktails thrown into the building of the consulate had the defendant's fingerprints.

The judge sentenced the man to three years of suspended imprisonment for attacking a place demanding respect and replacing him with 6 months of house arrest while wearing an electronic bracelet.

## AFP: Trauma, Stigma Plague Soldiers A Year after Karabakh War

STEPANAKERT (AFP) — Insomnia and nightmares, heart palpitations and aggression are among lingering psychological injuries that soldiers who fought in the Second Karabakh War are haunted by one year after the beginning of hostilities, AFP says in a recent article.

Thousands of veterans on both sides are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in patriarchal societies where seeking help for mental health can be taboo. Armenia and Azerbaijan are working to expand access to psychological care for former servicemen, an effort that is gradually drawing out battle-hardened veterans overcoming fears of being seen as weak. But the challenge of reaching everyone who needs help is huge.

Health professionals in both countries lamented an underdeveloped cul-

ture of psychiatric treatment they said was hindering efforts to help PTSD-diagnosed veterans.

"Only a quarter of war veterans agree to undergo treatment," said doctor Khachatur Gasparyan of the Intra psychological center in Yerevan.

"Society has to be taught there is nothing shameful in visiting a psychologist — that it's normal," he said.

Both countries have set up psychological rehabilitation centers for veterans, former war prisoners, and families of the dead and missing.

David Stepanyan, who narrowly escaped death on his first day fighting when an Azerbaijani shell blew up a car he had just got out of, is still on that road. The 21-year-old was wounded less than a month into the war and taken — unconscious — to a hospital,

where doctors told him a sniper's bullet had pierced his flesh millimeters from his heart. The bullet is still lodged in his chest and his entire body is scarred, but it's the psychological wound he struggles with most.

For months, he said, he couldn't sleep well and fragments of memories from the war would encroach into his dreams and waking hours.

"I couldn't interact with family or friends and finally decided to get medical help," he told AFP. "The worst memories from the war are the moments when you see your wounded friend nearby, but can't help him because of the enemy's heavy fire," he said.

But he said eight psychotherapy sessions had brought about some relief and that he now can sleep for as much as four hours a night.

## Online Platform Hopes to Get Diaspora to Help Armenian Veterans

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we're proud to have launched our website, created a partnership with various organizations in Armenia (including IFS), and have begun raising funds to support fallen and disabled Armenian soldiers and their families. We have big plans for the organization's impact as we look towards the rest of 2021 and beyond, including the issuing of our first official grants to IFS and creating further partnerships with other on-the-ground organizations in Armenia who support our fallen and disabled soldiers (and their families)."

FASF does not seek to create a new organization there, but simply use the existing channels to help families particularly affected after the recent war. The organization seeks to connect links between the diaspora and soldiers' families to continuously support the needs of Armenian veterans through monthly monetary contributions. FASF will partner with organizations on the ground in Armenia to deliver career training programs, rehabilitation services, and support for the everyday lives of these surviving veterans and the families of those who have fallen.

"In just the short time we've launched, we've already raised over \$100,000. While this is significant traction so far, it's just the beginning of far more ambitious plans," Kablanian said.

"Our core mission is to enable support for fallen or disabled Armenian soldiers and their families. We are extremely grateful to be working with great organizations based in Armenia, such as IFS, which will be our first grant recipient. IFS is an amazing organization that was created for the purpose of insuring and providing compensation to soldiers and families of soldiers who have been injured or deceased when defending the borders of our two motherlands. We're proud to lend our support to IFS and to other organizations who are supporting our fallen or disabled Armenian soldiers and their families," Kablanian said.

One of the ways FASF is making the stream of donations more stable is by seeking regular monthly donations rather than one-time ones, especially because the aftermath of the war will be felt for decades. "This is a cause that will need continuous contribution for many years to come. IFS

estimates that we'll collectively need to invest over \$300 million over the next 20 years towards these causes. This is a big problem, but also a big opportunity for the community to band together and support. In that sense, when we say continuous giving, we mean both monthly donations (which our platform seamlessly enables) and continuous mindshare for this problem," Kablanian explained.

In addition to Kablanian, the other co-founders of FASF are fellow members of the Armenian tech community, Al Eisaian, CEO of IntelinAir and Patrick Sarkissian, CEO and co-founder of Raleigh&Drake (RAD).

Explained Kablanian, "All have had a



Founding Board Member Adam Kablanian

sustained impact on Armenia's economy in two key ways: (1) through entrepreneurial endeavors across various business opportunities spanning over 20 years, and (2) philanthropically through both contributions and organizationally (example: Patrick Sarkissian is the founder of ONEArmenia). In addition to the founding Board members mentioned above, we have many volunteers who feel a similar level of passion for this cause and are donating their time, resources, and expertise to making FASF a success."

He added, "First and foremost, FASF has one focus: enabling support for fallen or

disabled Armenian soldiers and their families. We believe this sole focus will help us drive the most impact. In addition, because we're solely focused on this cause, we're able to directly measure and transparently share the impact we're having in a way that we believe resonates with our donors. This will be expressed through amount of funds raised, grants that have been provided, and the corresponding impacts of those grants (e.g. IFS will be able to support X families for Y years due to the funds raised by FASF donors). Lastly, we believe our platform (website, connections, focus area, and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization status) allows us to make a larger impact than other platforms have historically."

One of the problems that arises with donations to Armenia is fear that the money will not reach its designated destination. Kablanian is aware of this concern and has put protocols in place to safeguard the process, he said. "Transparency in our process, actions, and outcomes will be key for us; frankly, it's something that should be a central focus for any non-profit organization, whether Armenian or otherwise. We have plans to share outcomes (dollars raised), impact (lives that we've been able to impact), and future plans in real-time via our website & social media channels. We also go through a rigorous process of ensuring the organizations we partner with have the highest ethical standards & track records of success."

For Kablanian and FASF, again and again, it is the fate of soldiers that is important. "Our ultimate goal is to ensure that our brave men and women who sacrifice their lives for Armenia are supported, forever. This support can come in various forms: education, healthcare, monetary support, and anything in between. We'd like the global Armenian community to collectively participate in this goal. After all, the monetary donations we can all make is just a small sacrifice compared to what our brave men and women in Armenia are contributing every day," he said.

"We have volunteers that have been helping support FASF that are based all over the world - from San Francisco to Yerevan and anywhere in between," Kablanian added.

For more information or to donate, visit <https://fasf.org/>





## INTERNATIONAL

# PACE Calls on Azerbaijani Authorities To Release All Armenian Captives

STRASBOURG (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on September 27 adopted a resolution on “Humanitarian consequences of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict,” member of Armenia’s delegation to PACE Ruben Rubinyan noted.

“Contrary to Azerbaijan’s recent attempts to remove the name Nagorno-Karabakh from international documents [the President of Azerbaijan made such a call from the UN rostrum two days ago], the Armenian delegation managed to change the title of the resolution, the text of the resolution, to include the phrase ‘Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,’ which is very important,” Rubinyan said.

In the resolution the Assembly recalls that both Armenia and Azerbaijan committed themselves, upon their accession to the Council of Europe in January 2001, to use only peaceful means for settling the conflict. Therefore, the 6-week war in 2020 constitutes a breach of these commitment.

The Assembly notes that under Article 8 of the Trilateral statement “An exchange of prisoners of war ... is to be carried out” and that both countries claim to have complied with this. The Assembly however notes the concerns of the European Court of Human Rights, communicated to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 16 March 2021, in relation to 188 Armenians allegedly captured by Azerbaijan (some of whom have since been returned to Armenia). In this connection the Assembly:

- notes that under the Geneva Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian persons in time of War, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have binding obligations to repatriate prisoners of war and release civilian persons without delay after the secession of active hostilities;

- considers that the clear intention of Article 8 of the Trilateral statement was the exchange of all detained persons, without distinction as to the status assigned by one or other of the parties;

- is deeply concerned about the fate of around 30 Armenians, allegedly seen, filmed or photographed in captivity, with no indication as to their current whereabouts. The Assembly is alarmed at allegations that

these persons have been subjected to enforced disappearances and possibly killed;

- calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to expedite their investigations on this matter and provide relevant information to the European Court of Human Rights and to Armenia;

- welcomes the recent release of 15 Armenians on 12 June 2021 and a further release of 15 persons on 3 July 2021, bringing the total of repatriated to above 100;

- remains concerned about the detention conditions of 45 Armenians captured after the Trilateral statement, who are still in captivity, most of whom have undergone or are undergoing speedy criminal trials, which raise fair trial issues under the European Convention on Human Rights;

- calls on the Azerbaijani authorities to release all remaining captives and return them to Armenia without further delay;

- encourages the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) to carry out an ad hoc visit, notwithstanding that the ICRC has regular access.

The Assembly is concerned about the many allegations of crimes, war crimes and other wrongful acts levelled against both Armenia and Azerbaijan during the 6-week war. It notes the individual cases and inter-state cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights, including by Armenia against Azerbaijan on 18 October 2020 and against Turkey on 9 May 2021, and by Azerbaijan against Armenia on 26 October 2020.

Among allegations made by both sides, backed up by reputable international NGOs and a wealth of information available from different sources, there is worrying evidence of the use by Azerbaijan, with Turkey’s assistance, of Syrian mercenaries, and the use by Armenia of Armenians from different countries as foreign fighters.

In the light of the highly disconcerting information above, the Assembly calls on Armenia and Azerbaijan to fully investigate the allegations and bring to justice anyone, including at command level, found to be responsible for crimes, war crimes or other wrongful acts. Both countries should co-operate fully with the European Court of Human Rights on the complaints lodged against them, and Turkey is invited to do

the same. Unless there is accountability and some form of truth and reconciliation, these allegations will poison relations between the two countries for generations, and the consequences of the conflict will linger.

The Assembly encourages the international community to continue to support Armenia and Azerbaijan and move towards a more mid and long-term strategy to include not just recovery but also peace building and confidence-building measures.

The Assembly is greatly concerned by the increase in incidents at various points of the border since May 2021. There have been deaths and injuries and Armenian soldiers have been taken captive. The Assembly therefore calls on both sides to:

- de-escalate and keep to the positions agreed by the parties under the Trilateral statement;

- negotiate on a process of delimitation and demarcation of the border and examine the possibility of creating a demilitarized zone with the presence of a peacekeeping or military monitoring force.

- The Assembly also notes that the long running conflict has had a catastrophic impact on the cultural heritage and property of the region.

It condemns the destruction over the last 30 years of Armenian cultural heritage in Azerbaijan for which Azerbaijan is responsible, notably in Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, and condemns the damage deliberately caused to cultural heritage during the 6-week war, and what appears to be the deliberate shelling of the St. Holy Saviour; Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi, as well as the destruction or damage of other churches and cemeteries during and after the conflict.

It remains concerned, in the light of past destruction, about the future of the many Armenian churches, monasteries, including the monastery in Khutavank/Dadivank, cross stones and other forms of cultural heritage which have returned under Azerbaijan control.

The Assembly expresses concern about a developing narrative in Azerbaijan promoting a “Caucasian Albanian” heritage to replace what is seen as an “Armenian” cultural heritage.

## Jerusalem Patriarchate Ratifies Land Deal, Creating Concern in Palestinian Community

JERUSALEM — The Holy Synod of the Brotherhood of Sts. James on September 22, acting for the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, ratified a land lease deal previously signed with an Israeli company that plans to build a hotel on the property.

The land owned by the patriarchate is part of the historic Goveroun Bardez [Cows’ Garden] land in the historic Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem.

The decision has led several parties to raise concerns that the land, which is to be leased for 99 years, will be gobbled up in the future by the Israeli authorities.

The patriarchate has vigorously defended the decision, saying that the deal will bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars to the patriarchate and create jobs for Armenians, while registering the property definitively in the name of the patriarchate.

The day the deal was reaffirmed, the Higher Presidential Committee of Church Affairs in Palestine issued a letter expressing concerns about this lease. Dr. Ramzi Khoury, the letter noted, had tried to get in touch with Patriarch Nourhan Manougian for further clarification but had not heard back. The concern stated is that dealing with the Israeli government would change the nature of the land with an eye to “preserving the legal and historical status of the city of Jerusalem.”

Fr. Baret Yeretizian, Real Estate Director of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, issued a rebuttal.

Copies of the first two documents and a link to the aforementioned rebuttal may be found at [www.mirror-spectator.com](http://www.mirror-spectator.com).

It recommends that Armenia and Azerbaijan allow UNESCO unlimited access to all cultural heritage sites in both countries to assess the damage and assess the steps necessary to safeguard what remains and invites UNESCO to look into the developing narrative promoting a “Caucasian Albanian” heritage, to ensure it is not manipulated by either side.

## Armenian, Azerbaijani FMs Meet on Sidelines of UN Meetings as OSCE Peace Efforts Ratchet Up

MEETING, from page 1

“The co-chairs reaffirm their commitment to continue working with the sides to find comprehensive solutions to all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with their mandate,” the statement added.

It did not report any concrete understandings reached by Mirzoyan and Bayramov or say whether the co-chairs plan to visit the Karabakh conflict zone soon.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan reaffirmed Armenia’s readiness to “resume the Karabakh settlement process” that has long been mediated by the United States, Russia and France.

The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (Stephane Visconti of France, Andrew Schofer of the United States of America, and Igor Khovaev of the Russian Federation) in a statement added, “The co-chairs welcome this first meeting of the two ministers of foreign affairs since November 2020 as a sign of the resolve of the two countries to reengage in the peace process through direct dialogue aimed at contributing to security, stability, and prosperity in the region. The Co-Chairs reaffirm their commitment

to continue working with the sides to find comprehensive solutions to all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with their mandate.”

The talks came the day after Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s again claimed, in an address to the UN General Assembly, that Azerbaijan ended the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with its victory in the six-week war.

“Azerbaijan no longer has an administrative-territorial unit called Nagorno-Karabakh,” he said, adding that the international community should stop using the Armenian-populated territory’s name.

“The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unresolved,” counted Armen Grigoryan, secretary of the Armenian Security Council. “The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh’s status still awaits a solution and we see that solution within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.”

The US ambassador to Armenia, Lynne Tracy, has repeatedly made similar statements in recent weeks.

“We do not see the status of Nagorno-Karabakh as having been resolved,” Tracy insisted on September 13 in remarks condemned by the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry.

Aliyev ruled out on July 22 any negotiations on Karabakh’s status, saying that Yerevan must instead recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over the disputed territory.

Later in July, the US, Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the Minsk Group issued a joint statement calling for a “negotiated, comprehensive, and sustainable settlement of all remaining core substantive issues of the conflict.” They said the conflicting parties should resume talks “as soon as possible.”

The Karabakh issue was on the agenda of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s talks with his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian held the previous day on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the two men reaffirmed their governments’ intention to continue to strive for “stabilizing the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, first and foremost in the OSCE Minsk Group format.”

Le Drian also met separately in New York with Mirzoyan.

In addition, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has held two separate meetings, with Mirzoyan and Bayramov, the United Nations informed.

(RFE/RL and Armenpress contributed to this report.)





## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenians in France Demand Immediate Release of Prisoners of War

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Several hundred Armenians and ethnic French people demonstrated in front of the Azerbaijani embassy in Paris on Sunday, September 26, at the appeal of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF), supported by various French organizations. They demanded the immediate release of Armenian prisoners of war detained by Azerbaijan since November 9, 2020, in violation of Article 7 of the declaration of ceasefire and of several articles of the Geneva Convention, stipulating that the abducting country must refrain from subjecting prisoners of war to “violence, physical abuse, reprisals, intimidation or discrimination.” The demonstrators also demanded recognition of the Republic of Artsakh.

## A Rally Displaying Signs of Anger and Concern

The speakers addressed their solidarity with the Armenians of Artsakh and called for its recognition. Jules Boyadjian, president of the Committee for the Defense of the Armenian Cause (Comité de défense de la cause arménienne, abbreviated CDCA), denounced the fact that the French ambassador did not meet with the authorities of Artsakh, while the French ambassador to Cyprus met the



Veysel Keser, former mayor of a neighborhood of Van, speaking



Isabelle Santiago, deputy for the Val-de-Marne region



CCAF co-chair Ara Toranian

authorities of Northern Cyprus. The word union among Armenians was used several times in support of Armenia.

Patrick Karam, vice president of the Ile de France regional council, regretted the silence of the international community. He said, “As long as there are Armenians on earth, there will always be an Armenia!”

The highlight of the meeting was the presence of the former mayor of a neighborhood of Van, Veysel Keser (People’s Democratic Party, HDP), who had been removed from his post by Turkish President Recep Tayyip



Jules Boyadjian, president of the Comité de défense de la cause arménienne (CDCA)

Erdogan. Keser confirmed that Turkey sent jihadists to Azerbaijan, and that a month before the outbreak of the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression, Turkey had sent a lot of weapons and drones to Azerbaijan. He called for the Armenian hostages to be released and he paid tribute to the victims of the genocide and the victims of the aggression from Azerbaijan.

CCAF co-chair Mourad Papazian declared: “Armenia and Artsakh need us against the forces of pan-Turkism.” He added that after being received at the Elysée Palace, with Ara Toranian, by French President Emmanuel Macron, on November 12, 2020, Macron conceded: “We were cowards.”

CCAF co-chair Ara Toranian in turn said: “I would like to send a message to the French government to mobilize more on the issue of recognition of Nagorno Karabakh and our prisoners of war. Take action!” He denounced international cowardice, recalling the abandonment of the Kurds in Afrin. According to him, this was a scandal like that of Shushi. Values are in danger, he said.

## Midnight Express

Armenian ombudsman Arman Tatoyan revealed that “50 survivors testified to physical torture, abuse and deprivation of food, water, sleep and adequate medical care, without distinction between the treatment of detained combatants and civilians by the Azerbaijani officials and military personnel. Some prisoners testified that the guards forced them to



Pierre Ouzoulis, departmental councilor, senator (Communist Party)



Jean-Christophe Buisson, deputy director of Le Figaro magazine, at left, with Mourad Papazian

eat food spilled on the ground. Azerbaijani prison guards abused and tortured their bodies with belts, electric shocks, screwdrivers, rifle butts, metal chains and batons, sometimes several times a day. Under duress, they were forced to say ‘Karabakh is Azerbaijan.’”

Prisoners of war were intentionally deprived of sleep. Some were handcuffed to heaters, while others were forced to stand or sit for days. In winter, Tatoyan related, prison guards poured buckets of ice water over captives and opened windows at night, forcing Armenians to sleep on the cold prison floor. Torturers have consistently refused to provide prisoners of war with medical treatment for wounds inflicted in combat or in captivity, reported Tatoyan.

(All the accompanying photos are by Jean Eckian.)



A view of the demonstration





# Community News

## AGBU Young Professionals of Detroit Regroup After Covid

DETROIT — After the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted Armenian community activity, it was unclear whether the viability of small organizations like the AGBU YPs of Detroit would be affected. So, when the group held a practically last-minute picnic on September 12, committee members were surprised to find that 16 people showed up, when they were expecting 4 or 5.

The rationale for this occurrence seems to be that local Armenians were starved for social interaction outside of their immediate families due to the massive quarantine. And since all Armenian community activity had stopped, the Detroit Metro residents were in search of the old connectedness.

The chair of the current committee, Naera Hagnazarian, is an engineer for DTE (the electric and gas utilities firm formerly known as Detroit Edison) and is a native of Iran. Other members of the YP executive board are Chris Banerian, Lisa Aglamishian Ghoukassian, Garoonah Hagnazarian, and Harry Kezelian. The picnic was organized by Kezelian with the help of group members Erika Palaian and Brent Palaian, who served as “grillmaster,” as well as the other board members.

The committee was heartened by the fact that not only did their traditional constituency participate in the event, but new members also appeared, several of whom are students at Wayne State University Medical School and are originally from Los Angeles. Due to the economic downturn after the recession of 2008, newcomers have become scarce in Michigan and the Detroit Metro area, one of the areas hardest hit. But the auto industry and world-class educational institutions such as the University of Michigan and Wayne State Medical School continue to be a draw, and Armenians from large communities such as LA and the East Coast are

see AGBU, page 11



AGBU Young Professionals of Detroit Picnic at Heritage Park, Farmington Hills



Staff outside the Martuni hospital

## ‘Doctors for Artsakh’ Aims to Revive Healthcare System

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — The recent war in Artsakh caused significant damage to the healthcare system, particularly to its human resources, says FAR Healthcare Programs Director, Dr. Hambardzum Simonyan. Many doctors left Artsakh after the end of the war, causing a shortage of professional potential in Artsakh’s medical institutions.

To address this critical situation, Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) came up with a new initiative aimed at revitalizing the impaired healthcare system of Artsakh. The “Doctors for Artsakh” program launched with the Ministry of Health of Artsakh and “Progressive Medicine” NGO, is an extension and expansion of the Continuing Professional Training program implemented by FAR in Artsakh since 2011 in collaboration with AAHPO (Armenian American Healthcare Professionals Organization).

The initiative involved the best Armenian doctors who would go and stay in Artsakh on rotating bases for an extended period of time. Not only they would work in Artsakh clinics, but also, parallel to that, train a new generation of doctors. This new FAR initiative received an immediate positive response from its partners and supporters worldwide. The project fell into the dedicated and able hands of Dr. Simonyan with whom this writer spoke by telephone from Yerevan.

In 2005, when Dr. Simonyan joined FAR, the “CME of doctors working in the remote provinces of Armenia” project was launched. In 2011 it expanded to include doctors in Artsakh. This was made possible thanks to professional and financial support from Dr. Raffy Hovanessian, the Nazarian Family Foundation and AAHPO. Since then, more than 250 doctors from Artsakh underwent extensive training in leading hospitals in Yerevan. In 2018, the training of community nurses in Artsakh was launched, thus covering the entire healthcare human resources of the rural Armenia and Artsakh. This integrated program is unique and vital, especially for the health care of the people of Artsakh, said Dr. Simonyan and continued: “I never thought that Artsakh would mean so much to me ... During the first Artsakh war when I was a student at the Yerevan Medical University, my father was taking part in the war, in the frontlines. Understandably I got to know Artsakh intimately, and I really appreciated it. When I started working at FAR, I had many visits and contacts with Artsakh and its heroic people”.

It was his father’s close friend, cardiologist Victor Sahakyan from Martuni, who was like a mentor to Dr. Simonyan too, who inspired him to choose a medical doctor’s profession. “I think it came from my innate ability to help and empathize with people. I like to help people, especially children. Maybe that is why I chose pediatrics as my medical profession. And later, as the FAR’s health program coordinator, I was able to help tens, hundreds, probably many-many more people in need”, said Dr. Simonyan, who is married with 2 children.

During and after the 44-day war in Artsakh, doctors were overloaded with not only treating wounded soldiers, but also the local civilians, who had severe health problems. “They needed our support and the support was coming to them from all corners of the Armenian world, including through multiple projects coordinated by FAR. Medical supplies and critically needed tools would flow to Artsakh as donation from our compatriots who were united in their strong determination to do what they can to help Artsakh”, said Simonyan. They at FAR were coordinating that global response coming from all corners of the Armenian Diaspora, the Government and other partners. In particular, he mentioned incredible support from Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian and Dr. Ara Babloyan.

There are still a number of hurdles that have to be overcome for the uninterrupted work of the Artsakh healthcare system, like poor communication between Artsakh

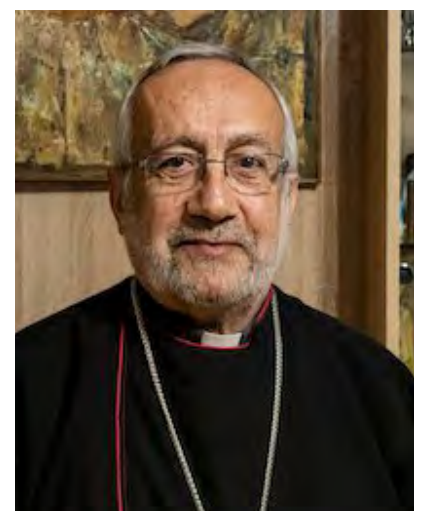
see HEALTHCARE, page 10

## Armenian Bishops Elect Former U. S. Pastor as Patriarch

ROME (Vatican News) — The Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia of the Armenians, Lebanon, convoked by the Holy Father in Rome on 22 and 23 September 2021, has elected Archbishop Raphaël François Minassian, titular of Caesaria in Cappadocia of the Armenians and ordinary for Armenian Catholic faithful of Eastern Europe, as Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians.

The patriarch-elect has taken the name Raphaël Bedros XXI Minassian.

Minassian was born in 1946 in Beirut. He studied at the Patriarchal Seminary of Bzommar (1958-1967) and at the Pontifical Gregorian University (1967-1973), where he also studied philosophy and theology. He attended a specialization course in psycho-pedagogy at the Salesian Pontifical University.



Archbishop Raphael Bedros XXI Minassian

On 24 June 1973 he was ordained a priest as a member of the Patriarchal Clergy Institute in Bzommar. From 1973 to 1982 he served as parish priest of the Armenian Cathedral in Beirut, and from 1982 to 1984, secretary to Patriarch Hovhannes Bedros XVIII Kasparian. From 1984 to 1989 he was in charge of founding the parish complex of the Holy Cross in Zalka, Beirut.

From 1975 to 1989 he was a judge at the ecclesiastical tribunal of the Armenian Church in Beirut. He taught Armenian liturgy at the Pontifical University of Kaslik from 1985 to 1989, and in 1989 he was transferred to the United States of America, where he worked for a year as a parish priest in New York. Subsequently, until 2003, he was pastor for Armenian Catholics in California, Arizona and Nevada.

Since 2004 he has directed Telepace Armenia, of which he is founder. In 2005 he was appointed as Patriarchal exarch of Jerusalem and Amman for the Armenians. On June 24, 2011, the Holy Father appointed him ordinary for the Armenian Catholic faithful of Eastern Europe, assigning him the titular see of Caesarea in Cappadocia of the Armenians and the title of archbishop ad personam.

From June 24 to 26, 2016, he received Pope Francis during his Apostolic Journey in Armenia.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# San Diego Church Consecration to Be Held October 15-17

SAN DIEGO — The Consecration Weekend of the new Armenian Church of San Diego will be held October 15-17, at the church site on 13925 El Camino Real. The blessing and raising of the crosses, held on September 17, 2021, was the first event to kick off the church's grand opening.

According to Parish Priest Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian, "The sacred tradition of blessing and raising the crosses follows the biblical example of what Moses did as was instructed by God, who commanded him to consecrate the tabernacle and all therein. The Cross is consecrated and elevated to the top of the dome of the sanctuary, first because Christ overcame the world (John 16:33). We also believe that cross on the top of the dome is the meeting point between heaven and earth."

The Semerdjian, Kellejian and Mikaelian families donated the two raised crosses in memory of the Very Rev. Fr. Shahe AK and Yeretzkin Alice Semerdjian.

This event leads up to San Diego's Consecration Weekend from Oct. 15-17, 2021. Ceremonies will be presided by His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, and the Very Rev. Fr. Pakrad Dz V Berjekian, Parish Priest.

The Opening Ceremony will be Friday, October 15 at 4 p.m., followed by a refreshment reception. The Consecration Ceremony will occur Saturday, October 16 at 1pm, also followed by a light reception. And the first mass ("Badarak") to be conducted in



The Semerdjian, Kellejian and Mikaelian Families in memory of Very Rev. Fr. Shahe AK & Alice Semerdjian. With His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and Very Rev. Fr. Pakrad AK Berjekian, who presided over the cross-raising ceremony.

the church will be Sunday, October 17 at 10 a.m., followed by an Armenian luncheon at \$30/person. Comfortable clothing and shoes are recommended for all weekend attendees.

A Consecration Celebration Banquet and Recognition Ceremony will be held on Saturday night, October 16, 2021, starting promptly at 6pm. This event is taking place

at the San Diego Marriott Del Mar.

Recognition of past and present church leaders, donors, and volunteers will occur at the banquet and at all three ceremonies throughout the weekend, including the unveiling of the new church name, which takes place at Saturday's Consecration ceremony.

Nora Balikian and Lisa Kradjian, Consecration Co-Chairs, commented on this milestone event. "The new church campus is more than 14 years in the making. We thank everyone who has made it a reality, and we are looking forward to a new chapter for our San Diego Armenian Community with this once-in-a-lifetime weekend."

Reservations and prepayment for the banquet are required and due October 1, 2021. All San Diego County Covid protocols will be observed, and masks are strongly encour-

aged.

To make donations or ticket/table purchases, mail ("Armenian Church of San Diego") to Armenian Church of San Diego, P.O. Box 1719, Vista, CA 92085 or visit [www.stjohngarabed.com/donateshop](http://www.stjohngarabed.com/donateshop).

This project, named Bridge to the Future, dates back to 2008 when the Trust Fund Committee of St. John Garabed Armenian Church purchased close to 14 acres of premium property in San Diego, California. In October 2014, the Conditional Use Permit was granted by the City Planning Commission. In January 2016, the Coastal Commission approved construction of the site. In 2017, the project was taken over by the newly-formed Building Committee to oversee and facilitate the construction phases. Thanks to a very generous benefactor, an additional 4 acres of adjacent property was donated to expand the campus.

When completed, the campus will feature a sanctuary designed to resemble St. Hripsime in Etchmiadzin, elegant social hall, youth center and gymnasium, education and cultural building with classrooms and a library, Armenian Heritage Park, picnic and meditation spaces, and abundant parking.

## 'Bureaucrats of the Armenian Genocide: The Mid-Level Perpetrators' By Dr. Suren Manukyan

FRESNO — Dr. Suren Manukyan, Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State, will speak on "Bureaucrats of the Armenian Genocide: The Mid-Level Perpetrators" at 7 p.m. (Pacific time)/10 p.m. (Eastern time) on Friday, October 15.

The presentation is part of the Fall 2021 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and will be an online presentation. Zoom registration is required: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesmanukyan2>.

This is the second of a three-part series of presentations by Dr. Manukyan on the Armenian Genocide. His final presentation on "Ordinary Killers of the Armenian Genocide: The Lower-Level Perpetrators," will be given on Friday, November 12, 2021.

The second level of genocide perpetrators encompasses structures, which are directly involved in regulating the Genocide following the directives of top authorities, and ensuring the implementation of those instructions. The role of the structures or the state bureaucracy on this level was remarkable. The local bureaucracy would greatly precondition the nature and the intensity of genocide. Local elites could intensify or slow down the dynamics of killings. Dr. Manukyan will discuss these factors in his presentation.

Dr. Manukyan is the Head of the UNESCO Chair on Prevention of Genocide and Other Atrocity Crimes at Yerevan State University and Head of the Department of Comparative Genocide Studies at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (Yerevan). He is also a Visiting lecturer at the American University of Armenia and has been a Fulbright Scholar at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights at the Rutgers University of New Jersey.

# Eastern Diocese Armenian School Teachers Meet for Symposium

NEW YORK — The Armenian Studies department of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America held its much-anticipated Armenian Teachers Symposium on Saturday, September 11, as a "hybrid" event combining in-person and remote participation.

Armenian School educators from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut met at the Diocesan Center in Manhattan, while colleagues from Houston (TX), Haverhill and Cambridge (MA), Cleveland (OH), Southfield (MI), Charlotte (NC), Philadelphia (PA), Watervliet (NY), and Washington, DC, joined them interactively via a live Internet broadcast.

Also in attendance were Fr. Davit Karamyan, Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral, and Fr. Diran Bohajian, pastor of St. Leon Church (Fair Lawn, NJ). In all, about 60

pals of parish Armenian schools, honored teachers for their continuing service, and paid tribute to longtime educators who had been lost in the past year.

Diocesan Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrop Parsamian opened the symposium with prayerful regards for all Armenian teachers. "The Armenian language has transmitted our faith from generation to generation," he said, congratulating the attendees for their efforts in preserving the church's mission. "With Daniel Srpazan, we at the Diocese are with you, beside you, backing our cultural inheritance."

A survey of Diocesan Armenian schools detailed the many challenges brought on by the pandemic—and the "best practices" found to overcome them. The findings were welcomed as a general "reality check" on the status of Armenian schools.



Fr. Mesrop Parsamian

Şahan Arzruni. He discussed beloved Armenian traditions in their historic context, and insightfully related them to customs from other cultures. Touching on practices associated with the New Year, Lenten fasting, Navasart, Vartavar, Khatchveratz, and blessings of water and grapes, Arzruni emphasized the importance of traditions as a critical support of the distinctive Armenian identity.

Dr. Jesse Arlen, the director of the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, spoke about his personal journey to learn Armenian as an adult, in a presentation titled, "Reversal: The Goal as the Means." He told how his love for languages, special teachers, and interaction with Armenian speakers led him throughout his linguistic journey of discovery. "The student should become a hunter of language. Learning a language must be the responsibility of the student," he said, to enthusiastic applause from the listeners.

Each presentation was followed by a question session, with speakers interacting with both the live and virtual audiences. The Armenian Studies department and the Zohrab Center presented gifts to the attendees, and books were available for purchase. The proceedings went forward in observance of all prevailing safety protocols. Levon Altiparmakian, Taleen Kupelian, and the Diocesan facilities staff all contributed to the smooth operation of the event.



Şahan Arzruni

participants attended or viewed the symposium, which was conducted entirely in Armenian.

Gilda Kupelian of the Diocese's Armenian Studies program saluted Armenian teachers for fulfilling their mission to spread Armenian culture in the extremely trying circumstances of the past year. She congratulated newly appointed princi-

### Language Hunters

Gilda Kupelian introduced a newly-released resource: a textbook titled *Ardoo-deeg*, aimed to facilitate reading comprehension and vocabulary skills among students from Kindergarten to 3rd grade.

Delivering a presentation on Armenian customs and traditions was renowned master pianist, ethnomusicologist, and lecturer





COMMUNITY NEWS

OBITUARY

Takouhi Bozoyan

Dedicated to Community, Church, Family

BELMAR, N.J. — Takouhi Bozoyan (nee Knabblian), 90, passed away peacefully, on September 12, 2021, surrounded by her loving family at her beach home in Belmar, NJ.

Born in Syria, 1931, both her parents passed away when she was only 7. Takouhi



lived between orphanages and relatives' homes until the age of 16 when she met and wed the late Yervant (Edward) Bozoyan. They immigrated to the US in 1953 with their children, settling in Union City where she lived until her passing.

She sponsored many of her relatives to come to America from overseas in search

of the American dream during difficult times.

Takouhi was a stay-at-home mom, a homemaker who self-taught herself the English language and at times cared for her working friends' children.

She was a pillar of the community, a devoted parishioner of Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in Union City, where she was an honorary member of its Women's Guild. She read the Bible on a daily basis, and was in the process of reading it in its entirety for the fourth time.

Her grandson, Vince, described his grandmother as a "dove" of the family, as the dove is a symbol of love, peace and innocence.

She was happiest spending time with loved ones at the family beach house in Belmar, where there was an open door policy as everyone was always welcome.

She was especially passionate about her cooking. She enjoyed doing so for her family and friends, especially during the holidays, and for the annual Holy Cross Armenian Church Bazaar, where she would spend days preparing the traditional foods and desserts, and would donate them all.

She worked very hard, selflessly, in spite of her poor health, and gave away what she had generously, to all. She was the model parishioner.

She was a wife, loving mother to six children, adoring grandmother and great-grandmother. She also leaves many nephews, nieces, and sister-in-law, Yeretzgin/Diramayr Anahid Kalayjian.

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# IN THE MIRROR



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# ‘Doctors for Artsakh’ Aims to Revive Healthcare System

HEALTHCARE, from page 7

and the rest of the World, insecure roads, lack of necessary medical equipment, still lack of qualified doctors and nurses, and much more. “But – one thing at a time, we should stay focused on the most important things, which are - strengthening the state of Artsakh and ensuring the welfare of its people”, said Dr. Simonyan, and continued: “As for me, since the question was asked, I have had many opportunities to leave Armenia and find comfortable living somewhere else. But I cannot leave, as my life’s mission is here, in Armenia and Artsakh”.

He remembers an interesting episode while he was serving in the army, and was able to find the correct diagnosis of a soldier with an atypical disease (malaria), thanks to which it was possible to save that soldier’s life. Years later, when Simonyan was working at FAR, two men entered his office and one said “Do you remember me? I am Samvel. You saved my life years ago in the army”, and hugged Simonyan.

Simonyan calls his father his model of a lifetime.

“My father is my role model, from whom I learned the qualities of helping, supporting and being a pioneer. On December 8, 1988 when the tragic earthquake struck, he was already in Spitak, and in 1989-1994, during the first Artsakh war, he was on the frontlines. It was my father who urged me to “work for our people”. That’s my type of a role model”, said Simonyan passionately.

## Two Devoted Team Members

Two devoted doctors — cardiologist Ani Rapyan and ophthalmologist Garo Hampartsumyan — have also been assisting FAR in Artsakh In the scope of “Doctors for Artsakh” project. Dr. Rapyan worked as a team member with two specialists helping heart patients for one month in Mar-

Sevan. She studied cardiology at Yerevan State Medical University. Her inspiration from childhood was her aunt who was a doctor. Her parents predicted she would become a “good specialist so she can help people.” With pride she mentions that her husband who works in IT sector is from Artsakh.

With obvious emotion, she related the thought that the economy is better in other countries, Armenia is different. “My roots are here. I would like to visit other countries, but I want to live in Armenia. I love Armenia.”

Garo Hampartsumyan with dedication treated 35 people in Mardakert for two weeks “They had grave eye conditions but never took care of that.” A 35-year old man who had been seriously injured as a



Dr. Ani Rapyan

voice trembling.

Another man who had caught a foreign object in his eye while repairing his damaged house came to be treated at 11 P.M. “He could barely walk because of the many injuries he had sustained during the war. He had had twelve other operations and had not fully recovered. These are incredibly courageous people”.

Hampartsumyan was born in Nor Jugha Isfahan, Iran, and came to Armenia at age twelve with his parents and two brothers and two sisters. Studying ophthalmology at Yerevan State Medical University, he reveals he became a doctor to help his father with his eye problems.

“Iran is a wonderful country for Armenia which it helps and respects”, said Hampartsumyan, adding with emphasis, “but Armenia is where our roots are. I will be the last person to leave Armenia.”

The “Doctors for Artsakh” project is generously supported by the Dr. Edgar Hovsepiyan Medical Fund, the Dr. Raffy Hovanesian Educational Foundation, the Nazarian Foundation, the Armenian Medical Fund, and AAHPO.



Dr. Garo Hampardzymyan

tuni, “a small town of 3000 people with doors open for all.” After the recent war, half of the area was tragically lost.

Dr. Rapyan described a 40-year old woman who had a brain tumor which the MRI ten years ago did not detect. She had no vision during that time.

Another case involved a 45-year old nurse whose husband died in the war while serving as a volunteer. And there was also a 20-year old girl whom she treated for heart and neurological problems.

“The people of Martuni are very patriotic people as are all the people of Artsakh. They share their meals and possessions. And they want and are determined to continue living there, in the land of their ancestors.”

Rapyan was born in Gavar, near Lake

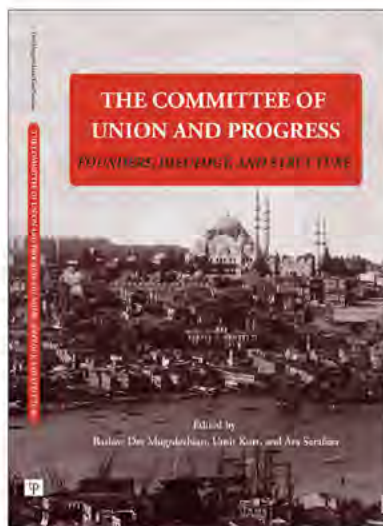
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*The Committee of Union and Progress: Founders, Ideology, and Structure* is Volume 13 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, co-editor of the book, will present the new volume. The book has chapters by Dr. Ümit Kurt, Dr. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Dr. Dikran Kaligian, Dr. Raymond Kevorkian, and Duygu Coskuntuna. It was edited by Ümit Kurt, Ara Sarafian, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.



The chapters included in this work were first presented as papers at a conference entitled “The Committee of Union and Progress: Founders, Ideology, and Structure” organized by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Dr. Ümit Kurt, and sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program of California State University, Fresno, between October 12–13, 2018. The papers have since been edited and appear here in a single volume with a new historical introduction and illustrations.

The volume includes a collection of articles that reflect on Ottoman Armenians and the Turkish nationalist movement of the Committee of Union and Progress before WWI. The articles provide new, critical insights on the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# AGBU Young Professionals of Detroit Regroup After Covid

AGBU, from page 7

often drawn to the fact that the Detroit area has a large Armenian presence, certainly compared with practically any other place in the “heartland” where one might go for college. The increasingly “hip” reputation of downtown Detroit doesn’t hurt either.

Several of the newcomers expressed interest in becoming more involved in planning activities, and the old guard has been enthused by this influx. The YP group was formed primarily to cater to the community needs of Armenians in their late 20s, 30s, and beyond who were searching for a way to get involved. Although the traditional youth groups ACYOA, AYF, and Homenetmen remain strong in the Detroit area, these cater to Armenians in their late teens and early 20s. The AGBU YP group fills a gap and tries to play a non-partisan and nonsectarian role. With the lack of community involvement during Covid and the arrival of newcomers who are not tied to, or are too old for, the traditional institutions, the group feels it has a renewed purpose and mission to bring together the Armenian young professionals of the area in community involvement and giving back.

The next event to be planned is a career day organized by the Armenian Students’ Cultural Association of University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, with the AGBU YPs corralling members to speak about their careers to the students.

–Harry Kezelian      Detroit AGBU YP group photograph



## Stained Glass Windows Smashed at St. Peter Armenian Church in Van Nuys

VANDALISM, from page 1

“However, when you destroy iconic images that represent religion or ethnicity, that’s categorized as a hate crime. In our case, destroying the image of Jesus Christ on the stained glass should be undoubtedly considered a hate crime. As the incident occurred one day after the 30th anniversary of the independence of Armenia, there is also racial implication involved,” said Fr. Demirjian.



A broken stained glass window

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# Arts & Culture

## NAASR Presents Webinar on the Legendary Rouben Mamoulian

BELMONT, Mass. — On Friday, October 8 at 1 p.m. (Eastern U.S.)/10 a.m. (Pacific), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), along with the Armenian Film Foundation, and the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, will offer a work-in-progress presentation by Dr. Milena Oganessian marking the 124th birth anniversary of American-Armenian stage and screen director Rouben Mamoulian, “Rouben Mamoulian: An American-Armenian Theater and Film Director and Artist.”

Rouben Mamoulian (1897-1987) was one of the most influential, yet overlooked, American artistic visionaries of the 20th century. Mamoulian’s revolutionary ideas and techniques brought important contributions to the early development of American musical theater and film. In his artistic productions, the director combined song, dance, dramatic action, dialogue, and rhythm to create a stylistic unity. In film, Mamoulian restored mobility to the camera; introduced multi-track sound recording and voice-over; redefined close-ups, split-screens, and dissolves; and directed the first full-length feature film shot in color, using the new



Rouben Mamoulian

Technicolor process. This presentation will explore some of the life experiences of Mamoulian and will focus on the director’s Armenian heritage as it relates to his art.

Oganessian specializes in cultural heritage and identity studies. Milena has presented in the United States, Canada, Georgia, and Armenia. She has taught internationally and has consulted for governmental and non-profit organizations, including the Smithsonian Institution and the Armenian American Cultural Association, Inc., in the Washington, D.C., area. She is a recipient of numerous awards and grants, including a research grant from the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and P.E.O.’s International Peace Scholarship, among others. Milena has worked as a translator; she speaks Armenian, Russian, Georgian, and Turkish.

This program will be accessible on Zoom (register at <https://bit.ly/NAASRMamoulian>) or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies>, where it will remain available after the event.

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



Gago Jackson with Marilyn Monroe’s Russian lookalike

## Gago Jackson

### Michael’s Lookalike from Vanadzor

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / MOSCOW-SOCHI — Gago Jackson — the stage name of Gagik Arturovich — was born in the city of Vanadzor, Armenia. From an early age he was fond of dancing and drawing, also - to parody and imitate celebrities. Gagik graduated from medical school with a degree in dental technician. In 2005 he received an invitation to work in “Double Plus” the Moscow professional theater of lookalikes. He took first place in the 2008 dance championship, also received a diploma from the leadership of the Courier Service of Russia, as well as many diplomas and certificates in various contests. In 2009 he made his debut on the Russia TV talent show “Minute of Glory” and in the same year became the winner and holder of the Cup of the International Gala Show “Minute of Glory,” where he competed with the finalists of similar competitions from the US, Germany, Israel, Argentina, Brazil, etc. In 2010, Gagik became a finalist of the same competition. His rendition of Michael Jackson’s song *Black or White* made it to the top 20 of “Minute of Glory.” Gago Jackson performs in various cities of Russia, both in corporate and themed parties, discos, banquets, and at concert venues.

**Gagik, there are many lookalikes of the King of Pop in the world. In your opinion, and in the opinion of others, what makes you different from the rest?**

I differ from other lookalikes in that I dance almost in silence. I feel the vibration, I know all of Michael’s dances and songs by heart. I even know how to improvise, I make my own phonograms for performances to my taste, I performed under them and everyone like them, inviting me very often to perform at various events. And I dance in silence because I have a weak auditory nerve, so I often wear a hearing aid. But on stage you cannot dance with it: either it deteriorates from moisture, or flies out. When I hear the first chords of music, standing near the speaker, I take off the hearing aid, go to the stage and perform from memory, clearly falling into the beat.

**I think it was very creative of you to dance in sync with Michael on the screen. Have the other lookalikes come up with such a duet?**

Everyone and I really like dancing *Dangerous* in sync with the background on the screen, as if a real Michael with a dancer came up with it himself.

**How many Michael Jackson lookalikes are there in Russia and is there any competition between them?**

There are Pavel Talalaev and I. We take our business seriously and always support each other; there is even no question of competition. We have been friends since 2003.

**They say that subconsciously a person also begins to resemble his lookalike internally - is that so?**

Sometimes yes, there are some things that are like a conditioned reflex. I like to snap my finger when I hear my favorite music, or, for example, in a taxi, when Michael’s music is playing, I “sing along” just opening my mouth and stamping my feet.

see LOOKALIKE, page 13

## Famed Criminal-Defense Attorney, Mark Geragos Named ‘Motherland’ Executive Producer

LOS ANGELES — Legendary criminal-defense attorney Mark Geragos has agreed to accept an appointment as executive producer of Vic Gerami’s “Motherland.”

“It’s an honor to be part of the team making ‘Motherland’ a reality,” Geragos said. Geragos added that he sees his role as an opportunity to break through the sheer volume of stories competing for public attention these days.

“The current media cycle ranges, day-to-day, from stories of insurrection to the recent chaotic evacuations out of Afghanistan and everything in between,” said, Geragos, the man sometimes called, “America’s defense attorney.”

“You can’t blame people for being totally unaware of the deadly crisis that has innocent girls, boys, women and men being brutally murdered in Artsakh, also called ‘Nagorno-Karabakh,’” he added. “But we also can’t let that lack of awareness continue.”

Geragos’ addition to “Motherland” follows the recent securing of a generous and symbolically important City of Los Angeles arts grant.

“I could not be more humbled, nor more grateful that America’s best-known and most effective advocate for the wrongfully prosecuted and politically persecuted has agreed to join the team producing the feature-length documentary film penetrating the crimes now being committed by Turkey and Azerbaijan against Armenians of Artsakh,” Gerami said. “

“We could not ask for a better executive producer,” he continued.

Geragos is famous around the world for prevailing in “un-winnable” cases. He represents countless clients whose household names and “A-list” celebrity status carry as much potential to convict as to exonerate. Geragos’s decades of experience standing up for the underdog make his role executive producing “Motherland” familiar territory.

“Standing up to bullies and finding allies along the way has been a big part of ‘Motherland’s’ development and production,” Gerami said. “Doing likewise is exactly what Mark Geragos and his associates at [Geragos & Geragos](#), Mark’s law firm in Los Angeles, do each and every day,”

Geragos was one of the lead lawyers in two groundbreaking federal class action lawsuits against New York Life Insurance Co. and AXA, for insurance policies issued in the early 20th century during the time of the Armenian Genocide, which saw the inhuman slaughter of more than 1.5 million Armenians. The two cases his firm argued settled for over \$37.5 million, in 2004 and 2005.

A short list naming just a few of Geragos’s myriad superstar and famous clients includes Michael Jackson, Winona Ryder, Gary Condit, Susan McDougal, Scott Peterson, Scott Barney, and Jussie Smollett.

In his hit podcast, [Reasonable Doubt](#), Geragos brings to the forefront significant details from past and present experiences as he examines

see GERAGOS, page 13





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Michael Jackson's Lookalike from Vanadzor

LOOKALIKE, from page 12

**How you collaborate with costume designers, stylists and make-up artists to create your stage image?**

My seamstress Lyudmila Lifanova has been sewing my costumes since 2012; she is very, very neat and sews with high quality, that my suits serve for a long time. She also makes beautiful and complex costumes for photo shoots, they are like museum exhibits. And the requisites - knee pads, belts, sleeves, I make myself from various materials.

**Is there something about your idol that you don't like?**

He was too kind. It was necessary in moderation, but he lived among unscrupulous people who ruined his life and are ruining it even after death. This world was not for him.

**How did it happen that Michael Jackson's father invited you to visit him?**

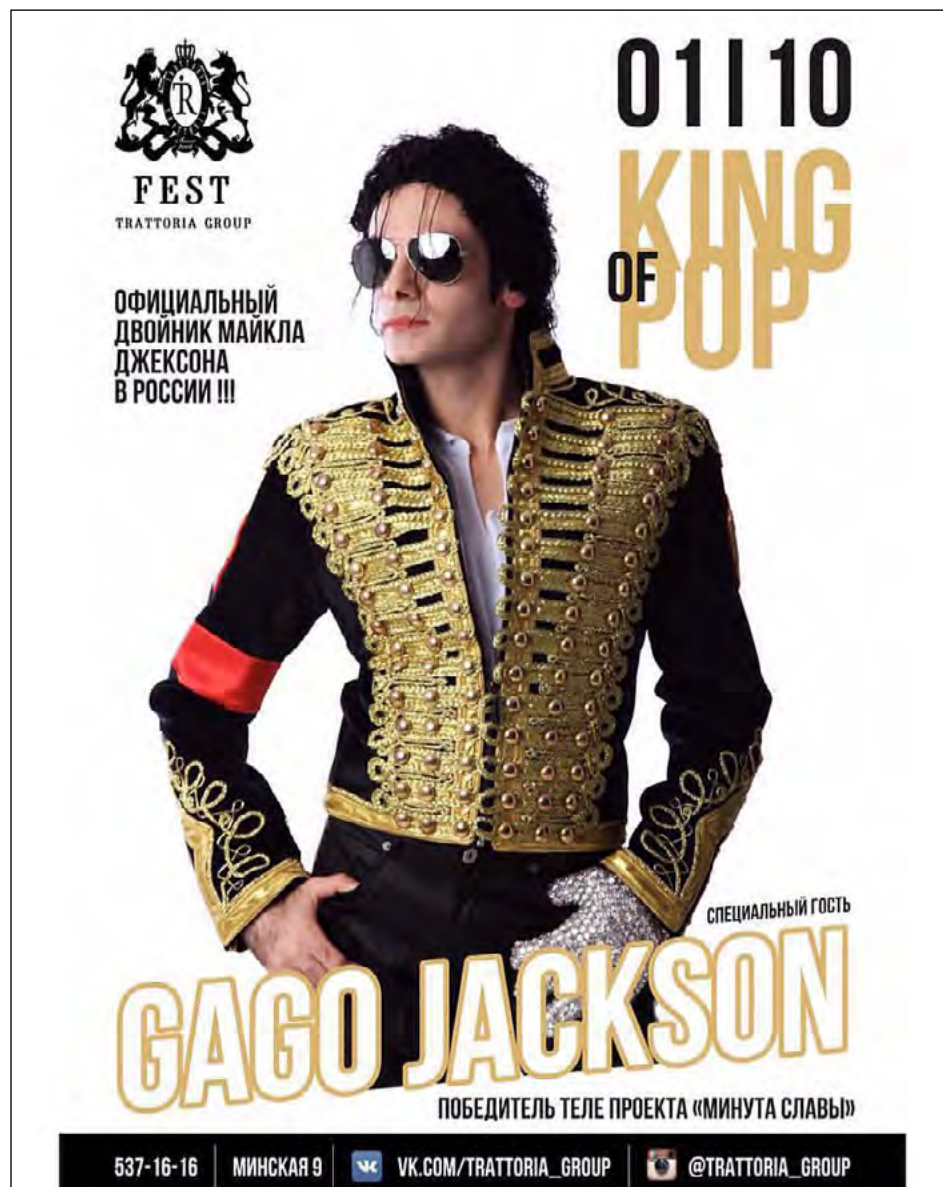
I won a photography competition and received an invitation from Michael's father to the Los Angeles premiere of "This is It," all organized by Sony. But the shooting of the "Minute of Glory" coincided, it was impossible to terminate the agreement. But I still cherish the invitation!

**I assume Jackson fan clubs in the States are aware about you.**

I am known in all Michael Jackson fan clubs in the world, and we still maintain an attitude on the Internet.

**Is it possible in Russia to make a living acting only as a celebrity lookalike?**

Of course! I work with adequate and competent organizers and thanks to them all my performances take place; I invest my earnings in the development of my favorite business. There are invitations from the highest authorities. For example, I performed in Almaty at the birthday party of the daughter of Kazakhstan's President, Nazarbayev. There were many celebrities



from Russia, and at the end of the program Jennifer Lopez herself performed.

**You also create great graphic art about Michael Jackson. Don't you think about developing this gift of yours as well?**

In the future, I will definitely continue to draw and even be able to open my own exhibition.

**Once the main "Stalin" of the Soviet Union and Russia was Georgiy Saakyan — a record-holder of the "Russian Book of Records," who played the role of Stalin in 36 films. Have you met other Armenians - celebrity lookalikes?**

Unfortunately, I have not met with them. Surely, it would be interesting to hear from them their life stories.

**There are many Jackson fans in Armenia, but there is no fan club. It would be great to see you in Yerevan!**

Of course, many people in Armenia love Michael, so I will be very happy to perform in Yerevan!

**Is there a project in which you dream to participate? Or is it a secret?**

I have a lot of interesting ideas. Let them be pleasant surprises. Everything will become a reality, I promise!



Gago Jackson with actors, Yevgeni Petrosyan and Karen Avanesyan

## Famed Criminal-Defense Attorney, Mark Geragos Named 'Motherland' Executive Producer

GERAGOS, from page 12

the finer and larger points of current law and how those impact society and shape current events.

"The law is a window and vector into modern life," Geragos says. "Societies built on law demand equal application of the laws that bind them. The law is a set of agreements we can think of as the foundations of civilization. When those foundations break, when bullies go unchecked, transgressions ranging from petty corruption to all-out genocide can result."

Joining Mark Geragos as a newly minted supporter of "Motherland" is Los Angeles City Councilman Mitch O'Farrell.

O'Farrell recently spearheaded the Little Armenia Gateway Project. Currently under construction, the Gateway will establish a meaningful and substantive Armenian American cultural place marker that will be unmistakable to anyone entering Hollywood's historically Armenian quarter.

The councilman's advocacy for his district's diverse 250,000-plus residents, including ethnic minorities like Hollywood's Armenian-American community, is well known. Securing a \$2,500 City of Los Angeles grant to assist with the film's post-production costs is just the latest example of his commitment to honoring and supporting his constituents.

"I'm gratified that we are able to join the dedicated

members of the Armenian American community and other allies of human dignity to help this important film make it to the production finish line."

The councilman expressed excitement when asked about his other most recent efforts to shine a light on communities of Armenian heritage.

"We are on track to create a cultural landmark that will serve as a point of pride for the Little Armenia community," said O'Farrell. "I want to congratulate the talented artists who were chosen as finalists, as well as the Department of Cultural Affairs for collaborating with my office and the community on this project."

The permanent gateway, designed by artists Gor Atanian and Armen Kazanchyan from Atanian Art Center, will serve to acknowledge the contributions of one of the largest Armenian populations in the entire country, and to celebrate the cultural heritage and diversity of the Armenian people in the City of Los Angeles.

Funding for the project is provided by the City of Los Angeles and the Arts Development Fee Trust Fund, which O'Farrell and his colleagues revived.

Produced and directed by Los Angeles-based Armenian-American journalist and activist, [Vic Gerami](#), "Motherland" is a new documentary, feature-length film about the genocidal assault and the violent ethnic cleansing that was unleashed September 27, 2020 by

Azerbaijan and Turkey. The 90-minute documentary film focuses unwavering attention on the coordinated, systematic and wholly unprovoked [genocidal attack](#) and ethnic cleansing against the Armenians of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh.

The release of a moving new preview trailer whose urgency is as palpable as the production's just-launched [Kickstarter](#) crowdfunding campaign, and is inspiring people everywhere to help fund the film. Individual contributors are jumping in to help raise the remaining \$50,000 needed to complete film's post-production work—at the same time increasing worldwide awareness of families caught in the crosshairs of an unrelenting military onslaught.

Gerami is founder and editor of [The Blunt Post](#) and host of the national radio show that focuses on politics titled, [THE BLUNT POST with VIC on KPFK 90.7 FM](#), part of [Pacifica Network](#).

"We are trying to prevent another Armenian Genocide," Gerami explains.

"Motherland" tells the story of this ongoing and tragic chapter of human history as it was recently witnessed in Armenia and surrounding areas when Producer-Director Vic Gerami and his film crew capped a yearlong reporting and advocacy project by taking cameras on riveting location shoots near the scenes of what many are calling war crimes.





ARTS & CULTURE

# Books

## Sophene Books and the Dawn Of a New Era for Classical and Medieval Armenian Literature

By **Jesse S. Arlen**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

It's an unusually chilly Friday evening in September. You put on the meditative piano music of George Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann, pour yourself a generous glass of Voskevaz Vanakan, and cozy up under a blanket to read Yeghishe's *History of Vartan and the Armenian War*. You start with the *Krapar* (Գրքաբար / Classical Armenian) text itself, falling headlong into the theologically and philosophically dense epistolary exchanges between the Zoroastrian magi of Sasanian Iran and the leading bishops of the Armenian church that comes near the opening of Yeghishe's text. As you encounter unfamiliar words or get lost in the at times interminably long sentences, you turn to the right page to check the English translation, then return to Yeghishe's eloquent *Krapar* on the left page.

Before long, the glass has long been finished and several other albums of Gurdjieff/de Hartmann have been played.

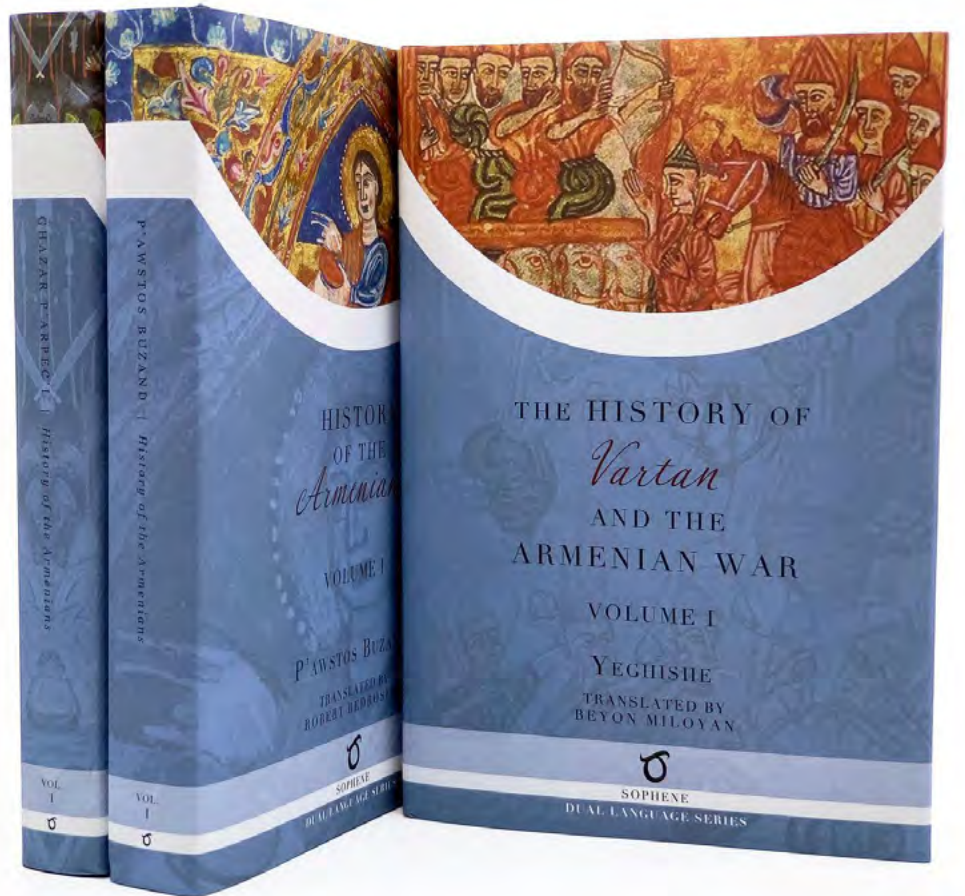
As the depths of night come upon you, you read of Shah Yazdegerd's state policy to suppress services in the churches, plunder holy and costly objects from altars and church treasuries, and torture priests and people who resist.

Reminded of the events of last year, you burn incense in the *poorvar* (քուրվար / censer) you bought from the gift store at Ghazanchetsots cathedral in Shushi, and say a prayer for those departed, recently and long ago.

It is only since December 2020 that such a scene could have taken place — that being the month in which Sophene Books released Five Gems of Medieval Armenian Literature (followed in March 2021 by Three Gems of Golden Age Literature), the first offerings in their “Dual Language Series,” which present the original *Krapar* Armenian text of authors like Yeghishe, Ghazar, P'awstos Buzand, and others, with facing page English translation.

For over a hundred years, dual language series have been a commonplace for other classical languages, like the Loeb Classical Library for Greek and Latin texts, which come in beautiful, high quality, portable, and affordable bound volumes, and have been critical in disseminating classical texts to a broad and general — as well as a scholarly — readership. Modeled on the Loeb, similar series have been produced for periods of literature later than the ancient and classical (as well as for other languages), such as the I Tatti Renaissance Library and the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Such series are indispensable both for scholars and interested readers. Scholars, of course, rely on critical editions for their studies and publications. However, in order to orient themselves to a source and read extensively in the original language, it is generally better to work with such publications, which contain the original text and a translation on facing pages.

However, in order to orient themselves to a source and read extensively in the classical language, it is generally better to work with such publications, which contain the



Three gems of Golden Age Armenian literature published by Sophene Books

original text and a translation on facing pages. For general readers and students, such editions allow access to the original language in a convenient format. While reading primarily from the translation, the ability to quickly glance from one side to the next to check the original term for a striking word or phrase allows for a richer appreciation and experience of the text than the translation alone could offer. Conversely, when encountering a tricky word or phrase while reading from the original, one may easily check the translation on the facing page.

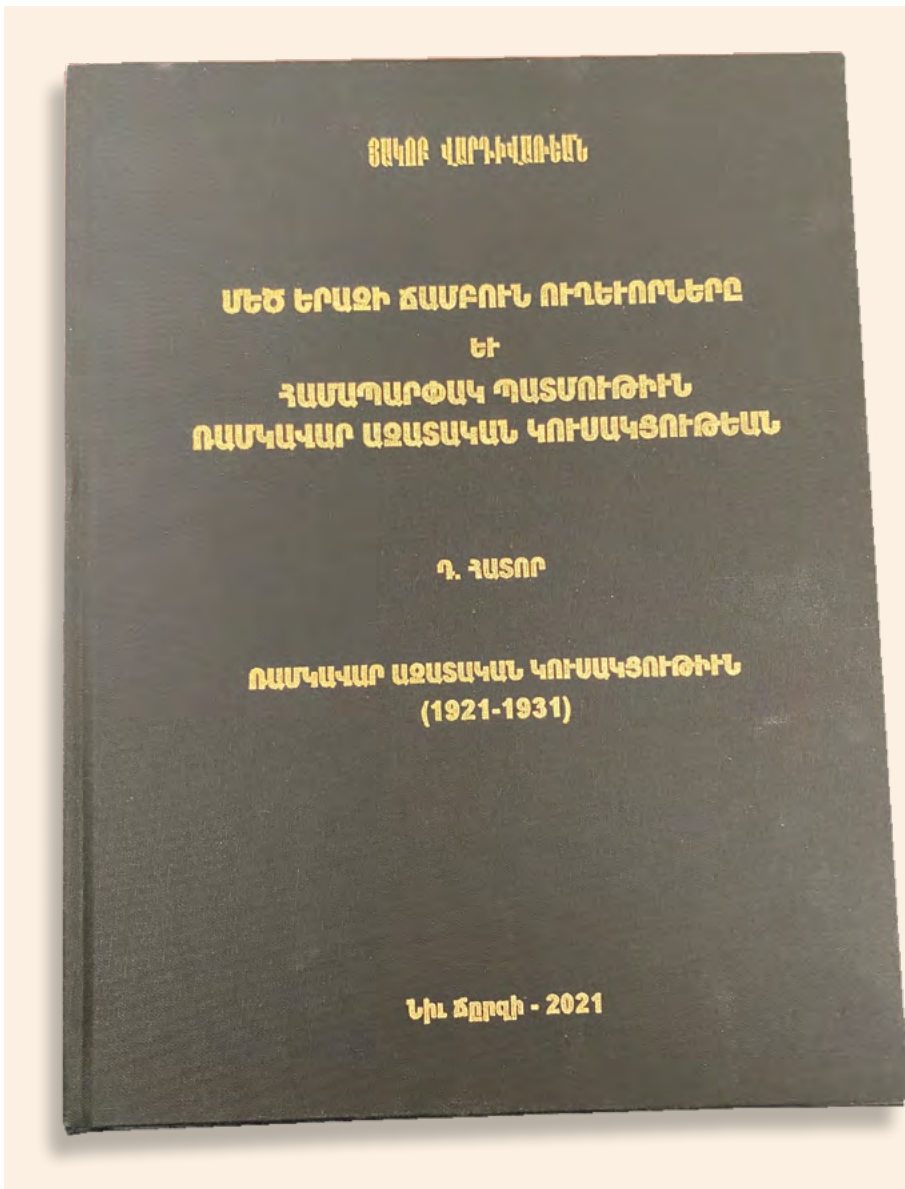
For general readers with varying levels of knowledge of the original language, or for students getting their feet wet in the original language, such editions allow access to the original language at the level they desire. While reading primarily from the translation, the ability to quickly glance from one side to the next to check the original term for a striking word or phrase al-

lows for a richer appreciation and experience of the text than the translation alone could offer. Conversely, when encountering a tricky word or phrase while reading from the original, one may easily check the translation on the facing page.

Now at last such an experience is possible for classical and medieval Armenian texts, thanks to recent publications by Sophene (and their ambitious publishing agenda). Less than a year to date since the release of the first dual language volumes, the following titles have already appeared:

- Aristakes Lastiverts'i, *History*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- Movses Daskhurants'i, *History of the Aghuans*, Book 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle*, volume 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- Smbat Sparapet, *Chronicle*, volume 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- Grigor Aknerts'i, *History of the Nation of Archers*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, volume 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- Ghazar P'arpets'i, *History of the Armenians*, volume 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- Yeghishe, *History of Vartan and the Armenian War*, volume 1. Translated by Beyon Miloyan. Sophene, 2021.
- Het'um the Historian, *The History of the Tartars: Flower of the Histories of the East*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- T'ovma Metsobets'i, *History of Tamerlane and His Successors*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- Sebeos, *History*, volume 1. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- Ghewond, *History*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.
- Movses Daskhurants'i, *History of the Aghuans*, Book 2. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle*, volume 2. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2020.
- P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, volume 2. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Sophene, 2021.

Thanks to Sophene, a growing library of classical and medieval Armenian texts are now available in beautiful bound editions  
*continued on next page*



## Hot off the Press

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# A Father's Sad Beginnings Lead to Joyous Life

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Vickie Smith Odabashian announced the release of her newest book, an extensively researched biography and family-story sequel that tells the unbelievable tale of her father's amazing life journey. Beginning with the tragic suicide of his mother, the author's own grandmother. *What Became of Little Jackie Smith? A True Story Continued*, follows Vickie's father as he navigates a life marked by abandonment and abuse, before finally celebrating the triumph of self-reliance and personal discovery. Revealing the gentle good nature of a kind soul, Odabashian's book is a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit, beautifully chronicled by a loving daughter.

"I suppose many daughters are fascinated by their fathers — dads are often our first heroes — but my father was particularly special, and he had a lifetime of adventures to prove it," said Vickie Odabashian. "And while my father's journey certainly wasn't easy, it was definitely worth writing about. He kept many important mementoes from his travels in his dependable Samsonite luggage — becoming sort of a ubiquitous part of my dad as a traveler. So, when he opened it up to share the contents with me later in life — a whole Samsonite archive of his adventures — that's when the heart of this book really began to beat. In our sessions together, he guided me through letters he sent home, photos, VHS tapes, artifacts, and other memorabilia, sharing his whole life with me. This led to further investigation and the subsequent discovery of dusty secrets his family had kept for decades, including our family's Armenian heritage."



Vickie Smith Odabashian

In 1950, Victoria Smith mysteriously leaped to her death in Fresno, leaving many to wonder about the 10-year-old son she left behind. *What Became of Little Jackie Smith? A True Story Continued* is a sequel to Victoria Smith's life story, *Victoria's Secret: A Conspiracy of Silence*, recipient of an honorable mention award in the Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards in 2001. In this follow-up biography, Vickie Smith Odabashian describes how Little Jackie Smith handled his mother's tragic death, along with

recounting the struggles he encountered from childhood through his many adventures in far-flung locations explored during his adulthood. This story is the author's loving tribute to a spectacular father, a man who summoned the rare courage needed to move forward, while also looking back. It is a celebration of his personal contribution to making the world a better place.

"Throughout his life, my dad managed to keep an old-world elegance that's worth remembering; those that worked with him in the Butte County Sheriff's Office called him 'Gentleman Jack.' I always thought of him as pure and good, like Andy Taylor from the 'Andy Griffith Show.' He was just that wholesome and kind, serving his country and his family with equal love and devotion. This book is my way of keeping his spirit alive, chronicling who he was. Or, in his own words, showcasing a life 'unique in its own right.'"

Vickie Smith (Foston) Odabashian began working as an educator in 1993 before earning her master's in sociology in 1999. She self-published her first book in 2001: *Victoria's Secret: A Conspiracy of Silence*. She and her husband Glen currently reside in Northern California close to their immediate family which includes five adult children and 10 grandchildren. Learn more about Vickie's life and family, her upcoming titles, and her publishing company, the Victoria Lazarian Heritage Association, at: [www.VLAHABooks.com](http://www.VLAHABooks.com).

*What Became of Little Jackie Smith?* is available for purchase via Amazon.

from previous page

that remain affordable (about \$30 per volume). The interested student, scholar, or amateur may now recline and read at leisure from the Armenian premodern classics, something that until quite recently remained impossible for those who did not have access to one of the major university libraries housing Armenian collections (University of California, Los Angeles, Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, etc.) or the private Armenian libraries and collections (National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Zohrab Information Center, etc.). Most of the volumes also come with maps, a list of key Armenian terms, a brief introduction, brief bibliography, and index. With beautiful dust jackets featuring manuscript illuminations and high quality paper and print production, the volumes are pleasing to the reading eye, will hold up over much use, and look attractive on the shelf.

Sophene Pty Ltd is the work of two dedicated individuals, Dr. Beyon Miloyan and Dr. Kimberley McFarlane, two early career academics and colleagues in fields unrelated to Armenian studies, who formed a friendship over their mutual love of classical literature. Noting to their dismay the inaccessibility of classical Armenian texts, they took it upon themselves to found an independent publishing company that would make the treasures of old Armenian literature available to a modern audience. In addition to the dual language series, they have published translations of modern Armenian classics, like Raffi's *The Fool*, as well as fascinating and out-of-print American-Armenian works, such as George Mardikian's *Dinner at Omar Khayyam's*, a cookbook and then some, based on the recipes of the famous old Armenian restaurant in San Francisco.

Having become exposed to Armenian literature through her friendship with Beyon, Kimberley went on to learn Armenian as an adult, motivated by her desire to have a taste for the Armenian literary classics in

their original language.

As for the principal translation work, a scan of the list above reveals most to be the work of Robert Bedrosian. Bedrosian earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1979, studying under Prof. Nina Garsoian and Fr. Krikor Maksoudian, and mastering old Armenian and related fields, such as Persian and medieval Near Eastern history. Since there were no Armenian studies jobs available upon his graduation, he ended up pursuing a successful career in computer programming, maintaining his passion for old Armenian texts on the side. Along the way, he managed to marry his twin interests (old Armenian texts and computer science), becoming a pioneer in digital humanities *avant la lettre*.

Plumbing the depths of Armenian texts and preparing translations by night, Bedrosian over the years produced translation after translation, and made them all freely available online. An entire generation of scholars and students in medieval, Byzantine, and Near Eastern studies have relied on his translations (often without acknowledgment), which in many cases were the first or only accessible ones of key Armenian sources, readily available on his website (which has now migrated to a more permanent and stable location on archive.org). In addition to uploading his translations, Bedrosian has collected, digitized, and uploaded key primary and secondary sources, making Armenological resources more widely accessible than ever before. These resource guides, or "clickable syllabi" are linked to material on archive.org and provide a key starting point for the interested amateur or scholar to be able to dig deeper and discover more. While the bibliography in the Sophene publications themselves are scant, those looking for more may, for example, access Bedrosian's resource guide to reference works about ancient and medieval Armenian literature.

The other principal translator is Beyon Miloyan, who has translated Yeghishe and several works of Raffi. Miloyan left

a promising academic career in epidemiology to pursue full time his passion for Armenian language and literature. His case is a striking example of the possibilities afforded by the democratization and dissemination of knowledge made possible by the internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a testament to what a dedicated individual may accomplish. Never having studied modern or classical Armenian at the university level or in the Armenian studies context, he gained his knowledge from his own independent initiative and by making use of materials freely available online. In addition to his translations, he has now



Five gems of medieval Armenian literature published by Sophene Books

even begun to publish free Classical Armenian lessons on his website and sentences from famous literary works translated into *Krapar*.

Miloyan now finds himself at the forefront of a contemporary resurgence of interest in Classical Armenian, and as the head of a company that is currently the most active publisher of old Armenian texts. It is notable that this resurgence is taking place outside of traditional Armenian academic centers and largely online. For example,

the Armenian Institute in London offers lessons in Ancient Armenian (as well as multiple levels of Western and Eastern Armenian). Dumbarton Oaks, the famed Byzantine research library and collection in Washington D.C., has partnered with the equally renowned Hill Museum & Manuscript Library to offer a summer intensive course of Classical Armenian to professors and early career scholars, along with offerings in other Eastern Christian languages, such as Syriac and Coptic. A reading group called "Krapar & Kini (Classical Armenian & Wine)," organized by the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, features

texts and authors from the fifteen-hundred year panoply of *Krapar* literature in a format designed to be accessible to all. Each session is led by a guest leader, including scholars, advanced students, priests, and dedicated laypeople. A recent series of eight presentation/close reading sessions, a collaboration between the Zohrab Center Vemkar, is available to watch on YouTube.

Such developments mark the dawn of a new era for classical Armenian in the twentieth-first century. By means of access made available through the digitization of books and texts, along with courses and reading groups now offered regularly by Zoom, this language and its

literature is available to all who are interested and no longer confined just to scholars. And thanks to the tireless efforts and devotion of those at Sophene, one may still curl up on the couch with a real book in hand and get lost of an evening in the textual world of a bygone age.

Jesse S. Arlen is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Fordham University and Director of the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center.









## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian



## H. Ronnie Henesian's Tourshi

This recipe is submitted by Kim Henesian.

"My mother, Hysmig "Ronnie" Giragosian Henesian, was born on May 11, 1926 in Detroit, Michigan. She was raised from the age of 2 by her paternal grandmother, Gulumia Giragosian, while her parents, Charles and Sofia worked in their dry cleaning and tailoring shop. To my recollection, my mother's grandmother did not teach her how to cook nor did her mother who was busy managing the family business. As with many first generation Armenian-Americans, families worked hard to survive and prosper in this new country. My mother was a self-taught cook, and she learned along the way. She learned how to cook by referring to various Armenian cookbooks, and through trial and error."

"Seeking a warmer climate and better career opportunities, my mother and father departed Detroit with their young son, and arrived in California in 1952. My parents were one of the founding members of the St. Andrew Armenian Church in Cupertino, California. My mother held executive board positions in the Ladies Society for at least 25 years. Of her many accomplishments in the Ladies Society, she was proud of her active role in compiling and documenting recipes for the creation of *The New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook*."

"My mother and Marion Paparigian were also the first women to serve on a Parish Council in the Western Diocese. For years, our mother worked diligently on behalf of the St. Andrew Armenian Church, and was awarded with the St. Nerses Shnorali Gold Medal for her exemplary service in October 2003."

In her introduction to the *New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook*, Vera Sarkissian, the original cookbook chairman said, "Many people deserve thanks for helping to make this cookbook a reality. First, thanks to those who, through their generous spirit, allowed us to share in their legacy of family recipes. Their high standards of culinary preparation – and revelation of "secret" recipes – contributed greatly to making this book a treasure to cherish for many years. Thanks to our committee and especially to Mary-Louise Essaian, Arlene Hancock, H. Ronnie Henesian, and Lucille Kuzirian for a spectacular job of collecting recipes. Thanks to my

Ladies Society Co-Chairman Florence Janjigian for all the support and help in innumerable areas of this book."

"Our mother was famous for her Armenian bourma which was sold at the St. Andrew Armenian Church Food Festivals," says Kim. "And for her delicious tourshi. Her bottles of tourshi were often auctioned at Daughters of Vartan events to raise money for that organization. Her background and history demonstrates that one does not necessarily require formal training or education to become a really great cook."

"This was one of our mother's tourshi recipes, she often made it for family dinners and Ladies Society events and fundraisers," adds Kim. Ronnie passed away in 2019, but her love of entertaining, creating memorable recipes for her family, and her commitment to St. Andrew Armenian Church and Ladies Society is remembered. Her recipe is reprinted in her memory, with thanks to her daughter Kim, and sons Mark and Kirk.

### INGREDIENTS:

This brine is enough for 9 quarts of tourshi. This recipe can be cut in halves or quarters for lesser amounts. Approximate vegetable requirements for a full recipe include: 2 medium cauliflower, 2 medium cabbage, 8 or 9 medium carrots, cut into strips, 1 pound fresh green beans, celery, sliced green tomatoes, quartered sweet yellow peppers, sliced pickling cucumbers or Armenian cucumbers, in any combination:

- 2 quarts white distilled vinegar
- 4 quarts water
- 1 cup canning salt (not iodized or plain salt)
- 1 cup dried garbanzo beans (to aid in the souring process)
- 1 large head garlic (optional)

### PREPARATION:

Bring the water, vinegar and salt to a boil until salt is dissolved. Let stand until lukewarm. Wash jars thoroughly. (It is not necessary to use regular canning jars, any jar with a good lid is fine.)

Place newly washed, wet bottles, upside down on rack in the oven. Warm oven at 200 degrees for 10 minutes only. Turn off heat. Wash and cut up vegetables. Remove hot jars, 1 or 2 at a time. Place on a towel to prevent cracking. Allow jars to cool off until manageable. Place a small handful of dried garbanzo beans and desired garlic in bottom of jar. Arrange vegetables in the jar.

Pour lukewarm brine into jar. Move jar around to distribute brine. Stuff more vegetables tightly into jar at this point. Place lids in pan of water and heat to boiling point. Turn off heat.

Clean top of jar and tighten on the lid. Label with the date. Will be ready to eat in 3 weeks (or 2 weeks, if you are impatient). Best stored in a cold place, like the back of the refrigerator. Note: If you have any brine left over, use it to clean the bottoms of your copper-bottom pans.

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The *New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook* is no longer in print, but note:

For Kindle, go to:

[https://www.amazon.com/Armenian-Kitchen-Andrew-Armenain-Society-ebook/dp/B002S52562/ref=tmm\\_kin\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr](https://www.amazon.com/Armenian-Kitchen-Andrew-Armenain-Society-ebook/dp/B002S52562/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr)

OR to receive a corrected copy of the New Armenian Kitchen Cookbook from Vera Sarkissian, send e-mail to: [Thenewarmeniankitchen@yahoo.com](mailto:Thenewarmeniankitchen@yahoo.com)

from previous page

Armenian letters, it seemed only fitting that Jihanian create the Armenian version of this signature font.

This isn't Jihanian's first time working with Armenian fonts. He is credited with helping to revamp TypeTogether's Adelle Sans Armenian font, which "provides a clean and spirited take on the traditional grotesque sans for Armenian audiences." During his presentation, Jihanian expressed that often, it's too easy to default to Latin



Emil Ter-Avetikants explains the inspiration for his Armenian font (photo Gabriel Ouzounian)

fonts and typefaces because there simply aren't enough Armenian fonts in existence. For this reason, he continues to focus his efforts on revitalizing the Armenian language both in Armenia and for the global Diaspora community.

As a member of the diaspora who had never interacted with her father's native language, I moved to Armenia with a mission to learn the Armenian language and alphabet. I recognized this skill as a step towards preserving my heritage while being offered the opportunity to interact more deeply with my culture. Though it no longer intimidates me like it once did, the Armenian alphabet remains as beautiful as ever to me. Falling in love with this alphabet has begotten a deeper love for its language, and thus its — my — culture.

In creating a space for the Armenian design community, Type Thursday Yerevan not only elevates that community, it elevates the Armenian language and culture while encouraging design-oriented thought. The event sets parameters for typography that are at once clear and flexible, facilitating a creative and thoughtful con-



Audience members take a closer look at Gor Jihanian's Armenian take on the Type Thursday font (photo Gabriel Ouzounian)

sciousness in regards to the artform.

What I love most, though, is its accessibility, especially to those of us who aren't graphic designers or typographers. After all, in most cases it will be the regular person who will interact with these designs in the real world, whether it be using a particular font to type something, buying a product based on the appearance of its branding, or simply reading a sign on the street.

Yerevan may be a small city, but it's got lots of talent in many mediums. So why is that we mostly hear about growth and innovation in areas like the tech industry? As successful companies like PicsArt bring Armenia into global consciousness and organizations like ONEArmenia and HIKE-Armenia create platforms for experiential tourism and the country's burgeoning hiking culture, so too should design have its place. Here is an opportunity to grow and elevate Armenia's design community while encouraging economic growth for the country. With all the challenges that Armenia has faced and continues to face, we must continue to build its economy.

With its seed money used up and its first event a success, Type Thursday Yerevan is faced with a new challenge — finding funding. The chapter is currently looking for a space to sponsor its monthly events as well as potential partners in food and drink. If they can secure this, Type Thursday Yerevan will not only survive, but thrive. The next Type Thursday Yerevan event will be October 7 at 8 p.m. Here's hoping there will be many more events to come!



# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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## COMMENTARY

# EDITORIAL

## Erdogan on the World Political Stage, or An Arsonist Posing as a Fireman



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

The 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly this past week became a forum to address some global issues plaguing the population of the planet. The main topics, of course, were the Covid pandemic and global warming.

The assembly witnessed the generosity of the US in providing 500 million doses of the Covid vaccine to the developing world and the commitment of the major nations to tend urgently to the dangers of ecological disasters. Even a reticent China pledged to defund coal-operated industries.

The session also provided an opportunity for President Joseph Biden to present a new US direction, shifting from “relentless wars” to “relentless diplomacy.” That statement needs to be seen and analyzed within the context of Foggy Bottom’s containment policy of Russia and challenge to China’s global dominance through soft power.

What interests the Armenians most are the conduct and rhetoric of Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mr. Erdogan’s demeanor and body language exuded one single message to the world community: Turkey has become a world player and has to be treated as such.

Before delving into the regional conflicts, where the Turkish president wore the mantle of peacemaker, Mr. Erdogan addressed two major issues: the inefficacy of the UN Security Council and Islamophobia raging in the West.

In recent years, the UN Security Council has become one of the major foci of Mr. Erdogan. He particularly resents the fact that five major permanent members (the US, the UK, France, Russia and China) retain veto power over vital global issues. He maintains that five members are too few to resolve all problems facing the UN and he believes that the time has come for countries like Turkey to join the elite, very much like his contention that Turkey’s international clout warrants it to join the nuclear club.

When Mr. Erdogan criticized the West for harboring Islamophobia, he did not realize that the issue could have a boomerang effect. Indeed, the policies and actions of leaders in the Muslim world such as Mr. Erdogan, who weaponize religion and use it as a political tool to meet their ambitions of building a world sultanate, contribute to the generation of Islamophobia. The irony is that Mr. Erdogan’s Turkey uses state-of-the-art weaponry to revive the dark days of Ottoman misrule over former subject nations, many of them inhabited primarily by Muslims, and to harken back to a glorious history of power.

Mr. Erdogan’s AK Party, when it came to power in 2003, reversed Ataturk’s policy of the division of state and religion. The founder of the modern Republic of Turkey had tried to emulate the Western democracies, confining the mullahs to the mosques and emancipating women by eliminating the veil.

Mr. Erdogan, by contrast, banked his political fortunes on the ignorance of fanatical masses and over the years has gradually brought back the marriage of religion and politics.

He was not satisfied by his actions at home and decided to export that policy overseas by funding madrassas in third-world countries to train a new generation of fanatical Islamic youth. He spread his message of hate in Europe as well, encouraging the Muslim citizens there to bask in their separateness and listen to extremist mullahs rather than try to assimilate. As if that were not enough, he asked Muslim families in Europe to bear five children each so as to increase their numbers rapidly, ready for political action when necessary. He also threatened to blow up Russia from within, politicizing and weaponizing Russia’s 25 million Muslim citizens.

Erdogan has refined the scourge of terrorism to build armies of mercenaries to destabilize many countries like Iraq, Syria, Libya and the region of the Caucasus. Therefore, when Mr. Er-

dogan resorts to using Islam as a political weapon, he should not be surprised that nations targeted by that threat resort to their defenses and one such defense, unfortunately, is the ugly face of Islamophobia.

The Muslim faith, like any other religion, deserves respect, but not its misinterpretation which enslaves women and practices beheadings, amputations and terrorism in other countries.

Christianity, in its turn, had its problems with extremism, weaponizing religion and franchising it in colonial outposts to conquer territories and torture people’s minds in the straight-jacket of the Spanish Inquisition as well as the Crusades.

But with the advent of rule of law and democratic form of governance, the Christian world for the most part adopted the separation of church and state.

Erdogan’s party and government are very far from that. The moment Islam is divorced from his policies, his entire value system will collapse and this will dash his imperial dreams.

After exposing major issues troubling him for a long time, Mr. Erdogan began dispensing his cure for almost all the hotspots in the world; for the Cyprus issue, he admonished his Greek interlocutors and advised them to negotiate and work within the realm of international law, never mind that his occupation army has illegally divided that sovereign country into two entities. Once again, he exhorted the use of international law to settle controversies in the eastern Mediterranean while bullying

his neighbors by exploring hydrocarbons in their littoral waters. He promised to eliminate terrorist groups in Syria, while the world has come to find out that Erdogan and his government have developed a lucrative business by training and sending into expeditions different Islamic groups. In fact, ISIS was funded and created by Turkey, until the US intervened and destroyed its infrastructure.

Mr. Erdogan called on the international community to restore Syria’s territorial integrity while keeping parts of Syrian territory under

his rule. On the Jammu and Kashmir issue, he sided with Pakistan, a hub for terrorism, and a refuge for Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban criminals. Pakistan also is a partner in crime with Turkey and Azerbaijan in their aggression against Armenia. After listening to Erdogan’s remarks, India’s Minister of Exterior Subrahmanyam Jaishankar advised Erdogan “to learn to respect the sovereignty of independent nations.” In the case of Crimea, Erdogan refused to acknowledge the results of the elections in that peninsula. That was a two-pronged policy, with one prong intended to ingratiate himself to President Biden, who holds the same position, and the other to thumb his nose at President Putin, with whom he intends to meet soon in Sochi. Therefore, he plans to negotiate with the latter from the position of power. To further enhance that position, he has recently moved fresh forces into Syria.

Since the US has successfully muzzled the Arab world, Mr. Erdogan has emerged as the sole defender of the Palestinian cause. Although, here again, he soft-peddled history, not to ruffle feathers in Israel, as he did in the past, today, he is eager to mend fences to reach out to the US administration through Israel.

In the past, Mr. Erdogan used to accuse the Chinese government of committing genocide in the Xinjiang province against the Turkic Muslim Uyghurs. This time around, he treaded softly by advising China to solve the issue within the principles of its territorial integrity.

Karabakh was also on Mr. Erdogan’s agenda. Reversing the roles in that conflict, he blamed Armenia for having occupied Azerbaijan’s territory. No one was able to detect any “positive signals” toward Armenia, as mentioned recently by Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

After watching Mr. Erdogan performance at that world forum, turning the issues on their heads, one could only conclude

*continued on next page*







## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Aliyev-Pashinyan Duel via Video At United Nations General Assembly

Just days before the first anniversary of the 44-day war, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev clashed once again, this time in a bloodless confrontation via video at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City.

In my opinion, both Aliyev and Pashinyan made the mistake of not appearing in person at the UN meeting. The issue is not just the speech which they delivered by video, but their absence from an important international gathering of close to 200 leaders from around the world. This was an important opportunity, particularly for Armenia's Prime Minister, to rub shoulders with many of these leaders in private and public settings to transmit to them Armenia's grievances and publicize Azerbaijan's brutal violations during last year's war.

Fortunately, Pashinyan dispatched to the UN Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan who held several important meetings with his counterparts from many countries, including Azerbaijan, the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group, and the Secretary General of the UN.

While Armenia and Azerbaijan were not represented at the UN by their heads of state, Turkey was wisely represented by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu who took advantage of the opportunity to meet with dozens of heads of state and inaugurate the new Turkish Center's high-rise building across the UN headquarters which was attended by many dignitaries and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Erdogan's only setback was the refusal of President Biden to meet with him at the UN.

Turning to the speeches, President Aliyev addressed the UN General Assembly on September 23 delivering a 38-minute speech in English by video. Pashinyan's video speech was much shorter — it lasted less than 12 minutes. Aliyev's lengthy speech was not necessarily a good thing. He probably bored to death the dignitaries at the General Assembly who were listening to non-stop speeches day after day. Whereas it was smart of Aliyev to speak in English, Pashinyan, despite his knowledge of English, chose to speak in Armenian which means that the attendees had to listen to the translation of his speech via earphones, not the best way to communicate. Nevertheless, Pashinyan wisely used a teleprompter to read his speech which made it much more interesting to watch, versus Aliyev who was looking down the whole time, while reading the speech from a paper in front of him. This prompted a non-Armenian to comment sarcastically on YouTube, under the video of Aliyev's speech: "What happened to Aliyev's petrodollars? Couldn't he afford to buy a teleprompter?"

In his lengthy speech, Aliyev told dozens of lies:

1) That Armenia, not Azerbaijan, started last September's war. Aliyev must have forgotten that he had previously admitted proudly that he started the war. He also accused Armenia of initiating an attack on Azerbaijan in July 2020. Armenia had no reason to start a war neither in July nor September 2020.

2) Aliyev referred to the 12th century poet Nizami Ganjavi as "the great Azerbaijani poet." Ganjavi is in fact Persian, not Azeri (see Wikipedia's numerous sources). In the 12th century, Azerbaijan did not even exist. Ganjavi was born in Ganja (Kantzag in Armenian) which at the time was "densely populated with Iranians and a small number of Christians," according to Armenian historian Guiragos Kantzagetsi (1200 – 1271).

3) Aliyev falsely described Azerbaijan "as an example of tolerance and peaceful coexistence of representatives of various religious and ethnic groups living in our country." On the contrary, Azerbaijan is a very intolerant and violent country. Its history is full of repeated massacres of Armenians. Yet, shamelessly, Aliyev accused Armenia of committing "genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity!"

4) Aliyev also accused Armenia of "gross violation of international law, in-

cluding the Geneva Convention." This is the exact description of Azerbaijan's own violations and crimes. He falsely claimed Armenia used "white phosphorus and cluster munitions" and attacked civilians. Once again, Aliyev was describing Azerbaijan's own war crimes against Armenian civilians, hospitals and churches.

5) Aliyev also claimed that Armenia recruited "mercenaries and foreign fighters from abroad." As is widely known, this is exactly what Azerbaijan did.

6) Aliyev lied about Armenians engaging in "the full destruction of cities and villages, including the cultural and religious heritage sites of Azerbaijani people." The truth is the exact opposite.

7) Aliyev claimed that Azerbaijan "started taking legal actions against [foreign companies] for illegally exploiting our natural resources in the formerly occupied lands." Hopefully, these companies will countersue Azerbaijan for confiscating their properties.

8) Indirectly admitting that Azerbaijan has encroached on the territory of Armenia, Aliyev boasted that "the country has been weakened to the extent that it cannot even guard its own borders by itself."

9) Instead of respecting the agreement signed on November 9, 2020 by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, to release all prisoners of war, Aliyev demanded that Armenia "provide us with accurate mine maps of all liberated territories." There is no mention of such a requirement in the November 9 agreement.

10) After telling all these lies and many others too numerous to mention, Aliyev has the audacity to urge Armenia to sign a "peace agreement ... based on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other." He is thus pursuing a total abandonment of Artsakh by Armenia.

Prime Minister Pashinyan delivered his speech at the UN on September 24. He started by setting the record straight, stating that "in the fall of 2020, Nagorno-Karabakh was subjected to aggression... [which] was accompanied by numerous gross violations of international law by the Azerbaijani armed forces, including deliberate targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure, extrajudicial killings of prisoners of war and civilian hostages, torture and many other documented crimes. As a result of these actions, in the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, which came under the control of Azerbaijan, the Armenian people were subjected to complete ethnic cleansing."

Pashinyan went on to highlight Armenia's democratic credentials, vainly hoping that the international community will be impressed and take positive steps to protect the country against Azerbaijan's aggression. Armenia's Prime Minister also spoke of his country's readiness for peace with its neighbors, again hoping for support from UN member states. He does not seem to realize that the world does not care about such niceties. The only thing the world respects is strength.

Pashinyan next condemned Azerbaijan for holding Armenian prisoners of war as hostages in Baku and spoke about Azeri videos that show "decapitated bodies or shot bodies of these soldiers."

Pashinyan also mentioned "reopening transport links" between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He naively added that "if the railway connecting Armenia to Turkey is opened too, then the topic of opening regional communications will cover broader scope."

The Prime Minister made one more pitch "to resume the peace process for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs." Regrettably, this process has reached a dead end, as Aliyev claims to have solved the Artsakh issue by force and sees no need to engage in any further negotiations on this subject.

Pashinyan mentioned "with regret" that Azerbaijan's forces crossed Armenia's borders on May 12, 2021 and have refused to leave. He suggested that both countries withdraw from "the Soviet times border" and invite the deployment of "international observers" along the border. It is not clear why Armenia should withdraw from its own border!

Unfortunately, nice words do not mean much in realpolitik. The world believes only in power. While Azerbaijan and Turkey speak from a position of strength, Armenia is obliged to submit to the imposition of its more powerful and brutal enemies.

from previous page

the arsonist was posing as fireman.

Mr. Erdogan arrived in New York with great expectations. The composition of his delegation made clear all his intentions. His delegation included the head of the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Ersin Tatar, because he called on the world community to recognize that entity as a sovereign state. To give credence to his call, he has decided to allocate a section to it in the new 55-story "Turkish Home" or Turkevi Center building erected next to the UN headquarters. He also presided with great fanfare over the opening of that "House."

Anticipation was great in Turkish political circles because Mr. Erdogan had hinted about a possible meeting with President Biden. That meeting could have counterbalanced Mr. Erdogan's row with NATO allies, in insisting to retain S-400 missiles from Russia. Also that would justify Turkey's slaughter of Syrian Kurds allied with the US. But President Biden had no time to meet with him. That summit, along with another meeting with the heads of corporate America would have boosted investments in Turkish economy. Like President Biden, the heads of major US companies shied away from meeting with Erdogan.

We should be reminded that Mr. Biden had called Erdogan an "autocrat" before his election and had called on America to help his opposition topple him.

Mr. Erdogan complained that he had worked well with all US presidents during his 19-year rule but, he added, "I can't say that we started well with Mr. Biden."

The coolness towards Mr. Erdogan and his actions around the world was manifest also in other signals; for example, the call by France and the US to resume negotiations on the Karabakh conflict, which Turkey and Azerbaijan assume has been resolved through the application of force.

Also, in the congratulatory message sent by President Biden to Prime Minister Pashinyan, on the 30th anniversary of Armenia's independence, Mr. Biden did not need to take the extra step of reassuring Armenia that Washington will work towards the release of Armenian POWs from Azerbaijani prisons.

The only meeting which was held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly was between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu. That meeting lasted for one hour and dealt with the crises in Afghanistan, Syria and Karabakh.

In an article published in Al Monitor, Cengiz Çandar writes: "For Erdogan, his priority is to boost his dwindling image in Turkey. His survival until the elections in 2023, centenary of the foundation of Turkey, is the most pressing issue in his personal and political agenda. Thus, every step he takes and every statement he makes aims to advance

that political agenda. His visit to New York was no exception in this regard. Yet, he did not achieve much despite the expectations of his team before the visit."

It is very apparent that Mr. Erdogan's policy of independent actions has backfired; his bid to join the European Union has failed and today the US is giving him the cold shoulder. His alienation from Europe and NATO may provide some comfort to the Kremlin but Mr. Erdogan cannot stretch his leash too far from Washington. As he returns home, he has too much to consider.

Mr. Çandar concludes his article with the following statement: "In terms of Erdogan's image within Turkey, his New York performance seemingly failed to create much impact, neither positively nor negatively. However, what international observers should not miss is that the visit, once more, confirmed the over-broadening wedges between Turkey and the Western world."

The reason Mr. Erdogan was able to get away with murder thus far was because he could manipulate opposing powers against each other. That flexibility seems to have hit a snag.

His pompous ceremony at the dedication of the "Turkish House" with a prayer by a mullah invited from Turkey and his tumultuous motorcades around Manhattan have amounted to very little, if anything, of concrete significance.





# Azerbaijan and Turkey Tight-Lipped over New Gas Deal

By David O'Byrne

ISTANBUL (Eurasianet) — After almost a year of intense negotiations, Azerbaijan and Turkey have finally concluded a new deal to replace the 20-year-old contract that had governed their gas trade.

The agreement was announced in a low-key fashion, atypical for the two states that rarely miss an opportunity to trumpet their ascendant ties. Azerbaijani officials only confirmed the existence of a “temporary agreement” by email. Speaking on September 20 at an energy conference in Dubai, Turkey’s deputy energy minister, Alpaslan Bayraktar, also confirmed that a new agreement had been reached and offered no details.

That reticence is unlikely to reflect the broader state of relations between Baku and Ankara only a year after Turkey provided support to Azerbaijani forces who retook much of the territory they had lost to Armenian forces three decades earlier.

But it does highlight both the difference in the economic priorities between the two states, as well as how much European gas markets have changed since the original

contract was inked in 2001 by then-presidents Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Suleyman Demirel of Turkey.

That contract saw Turkey import 6.6 billion cubic meters a year of gas from Azerbaijan’s Shah Deniz Caspian gas field, delivered through the South Caucasus or Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines via Georgia.

Talks between Azerbaijan’s state oil company SOCAR — which heads the Azerbaijan Gas Supply Company (AGSC) — and Turkey’s state gas import company Botas on a renewal had been widely expected to be little more than a formality.

But they unexpectedly dragged on for the entire summer.

Given their generally close ties, “Azerbaijan and Turkey were always going to reach an agreement,” said regional energy analyst John Roberts, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.

“Turkey values diversity of supply and Azerbaijan is dependent on Turkey as its only route for exporting gas to Europe,” Roberts told Eurasianet, referring to the TANAP pipeline carrying Azerbaijani exports across Turkey and on to Europe, the construction of which was largely paid for by Baku.

Turkish imports of Azerbaijani gas under a second contract, via the TANAP line, continue unaffected.

But the loss of the first contract left Turkey in a difficult position during an unusually severe mid-summer heat wave, when low water levels in the country’s main hydro-power dams meant that gas-fired power plants struggled to meet soaring power demand as Turks turned their air conditioning to full blast.

The root problem behind the slow renewal is that Azerbaijan and Turkey are in very different bargaining positions.

In Ankara, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AKP party are at historic lows in opinion polls. Their attention is focused on presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2023, and the need to hold down energy prices for an economically struggling electorate.

Azerbaijan, meanwhile, is heavily dependent on oil and gas exports, which fund 60 percent of the state budget. Those revenues have been hard hit by the COVID pandemic which sent crude oil prices tumbling

ahead of OPEC-imposed production cuts; together, that caused the country’s GDP to shrink by 4.3 percent last year.

Although neither side is confirming details, it has become clear that the new agreement lasts to the end of 2024 only and will see Azerbaijan selling gas to Turkey effectively on a spot basis.

This reflects broader changes in international gas markets.

Previously — as with the Azerbaijan-Turkey contract that ended in April — international gas import contracts were negotiated to last for decades, with prices usually indexed to the price of crude oil.

But the rapid rise in global production of liquid natural gas (LNG) has meant that gas is more often sold like crude oil: on a spot basis with prices fluctuating based on supply and demand.

That practice has spilled over into pipeline contracts, which can still run for extended periods but on prices calculated daily at regional “hubs”: points in pipeline networks where gas from multiple sources can be sold to multiple buyers, allowing for the calculation of a market price.

In July Turkey’s state energy regulator began opening auctions for daily, unused “spot capacity” in the two pipelines that carry Azerbaijani gas to Turkey: the South Caucasus and TANAP.

The three auctions held so far have offered monthly and quarterly capacity for this year and yearly capacity for 2022 through 2024 — suggesting that the deal just reached only extends to the end of 2024.

Turkey’s state gas importer Botas has been the sole bidder, and has bid only for capacity in the South Caucasus Pipeline, suggesting that AGSC wants to hold the remaining spare TANAP capacity to allow for increased exports to Europe — a move which makes sound commercial sense given that European gas prices currently are high.

To date, Botas has booked around a third of daily spot capacity in the South Caucasus Pipeline through the end of this year.

Turkey will continue to offer the unreserved capacity in monthly auctions as long as it is available, allowing Botas to increase imports if AGSC agrees to sell them the gas.

The year-long reservations give Baku some security in knowing the minimum volume of gas it will sell to Turkey for the coming three years, while continuing monthly and quarterly auctions allow Botas to increase the volume it imports in line with demand.

What the spot capacity auctions don’t reveal is what price the gas is being sold for. Unconfirmed reports suggest that Turkey is getting a discount.

However, the temporary nature of the agreement suggests that either Ankara or Baku may be less than happy with the result, or with other unresolved economic issues between them, such as Ankara’s long-standing promises to construct a gas supply pipeline and railway link to Azerbaijan’s exclave of Nakhichevan. Those efforts appear to have stalled, however, with no construction tenders announced to date.

It also suggests the possibility of a temporary fix aimed at preventing possible Turkish gas shortages as Ankara tries to renew other gas import deals with Russia which are about to end, and ahead of the planned arrival onshore of gas from Turkey’s own Black Sea gas field discovered last year.

“Even a relatively short-term deal now with Azerbaijan gives Turkey a stronger position in ongoing talks for other new gas deals with Russia,” Roberts said.

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