



Therapists for Armenia and AASMC visit the Physical Therapy Dept. at Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture

Therapists Advance Rehabilitation Through Education and Partnership

By Paul Vartan Sookiasian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The 2020 Artsakh War placed an overwhelming strain on Armenia’s health system, presenting the challenge of managing thousands of wounded soldiers and displaced civilians during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the

focus shifted from the war to rehabilitating the newly disabled, two diaspora organizations teamed up to support Armenian rehabilitation professionals. Together Therapists for Armenia and the Armenian American Sports Medicine Coalition (AASMC) provided clinical and educational support during and after the war through the establishment of a

digital resource library, weekly bilingual webinars, multidisciplinary teleconsultation targeting evidence-based assessment and intervention, and a channel through which volunteer rehabilitation professionals could provide direct care and education in both Armenia and Artsakh.

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Grief-Stricken Armenians Resent Lavish Anniversary Celebration

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Families of Armenian soldiers killed in last year war with Azerbaijan have expressed outrage at a “large-scale and colorful” celebration of Armenia upcoming Independence Day promised by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Pashinyan announced on Wednesday, September 8, that such festivities will be held in Yerevan’s central Republic Square on September 21 to mark the 30th anniversary of the country’s declaration of independence from the disintegrating Soviet Union. “That will be first and foremost dedicated to our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Armenia’s independence, security and sovereignty,” he said during a cabinet meeting. The announcement appears to have angered many relatives of the Armenian victims of the six-week war in Nagorno-Karabakh that broke out almost one year ago. Some of them took to social media to condemn it and even threatened to disrupt the planned event. They said that any pompous celebrations would be highly inappropriate in a country see ANGER, page 2

Lebanese-Armenian George Bojkian Appointed Minister of Industry in New Lebanese Government

BEIRUT (Panorama.am) — Lebanese factions formed a new government on Friday, breaking a 13-month deadlock that saw the country slide deeper into financial chaos and poverty. Lebanon has been without a fully empowered government since the catastrophic August 4, 2020 explosion at Beirut port, which forced the resignation of then Prime Minister Hassan Diab’s government. The new Cabinet of 24 ministers headed by billionaire businessman Najib Mikati was announced by the president’s office. Among the newcomers of the Cabinet is the newly appointed Minister of Industry George Bojkian from the Armenian community of Lebanon. According to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Lebanon, Bojkian was born on May 10, 1965. He speaks Armenian, Arabic, English, French, and German. He has managed number of private organizations. Bojkian’s candidacy was backed by the ARF.



George Bojkian

Caucasus Heritage Watch Sounds the Alarm on Karabakh Monuments’ Destruction

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ITHACA, N.Y. — Ever since the beginning of last year’s war, one thing on the minds of most Armenians in the homeland and Diaspora, aside from the loss of life and territory, has been the fate of Armenian heritage sites — churches, monasteries, monuments, and so on — in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. It’s not just the Armenian community and the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh that are concerned. The scholarly community is too, and quite rightly. They have seen the destruction to which Armenian monuments have been subjected in Turkey, Nakhichevan, and elsewhere. Based at Cornell University, a group called Caucasus Heritage Watch has stepped into the fray with a goal to



Satellite Imagery Showing Sghnakh Armenian Cemetery Destroyed

protect heritage sites under threat due to Azerbaijan’s territorial gains. A Veteran Team Handles a New Challenge Archaeologists Lori Khatchadourian and Adam T. Smith of Cornell, and Ian Lindsay of Purdue have been working together since 2002 on the longest-running international project in the South Caucasus, digging see MONUMENTS, page 12

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Benefactor Allocates 105 Million Drams to Rescue Yerevan Botanical Garden

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — After being neglected for more than 30 years, the main collection area of the Botanical Garden of Yerevan that preserved trees, which covers about 15 hectares, from now on can be irrigated any time of year. For that purpose, with the financing by benefactor Karen Vardanyan, a five-kilometer-long irrigation system has been constructed, a pumping station, a deep well, a 60-ton tank, 180 valves have been installed, and a water filtration basin has been built.

A solar station has been installed in the Botanical Garden. This will allow to reduce the about 5 million AMD annual cost of electricity, also increased due to operation of the newly installed pumping station, and direct the saved money to other issues. To ensure the smooth operation and longevity of the installed solar station, the 800 m2 roof of the building has been repaired. For construction of the irrigation system, repair of the roof and installation of the solar station, benefactor Karen Vardanyan has allocated 105 million drams (\$214,000).

Yerevan Court Holds Preliminary Hearing in Kocharyan v. Pashinyan Case

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction, presided over by judge Alexey Sukoyan, on September 14, held a preliminary hearing on a defamation lawsuit filed by Armenia's second President Robert Kocharyan against Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The court hearing was attended by their representatives – Hayk Alamyanyan and Gevorg Gyozyalyan.

Speaking with [Aravot.am](https://www.aravot.am), Alamyanyan said that the court determined the scope of facts to be proved, distributed the burden of proof between the parties and gave the parties time to present their evidence. The next court hearing has been scheduled for November 29.

The source recalls that it is the third time Robert Kocharyan has sued Nikol Pashinyan. The lawsuit is based on Pashinyan's statements made during the March 1 rally at Republic Square in Yerevan. Kocharyan demands that the premier refute some of his statements on the bloody events of March 1, 2008 and the investigation of the case and provide compensation in the amount of 4 million drams.

Status of Karabakh Yet To Be Resolved Says US Ambassador to Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The US is doing everything to bring the parties together under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy told reporters in Yerevan on September 11.

Iranian Trucks Entering Armenia Stopped By Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Azerbaijani forces have set up a checkpoint to stop and reportedly tax Iranian commercial trucks using a strategic road that passes through areas along southeastern Syunik province controversially handed over to Azerbaijan after last year's war.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan ordered Armenian army units and local militias to pull out of those areas one month after a Russian-brokered ceasefire stopped the six-week war over Nagorno-Karabakh last November. Pashinyan said that they are located on the Azerbaijani side of Arme-

nia's Soviet-era border with Azerbaijan, which had never been demarcated due to the Karabakh conflict.

The order, strongly condemned by the Armenian opposition and local government officials, left Azerbaijani forces in control of a 21-kilometer stretch of the main highway connecting Syunik's capital Kapan to another provincial town, Goris.

The highway, parts of which are now patrolled by Russian soldiers and border guards, remains Armenia's sole transport link with Iran. Pashinyan and other government officials assured critics in December that Armenians as well as foreigners will continue to pass through its Azerbaijani-controlled section without any restrictions.

Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) reported on Sunday, September 12, that Azerbaijani police units deployed there have started stopping Iranian trucks to check their drivers' documents and cargos. It said Armenian and Russian border guards are now jointly trying to "resolve the situation."

Vahe Hakobyan, a senior opposition parliamentarian and former Syunik governor, said on Monday that Azerbaijani officers are also collecting payments from Iranian drivers.

One driver, who arrived in Yerevan last week, echoed that claim, citing fellow truckers stuck in Syunik. "They say the Azerbaijanis demand \$120 from every truck for using the road," he told RFE / RL's Armenian Service.

Another Iranian, who also did not want to give his name, said Azerbaijani officers stopped him on the Goris-Kapan road to extort diesel fuel days before setting up their checkpoint. "The most interesting thing is that the Azerbaijanis posed as Armenians," he said.

The Azerbaijani authorities effectively confirmed later on Monday that they have started taxing Iranian trucks using the mountainous road. The State Customs Committee in Baku said it is enforcing an Azerbaijani law that requires it to levy road and transit fees from all foreign vehicles entering the country.

In what may have been a related development, Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that it has sent a letter to the Russian military demanding that it stop vehicles from "other countries" illegally passing through "Azerbaijani territory where Russian peacekeeping forces are

temporarily deployed."

Earlier this year, Baku condemned Iranian trucks for transporting goods to and from Karabakh without its permission.

The Armenian government did not publicly react to the latest development as of Monday evening. Nor did the NSS issue any updates on its purported contacts with the Azerbaijani side.

Meanwhile, Hakobyan and other lawmakers representing the main opposition Hayastan alliance demanded an emergency session of the Armenian parliament on Azerbaijan's actions seen by them as a further grave threat to Armenia's security.

Hayastan's Artsvik Minasyan said government officials should address parliament deputies and answer their questions "so that we get a clear idea of what's going on there."

"I also see an economic problem... which is no less important," Hakobyan said for his part. "As you know, over 40 percent of our cargo turnover [with the outside world] is carried out through Iran."

The parliament's pro-government speaker, Alen Simonyan, promised to consider organizing such a discussion.

Azerbaijan has already blocked the Goris-Kapan road section controlled by it late last month and kept it closed for two days, citing the alleged stabbing of one of its soldiers. Traffic through the road resumed after talks involving Russian military commanders on the ground.

The Iranian Embassy in Yerevan expressed concern over the blockage which disrupted cargo traffic between Armenia and Iran. It expressed hope that the Armenian government will speed up work on "alternative routes" for Iranian-Armenian trade.

The government is financing the ongoing reconstruction of an alternative Syunik road bypassing the border areas.

In addition, the Azerbaijanis have installed a new signboard on the road connecting communities in Armenia's Syunik province, which reads "Attention: You are entering the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan" in three languages.

An Aysor.am correspondent reporting from the scene reveals that Azerbaijan's decision to stop and inspect Iranian trucks heading to Armenia has resulted in traffic congestion on the road.

(Reports from RFE/RL, Panorama.am and PanArmenian.net were used to compile this story.)

Grief-Stricken Armenians Resent Lavish Celebration Planned By Government

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which is still mourning the war dead and has not yet found, identified and buried all of its fallen soldiers.

According to official figures, about 3,800 Armenian soldiers were killed and more than 200 others went missing or were taken prisoner during the hostilities stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire last November. Karabakh Armenian search teams still recover, on a virtually daily basis, soldiers' remains from former battlefields now controlled by Azerbaijani forces.

Some opposition politicians and public figures added their voice to the uproar, demanding that the government scale down the Independence Day events.

Most people randomly interviewed by RFE/RL's Armenian Service in the streets of Yerevan also favored a muted celebration of the key national holiday.

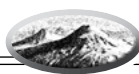
"The independence holiday must be marked but not 'colorfully,'" said one man. "What does marking it 'colorfully' in memory of the dead mean? What is it?"

"It should be marked but not in the way presented [by Pashinyan,]" said a woman.

"I think that in these circumstances we have no right to celebrate any holiday," opined another Yerevan resident.

The government has not yet reacted to the criticism. It has already contracted a private company to stage the festivities at Republic Square.

The company founder, Ashot Arakelyan, gave few details of the planned event when he spoke on September 9. He said only that it will feature classical music.



ARMENIA

Advancing Armenian Rehabilitation Through Education and Partnership

PARTNERSHIP, from page 1

Building on these efforts, the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Virtual Symposium was held on July 17 and 18, welcoming more than 430 participants from eight countries: Armenia, Artsakh, the United States, Belize, England, Lebanon, Iran and Canada.

The symposium was a collaboration between Therapists for Armenia, AASMC, and the International Center for Professional Development, with the goals of stimulating interdisciplinary collaboration, addressing identified challenges related to post-war rehabilitation, facilitating connection with international experts, and bringing awareness to the unique challenges of post-war Armenia and Artsakh. The symposium organizing committee, led by chairwoman Armineh Babikian, invited presenters from various nations and organizations including the World Health Organization, American Physical Therapy Association, Columbia University, University of Toronto and Arabkir Medical Center.

The conference's first day focused on clinical interventions, with an opening keynote presentation by Peter Skelton of the World Health Organization, who presented on the importance of rehabilitation in emergency and disaster relief. The second day emphasized community reintegration fol-

lowing combat injury with keynote speaker Dr. Michel Landry from Duke University, describing rehabilitation through the continuum of care.

response from both participants and speakers. "To say the conference was enlightening would be an understatement. We received critical information on how to function effectively as rehabilitation professionals in post-conflict situations and also apply the knowledge to our day-to-day clinical practice. There are not enough symposiums that focus on educating rehabilitation professionals on these topics and the difference it provided was refreshing. Another point to note was the inclusion of all types of rehabilitation professionals, which is crucial as we work as a team to achieve effective patient care," reported Mona Lesa Lennon, a physiotherapist working in Belize.

The Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Virtual Symposium was a great example of how international researchers, diasporan organizations and local clinicians can work together to make a strong impact. Speaker Dr. Dawn Nilsen from Columbia University stated, "It was a wonderful opportunity to share ideas and experiences, and to collaborate with rehabilitation specialists from across the globe."

Many of the speakers learned about Armenia for the first time through this experience and are eager to continue building partnerships with local universities, professional associations, and rehabilitation centers.

For Therapists for Armenia and AASMC, this was the first step in a larger initiative of advancing Armenian rehabilitation as a whole. Founders Armineh Babikian (Therapists for Armenia) and Nicholas Tavoukjian (AASMC) have a combined 11 years of experience within rehabilitation in Armenia and Artsakh. AASMC and Therapists for Armenia have helped recruit more than 60 healthcare professionals to travel to and volunteer in Armenia and Artsakh, including Babikian and Tavoukjian themselves who traveled to Armenia in July to spread awareness of their efforts and continue to build on partnerships.

"We met with the Ministry of Health, Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, World Health Organization Regional Office, National Institute of Health, local rehabilitation centers and universities. A common theme we encountered through-



Dr. Liana Aghajanyan and Dr. Michel Landry at the rehabilitation center at Arabkir Medical Center

out the meetings was that rehabilitation is a crucial component of the nation's recovery following the war, as it can help individuals regain quality of life and return to work and family duties," stated Babikian. Given the current phase Armenia and Artsakh are in, rehabilitation and global health experts have expressed that an investment in education and workforce capacity building must be a priority, especially for preparedness in the case of future conflict, emergency, or disaster.

During the past year, Therapists for Armenia and AASMC have been co-developing an Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation Fellowship for Armenia (IRFA), planned to pilot in January 2022. As Tavoukjian explained: "This initiative is designed to scale-up clinical and higher education competencies to impact service delivery, promote leadership, and strengthen the overall capacity of the rehabilitation workforce in Armenia and Artsakh. Together, with partners from the Ministry of Health, National Institute of Health, Polaris Education Corps, and the IDEa Foundation-UCLA Health-Philips Consortium, the IRFA can deliver a solution based on local priorities, while also aligning with standards set forth by the World Health Organization for

strengthening rehabilitation within a health system."

The fellowship will utilize a train-the-trainer model to build workforce capacity and train rehabilitation clinicians in research, ethics, teaching and adult learning theory, leadership, policy, and entrepreneurship. This program will enhance rehabilitation education in Armenia and Artsakh, and provide valuable skills to sustainably develop rehabilitation in the years to come.

With the new national priority of addressing the needs of the growing population of Armenians with disabilities, Therapists for Armenia and the Armenian American Sports Medicine Coalition are dedicated to advancing Armenian rehabilitation through collaboration and co-creation of solutions with local colleagues. The symposium and fellowship are the building blocks of a long-term vision. Active engagement from the diaspora, co-development with local experts, and guidance from international organizations can not only strengthen the field, but support Armenia in becoming a regional leader in rehabilitation.

To help further this effort, those interested can donate to [Therapists for Armenia](#) or [AASMC](#).



Therapists for Armenia and AASMC meeting with National Institute of Health (NIH) in Yerevan

There was an overwhelmingly positive

650 Homes to Be Built in Karabakh's Askeran for IDPs

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A total of 650 homes will be built in Nagorno-Karabakh's Askeran region to accommodate internally displaced persons left homeless after the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan in late 2020.

Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) President Arayik Harutyunyan on September 10 visited Aygestan and Noragyukh communities of Askeran in the administrative territories of which, separate settlements are being built for the residents of the communities of Azokh and Drakhtik (Hadrut), Karin Tak (Shushi), and Avetaranots (Askeran) which were displaced as a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh in 2020.

The construction of the settlements is carried out with the financial means provided to the governments of Artsakh and Armenia.

"The head of state followed the start of the construction and gave appropriate instructions. The residential districts with about 650 private houses will be provided with all the necessary infrastructure and amenities. The first apartments will be ready in 2022, and the construction is planned to be completed in 2023," Harutyunyan's office said.

"President Harutyunyan stressed that the issue of providing housing to all displaced families after the third Artsakh war is in the center of the state's special attention, and the Government will spare no effort to solve this issue at the shortest possible time. The President of the Artsakh Republic emphasized that in addition to housing projects, the state will support displaced families to carry out economic activities and provide their own income."



The announcement ceremony in Askeran

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Macron Announces First COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery To Armenia

PARIS (Panorama.am) — French President Emmanuel Macron this week announced the delivery of the first batch of 25,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Armenia in a Facebook post in the Armenian language. “As I promised in August last year, the first batch of 25,000 doses of vaccines will reach our Armenian friends this evening,” he wrote on September 13. “Solidarity in action in the fight against COVID-19,” Macron added.

Armenia, EU Want Resumption of Karabakh Talks within OSCE Framework

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hosted EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar in Yerevan on September 13. According to a statement from the PM’s office, both Pashinyan and Klaar exchanged views on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and stressed the importance of resuming talks within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairmanship.

Describing the Armenia-EU partnership as dynamic, Pashinyan highlighted the visits of the President of the European Council, the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement to the country in July, noting that the government is currently working on the finalization of the priorities of the 2.6 billion euro financial package provided to Armenia by the EU. Klaar, meanwhile, reaffirmed the political commitment of the EU to continue providing assistance to Armenia.

The two discussed issues on the agenda of the Armenia-EU partnership. The sides weighed in on the prospects of developing ties in the fields of infrastructure, trade, economy, business and other spheres. They discussed other issues of regional significance, exchanged views on the opening of transport communications.

Paylan: Armenia-Turkey Normalization Not Option Without Opening Borders

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Garo Paylan, a Turkish-Armenian lawmaker from the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), has weighed in on the potential Armenia-Turkey rapprochement, maintaining that there are two ways out of the situation created after the Second Karabakh War: to resume the war or to think about reconciliation.

Paylan said in an interview with Factor.am on September 10 that the main precondition in the normalization of relations is having open borders: “Without opening the borders, it is impossible to start a normalization process.”

Turkish Technical Team Begins Work at Kabul Airport

By Ragip Soylu, Levent Kemal

ISTANBUL (Middle East Eye) — A Turkish technical team arrived in Kabul last week to help efforts to reopen its airport for domestic and international flights, a Taliban spokesman and two people familiar with the issue said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a Turkish newspaper on Sunday, September 5, that Turkey and Qatar have been working together at the airport. “[Turkey] is now working at the general terminal and around it,” Mujahid told *Yeni Safak* newspaper. “I have seen them working myself.”

Two people familiar with the issue told Middle East Eye that the Turkish technical team began to work at the airport on 1 September. There is a small Turkish security team present at the airport to protect that technical group, the people added.

Turkey has also taken additional security measures in neighboring Pakistan, deploying special forces and other equipment to use in case of emergencies in Kabul.

On Monday, Al Jazeera reported that

the Taliban invited Turkey, China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Qatar to attend a ceremony announcing a new Afghan government, following the US withdrawal and the group’s dramatic takeover of the country last month.

Al Jazeera report didn’t mention the exact date, but the Taliban is expected to unveil its interim government later this week.

Turkey and Qatar have been thrashing out a deal with the Taliban to operate the airport in recent days.

The draft deal revealed by MEE last month included provisions that would see Ankara recognising the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and providing security at the Kabul airport through a private firm.

Additional members of the Turkish special forces, operating in plainclothes to secure Turkish technical staff, would also not leave the airport perimeter, according to the deal.

One outstanding issue in the way of the deal is that the former Afghan government had in October already awarded a contract

to a United Arab Emirates-based consortium to operate the airport. The Taliban will need to cut a separate deal with them.

One Taliban official told the UAE-based Sky News Arabia over the weekend that the Emirates would also help the Afghan group to get the airport up and running. The UAE’s role remains unresolved.

Turkey temporarily shut its Kabul embassy amid the chaotic US withdrawal and Taliban takeover, instead continuing operations from the airport, but has now reopened the building and its diplomatic staff are operating from the mission as normal.

Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* last week reported that a special phone line between Turkey and the Taliban had been established to conduct negotiations on the airport and other matters.

Turkish officials previously told MEE they believe maintaining a presence in Afghanistan will help them to protect commercial and political interests in the country, including preventing a wave of refugees from entering Turkey seeking asylum in Europe.



Annual Divine Liturgy Held at Armenian Surb Khach Church on Akhtamar Island

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — The annual Divine Liturgy at Surb Khach (Holy Cross) was held at the Armenian Church on Akhtamar Island in Lake Van on Sunday, September 5.

Participation in this year’s service was limited due to the coronavirus pandemic. Only a small number of invited guests attended the mass.

Religious services were resumed in the church in 2010 after a 95-year hiatus.

The church was built between 915 and 921 A.D. by architect Bishop Manuel under the sponsorship of Gagik I Artsruni of the Kingdom of Vaspurakan.

The church was abandoned after the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The building’s restoration began in 2005 and opened as a museum two years later.



INTERNATIONAL

Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate Official Comments on New Land Lease

By **Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

JERUSALEM — The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is a major property-owner in Jerusalem. Recently a controversy was sparked about plans of the Patriarchate to lease a piece of property for 99 years in order to build a hotel on what is called the Cows' Garden or Goveroun Bardez, a large stretch of land in the Armenian Quarter near the Armenian convent. Several articles in the Armenian press, including a column in the *Mirror-Spectator* by Harut Sassounian, criticized this decision. Very Rev. Baret Yeretzian, the director of Real Estate for the patriarchate for the last seven years, and thus involved in negotiating this lease, responded to those criticisms in an interview and provided his own perspective. He also has issued a communiqué (<https://armenian-patriarchate.com/2021/09/07/communique-september-7-2021/>).

Managing Patriarchate's Properties

Fr. Yeretzian related that the Armenian Patriarchate owns property in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Bethlehem and many other places. He said, "We have many issues connected with our lands, even concerning our neighbors, in many places. For us, the most important thing is not to leave these lands vacant. When they are left vacant, everyone's eyes are on those properties. Investment for us is the most important means to secure our lands and the future of our patriarchate."

In his tenure in office, Yeretzian said there have been more than 20 lawsuits concerning property, of which nearly all were won by the patriarchate. Tenants try to avoid paying rent, some sublet or rent out the Armenian Patriarchate's property to others without permission, and others try to usurp land outright. Yeretzian said that after sending warnings, if there is no response, the next step is to take such people to court.

Despite all that is heard about the Israeli government, he said that it does not intervene in such matters and the courts' decisions have been respected by the government. In Palestine too the patriarchate has won its court cases.

Only one case was lost in Yeretzian's time. There were two stores together, run by two brothers. The patriarchate won one suit and lost the other. This was about rental payments, not the land itself, he explained.

In sum, he said, "We do not act with *davul zurna* [i.e. loudly and publicly]. We go to court and spend thousands to defend our rights. Do people outside even know what happens here?"

There have been cases when the city government has used land belonging to the Armenian Patriarchate through eminent domain. Despite rumors to the contrary, Yeretzian said that such land, though used for other purposes, remains in the name of the patriarchate. He gave the example of the land around St. Philip's Fountain or Spring, which the government took in 1977 for a "green belt" or park. The government does not have the right to build on this land without permission from the patriarchate, to which it still belongs, though the latter also cannot build on it at present.

Yeretzian asserted that the financial situation of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the best it has been for many years and it is buying back its former properties. Apparently a law was passed by the Israeli government providing for rights of "protected tenancy" which applies to Armenians living in houses belonging to the patriarchate for at least three generations. Initially these Armenians were given homes for a minimal annual payment, but through this law, they were given the right to sell the house they lived in if it were outside of the Armenian convent proper. Fr. Yeretzian said that the patriarchate has bought back 4 or 5 houses by now. There is a different system in the part of Jerusalem occupied by Israel in 1967, where agreements with renters on the patriarchate's property eventually will allow the patriarchate to set its rents freely. Yeretzian pointed to such action and stressed, "I want to say that we are doing everything to retain our properties."

At the same time, he observed that the patriarchate was not receiving any aid from the outside and needed to maximize its sources of income, which was why it

signed the hotel deal. He said, "We have many expenses and no revenues from outside. We want our monastery to be self-sufficient, to be able to pay all our expenses. We have hundreds of employees. Every day, meals are prepared for hundreds of people. We have schools, a manuscript library and a library to maintain."

He exclaimed: "If the nation [*azk*] thinks this belongs to the nation, let people carry out their national responsibility! We do what we can. I can speak only of my time period: not one penny has been lost from us. What we do is investment and protect our lands."

For hundreds of years, the monastic Armenian Brotherhood of Sts. James preserved its rights with or without large numbers of Armenians living in the local community, Fr. Yeretzian said. Today, he estimated that there were around 1,000 to 1,500 Armenians living in Jerusalem. He said, "It is our sacred responsibility to continue to preserve our rights. For this reason, we must strengthen this brotherhood and financially make it independent." He stressed, "We are neutral with governments and states. We do not intervene in politics. Our only concerns are the Holy Places, our community, our monastery and our future."

Goveroun Bardez

Yeretzian said that the issue of how to use the Goveroun Bardez property was not a new one but had been discussed at various times many years before he took office. For example, he mentioned an attempt to build an Intercontinental Hotel while Archbishop Yeghishe Derderian was patriarch (1960-90). Evidently the sides could not agree on the financial terms so it did not come to fruition. Much later, Yeretzian said that investors from Jordan, Palestine and Russia wanted to lease the property for 99 years.

Asked why the current lease is for so many years, he responded, "If you don't give it for 99 years they are not interested. People will be spending large sums of money and will not do it otherwise." When asked whether the land might be lost to the patriarchate after such a long lease, he said that both the land and the building will remain registered under the name of the Armenian Patriarchate. Fr. Yeretzian said, "We are against the selling of property. We do not sell land."

There are periodic attempts by Arabs and Jews to obtain control of lands belonging to the Armenians and this requires constant vigilance. For example, there was an attempt about 15 years ago by Arabs who claimed the lands of the garden belonged to them. Supposedly they had documents to this effect, but the Armenian Patriarchate took them to court and won the case. Fr. Yeretzian said.

More recently, but prior to the hotel project, a contract was signed in 2020 with the patriarchate by the Jerusalem city government for a 10-year period to use some of the same land of Goveroun Bardez as a parking lot. A small part of this land had been used in a "provisory" fashion for parking for Armenian Quarter residents in the past.

Yeretzian said, "For some fifty years this land was only a pile of garbage. We succeeded in getting it cleaned and turned it into a regular parking lot." The contract made with the municipality of Jerusalem stipulated the latter would spend around 2 million dollars to clean up this land, removing dirt and doing paving, and this sum was registered as a loan. In return for this expenditure, the parking lot that was created will be used by both Jews and Armenians, while remaining under the control of the patriarchate.

While the lot was to open in May of this year, a mosaic was found during the preparations, and so all of the spaces have not been finished. There will be a list of names of the users, and Armenians will constitute at least half. According to a communiqué of the Patriarchate, there will be at least 180 parking spaces total.

If the hotel is indeed built by the new investor, there is a clause in the 10-year contract allowing for it to be voided. The municipality still benefits in this case, Fr. Yeretzian said, because it will both get a new hotel and receive taxes from it through the years.

The hotel deal was concluded in July of this year with a company belonging to a Jewish Australian named

Dany Rubinstein. Fr. Yeretzian said Rubinstein has lived in Dubai for many years, and his corporation is based there. Yeretzian asserted that the Arabs would have not allowed him to do business for years in the United Arab Emirates if he were doing improper things in Israel (i.e., which would ultimately adversely affect Arabs).

His business will invest \$200 million in the project. Both the building and the land will be registered in the name of the patriarchate. Fr. Yeretzian noted that the process of registering land is itself an expensive one, which the investor is obliged to do for the patriarchate according to the contract. Elsewhere too, the Armenian Patriarchate has documentation of ownership for many parcels of land, but some of them are still not officially registered due to the lengthy and expensive process.

According to Sassounian, the down payment for the hotel deal was \$1 million, but Sassounian does not reveal his source. When asked about the financial details of the agreement, Fr. Yeretzian only stated that he could not give all the details publicly, but that the patriarchate would receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in rent, plus yearly percentages with scheduled increases.

The contract was approved by Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Grand Sacristan Sevan Gharibian, and Fr. Yeretzian. Sassounian's anonymous source claims the entire brotherhood of St. James should have approved it.

Fr. Yeretzian commented, "The Synod had made the decision for the parking lot renovations. All Synod members have been aware of the hotel negotiation too. It has been an ongoing one. It is an internal matter to our brotherhood and patriarchate. The brotherhood can speak out on it if it wants to. The plan is not a new one. Only the persons asking for the contract have changed, but the plans are the same. Due to the coronavirus, we have not been able to come together as a group for meetings. We did have a meeting, but not with large numbers." He added, in order to make the difficulties of the situation clear, that even religious services could not be held due to coronavirus, and most of the members of the brotherhood had gotten sick from covid (now they are all vaccinated).

Fr. Yeretzian said that there were two other similar land contract issues that are still in process and have been under discussion or negotiation for long periods of time, perhaps 15 years or so, on the Mount of Olives and Tel Aviv.

He said that at the crux of the current criticism of the Goveroun Bardez hotel project were local Armenians who had been stealing or conducting other illegal actions against the patriarchate and had been punished through court cases. He said, "There are Armenians among us, families, who do not pay their rents. They want to usurp our properties in one way or another. We file lawsuits against them. Others want to sell our properties to non-Armenians. These are the ones who speak against us. We are defending our rights."

A second cause was the envy of the current good situation of the monastery. He said, "This envy leads many to disparage us outside. I think many of them think we do not understand business and only they do. We have five lawyers, we have accountants, auditors, our synod, the patriarch, and many other bodies. They do not know that we are constantly researching and investigating. They think this is a simple matter."

He asked where the people in the outside world were when help could have been used. For forty years, he said no major financial aid has been given. Instead of advice, he asked that these people give money, while the brotherhood spends its money to hold onto its lands. If anyone makes accusations of bribery or corruption, he said they should prove it, but there is no such thing.

He remarked that there are many false rumors circulating. For example, there is a police station which supposedly was lost to the patriarchate due to a 99-year lease. Yeretzian said this was a fabrication, as the police building never belonged to the Armenians but instead to the Ottoman government, and was later successively transferred to the governments in control of that territory.

(See an editorial of the *Mirror-Spectator* on this topic in the current issue.)



INTERNATIONAL

Berlin Greek Orthodox Community Commemorates Genocide Victims

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Every year in mid-September, members and friends of the Greek Orthodox community in Berlin gather at the Luisenkirchhof III cemetery to honor the memory of the victims of the genocide. On September 11, the Day of the Open Monument, participants took part in a tour of the cemetery led by Dr. Tessa Hofmann, co-founder and spokeswoman of the organization behind the initiative (FÖGG). On Sunday, September 12, she delivered an address at the commemorative ceremony, where a wreath was laid, and Archimandrite Dr. Stefan L. Toma, of the Greek Orthodox Church of Christ's Ascension, offered requiem prayers.

Among those who attend these events are Armenian as well as Aramaean/Assyrian/Chaldean Christians. The site is known as the Altars of Remembrance. A unique monument embodying the spirit of ecumenicism, it occupies a special place in Germany's culture of remembrance, as the story of its origins reveals. Hofmann shared this history while guiding visitors through the cemetery.

At the beginning of the 20th century, an estimated five million indigenous Christians from these communities lived in what is today Turkey, and over three million perished on orders of the Ottoman regime, through deportations, massacres and slave labor.

When, in the second half of the 20th century, large numbers of Greeks and other Christians arrived in Germany from Turkey and countries of the Middle East, they were de facto refugees. Many of them were descendants of genocide survivors, and could be described as carrying little luggage but a heavy burden of memory. Most painful must have been the memory of those relatives denied proper burial, and whose final resting place, in modern day Syria, Turkey and northern Iraq, had become inaccessible.

Thus, their desire and need for sites of personal and community commemoration in their new homeland was great. Not only as a place for mourning, but also as a symbolic warning or admonition, never to allow a repetition of such crimes against humanity.

In 2002, the "Speaking with One Voice!" organizing committee was set up, a civil society group calling for recognition in the German Bundestag (Parliament) of the 1912-1922 genocide against Ottoman Christians. In 2008 it launched the initiative for an ecumenical remembrance site in Berlin and received support from local political figures in Charlottenburg, a district with a strong historical

connection to Armenian-Turkish-German history. Two of Berlin's Armenian communities as well as a Syrian Orthodox community are located here.

pire (FÖGG) came into being. That May, the Evangelical Luisengemeinde (Parish) made available three abandoned burial sites, where three Altars of Remembrance would be erected, dedicated to the Armenians, Greeks and Aramaean/Assyrians, respectively. (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/March-3-2018-1.pdf>)



Tessa Hofmann presents memorial monuments

Norms for conserving historical monuments guided the renovation work in 2015 to transform three memorials into altars, and construction work was completed in 2018.

The Luisenkirchhof III cemetery itself was established in the nineteenth century. Native trees, beech, oak, maple and linden, adorn its broad avenues and geometrical layout, reflecting the ideas of garden architect Gustav Meyer (1816-1877) and his student, Otto Vogeler (1843-1913), who planned the landscaping. The grounds, which offer a perfect location for the ecumenical monuments, have been granted official protection as a natural and historical site.

Refugees, Greek Islands Then and Now

In her remarks during the Sunday commemorative gathering, Hofmann drew parallels between the genocide a century ago, and the situation today. She recalled the conquest of the defenseless Ionian port city Smyrna (Izmir) on September 9, 1922 and its wanton

destruction, which "marked one of the greatest refugee tragedies of the 20th century." Then, as now, she went on, the question was, what countries would take them in? She cited correspondence between the American Dr. Esther Pohl-Lovejoy, who was in Smyrna, and Dr. Mabel

Evelyn Elliott from the American Women's Hospitals (AWH), the medical director of the health department for refugees of the Near East Relief (NER). Dr. Elliott portrayed the incredible challenge posed by the need to rescue and transport almost a million refugees within a matter of weeks. In a letter dated January 16, 1923, Dr. Elliott described the conditions under which survivors travelled on ships leaving Turkey. The setting was unimaginable, she wrote, and worse, the refugees had trekked days and weeks through Anatolia's snow-covered mountains, before boarding ships taking them through the Black Sea, Bosphorus, Marmara and Aegean seas. Those who had perished during the voyage could not be buried and had to be burned in the ship's furnaces.

When the ships arrived at the Greek coasts, the government and aid organizations were utterly overwhelmed; in 1923, about a million refugees were coming to a land with a population of 5 million. Hofmann cited an October 11, 1922 telegram dispatched by Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, League

of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Nansen estimated that no fewer than 750,000 refugees, mainly women and children, were scattered throughout Greece, Thrace and the islands. While he praised the efficiency of the evacuation, which had saved lives, he lamented their condition, without money, clothing, shelter or food.

Then, due to the widespread threat of contagion, the refugees were put in mass quarantine on the Cyclades island of Makronisos, which was small and lacked adequate infrastructure. The Greek government, the only one that had taken in Armenian and Greek refugees of the genocide, had reached the limit and would accept more only on condition they were free from disease, and clean. Dr. Olga Stasny from AWH, who was in charge of setting up the refugee camp, described a situation where even adequate drinking water was scarce. No telephone, no telegraph, no radio communications — and yet, the AWH was supposed to prepare to receive the refugees within 10-12 days.

"The quarantine in Makronisos lasted from January to June 1923," Hofmann said, "Over 20,000 refugees from Turkey passed through the camp on the small island." She continued: "Hopelessly overcrowded refugee camps on Greek islands — like Moria — create an image to the present day of misery and unsolved humanitarian problems. It is shocking to see how little has changed or improved in almost a hundred years. What have we learned? What has become of the mantra-like repeated call, 'Never again?'"

Hofmann concluded with reference to next year, 2022, which marks the centenary of the conquest and catastrophe of Smyrna, "an occasion to reflect seriously on the decade-long genocide against Ottoman Christians, as well as the accompanying humanitarian catastrophes."



Dr. Stefan L. Toma offers requiem prayers

connection to Armenian-Turkish-German history. Two of Berlin's Armenian communities as well as a Syrian Orthodox community are located here.

In early 2012 the Promotional Society for the Ecumenical Monuments for Genocide Victims of the Ottoman Em-



Community News

Artsakh State Minister to Speak at AMAA 102nd Annual Meeting Banquet

By Elise Kalfayan

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) will hold its 102nd Annual Meeting Banquet Saturday, October 23, at First Armenian Presbyterian Church in Fresno, featuring a keynote by State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan.

AMAA Board Member LindaKay Abdulian, President of National Raisin Company, is organizing this year's Banquet and will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies. She and her husband Dr. John Abdulian are sponsoring the Banquet with the aim of introducing the work of the AMAA to the Fresno Armenian community, especially its young people.

Armenian Evangelical churches in the US founded the AMAA in 1918 as their mission arm, to re-establish Armenian Evangelical communities and churches in the Near East following the Armenian Genocide. That work greatly expanded following the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, the birth of the independent Armenian Republic, and Artsakh's fight for liberation in the 1990s. The AMAA has since built and operated schools, day-care centers, churches, and Christian camps in Armenia and Artsakh and despite the devastation of the 2020 war, continues with resolve to care for the lives and spirits of impacted families and



Artsakh State Minister Artak Beglaryan

children. Says Abdulian, "I'm looking forward to hearing from our speaker about what's happening now in Artsakh, and how Armenians are coping. Our family helped build a wonderful Christian camp that was destroyed and taken away during the war. It's gone, but what we are upset about is that the ministry is gone as well. We've gotten letters from people who have thanked us for the Camp."

Beglaryan, the banquet's guest of honor, attended AMAA summer camps in the late 1990s, and credits his Christian education there as helping develop his service mentality. During the 2020 war, he was serving as the human rights ombudsman of

see AMAA, page 8



Family members, left, attend as Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station Captain Justin Diez speaks at the 20th Memorial ceremony for fallen Deputy Hagop "Jake" Kuredjian held in Stevenson Ranch on Tuesday, 083121. Dan Watson/The Signal

20 Years Later, Deputy Kuredjian's Memory Lives on

By Kev Kurdoghlian

SANTA CLARITA, Calif. (*Santa Clarita Signal*) — Two decades after Los Angeles County sheriff's Deputy Hagop "Jake" Kuredjian made the ultimate sacrifice, his memory remains alive and well in the hearts of those who knew him.

A ceremony held Tuesday, August 31, at the corner of Stevenson Ranch and Poe parkways marked 20 years since Kuredjian was shot and killed in the line of duty in service of the Santa Clarita Valley.

There, Kuredjian's family and community gathered around his memorial to pay tribute to his life and memory.

"On August 31, 2001, Jake received a radio call that officers needed assistance," said Garo Kuredjian, Jake's brother. "He did what he always did. He answered that call with selfless dedication."

Garo Kuredjian, the police chief for the city of Filmore, said his older brother was his role model. Jake, he told a crowd of deputies, firefighters and community members, made a lasting impression on him through his courage, confidence and commitment.

"Jake was someone that was larger than life. He knew how to handle himself in every situation," Garo Kuredjian said, expressing gratitude to the Sheriff's Department for remembering his brother. "He knew when to talk and, more importantly, when to listen. He knew when to be patient, but also when to take action. He was a great big brother, a great son, a great friend and a great partner."

Jake's brother Raffi Kuredjian travelled to Santa Clarita from Michigan to attend the ceremony.

"It brings back sad memories," he said of his brother, who was 40 years old in 2001. "We miss him."

Raffi Kuredjian said he's grateful that the Sheriff's Department continues to memorialize his brother's dedication and service.

"He really loved the community. He lived here. He played here. He truly was dedicated to this community. And he did what he loved to do," he said. "It's been 20 years. It seems like yesterday."

Anahid Kuredjian, Jake's mother, seated next to her granddaughter, reflected on the day she said she could never forget.

"His goal was to be helpful to people and he was. Our family's life changed after his death, but his memory is everlasting in us," she said. "He was so proud to be a (sheriff's deputy). It's like he was born to be a deputy."

Don Rodriguez, who was the captain of the Santa Clarita Valley (SCV) Sheriff's Station 20 years ago, remembered Kuredjian as always gregarious, outgoing, funny and hard working.

"He was just a wonderful guy," he said. "The day was just terrible. It's still terrible."

see REMEMBRANCE, page 8



Hagop "Jake" Kuredjian

Bay Area Teen Creates Club to Tutor Refugees From Afghanistan and Beyond

By Dion Lim

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (KGO) -- As the refugee crisis in Afghanistan continues, a group of young people in the Bay Area are doing their part of helping refugees from many different countries learn English with the goal of making more "Buddies without Borders."

At noontime on Saturdays 17-year old Krikor Kevranian, a senior at Design Tech High School in Redwood City, can be found Zooming with another 17-year old, half a world away.

"His name is Mahdi and since last school year I've been talking to him on a weekly basis," says Kevranian, who goes by "Koko" for short. Koko founded the Buddies Without Borders club at the school which helps connect his classmates with refugees from around the globe. Madhi is a refugee from Afghanistan now living in Greece.

At first Koko admits, he had reservations about helping Mahdi learn English. "I was nervous. What are we going to talk about? What if we don't like each other? What if it's awkward between us?"



Krikor Kevranian

Despite his worries, Koko still wanted to help because of the struggles his own immigrant parents experienced coming to America from Armenia and his great-grandparent's challenges as refugees who survived the Armenian Genocide and sought refuge in Syria.

"I know it's really hard to come to a place where you don't know the language. You have no friends. No family. If someone just helped them they would have had a better experience and that's what I want to give these kids."

Pretty soon, through their regular chats which became more frequent during the pandemic and watching Disney+ movies together, there was a transformation.

"It's incredible" beams Koko. "When I first talked to him, it was mostly broken English. But now he's able to talk really well and understand most of it." These connections are more than a lesson in English. According to D-Tech's director Melissa Mizel, it's

see CLUB, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley Meets With Representative Lori Trahan During August Recess

CHELMSFORD, Mass. — The Armenian National Committee (ANC) of Merrimack Valley met with Representative Lori Trahan (D-MA(03)) at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church in Chelmsford. When her staff suggested a meeting in Chelmsford, the ANC of Merrimack Valley took the opportunity to arrange the meeting at Sts. Vartanantz where the congresswoman was able to make her first visit to the church and

were greeted by Rev. Father Khachatur Kesablian and ANC of Merrimack Valley members Ara Jeknavorian, Greg Minasian and Joe Dagdigian. After a tour of the sanctuary by Father Khachatur, team met with Representative Trahan to express the community's appreciation for her on-going support of the many congressional resolutions on Armenia and Artsakh, especially H.RES.240 calling on Azerbaijan to

calling recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The ANC of Merrimack Valley also provided Trahan with an update on the grave situation in Armenia and Artsakh with focus on Armenian POWs being abused and tortured by Azerbaijan, the cultural genocide of Armenian institutions in Artsakh, and the on-going Azeri attacks on Armenia. The team underscored the recent hostilities by Azerbaijan appear to be probing the response of Armenia and the international community, especially Russia and the United States, urging the Congresswoman to support a strong U.S. response to stop future aggression by Azerbaijan.

Trahan appreciated the update on Armenia and Artsakh and committed to support and initiate congressional resolutions to reverse the waiver on Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act.

"We are honored to have Representative Trahan's support on issues that are important to the Armenian American community in the Merrimack Valley. We look forward to a continued friendship with the Representative and are eager to work with her staff to aid Armenia and Artsakh," said Ara Jeknavorian, ANC of Merrimack Valley co-chair.



Representatives from the Armenian National Committee of Merrimack Valley with Representative Lori Trahan (D-MA) on Wednesday, August 25 at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church. Pictured from left to right: Greg Minasian, Ara Jeknavorian, Rev. Father Khachatur Kesablian, Congresswoman Lori Trahan, and Joe Dagdigian.

meet with her constituents at their home away from home.

Trahan and her staffer Emily Byrne

immediately release all Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians, and the bipartisan letter to President Biden

Artsakh State Minister to Speak at AMAA Annual Meeting

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Artsakh, and he covered the war with daily public updates on war crimes perpetrated by Azerbaijan against the Artsakh people.

Beglaryan lost his eyesight as a child when a landmine he found in his family's yard exploded. His father had died in battle just two years earlier. He studied at a school for the visually impaired in Yerevan. He graduated from Yerevan State University in 2010, subsequently studied business management in Thessaloniki, Greece as part of a student exchange program, and took part in international programs and research fellowships in the Czech Republic and Switzerland. He went on to masters' level studies at University College London in politics, security, and integration; and completed a public policy and administration program in the United States at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University near Boston.

Beglaryan has held several posts in Artsakh. He has also lectured at Artsakh State University on political science topics.

The AMAA Camp Beglaryan attended in his childhood was near Stepanakert. The camp had moved to Shushi by 2003, and the Bedrosian family sponsored its program investing around \$600,000 for the camp programs and to pay for building renovations and a playground. Adjacent buildings included a Christian Education Center and AMAA Shushi office which was completed with funding from the

Bedrosian family and had only been used for a few months before the war started in September 2020. Camp Bedrosian served about 800 campers each summer.

During the 2016 and 2020 Azeri attacks, the camp sheltered Armenian families fleeing violence. "The Bedrosian family has always felt that it is our Christian duty to help Armenians succeed," said Bryan Bedrosian, LindaKay's cousin and also an AMAA Board member. "We are heartbroken for the Camp and for the people of Shushi. We hope and pray that Camp Bedrosian will return."

LindaKay Abdulian has been actively involved in the work of AMAA for 25 years as a member of AMAA's Los Angeles Child and Orphan Care Committee. "Through the AMAA, as you give of your time and your talent, it isn't even about how much you give or receive, it is about what you become. I became a philanthropic person, committed to Armenian Christian causes. I kept up my involvement in the AMAA because I saw a change in the children we were serving" said Mrs. Abdulian.

As banquet Chair and MC, Abdulian acknowledges that this is an extraordinary time and everything is up in the air. Planning for the event continues as she keeps informed about external circumstances related to public health. Attendance will be limited to 200 guests, at tables of 8, in the large hall of Fresno's First Armenian Presbyterian Church, which can easily accommodate twice that number. "The program

will be brief, and we are honored to have such a great speaker," she noted.

AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian spoke of this time's suffering for the Armenian people as he reflected on his recent mission field trip. "I have seen the impact AMAA has on the lives of people all over. One life at a time. Upon my return from a four-week emotionally packed trip, I was asked to summarize what I took with me and what I brought back. It did not take me long to pack the answers in two simple but lauded words. I carried HOPE and brought back INSPIRATION. Carrying HOPE has always been the AMAA's core mission. In HOPE, the Good News of the Gospel taken to the ends of the world is bundled. HOPE is the remedy to despair and depression, the eyedrop to a blurred vision and the magical key to revival, rejuvenation, and resuscitation."

The 102nd Annual Meeting of the Armenian Missionary Association of America will be held at Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, October 21-24, with the option to join virtually. The registration and meeting agenda can be found on the AMAA website at www.amaa.org

The banquet will be held Saturday, October 23, social hour at 6:30 p.m., banquet program starting at 7 p.m., at First Armenian Presbyterian Church, 430 S. First Street, Fresno, CA 93702. Tickets are \$50, and banquet sponsorships are available at several levels. For more information, visit www.amaa.org

Deputy Kuredjian's Memory Lives on

REMEMBRANCE, from page 7

Deputies who served with Kuredjian at the Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff's Station, where he was stationed before moving to Santa Clarita, also attended the ceremony.

"He was one of those guys who loved life," said Steve Rohrbach, remembering Kuredjian as someone who was loved by everyone at the Malibu Station. "He was a very funny guy, upbeat."

Dave Chambers also served with Kuredjian in Malibu. He said they would take day rides on their motorcycles.

"He was an avid motorcycle rider," Chambers said of Kuredjian, who was a motorcycle deputy at the end of his 17 years of service.

SCV Sheriff's Station Capt. Justin Diez said Aug. 31 represents a significant day for the history of Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station.

"We're all here today to mourn his passing and also celebrate his life as we stand here at this monument, uninterrupted for 24 hours," he said of the annual tradition of standing watch at Kuredjian's memorial.

Diez thanked the community and the Kuredjian family and issued a reminder to deputies at the ceremony.

"Every day when you get dressed and don your uniform and don your badge, remember what Jake stood for," Diez told deputies. "You've got the most honorable job in the world, always remember that. When others run or ask for help — you respond, you perform."

Diez also had a message for Jake Kuredjian:

"We know you're looking down upon us today and every day — probably a smile, probably a tear, probably a little bit of laughter, probably pride in your face," he said. "We know that you're a guardian angel watching over us during all our close calls in our daily events."

Dan Finn, a detective with the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station, worked with Kuredjian in Santa Clarita. He said his late colleague epitomized the definition of a hero.

"All of us have a memory of Jake and that's what keeps him alive," he said.

And those memories will always have a place in Santa Clarita, Diez said.

"Every year we will meet here in this exact location for generations to come," he said. "And Jake's memory will be etched in the fabric of this community."

Bay Area Teen Creates Club To Tutor Refugees from Afghanistan and Beyond

CLUB, from page 7

a lesson for students in perspective and what's happening in our world today.

"They recognize the privilege they have living in the Bay Area and how much they have. They see (what's happening in the world) on the news. They're inundated all the time."

Mizel says the club is the epitome of the school's mission.

"Make the world a better place. To get out in the community and support people and help people solve those problems." She says seeing the club succeed in that mission brings her joy. "It makes this job so worthwhile."

So far dozens have joined the club and Koko hopes to amplify Buddies Without Borders to schools across the Bay Area.



OBITUARY

Helen Azniv Manougian

Daughter of Genocide Survivors, Dedicated to Family

SAN FRANCISCO — Helen Azniv Manougian, a resident of San Francisco and Peninsula, passed away peacefully at the San Carlos Elms on August 20, 2021. She was 89.

Helen (née Orchanian) Manougian, was the daughter of Nasib and Azniv (née Ansoorian) Orchanian, Armenian immigrants who escaped the Armenian Genocide from Marash, Turkey and Nicosia, Cyprus, and whose families settled in North Bergen, NJ near aunts, uncles and cousins.

Helen's father died when she was only 7 and she was raised by her single mother and doting aunts and uncles.

At age 10, Helen was sent to Southern California by train, escorting her aged maternal grandmother, where her aunts/uncles had been resettling and starting their families and businesses.

Her formative years were in Los Angeles with her sister Aurora "Ora" Aruta and attending LA High School and secretarial school.

Helen met her future husband, Paul Ma-

nougian, of San Francisco, at an Armenian General Benevolent Union event followed by a nine-month courtship between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Theirs was the first wedding in the new St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in the shadow of Twin Peaks in San Francisco.

Helen grew up in the Gethsamane Congregational Church, later United Armenian Congregational Church, of Los Angeles.

Paul and Helen were married for 55 years until Paul's death in 2013.

Helen and Paul raised their two children, Gregory and Paula, in San Francisco, remaining closely tied to the local Armenian community. Likewise, Helen remained close to her large family in Los Angeles, Ohio and New Jersey, including visits for holidays and reunions.

Helen worked for Prudential Insurance in Los Angeles as a secretary. Once in San Francisco and settled in the Sunset, she was dedicated to raising Gregory and Paula and to be at home for them and their varied activities.

In the mid-1970s, Helen began working for the public schools as a clerk typist at Francisco Junior High, summers at elementary schools, and CCSF.

Still in the civil service system, she

worked as executive secretary for the San Francisco War Memorial.

Following her retirement, she found joy in working as the coat check attendant at the San Francisco Opera House. This was her final and most satisfying job; she was able to see friends, celebrities, and snippets of the opera and ballet, with the "Nutcracker" being the most satisfying.

While growing up in LA, she joined Jobs Daughters, a Masonic affiliated organization and Queen of the local chapter. In San Francisco, she was involved with the Armenian church and its organizations, AGBU, Knights and Daughters of Vartan, school PTA, Paula's (and Greg's brief) ballet career, and true to her spirit, actively participated in local politics working at

campaign offices for mayoral and supervisor elections — including the kids!

She was predeceased by her husband Paul, parents Nasib and Azniv, sister Ora Aruta and sister-in-law Mary Hogikyan.

Helen leaves behind her son Gregory (Karen) of Rockville, MD and Paula Boghossian (John) of San Carlos, CA, grandchildren Philip (Niki), Alec, Rebecca, and Andrew; nieces Mary Aruta, Janice Chamberlain, Helen Bannon, and nephew Vaughn Hovanessian, along with many cousins from the Manougian, Kuzirian, Hogrogian, Ansoorian, Najarian and Boyajian families.

Funeral and burial were held on August 25, at Cypress Lawn Cemetery, Colma, attended by family and friends.

Rose Torossian Arslanian

Dedicated to Family, Church and AGBU

WATERTOWN — Rose Torossian Arslanian died on September 4, 2021. She was 84.

She was the wife of Hrant A. Arslanian of Watertown. She leaves her children Dr. Armen (Araz) Arslanian; Sarkis (Maral) Baliozian of Beirut and Armen (Salpi) Lusarian; grandchildren Rose and Lily Arslanian, Dr. Patil Baliozian and Dr. Puzant Baliozian of Germany, Ani-Arpi and Kevork-Jacques and Hrant-Haig of Lebanon.



She was the daughter of the late Hagop and Anahid Torossian, Sister of late Eliz Donoyan (widow of late Khatchig Donoyan), the late Osanna Donoyan (widow of late George Donoy-

an), Harout and Azad Torossian Melik and Azniv Torossian (Canada), Maral Darakyan (widow of late Dr. Ghazar Darakyan), Nerses and Seta Torossian (Lebanon); sister-in-law of Late Hagop and Hermine Arslanian, Haroutian and Mary Arslanian, Puzant and Shaké Arslanian, and Anahid Arslanian. She also leaves many loving nieces and nephews.

The entire Torossian, Arslanian, Lusarian, Abrahamian, Baliozian, Donoyan, Dorsoonian, Toranian, Garabedian, Casparian, Cruley, Cragan, Tangoogian, Balian, Pehlulian, Terzibashian, Bebejian, Babahikian, Vayejian, Hasserjian, Karamanogian, Shahbazian, Balabanian, Arabanian, Yetenekian and all relatives mourn her passing. She was intelligent, joyful, caring, considerate, outspoken and patriotic. She was farsighted yet spontaneous, personable yet astute, pragmatic yet incredibly creative

all at once. She loved songs and singing, she loved stories and storytelling, and she loved Sunday School, Hymns and the liturgy. She held the Armenian Church in the highest esteem: She belonged to the Holy Echmiadzin Women's Guild, and cherished the Holy See of Cilicia and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. She fondly participated in the Madagh preparation at St. Asdvadzadzin Chapel in Bikfaya during the Blessing of Grapes. She was also a very dedicated volunteer and committee member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). Her trips to Yerevan, Armenia and symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem brought her so much joy.

She extolled the values of education and encouraged her children and grandchildren to seek it. In all aspects of life, she demanded the best effort and appreciated it greatly. She yearned for everyone's success. She was elated with her grandchildren's achievements as well as friends' children's performances. In everything she did she nurtured her family, classmates and friends.

And then there was her food. A whole universe of flavor and spice. Her desserts were incredible, nourishing our bodies and souls with every shared meal at her table.

The family will celebrate her life now as they celebrated her birthdays and special milestones together. And as we all know a mother does not ever truly die, she only becomes invisible. We will always feel her love.

Funeral service were held at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge on Monday, September 13. Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home. At the request of the family, cemetery services were private.

Jack Sarmanian

Mental Health Advocate, Civic Leader

WELLS, Maine — Jack Sarmanian of Wells and formerly Edgecomb, Maine as well as Lexington and Watertown, Mass., died on September 11, 2021.

He was the husband of June "Sandy" (Sandell) Sarmanian; father of David Sarmanian and his wife Donna, and daughter Julie Sarmanian and her late husband Peter Petrole; grandfather of Nicholas Sarmanian and Samuel Sarmanian; brother of Esther Stepanian and her husband Stephen, JoAnn Janjigian and her husband Dick, and the late Peter Sarmanian and his wife Agnes. He is also survived by many cousins, nieces and nephews.



He will also be missed by a wide circle of friends, from his lifelong Watertown pals, to fellow Sheepscot River boaters and beyond.

With Armenian music playing in the background and the fullness of love permeating the atmosphere, Jack passed away in the embrace of family.

He dedicated his life to the betterment of others, professionally and personally. With a doctorate in education and a Master's Degree in social work, he was on the vanguard of mental and behavioral health clinical practice and systems management, with a reach from local organizations to the federal government. With a commitment to his profession, he wrote prolifically, lectured extensively and taught the next genera-

tion at Tufts Medical School, University of Massachusetts, Boston College and Smith College.

Along with the love of his life, his wife Sandy, he was an antique dealer. He specialized in antique tools and was sought out for his expertise, earning his trade name, The Tool Man.

Jack's belief in civic service led to the 20-year tenure as a Lexington Town Meeting member, who spearheaded advocacy for development of the Lexington Town Track, which remains in widespread use. Upon Jack and Sandy making Edgecomb, Maine their permanent residence, Jack integrated into local government, eventually leading the town as chairman for the Board of Selectmen.

His leadership's imprint permeates the community, from the Fire Department, to the roads, to the professionalization of town management to assure longevity for its citizens.

As an American Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Worker, Jack helped victims of natural and civilian disasters as well as our veterans.

Dr. Jack Sarmanian lived what he believed. His was a deep impact for the betterment of countless lives and for the strength and joy of his family.

Funeral service were held at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown, on Friday, September 17. Interment was at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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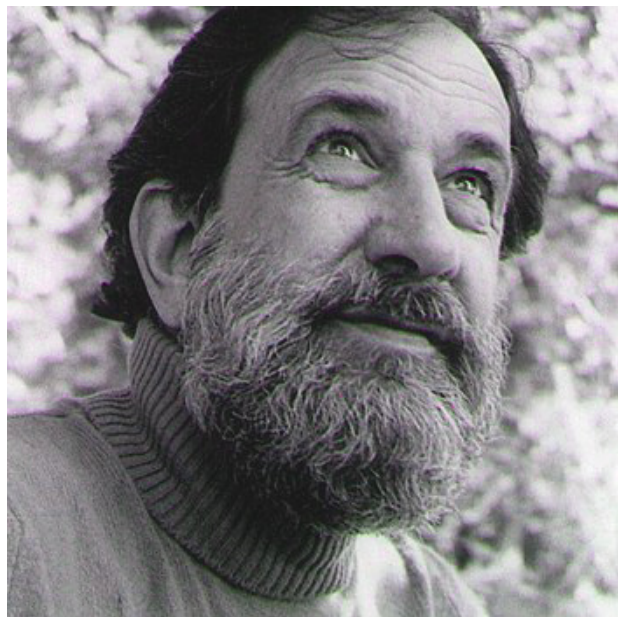
THE ARMENIAN
MIRROR-SPECTATOR
BOOK
R E V I E W S

Kherdian's *A Place in Time*: A 20th Century Memoir Is a Quiet Celebration

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

David Kherdian's hometown, Racine, Wis., is a "desolate and broken town," an abandoned Midwestern city of factories, mines and railroad tracks. Where there once was togetherness and community, there now is division and discrimination. The itinerant workers, alive with their laughter and chatter, have been replaced by the "new barren life" of businesses "where the only payment was money."

The city that comes to life in Kherdian's recent memoir, *A Place in Time: A 20th Century Memoir* (Cascade Press, 2020), is also another place in another time. In the sequence of poems and companion prose pieces Racine



emerges as an idyllic place, a mythical place almost, that transcends all places, in all times. Its amazing blue lake, a river that winds through the city, and its numerous parks nurture dreams and make it possible to believe in the promise of a different life. Kherdian's own State Street is "an artery of goodness for its entire length."

The poems assembled in the memoir evoke a changing city. A past of freedom and laughter has transformed into a present where machines have invaded the town's closeness to nature.

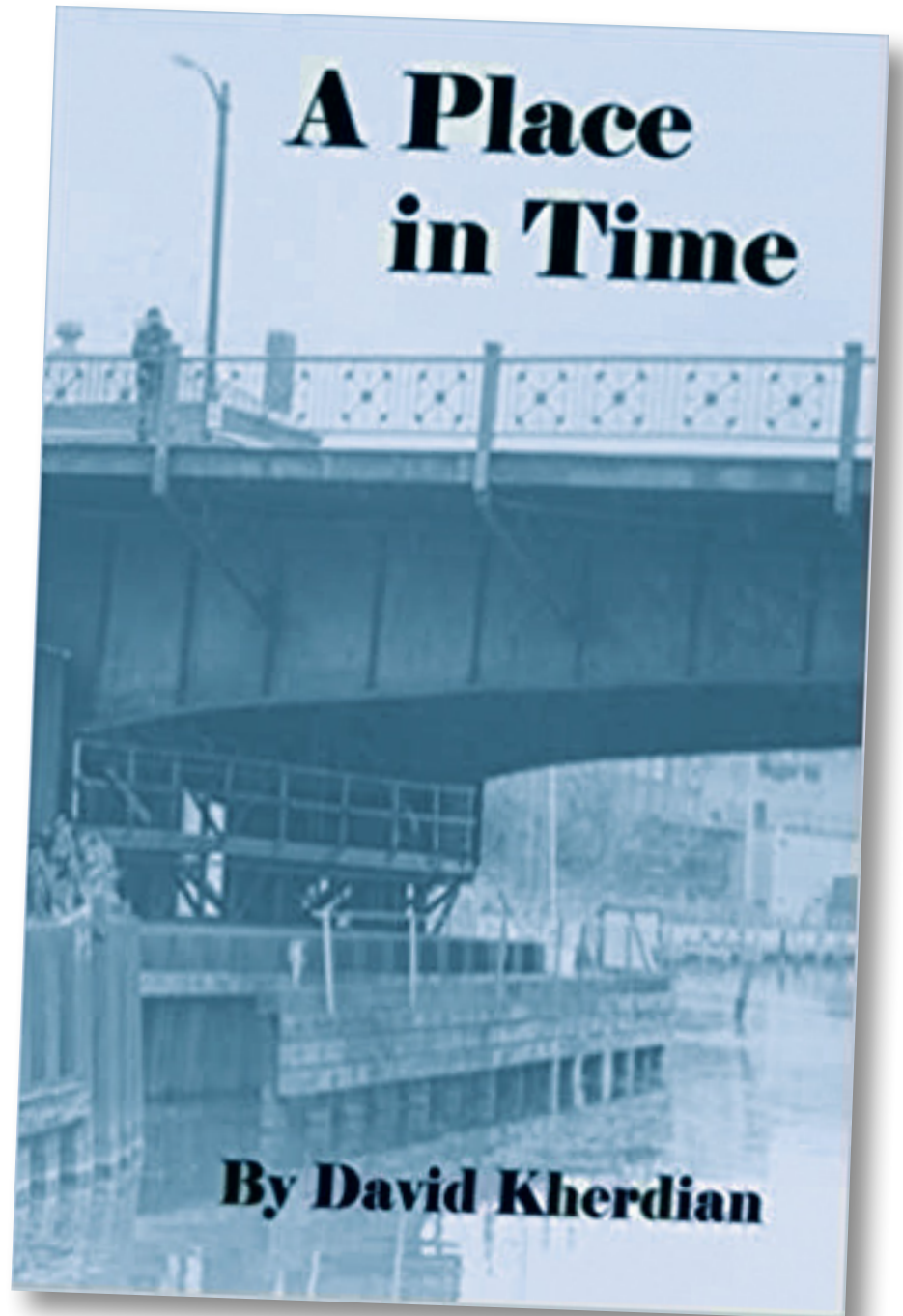
Supermarkets have replaced the small ethnic stores in which things did not come "wrapped and labeled and watched over by a clerk." These stores were "not busi-

nesses at all," but real places where "we could talk" about "all the real things we cared most about." While there is no judgment here, Kherdian is very clear about the values worth preserving. Respect for family and home, communion with nature, tolerance for differences and forgiveness are not forgotten, even if lost.

There is, in fact, no bitterness over the loss. Kherdian's is a most comforting way to think about a place that, while destroyed and no longer "eager and alive and free," still gives one all one needs from life. His is a quiet celebration of the ongoing life of the city. No matter how "difficult and demanding," life can actually be good. Finding real peace is possible. And if there is any yearning, it is only for more of the same.

Which is not to say that there is no underlying sadness in Kherdian's ideology. His memoir ends with the lines, "How sad to be a human being, how lonely/and difficult." Even if these lines are written in memory of a dead person — "In Memoriam Mike Kaiserlian" — asserting sadness as part of the human condition makes the idea of "silent acceptance and gratitude" more palatable. As Kherdian well knows, sadness is "simply there," and going deeper and deeper into the inner world, as he does, means reaching "something much much deeper than catching perch in a lake on a line."

Kherdian's vision comes through because it is simple, straightforward, and sincere. The casual, almost conversational, tone of the poems makes a profound philosophy accessible. Just as the wondrous lake feeds "the people whose shores it laps," "unknowingly," we too "imbibe its truth unwittingly." That "truth" certainly works for Joe Perch, "everybody's hero on the pier," who "never spoke, never bragged. . . He just caught fish." It also works for the many who "were content to sit above the lake in silence on park benches, or else drive silently along the streets and look over the waters as they drove."



The voice of the poems is a calming voice. "The calm of the lake was in us/the peace in the landscape was ours," writes Kherdian. There is indeed in the book a reverence for "the elderly and the thoughtful" who sat on the bluff above the lake, looking down at the "moving body of changing blue" in quiet contemplation. Much goodness comes from silent reflection.

While a philosophy that exhorts peace and calm is relevant anytime, it is especially useful today, when the world is in shambles and we find ourselves perched on the edge of the abyss. Mankind does not need another war to know that it is on a path of self-destruction.

It is impossible to think of a "split-off America" without conjuring Kherdian's own "split-off world/We knew only as Armenia," for which he has such deep love. The separation of the old and the new, the divide between fathers and sons—the fathers, "somber, silent belonging/to a world outside of ours," the sons, full of laughter and adventure—are intrinsic to *A Place in Time*. Kherdian's own silent father, "foreign, forlorn," is constantly evoked in the poems.

I was delighted to learn that Racine is referred to as "the Fresno of the Midwest," being home to the largest Armenian community in Wisconsin. The small town even boasts an annual Racine Armenian Festival.

Works of 20th C. Western Armenian Literary Titan Hagop Oshagan Online



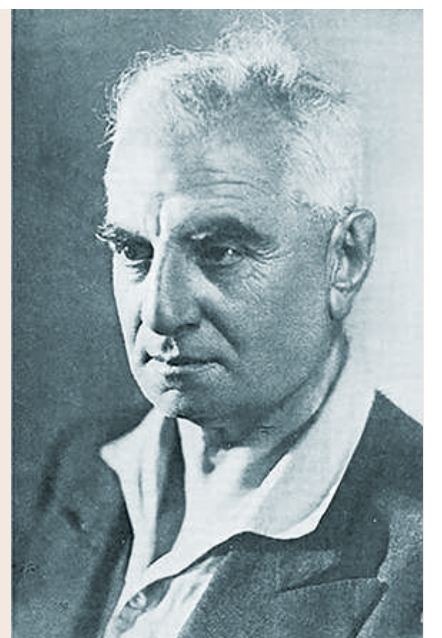
YEREVAN — The entire oeuvre of Hagop Oshagan, one of the giants of Western Armenian Literature, is now online and easily accessible to all, free of charge. The digitized materials can be found on the website of the Digital Library of Classical Armenian Literature (Digilib) of the American University of Armenia. The project was supported by the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Thanks to this initiative, some 30 books from the author, including all the volumes of the *Panorama*

of Western Armenian Literature, *The Humble Ones*, *Remnants*, and many more difficult to find texts have been fully digitized and are available in a searchable format.

All content is available now on the Digilib website: <https://digilib.aua.am/am/ՅԱՎՈՐԲ ՕՇԱԿԱՆ/library/553>

For more information about this project and other initiatives visit the website <https://gulbenkian.pt/armenian-communities/> and subscribe to the newsletter.





BOOK REVIEWS

Aaron Poochigian's *American Divine* Explores God and Country

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Aaron Poochigian's fourth book of poetry, *American Divine*, confirms him as one of our important poets, with both a formal mastery of his craft and important things to say about the human condition in 21st century America. While he was brought up in Grand Forks where his father Donald taught Philosophy at the University of North Dakota, Poochigian's Armenian roots go back to the town of Peri in Western Armenia via Fresno, home to other well-known Armenian writers such as William Saroyan, Charlie Minassian and Aris Janigian. Poochigian earned a doctorate in classics and is also a prolific translator. On the occasion this year of the bicentennial of French poet Charles Baudelaire's birth, he is coming out with a new translation of *The Flowers of Evil* on Norton Press. It's the author's eleventh book, which says something about his creativity and work ethic.

Geography plays a pivotal role in *American Divine*. It sets the stage for a look inward at Poochigian's faith in both God and man — his relative lack of faith as well as his search for it, in what I sometimes call The Big American Empty. Poochigian moved to New York in 2011; the Midwest's loss has been our great gain. Here in "American Divine" the poet pens a love letter to his adoptive city, but also in a sense to the other America which he left behind, a place which he prefers to forget yet cannot quite ever leave behind. The book is divided into three sections: "The One True Religion," "The Uglies" and "The Living Will." It's no accident that Section Two of the book bears the title "The Uglies." In his seminal "Welcome Home," the poet describes North Dakota in less than flattering terms, telling the reader outright: "I've got no patience for Dakota Zen," before intoning:

I grew to hate the place — a vast ho-hum.
Thing is: I fought against it with such force
So goddamn long that I got owned, of course
and now it's always where I'm coming from.

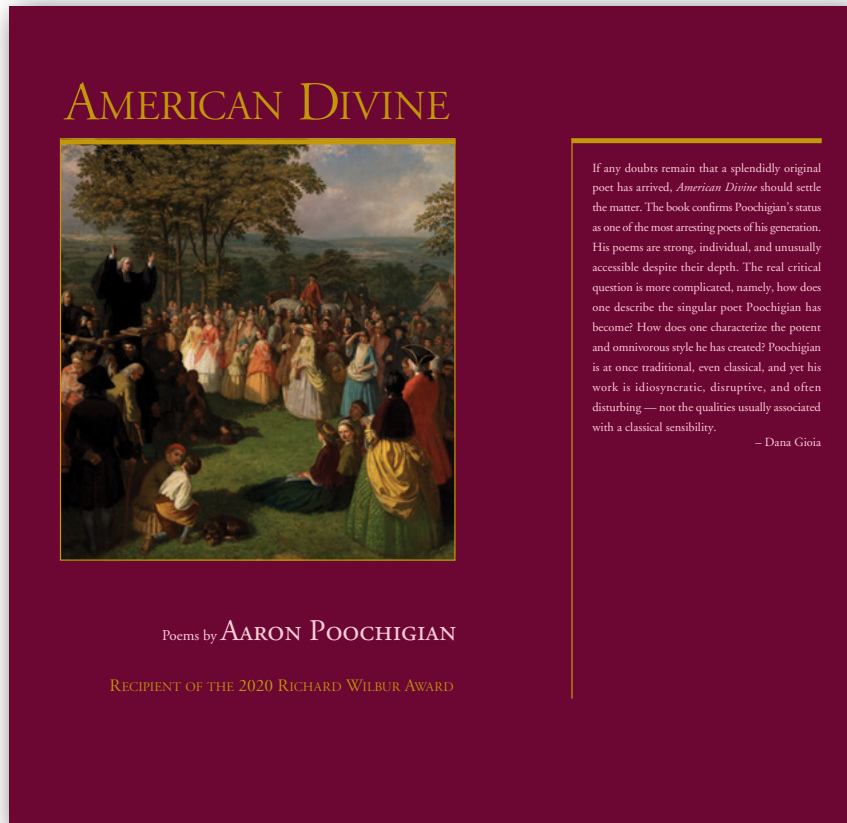
Juxtapose this visceral dislike of his hometown with his description in the title poem of the Gotham which he has adopted as his own:

There is a heightened way of being here
in Union Square: as ice descends half-thawed
past whirling numbers on a glass façade
so many coats attached to totes, briefcases,
blueprint tubes and roller bags are reaching
A stairwell to the subway. They don't fear
the local Moses, Mort, who flails and paces
back and forth before the top step, preaching
to infidels about a Weather god:
"Azuzu whispers and the world goes round!"
Amused teenagers hoot and mock-applaud.
The trains keep making thunder underground."

New York as a drug then, one that gives access to a "heightened" state of being, where numbers "whirl" like dervishes in a trance and the pell-mell of daily existence takes over among "flailing and pacing, hooting and mock applause." Union Square, the hustle and bustle of New Yorkers, the large digital clock that was installed along with a new garish skyscraper some thirty years ago, the crazies who preach loudly into thin air to anyone who will listen: the city's excited unrelenting energy courses through the poet's veins. The Dakotas, I am told, are rather stunning, but here they don't stand a chance. But might North Dakota not also stand in as the poet's Ithaka, a place of grounding for the poet, as in Cavafy's famous poem of the same name: "Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey./Without her you wouldn't have set out./She has

nothing left to give you now."

Faith is the other great topic in *American Divine*, in verse that parses the poet's own religious sentiment and his search for divinity or a greater power at work in the universe. This has already set in by the time he is a teenager, as per his wonderfully rhymed poem "The Satanists." The author tries to shrug off his attempt to invoke Satan as a mere childhood prank, the province of "teenage heathen" just having fun, a bunch of teenagers "vague as vandals" dressed "in studded hoodies and



camouflage pants." These young boys and girls invoke Lucifer but for Poochigian they are also "congregants," so that Satanic ritual and religious ceremony here become one and the same.

"one girl, one boy.
Hunkered, with candles
And all the goodies
Demons enjoy,"(...)

We dug a hole
Like a mixing bowl
And dumped in honey,
And milk and wine —
Then, for the money,
Blood of swine."

And then comes the hilarious: "*Ad me veni. You Out there?*" *Come to me*, they ask, as if they really expect him to show up. No devil appears, so Poochigian tries to bribe his way to hell: "I threw in a penny/To cover the fare." Perhaps had he thrown in a dollar instead, Lucifer might have arrived in the spot, horned with long tail and pitchfork:

And though no spirit
Pricked up my hair...
we will always share
What was desperately something
(if not quite love)
and the glory of
this crazed dumb thing
we did when young."

The satanic and the sexual intertwine for Poochigian and his friends "We felt we were near it/We were aroused." The question then becomes why "crazy"? Why "dumb"? Is Satanism not in a sense just an inverse of Christianity and Satan an inverted vision of Christ our Lord? Who after all gave Shaytan, the fallen angel, such a bad name?

In another killer poem "A fool at Christmas" Poochigian attacks our monetized secular religion. Christmas itself is of course a Christian holiday tagged on to a pagan one, one meant no doubt to smother the latter out of

existence. Here the poet hears the Salvation Army jingle and turns his attention to the Christmas tree, symbol for the holiday itself:

"...May they be crowned
each, with a star. May they be bright and grand.
I need their limbs to guard childhood's demand
For wish-fulfillment. Every sweet, spellbound
Gasp like a gasp in never-Never Land."

In "Multimammia" a hymn to the divine feminine ("The Gods are down here, and they can be hard/to look at, hard to take — hard, hard, hard.") we are made privy to the poet's encounter with a pregnant bitch — grotesquely titted, she pays little attention to him and moves on. And in "The Gospel of Prosperity," Poochigian indulges in a not-so-subtle ribbing of a Protestant reverend who in good capitalist fashion extorts tithe money from parishioners with the wonderful refrain: "...Why do we pay? For something in return./A person has to give so he can earn."

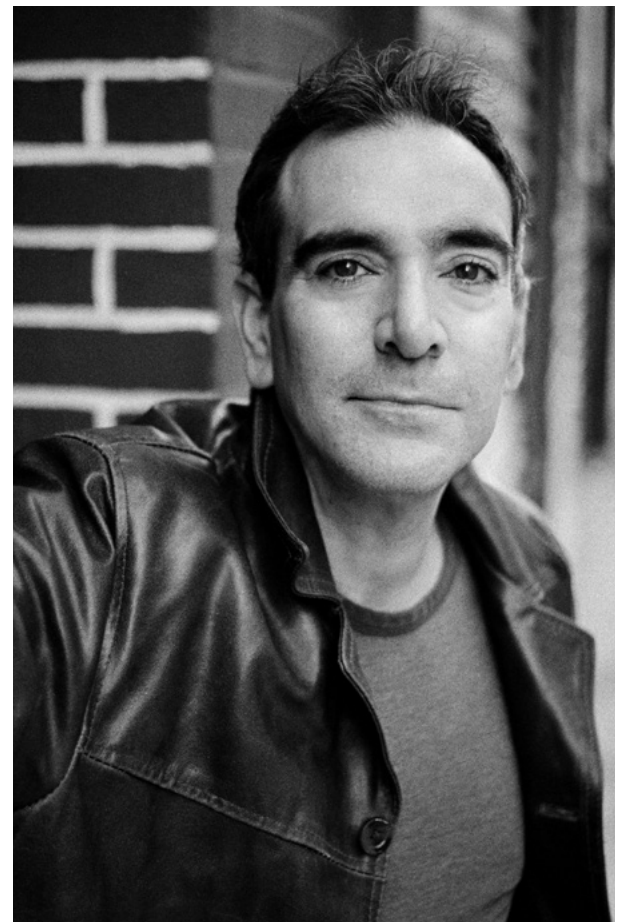
The reader's head verily spins as Poochigian delivers a tour of Buddhism, Hinduism, paganism: you name it. He ends his section on religion with "American Osiris," a Made-in-USA version of the Egyptian God of fertility and the afterlife. The poet pleads with Osiris, imploring him to appear and wipe clean his doubt, in the process affirming the existence of a greater divinity:

"Dead god, dead God, come alive
on the count of number five.
One, two, three, four..."

Interestingly enough Poochigian's view of America as a real, concrete place in the end dovetails with that of the religious or abstract aspects of human existence. In "That, Too" he foresees that everything we hold as dear and permanent — statues, churches, racehorses, stock trades are impermanent and will one day disappear. Given climate change and global warming, his prediction may come sooner than later:

The wind will blow away,
Someday
Grand statues in the square,
The words with which I play,
Good times, and my despair.

All that I do
And say —
That, too,
the wind will blow away.



Relax, Aaron Poochigian seems to be telling the reader, there's nothing you can do. In the end the trees and the grass, the mountains and the seas, our grandest cities and even the Great Pyramids themselves will turn to dust. And yes he concludes, the poet will also one day inevitably disappear.

Purchase *American Divine*: <https://www.amazon.com/American-Divine-Aaron-Poochigian/dp/0930982797>

To see a list of his publications, visit <https://www.aaronpoochigian.com/>



COMMUNITY NEWS

Caucasus Heritage Watch Sounds the Alarm on Karabakh Monuments' Destruction

MONUMENTS, from page 1

around the northern and eastern slopes of Mt. Aragats. (Smith himself has been working in Armenia since 1992.) The team had been working with local archaeologists from Armenia as well where, according to Smith, there is “terrific talent.”

The loss of territory to Azerbaijan shifted the scholars' attention eastward to the Artsakh region. According to Smith, they had been “watching the aftermath [of the war], having known what has happened to heritage monuments elsewhere, that there was a real present danger and threat. And we had the skills and tools to use satellite technology to monitor sites.”

Like many archaeologists, the group had been using satellite imagery for years. Initially it was in the form of photos released from the NASA archives. Smith and his team were using these photos to detect long-term landscape change, as well as locating sites that would be hard to find on

tainly not in relation to heritage sites, Smith said. Sadly, the destruction of monuments and cultural heritage is not new. One of the most notable cases was the destruction of Buddhist statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan in 2001 by the Taliban insurgents. In addition, vital work was done with satellite imagery to surveil areas of Syria and Northern Iraq when it was under ISIS control. But the group working on that project wasn't dealing with a recognized state actor like Azerbaijan, or even attempting to create deterrence. Furthermore, they were reliant on government-contract satellite imagery shared with them by the US.

Smith, Khatchadourian, Lindsay, and the other team members, Salpi Bocchierian and Dr. Husik Ghulyan, have their work cut out for them. “I think this is a long-term project,” Smith said. “It will probably go on for 8 to 10 years,” implying that this is how long it would take Azerbaijan to destroy all the monuments in Karabakh, with a few left over to be branded as “Caucasian Albanian.”

“We hope that our work can be some level of deterrent,” noted Smith. With knowledge of what is happening — doc-

umented in real time — diffused not only through the Armenian community, but also the world, Smith and his colleagues hope that negative press can deter Azerbaijan from continuing their destruction. If not, at least there will be a record of what happened and how it happened, documented by an unbiased, professional, and scholarly organization.

The website of Caucasus Heritage Watch can be accessed at <https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu/index.php/home>.

CHW's Twitter account is @CaucasusHeritageWatch



Dr. Lori Khatchadourian



Dr. Adam T. Smith of Cornell

foot. In recent years, private companies have also tapped into that bandwidth, providing pictures for a fee. Smith's group has been working with a company called Planet Labs to get satellite images of the areas in Armenia where they were digging. From Planet Labs, they have been able to order images of specific places at specific times. Now they needed to use those resources for a different goal.

Eyes On Artsakh

The first task was to compile a database of all heritage sites in the Karabakh region. “We spent a huge amount of time putting together the database just to know where the sites were and what the level of risk was,” says Smith. That job took from December 2020 through March 2021, and the database is still growing.

The second step was tasking satellites to make sure there was maximum visibility. The evaluations take place at Cornell and Purdue, Smith says. “We look at the images side by side, so we have a pretty significant compendium we can draw on to look for damage, destruction, and threat.”

Two areas of immediate threat are the historic city of Shushi, and anywhere roads are being constructed. The team has been tracking the movements of Azeri road construction crews and has seen that cemeteries are disappearing in their wake. Since there has been no permission from UNESCO or another organization to go to the region directly and inspect these sites, satellite technology turns out to be the best option for gathering information about the facts on the ground in Karabakh.

An Unprecedented Project

The public response to the project has been “amazing” says Smith. “There is a lot of engagement.” With more than 1,000 followers on Twitter, Caucasus Heritage Watch is quite popular for an archaeological platform.

There is not a lot of precedence for a non-state actor trying to affect state policy, cer-

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Arts & Culture

Senator Portantino Garners Additional \$1.8M in State Funds For Armenian American Museum in Glendale

SACRAMENTO — State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D – La Cañada Flintridge) announced this week that his request for \$1.8 million for the Armenian American Museum was approved by the Legislature. The highly anticipated landmark, which commenced construction in July, is set to be the first cultural center of its kind in California.

“I am thrilled to secure additional funds to keep the museum’s positive momentum going for this important cultural center in Glendale,” stated Senator Portantino. “The landmark museum will impact and inspire generations to come. This is an investment that represents our shared vision with the Armenian American community. I am pleased to be in a position to help make it a reality and very grateful to our Senate Leadership and the Governor for supporting this educational investment that will benefit California for decades.”

Earlier this year, the Armenian American Museum celebrated its groundbreaking during a ceremony at the future site of the museum, with more than 1,000 guests who marked the beginning of construction of the landmark center. Senator Portantino was honored to attend and provide remarks during the event.

“We are incredibly grateful to Senator Anthony Portantino for his unwavering support of the Armenian American Museum,” stated Berdj Karapetian, Executive Chairman of the Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California. “It is an exciting time for the project as we celebrated the historic groundbreaking with the entire community and now have commenced construction at the future site of the museum. Senator Portantino’s efforts to secure additional funding and the State of California’s continued commitment and partnership will help bring to reality a landmark center that will be the pride of our Jewel City and Golden State.”

Senator Portantino has been an ardent supporter and a champion for the Armenian American museum. He has helped secure millions in state funds in support of the project.

In 2019, Portantino initiated a meeting between Governor Gavin Newsom’s team and museum leadership that helped the project reach a historic milestone. Following the successful meeting and tour of the cultural center’s future site by his Legislative Secretary, the Governor renewed his support for the project by including \$5 million in the 2019-2020 State Budget for the Armenian American Museum.

An initial \$1 million grant for the project was approved as part of the 2016-2017 State budget. In his first term, Senator Portantino successfully secured \$3 million for the museum, which was approved in the 2017-2018 budget. The additional funds in this year’s budget brings the total state investment in the Museum to \$9.8 million.



Vic Bagratuni in “Sunrise Surprises”

A CONVERSATION WITH...

Actor Vic Bagratuni Is Looking for His Own Hollywood

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/BERLIN — Actor and writer Vic (Vahag) Bagratuni was born in 1990, in Yerevan and raised in Germany. He studied at the Lee Strasberg Film and Theater Institute in New York, attending master classes with Anna and David Strasberg and Vincent D’Onofrio. At Strasberg, he was the lead actor in “Carnal Knowledge” and “Long Day’s Journey Into Night.”

In 2011 he became a professional observer at the legendary Actors’ Studio and appeared in off-off Broadway plays such as “A Hatful of Rain” and “Killers and Other Family.” He is an Alumni of the Baron/Brown Acting Studio in Santa Monica, CA.

Vic Bagratuni has appeared in 14 films and TV series, including Martin Scorsese’s “The Wolf of Wall Street” and the series “Boardwalk Empire,” and the documentary series “Inside the American Mob.” His most recent credits are “Men of Granite,” “Scorpion,” “Brothers in Arms,” and the Sundance hit “After Her.” He is also author of two plays, “The Strasberg Legacy” (performed at The Lee Strasberg Theater in New York) and “Sunrise Surprises” (performed at New York’s Monroe Theater in 2016).

Vahag, I think we, all movie lovers from around the world, for some time dream to appear in the main film dream factory, Hollywood, but most of us even do not reach a remote corner of it. You also had that dream as child and made your best to make it happens. In what part of that road you are now?

It’s been a fun and a life altering journey, I have to admit. However, I left that life behind me. You have to grow up and realize that at the end of day the “romantic idea” of Hollywood is bogus and is to be experienced and navigated with caution. At least in my opinion. It’s natural to be young, wild, careless and free to choose this privileged profession, move to Hollywood to “make it,” hustle jobs, auditions, managers or agents, whether or not to join the actors’ union Screen Actors Guild and if yes, how, get the “attention” of casting and many, many other catch-22 like issues young artists are faced with in a relentless and cruel town such as Los Angeles with no real and well-intentioned guidance. The nature of artists is a soft one, a vulnerable one, a somewhat naive and hopeful one, which shouldn’t be exposed to the “business” side of acting.

Everybody is hustling and grinding to make meets end and for that, you need a thick skin and a huge portion of endurance to overcome the literal bullshit people in the acting world are trying to sell you, whether it’s a useless workshop of some kind, where “desperation” is imprinted on each actor going by the motto of “I’m gonna fake it until I make it,” or fake parties with fake people, pretending to be a big time producer or whatnot, or even one’s own talent manager or/and agent not fully believing in you, but

see BAGRATUNI, Page 16

Documentary on Karabakh War Atrocities Raises Money to Finish Production for Release

LOS ANGELES — The producers of “Motherland,” a new documentary, feature-length film about the genocidal assault and the violent ethnic cleansing unleashed September 27, 2020 by Azerbaijan and Turkey against the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), have pulled back the cinematic curtain by welcoming public participation in post-production of this endeavor.

The release of a moving new preview trailer whose urgency is as palpable as the production’s just-launched [Kickstarter](#) crowdfunding campaign, is inspiring people everywhere. As we speak, individuals 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.

“Motherland” is a 90-minute documentary film about Azerbaijan’s and Turkey’s coordinated, systematic and wholly unprovoked [genocidal attack](#) and ethnic cleansing against the Armenians of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. Since September 27, 2020, Turkey and Azerbaijan have engaged in a highly sophisticated and lethal campaign of hate, vio-



Vic Gerami

lence, and disinformation against the Armenians.

It is produced and directed by Los Angeles-based Armenian American journalist and activist, [Vic Gerami](#). 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 racing against time to bring much-needed attention to this humanitarian catastrophe and the imminent threat it poses to millions of innocent people,” says Gerami.

“Armenian and Artsakh people have a combined population of about three million; but Azerbaijan and Turkey have ninety million,” he continues. “It’s a genuine David versus Goliath nightmare.”

see FILM, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



(Photo courtesy of the Armenian Museum of America)

Goldie Nakashian’s Koulenje From Gesaria (Kayseri)

WATERTOWN — This recipe from Janice Okoomian is featured at the Armenian Museum of America website. Janice, a professor of English/Gender & Women’s Studies at Rhode Island College, contributed this recipe in honor of her beloved grandmother, Goldie Nakashian.

Voski Takouhi Victoria Nakashian (néé Mardirosian) was named after Queen Victoria of England, whom her mother admired. (“Golden Queen Victoria” is the translation of her name; she was known as “Goldie.”)

“Goldie was born in 1907 in Everett Massachusetts, where she lived for her entire life,” says Janice. “Her mother, Khosrofouhi Arzoumanian, was the niece of Bishop Drtd Balian, the Bishop of Gesarya and a member of the Balian architect family. Her father, Mgrdeech, from Kharpert, was a cooper (a barrel maker) and performed with a touring wrestling team in the United States. Khosrofouhi

believed in education for women, so she sent Goldie to college, where she completed one year of study. Goldie married Ludwig Nakashian in 1926, and had two children, Phyllis (Janice’s mother), and Martin.”

“Goldie was an amateur oil painter and poet. I have many of her seascapes hanging in my house, and some of her poetry was published in magazines. She also developed a hobby of entering contests, and she got very good at winning them. On the way home from the hospital after the birth of her son, in 1931, she stopped by an airfield and won the prize for the youngest baby. The prize was a ride in an airplane. My childhood home was



Goldie Nakashian

full of transistor radios, kitchen appliances, skateboards, and other objects that my grandmother had won in contests. Often, she would have to write a jingle or poem for the contest. She also adapted her Armenian recipes for an American context. In the 1960s, when Jell-O ran a contest for recipes using Jell-O, Goldie was one

of the winners, with a recipe she called ‘Mediterranean Jell-O Delight,’ which was basically a Jell-O mold version of jajek – madzoon, cucumbers, and mint.”

“I learned to cook at her elbow,” adds Janice. “We collected rose petals from her garden and made rose syrup; she taught me to make “shekher lokhom” (kourabia), paklava, and many other Armenian delights. My grandfather made madzoon on the steam radiator in the kitchen, and we would put his madzoon on our pilav.”

The Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, MA re-opened last month with an updated “art, culture, eternity” exhibition highlighting over 3,000 years of Armenian culture and new contemporary art exhibits in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries. It is a living museum that collects and preserves religious and cultural artifacts and artwork, and presents multi-media programs that illustrate the creative endeavors of the Armenian people. The museum’s website also presents cherished recipes from Armenian families and contributors that reflect Armenia’s rich and diverse history, and the adaptability and strength of an enduring people.

“This is my grandmother’s Armenian quick bread that originated in the region of Gesarya (Gesaria) in Armenia,” adds Janice. “Koulenje is not well known among Armenians in the United States -- most Armenians are more familiar with choreg, which is a similar bread but made with yeast instead of baking powder. The seeds on the koulenje are called sev dzandig (or sev goundig), which translates as ‘little black seeds.’ My grandmother, who passed away in 1993, measured ingredients by eye and feel; this version approximates her amounts. My family is Gesaratsi, and my mother and grandmother told me that our recipe is from that area. Our Kharpetsi relatives make the more commonly known choreg.”

“Gesaria (Գեսարիա), also transliterated as Gesarya or Gessaria, is now known in Turkey as Kayseri. Kayseri is also renowned for its culinary specialties such as manti, pastirma and sucuk. Manti is the most popular dish in Kayseri for the local people and tourists. Another specialty is stuffed zucchini flowers made with köfte, garlic and spices. Nevzine is a traditional dessert.” (See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kayseri>)

INGREDIENTS:

- All ingredients should be at room temperature.
- 6 1/2 cups flour, or a little more
- 6 large eggs
- 6-7 heaping teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup melted butter
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 to 1-1/3 cups milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground mahleb
- 1 tablespoon sev dzandig (black seeds)

Glaze:

- 1 medium egg
- About 1 additional tablespoon sev dzandig (black seeds)

PREPARATION:

Sift flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar together. In a separate bowl, beat 6 eggs, then blend in the butter and milk.

Sprinkle one tablespoon of sev dzandig (black seeds) and all the mahleb on top of the dry ingredients. Make a hole in the center of the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients in all at once, mixing with a few strokes until the dough can be turned out onto a floured board. Add more flour if necessary; it shouldn’t be too sticky.

Knead the mixture gently, just a few times, and then roll it out until it is 1/2” thick. Cut it into diamond shapes, circles, or long strips which can be rolled and braided into loaves. Prick each piece several times with a fork.

Beat the seventh egg with additional sev dzandig (black seeds) added. Brush each piece of koulenje with this glaze and place on cookie sheet covered with baking parchment. Bake at 400° for 12-15 minutes until slightly golden. Cool on a rack. (These are best eaten warm. Reheat them by wrapping in foil.)

Note: To read more about the significant role that choreg has played in Armenian cuisine, tradition, and identity, visit: <https://www.diningindiaspora.com/food/2018/3/30/choreg-for-armenian-americans-identity-is-braided-into-this-bread>

Armenian Museum of America
65 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472

Call for information: (617) 926-2562

Current hours: Fridays through Sundays from 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm; admission is free for members and children under 18

To share your Armenian recipes, go to: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/share-your-armenian-recipes>

To make a donation: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/checkout/donate?donatePageId=59b94628cd0f6831fdd9040f>

<https://www.facebook.com/ArmenianMuseumofAmerica/>
<https://www.instagram.com/armenianmuseumofamerica/>
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVna-Glm6e_hk2zDhPP9iYg

For more about the historic City of Gesaria (modern-day Kayseri; historical Caesarea) go to: <https://www.houshamadyan.org/mapottomanempire/vilayetan-kara/sandjak-of-kayseri/local-characteristics/folk-medicine.html>

See: “UNESCO has added Turkey’s central province of Kayseri to its Creative Cities Network in the field of gastronomy for the city’s rich cuisine,” July 28, 2021. Turkey’s Kayseri becomes UNESCO Creative City due to culinary arts at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/life/food/turkeys-kayseri-becomes-unesco-creative-city-due-to-culinary-arts>



ARTS & CULTURE

Dr. Suren Manukyan Named 18th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State



Dr. Suren Manukyan

FRESNO — Dr. Suren Manukyan has been named as the 18th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Fall 2021 semester.

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. He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights at the Rutgers University of New Jersey.

Dr. Manukyan is teaching a course on “Introduction to Genocide Studies” during the Fall 2021 semester. Genocide is a crime against humanity that has occurred throughout history and Dr. Manukyan’s course will focus on genocide in the 20th and 21st centuries from legal, political, sociological, psychological, cultural, ethical, and comparative perspectives. Special attention will be paid to the Armenian Genocide, Jewish Holocaust, Rwandan Genocide, and other modern century genocides and theories of genocide. Dr. Manukyan will also discuss the role of perpetrators, bystanders, rescuers, resisters, and victims in the Armenian Genocide.

Manukyan is the author of some 30 articles in the field of Genocide and Oriental studies. In his research interests, Dr. Manukyan explores the history of genocide, which provides an understanding of the origins of social behaviors that lead up to mass murder: prejudices, stereotypes, racism; religious and ethnic hatred, and discrimination. If tolerated as acceptable within a group these can, in certain situations, lead up to and result in genocide.

While at Fresno State, Dr. Manukyan will give three public lectures, the first one on “Architects of the Genocide: The Top-Level Perpetrators” took place virtually on Friday, September 17.

For information about Manukyan’s lectures follow Armenian Studies on its Facebook page, @Armenian-StudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.

Documentary on Karabakh War Atrocities Raises Money to Finish Production

FILM, from page 13

“Azerbaijani President Aliyev continually threatens Armenians with extermination and is currently negotiating to purchase two billion dollars’ worth of US weaponry. Turkey is building a much larger version of the Pentagon that Turkish President Erdogan promises to ‘strike fear to our enemies.’”

21st Century Armenian Genocide in the Making

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

It took 106 years before the United States formally recognized the Armenian Genocide of 1915, which was committed by Ottoman Turks.

On April 24, 2021, **President Joe Biden** became the first US president to recognize the Armenian genocide, officially — and to recommit America to its promise to prevent such an atrocity against humanity ever occurring again.

Yet tragically, history is repeating itself. Turkey’s and Azerbaijan’s ongoing genocidal attack and ethnic cleansing against Armenians, as we’ve witnessed recently in Artsakh, is unrelenting.

“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.

Unmatched Suffering, New Chapter of Regional Warfare

Azerbaijan, with declared assistance from Turkey, has launched a large-scale offensive against Artsakh. Employing thousands of Turkish-paid jihadist mercenaries airlifted from terrorist camps in Syria, Libya, and Pakistan, Azerbaijan’s war effort has been empowered by Erdogan to magnify the violence already being perpetrated by the Azerbaijani Army against innocent children, women and men who, previously, had lived peacefully for generations in Artsakh.

The 2020 invasion opened a new chapter in the history of regional warfare. The travesty has been marked by unmatched suffering anywhere on the planet today, which Artsakh’s civilian population currently endures on a daily basis. For 44 days, the world stood by, largely in silence, as more than 4,000 Armenians were massacred.

“Motherland,” currently in pre-post-production, has received broad support from some of America’s leading elected officials, including influential United States Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ). A part of Sen. Menendez’s interview with Gerami is featured in the Motherland’s “sizzle,” also known as a preview trailer.

In that segment of the film, Menendez tells Gerami, “The [Trump] Administration turned a blind eye to what was happening.”

Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA)

granted Gerami an on-camera interview for the film. A part of Rep. Schiff’s interview is featured in the sizzle. In it he explains, “Turkey’s role in importing mercenaries from Syria, and terrorists to join the mayhem demonstrate how Turkey’s actions are incompatible with being a NATO ally.”

Funds donated via Kickstarter will be used to edit the film and prepare it for wide-scale distribution.

“This a rare chance for individual people to make a real difference and to be a part of history,” Gerami says.

To contribute to Motherland’s Kickstarter campaign, please click here or visit, https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/motherland/motherland-1?ref=project_build. For more information, please visit the film’s website, MotherlandDoc.com. High-resolution photos and headshots can be found here.

Gerami’s radio program, TBPV covers national, regional, and local headline news, politics, and current events, and Gerami offers analysis and commentary. He also interviews a high-profile member of Congress or other high-profile public figures on each show. His recent guests include Congressman Adam Schiff, Senator Bob Menendez, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Governor Howard Dean, Congresswoman Katie Porter, Congressman Brad Sherman, Congressman Mike Levin, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, and Congresswoman Judy Chu, LA District Attorney George Gascon, among many others.

Gerami is also a contributor for some

of the most prominent publications in the nation, including *Windy City Times*, *Bay Area Reporter*, *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *The Advocate*, *The Immigrant Magazine*, *GoWeHo*, *Destination Luxury*, *OUT Traveler*, *The Fight*, and among others.

Gerami founded the Truth And Accountability League (TAAL), a 501©3 non-profit organization that advocates for Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Armenia. TAAL monitors and addresses Armenophobia, extremism and bigotry around the globe on the level of media, including social media, public policy, academia, and intelligentsia.

The Wall Street Journal featured Gerami as a “leading gay activist” in its landmark 2008 coverage of opposition to Proposition 8, the ballot measure that for years denied same-sex couples in California the freedom to marry. In addition to his years of volunteer work as a leading advocate for marriage equality, Gerami served as a Planning Committee member for the historic Resist March in 2017.

In 2015, Gerami was referenced in the landmark Supreme Court civil rights case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the Court held in a 5–4 decision that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process and the Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Instagram: [@vicgerami](https://www.instagram.com/vicgerami)

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ARTS & CULTURE

Actor Vic Bagratuni Is Looking for His Own Hollywood

BAGRATUNI, from page 13
trying hard to just get you a job no matter what it is, which is noble, but totally without strategic intentions toward a long-lasting career. It gradually took me away from my art, my self-value as a human and artiste, but that is not an excuse. Nobody is going to give you a manual. Want less, live more. Maybe that was my mistake. I should've, could've, must've... but at the end, who cares?

And although all the above sounds negative and sour, it's actually very positive. To me. It shaped me, my character, my judgment, my expectations and goals. So I'm very thankful and appreciative to have had the privilege of that kind of crazy journey. So, if you ask me on what part of the road I am right now, I'd say I'm at a point in my life where I feel good and contend with my work. Obviously Berlin, where I live now, was as effected by Corona as the rest of the world, with the entertainment world on

an indefinite hiatus, but now it opened up again and we shall see where my journey is headed to.

They say that being an actor is not a profession - it is a lifestyle, a state of mind, 24-hour work. Is this true for you?

It is indeed. We actors are a weird and eccentric breed. You have to be different, outgoing and curious about life, so you can breathe it in as it is and breathe it out with your artistic point of view and message in it. The hard work on your instrument such as vocal range, physical presence, sharpness in observation and mind is indeed a 24/7 requirement. Most of actors and artists are misunderstood and socially awkward, but that doesn't mean to outcast them or label them as weird. If one makes an effort to look behind an artists' curtain, they mostly will discover shyness, reticence and lots of vulnerability and love. But yes, it is a constant process of mind, matter and in-

teraction that make us grow and, hopefully, lets us reach a balanced realm of being at peace with oneself and the world and people around.

In an interview you said that having a small part in "The Wolf of Wall Street" and working closely with Leonardo DiCaprio, made you a better actor. Could you please specify?

Although it was ages ago, that experience stuck with me for years. We all are impressionable when we are young. Especially if it's something you are madly passionate about. It's nature, you can't help it. Back then, I was proud not to have fought being impressionable. Now I look back and see it was partly founded on insecurities and the wish to be seen or recognized. So seeing a superb veteran actor acting next to you, or in my case, with me, you pick up a lot of technical things they do toward the camera such as waiting a couple of seconds when you begin the scene or end the scene to give the editor room to cut around or counter-move when it's a 360-degree shot or even conveying emotions or text within a single gesture or look. Those observations made me better, because they weren't taught to me. That doesn't mean to stop being impressionable. It just means that there is so much to learn from everybody on a set, but also don't forget to have your own self-confidence and insurance, that you are worth it.

Some years ago "Men of Granite" was announced, based on the book of the same title by Dan Manoyan, an American-Armenian author, who died last year. The film featured Academy Award Winners Shirley MacLaine and William Hurt, and you were also in the cast. But we have not heard any more about that film. What happened to it?

I had no knowledge of the passing of Dan Manoyan. What a terrible loss! My sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. He was such a generous, passionate and kind soul, whose book not only gave voice to those who seemed forgotten, but also a significant contribution and valuable piece of documented American history. As to what happened to the feature film, I don't have the slightest idea. We were ready to start the project, but it never happened. At least I had the privilege to have had visited Granite City, seen all the original places from the book and started my research. I still remember it being a brilliant movie script and I hope it will get made whenever, with whomever and by whomever. For the sake of Dan, Granite City and all fans of American underdog sportsmanship movies.

You were born into a family of musicians and you have artistes among your ancestors: great-grand father Vache Bagratuni and his brother Arsen Bagratuni were actors, great-grandmother Violeta Vardanyan was opera singer, while your grandfather Vahagn Bagratuni was an actor and renowned opera director in Armenia and Russia. When years ago we met in Yerevan, it was also nice to know that your maternal grandfather is Karen Svasyan, an eminent philosopher, now residing in Switzerland, an author of many studies in German and Russian. How has this heritage influenced you?

My artistic passion does have its roots in the past actions of my ancestors, for sure. Though I've never met any, besides my maternal grandfather, I've heard they were quite good at what they were doing. But I know they're watching from high above. But moreover, I would definitely like to

highlight the vast influence of my grandfather, whose guidance and never-ending support and unconditional love, have carried me through some rough patches in life. His knowledge is awe-inspiring, and his contribution by lecturing and writing books to educate a nowadays slowly mentally ill-falling society, has been a true source of inspiration and influence to me.

Is your being a descendant of Armenia's Bagratuni royal dynasty a family legend or is there certain evidence?

As far as I know there's evidence, but I wouldn't go and dwell on it. It's a cool fact and some might find it interesting or fancy to stand out with it, but I personally don't sweat it. I know who I am, the people I love and care about know who I am, and that's the most important.

You left Armenia when you were child, however along with English and German, Armenian and Russian are also among the languages you know fluently. How did you manage it?

That's true, we left Armenia in 1992, but my parents taught never stopped talking to me in Armenian or Russian so that stayed. German I leant from a very young age on, so I was fortunate, considering how hard that language can be, and English I learnt in high school.

Now more Diaspora actors come back to Armenia to make films. Have you ever participated in Armenian projects?

No, I haven't, although I recently connected with a young aspiring Armenian director, who is majoring in directing at the Babelsberg Konrad Wolf Film Academy. Who knows what will come out of it in the future.

My second son dreams of becoming a film actor, rather a film star! What would you advise him to do?

That's a tricky question. It would be wrong to say becoming a movie star is a silver lining in the sky, nor would it be a bad thing to actively pursue. It depends what you want. Everything is possible, lots of paths lead to success and everybody's journey is different. What stays the same though is a deep-rooted passion you need to have, which is vital to gain a thick skin to cope with rejection in a healthy way. The glamor, wealth, carpets, awards, pictures, stardom and whatnot will come. It's rather unhinged collateral damage. It's cool and enjoyable. But that's about it. Let your work speak. Have a voice. Don't get intimidated by the industry which will constantly diminish and reject you, try to mold and manipulate you to their own advantages and try to compartmentalize you, so it's easy for them. But it's about you, not them. Have faith. You are worth it. They are not. That's what I would recommend to your son and anybody who has the desire and guts to try and follow their dreams.

Your Instagram name is Mr. Hollywood. I really wish you to be Mr. Hollywood in real life!

Although I disregarded that ridiculous Instagram handle a long time ago, I very much appreciate your wishes. It's a constant shifting and changing. Then young and childish, now mature and reflective. But especially after experiencing a worldwide pandemic, one was reminded that there are more important things than one's own career and well-being. So, although I've wished myself to be Hollywood, I actually never was, but I always will aspire to be my own Hollywood.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 19 — SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARK. 2 p.m. Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB TV5, emcee Enjoy Hye Guys Ensemble – Ron Sahatjian, clarinet. Jack Giragosian, oud; Kevin Magarian, guitar and Arthur Chingris, dumbeg
RSVP hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 25 — Amaras will hold its annual Walkathon in support of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. Registration and Check In:10:30 am – 11:00 am. Walk: Starts at 11:00 am. Start Location: Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown. End Location: Saltonstall Park at Watertown Square. Registration Fee: \$25 for Adults; \$10 for Students and Children (Children need to register to participate in the Walk). Online Registration is highly recommended. For more information: call 617-331-0426 or email ne@abmdr.com

OCTOBER 3 — International Food Festival: Sample authentic cuisine from nine different countries. Sunday, 12 pm to 3 pm, Holy Trinity Armenian Church 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge.

OCTOBER 6 — LET'S MEET AT THE PARK! Wednesday, 10.30 a.m. In collaboration with Age Friendly Boston Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeitagePark.org

November 14 — GIVING THANKS: TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION, Sunday, 2 p.m. In collaboration with Boston Children's Choir & The Greenway Conservancy Meet & Greet. Enjoy the Boston Children's Chorus Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree RSVP hello@ArmenianHeitagePark.org

December 19 — CANDLELIT VIRTUAL LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY, 4.30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Wish on The Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate. Individually-wrapped cookies. RSVP hello@ArmenianHeitagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 19 — Ardashad Tahlj and Shooshanig Otyag of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan (Philadelphia Chapters) annual TAVLOO TOURNAMENT AND PICNIC on Sunday from 3:00 PM until 6:00 PM to be held at Battlefield Park, 100 Hessian Avenue, National Park, New Jersey 08063. Cost is \$15 (kids under 12 free) – register through our secured PayPal account: PHILLYKOV5 @ GMAIL.COM or contact Gerald Najarian (najarian@remgrp.com 609-933-3990) or Gabrielle Meranshian (gabriellemeranshian@gmail.com 856-725-2260). Battlefield Park is a beautiful waterfront park with walking trails and playgrounds for the children. This event helps us publicize our charitable and service endeavors in the local and national Armenian communities

SEPTEMBER 25 — The TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group presents an open air concert with Huyser Music Ensemble. Saturday. Save the date. Details to follow.

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

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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

Baika Association, Inc.

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02472-1509

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

COMMENTARY

Commentary

30th Anniversary of Armenia's Independence: An Occasion Neither to Laugh Nor to Weep



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

The second part of this headline has been borrowed from Rev. Abraham Hartunian's memoirs on the Genocide, *Neither to Laugh Nor to Weep*, because it reflects and defines the mood in Armenia today.

In preparation for the forthcoming 30th anniversary of the country's independence, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced in a parliament session that the government had set up plans to mark the anniversary

with grand and colorful celebrations.

The reaction was swift and intense, yet not for the reasons the premier might have hoped for. The announcement touched a raw nerve particularly amongst the family members of the martyred soldiers. There were flash mob events facilitated through Facebook by the grieving families, some of whom threatened to disrupt those celebrations.

In today's polarized atmosphere, any issue can be cause for controversy. Therefore, it was not surprising that the opposition seized the opportunity to capitalize on the massive emotional outbursts by the families of the victims.

In the past, the independence anniversary was celebrated on Republic Square, with military parades and the demonstration of state-of-the-art weaponry backing the Armenian armed forces' claims to be the most powerful fighting force in the region. After last year's defeat, any such display not only would prove to be arrogant but would also expose and project the true picture of the army; if Armenia displayed its obsolete hardware, that would encourage the enemy to plan its next move accordingly. On the other hand, if Armenia paraded weapons recently procured from Russia, that would pose another political problem. That is why the government has opted for a colorful, civilian celebration and a company was hired whose founder revealed that "only classical music would be featured."

But that did not calm the public and the controversy went viral.

One opposition parliament member, Gegham Nazaryan, wrote: "They are planning to spend \$2 million to insult the memory of our heroes. Those who are planning to sing and dance will be treading on the blood of our martyred children. If they want to mark an anniversary, let them play Bach and Mozart, let them invite the Catholicos to pray. ... What are we celebrating? The fall of Shushi?"

Incidentally, on this occasion, official figures of the dead soldiers have been revised down from 4,000-5,000 to 3,800 or even less. That does not in any way mitigate the trauma of the losses nor can the figure of 7,000 Azerbaijani losses become a source of consolation.

The human sacrifices are coupled with territorial losses — Karabakh has lost 75 percent of its territory and Azerbaijani forces have crossed the border into Armenia, threatening to impose their will on Armenia should it not agree to the terms dictated by the victors and facing the loss of sovereign Armenian soil.

After waging a 44-day war against Armenia last year, Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan have become messengers of peace in the world. We have to admit that both countries have orchestrated their media campaigns so skillfully that no major power raised any objection to their blatant violations of international law. On top of that, President Vladimir Putin is now wearing the man-

tle of savior, claiming that had it not been for his efforts to draft and sign the November 9 tripartite declaration, Armenia would have suffered more losses.

In fact, President Aliyev himself confided recently that had the war continued for another week or so, their losses would have been insurmountable. And this despite the combined forces of Turkey, Azerbaijan, ISIS Jihadists and Pakistani Air Force pilots.

Ironically, with this war, Israeli drone manufactures became the inadvertent bedfellows of Islamic jihadists, all of whom worked to support illegal Azerbaijani actions.

see INDEPENDENCE, page 18



Editorial

On Jerusalem and Transparency

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem is in a difficult position and is beset on all sides. Both Israelis and Arabs have their eyes on the valuable real estate owned by the patriarchate. The local Armenian population has declined over the years, weakening the local Armenian community.

Controversy is no stranger to the patriarchate. There have been a number of infamous cases of corruption and theft in the past in which high level clergymen and even patriarchs have been implicated. At the present time, a hotel deal on strategically located property is leading to various accusations in the Armenian media (for background, see the accompanying article "Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate Official Comments on New Land Lease" in the current issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*).

Lack of transparency and mistrust due to cases in the past can only be rectified by providing more of the details of the 99-year lease signed this summer of the land of Goveroun Bardez for the construction of a fancy hotel. Without such information, it becomes difficult to interpret the value or danger of such a contract. Critics rely on anonymous sources whose truthfulness cannot be verified. Supposedly these sources fear

retribution if they speak out openly. On the other side, the patriarchate only can give assurances back by limited concrete information.

The autonomous status of the patriarchate and the Brotherhood of Sts. James which runs it at times may have historically helped it survive, but it also caused difficulties over the centuries. Even in Ottoman times, the Armenian National Assembly in Constantinople had to send various missions to figure out what was taking place in Jerusalem and address various crises. Today, with the diminishment of the strength of the local community, it is more important than ever that the patriarchate forge strong ties with the other institutions of the Church of Armenia as well as with Armenian communities in the diaspora that could play an important role in supporting it.

Of course, this situation is not something unique to this one institution, but is a broader problem in the Armenian world and beyond. Lack of confidence in the institutions and leaders of the Armenian diaspora, and the Armenian government, for that matter, can only be restored through a more open approach along with more rigorous accounting of revenues and expenditures.



COMMENTARY

Erdogan Heralds Massive Military Complex to Coordinate Military, Security Agencies

By Metin Gurcan

Turkey has launched the construction of the massive military complex, the Crescent and Star, named after the symbols of its national flag, to bring the Defense Ministry, the chief of General Staff, and the headquarters of the land, air and navy forces under a single roof, with the stated aim of enhancing coordination between military institutions and their operational effectiveness.

Dubbed “Turkey’s Pentagon,” the project will sprawl on an area of some 12.6 million square meters and have indoor spaces of 890,000 square meters to house up to 15,000 employees. A crescent-shaped structure in the middle of the complex will contain various conference halls, curving around a ceremonial ground of 23,000 square meters and facing a star-shaped structure to the south. The complex will be erected in Ankara’s suburb of Baglica, not far from the new, high-security headquarters to which the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) moved last year. The Defense Ministry, the chief of General Staff, and the headquarters of the land, air and navy forces are currently housed in separate buildings in Kizilay, the commercial heart of the Turkish capital, in close proximity to parliament and government buildings.

According to state-run media, “The design, originality, size and technological features [of the Crescent and Star complex] will make it one of the most modern and functional headquarters in the world.” The structure will “instill fear in enemies and give confidence to friends,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan boasted at the groundbreaking ceremony August 30.

The complex is expected to be inaugurated May 19, 2023, only about a month before critical presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place.

The plan to relocate military headquarters outside the city center dates back nearly a decade, although it was announced after the failed coup attempt in 2016. The project was first presented to Erdogan during a Supreme Military Council meeting in 2013 when he was prime minister and was taken up again at other high-level meetings in ensuing years. According to one presentation, the project “was launched in conjunction with the project to consolidate the Turkish armed forces’ scattered barracks structure and with the aim of eradicating the dense military outlook opposite parliament and at the center of the state; prevent the heavy traffic caused by personnel service vehicles; and strengthen and improve the sense of jointness between the forces’ commands, the Defense Ministry and the General Staff.” Additionally, it said, the project would help reduce staff by about 4,000 people.

DUBBED “TURKEY’S PENTAGON,” THE PROJECT WILL SPRAWL ON AN AREA OF SOME 12.6 MILLION SQUARE METERS AND HAVE INDOOR SPACES OF 890,000 SQUARE METERS TO HOUSE UP TO 15,000 EMPLOYEES.

After the coup attempt, the force commands were subordinated directly to the Defense Ministry rather than the General Staff, a move that seems to have accelerated plans to bring all top military bodies under one roof.

Speaking to journalists in 2019, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said the prospective Crescent and Star complex will “rival the Pentagon,” adding Erdogan had given the go-ahead for the project.

Given that force commands and Defense Ministry buildings contain strategically important high-tech systems, the new complex is likely to yield lucrative profits for construction companies close to Erdogan, which are routinely awarded large public projects.

Details about the cost and financing of the complex have yet to be revealed, even though they carry added importance at a time when the country’s economy and public finances are in dire straits. Unofficial estimates put the cost at \$600 million. The government has picked Ronesans Holding as a contractor, which became publicly known only when the chairman of the company, Erman Ilıcak, was invited to the stage during the groundbreaking ceremony.

Ronesans Holding is the builder of Erdogan’s gigantic presidential palace in Ankara, inaugurated in 2014, and his new summer mansion under construction in a secluded, picturesque cove on the Mediterranean coast, as well as the MIT’s new headquarters in Ankara and Istanbul. Standing out among other projects awarded to Ronesans are the sprawling medical complexes known as “city hospitals” in which the contractors receive billions of Turkish liras in rent and services as payments from the government.

Ilıcak said at the ceremony the new complex would be completed in August 2023, but Erdogan insisted on an earlier date and extracted a pledge to have the complex ready in May that year. Some observers saw this as a sign that Erdogan wants to inaugurate the complex before the scheduled elections. Either way, it is an Erdogan classic to publicly put pressure on contractors to bring completion dates forward, even though this could affect the quality of work or lead to inauguration ceremonies before projects are fully completed, as has often happened in the past. Whether a single contractor could

complete such a big project in such a short time remains open to question.

As for the essential purpose of the project, Erdogan said the prevailing security conditions required a better-coordinated defense establishment. In the context of Turkey’s military operations in Syria, Libya and Azerbaijan, the increased scope of the Turkish army’s duties and missions does make a well-equipped and unified headquarters a necessity. A joint location for the Defense Ministry, the General Staff and the forces’ commands could help ensure a more effective and faster coordination in addition to more efficient utilization of resources by saving significantly on time, energy and workforce.

Along with such upsides, however, the co-location of all defense units carries risks. A hostile

act such as the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon, for instance, could make all institutions vulnerable at once.

That said, placing the General Staff and the force commands in a joint facility with the Defense Ministry is also an effort to strengthen civilian control over the military, in addition to enhancing interoperability among the land, air and naval forces. Still, major military capabilities such as combined force generation, interoperability and network-centric warfare do not necessarily require military leaders to be close physically in the 21st century. Whether the complex will boost the Turkish army’s command-control capabilities and operational effectiveness remains to be seen, but it will certainly give Erdogan an issue to boast about ahead of elections and yield nice profits for companies close to the government.

(This column originally appeared in Al Monitor. See <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/09/erdogan-heralds-massive-military-complex-coordinate-military-security-agencies#ixzz76SWzA6k8>)

30th Anniversary of Armenia’s Independence: An Occasion Neither to Laugh Nor to Weep

INDEPENDENCE, from page 17

The irony is the fact that both Turkey and Azerbaijan outspend Armenia in their media allocations and thus earn the moniker of “peacemaker,” with Russia offering its mediation. In fact, at this time, all their interests coincide because the alternative to that conditional peacemaking is the convening of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, two of whose co-chairs (the US and France) insist the status of Karabakh has yet to be determined, as US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracey said this week, while Moscow, Ankara and Baku have been trying to keep the West away from the Caucasus.

The war was bad enough to break the Armenian people’s morale; now the division and polarization are wreaking havoc.

Writing in the news outlet 1in.am, the commentator Aram Amatuni states, “The atmosphere of hostility is the most crucial

challenge for Armenia’s government.”

That statement reflects the true reality in Armenia. Yet, ironically, many in Armenia believe that Aram Amatuni is the penname of former Member of Parliament Arman Babajanyan, who is the main source of vitriolic attacks against the former regime.

Unfortunately, with all the current problems, the pandemic is spreading unchecked. The majority of the citizens fatalistically are embracing death by refusing to wear masks or to receive Covid vaccines.

Armenia’s independence is an occasion to rejoice and to laugh but the ravages of war, coupled with the remains of many soldiers still unburied, have created a trauma we have yet to overcome. It is a cause to grieve and to weep.

On September 21, Armenia’s population will be caught between two polar opposite emotions. They are not sure whether to laugh or to weep.

LETTERS

Turkey’s Longstanding Backing of Terrorist Organizations Poses Threat

(Editor’s Note: The following letter was published recently in *MetroWest Daily News* in Massachusetts.)

As U.S. troops have exited Afghanistan (“Local veterans say it was time for troops to come home from Afghanistan,” Aug. 17), Americans are rightly concerned that that country may again become a base for terrorist attacks against the homeland, especially by Al-Qaeda and ISIS-K.

Yet Turkey’s longstanding backing of terrorist organizations poses a similar threat even closer to the American homeland.

In January and July, for example, the United States Treasury Department cited Turkey as a financial base for ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

However, the U.S. has applied penalties only to Turkish individuals and companies, not Turkey itself. Hence, the effect has been minimal.

That the State Department and Congress have done so little over the years to stop Turkey’s backing of anti-American terrorist organizations raises serious questions about the sincerity of America’s Global War on Terrorism

David Boyajian
Belmont



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Should Not Follow Sargsyan's Mistaken Policy on Relations with Turkey

Here we go again. Back in 2009, President Serzh Sargsyan engaged in a misguided effort to sign an agreement with Turkey ostensibly to open the mutual border. Even though Armenians around the world strongly objected to the scheme, President Sargsyan kept insisting that he was right and everyone else was wrong.

Sargsyan could not see that Turkey had no intention to open the border. Ankara used the border issue as a ploy to obtain maximum concessions from Armenia, such as giving up on the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, accepting the territorial integrity of Turkey, which meant that Armenians were to abandon their demands for Western Armenia, and returning Artsakh to Azerbaijan. These were the Turkish preconditions. Furthermore, even if Armenia accepted these inadmissible conditions, Turkey would escalate its demands, adding new ones.

President Sargsyan did not understand that if Turkey really wanted to open the border, it could have done so without signing any protocols and without making any demands from Armenia. After all, Turkey was the one that unilaterally closed the border, not Armenia, so it could have reopened the border anytime it wanted. When President Sargsyan toured several Diaspora communities in 2009, supposedly to find out their views on the border issue, he faced massive protests and confrontations in Lebanon, France, the United States and Russia.

Finally, Azerbaijan succeeded in killing the Armenia-Turkey Protocols by pressuring Turkey not to ratify them, in order to exert maximum pressure on Armenia to return Artsakh. Ironically, Azerbaijan was the one that ended up safeguarding Armenia's interests, not President Sargsyan.

Now, in 2021, we see the repetition of the 2009 scenario, except this time, the situation is much worse, since Armenia is led by a defeated leader who has no choice but to accept Turkey/Azerbaijan's escalating demands for concessions. All those who believe that Armenia and Turkey cannot remain eternal enemies and see nothing wrong with talking with "our opponents," are forgetting one key point: Who is doing the negotiating? On the one side, we have a shrewd politician — President Erdogan of Turkey — and on the other side, we have the inexperienced and defeated leader of Armenia! This is like asking the sheep to negotiate with the wolf. The outcome is obvious.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently said that "Turkey is willing to work for the normalization of relations with Armenia pending the neighboring country's abandonment of single-sided accusations and embrace of a realistic outlook." Amazingly, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan considered Erdogan's statement a "positive signal" and promised to respond in kind! Turkey's 2009 preconditions are still on the table, except that Azerbaijan recovered most of Artsakh by force. However, Turkey continues to demand that Armenia give up the pursuit of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide and accept the territorial integrity of Turkey. Since last year's war, Azerbaijan and Turkey have added a new condition: Armenia should sign "a peace treaty"

with Azerbaijan, which would mean accepting the territorial integrity of the latter, thus permanently giving up Artsakh. Furthermore, even if Pashinyan were to accept such inadmissible demands, Turkey and Azerbaijan would certainly impose new more troubling conditions. This is a red line that no Armenian leader has the right to cross! How can one negotiate with a country that almost destroyed the Armenian race in 1915, and killed thousands of young Armenian soldiers as recently as last year?

Having mostly fulfilled the first Turkish precondition — the return of Artsakh — Azerbaijan now wants to complete the job by occupying the rest, this time not by war, but by forcing Armenia to give it up voluntarily, by signing a deceptive "peace treaty." Azerbaijan is continuing to twist the knife in Armenia's bleeding heart by encroaching on the country's border and illegally holding and torturing Armenian POWs, even after Pashinyan needlessly turned over to Azerbaijan maps of 200,000 land mines in the Azeri-occupied territories. The Nov. 9, 2020 agreement had no such requirement. However, it did include a demand to return the Armenian POWs. Pashinyan should insist that nothing will be negotiated until the POWs are released and the Azeri troops withdraw from inside Armenia's border. Under these circumstances, Armenia must counter Turkey's preconditions with its own preconditions.

Then there are those who think that opening the Armenia-Turkey border will promote trade and bring financial benefits to Armenia. Just to the contrary, cheap Turkish products will flood the Armenian market, bankrupting the local producers. Armenian manufacturers cannot compete with Turkish producers who benefit from economies of scale, based on an 85-million population market.

Let us not sell Armenia cheap by acting like Turkey will be doing us a big favor by offering to open the border. In fact, Turkey stands to gain much more than Armenia by opening the border. The Turkish city of Kars, only 30 miles from Armenia, suffered a "massive blow" to its economy after the border was closed, according to EurasiaNet.org. As a result, the population of Kars province "shrank from 662,000 in 1990 to 285,000 in 2020."

It is ironic that Pashinyan, who came to power opposing all of his predecessors' actions, is blindly repeating the previous president's failed policy on relations with Turkey. He is even using Sargsyan's own words: "establish relations with Turkey without any preconditions." It seems that Armenia's leaders not only do not learn from past mistakes, but blindly repeat them. It would have been somewhat understandable if Pashinyan, as the leader of a defeated nation, confessed that he had no choice but to accept the Azeri/Turkish imposed conditions. But, that's not what he has said. Pashinyan repeatedly has stated that these imposed conditions, such as the planned route linking Nakhichevan to Eastern Azerbaijan and opening the border with Turkey, are in Armenia's best interests! Such measures are completely against Armenia's national interests. They are in fact, the age-old dreams of Pan-Turkists, to connect Turkey through Armenia to Turkic Republics in the Far East.

To make matters worse, in recent days, Pashinyan has welcomed Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's announcement that Armenia should make an effort to open its border with Turkey. This is not surprising as such actions are in Russia's interest in order to further distance Turkey from NATO and the West. It is regrettable that while Russia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan are diligently pursuing policies that are in their national interest, Armenia's leader has no conception about his country's national interest.

Human Rights Watch Says Europe Should Take Turkey to Task in Kavala Case

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers should trigger infringement proceedings against Turkey at a meeting starting on Tuesday, September 14, for its failure to implement the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) judgment ordering the release of imprisoned human rights defender Osman Kavala, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, and the Turkey Litigation Support Project said.

The three NGOs made the recommendation on Monday in a [submission](#) to the committee. The document included a full update on the latest developments in the ongoing legal proceedings against Kavala, Human Rights Watch said in a press release. HRW went on to say:

The committee's September meeting will also examine the state of implementation of another leading ECtHR judgment ordering the immediate release of the Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş, which the Turkish government continues to defy, HRW said. The three organizations, along with Article 19 and the International Federation for Human Rights, have also made a [submission](#) to the Committee of Ministers on developments in the Demirtaş case, calling on the committee to urge the Turkish government to ensure his immediate release, it said.

"In the face of Turkey's persistent and flagrant defiance of its obligation to implement the Kavala judgment, the Committee of Ministers should trigger infringement proceedings against Turkey," said [Aisling Reidy](#), senior legal adviser at Human Rights Watch. "The committee should also call for the immediate release of Demirtaş with a commitment to escalating measures if it does not happen."

The ECtHR ruled on December 10, 2019, that by holding Kavala in pretrial detention since November 2017 and prosecuting him on the basis of his human rights activities, the Turkish authorities had "pursued an ulterior purpose, namely to silence him as a human rights defender."

Similarly, the ECtHR ruled on December 22, 2020, that by holding Demirtaş in pretrial detention since November 2016 and prosecuting him for activities and speeches protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Turkish authorities sought to prevent him from carrying out his political activities. The court said that this deprived voters of their elected representative, and resulted in "stifling pluralism and limiting freedom of political debate: the very core of the concept of a democratic society."

In both cases, the court found that by using detention for political ends, Turkey had violated Kavala's and Demirtaş's rights, including the right to liberty, and had abused the discretion given to governments to impose legitimate limitations on rights (articles 5 and 18 of the ECHR respectively). The court took the rare step of ordering both men's immediate release.

Both judgments are legally binding, yet the Turkish authorities have snubbed the Strasbourg court and ignored the Committee of Ministers' decisions calling for the men's release. The Turkish courts and prosecutors have engaged in a [series of tactics to circumvent the authority of the ECtHR and the Council of Europe](#). They have

issued repeated sham release orders, initiated multiple criminal proceedings on the same facts, repeatedly issued detention decisions while adopting unwarranted procedural decisions to prolong detention and baseless prosecutions, and expedited a conviction to prevent release from detention.

"The Committee of Ministers should take note of the Turkish authorities' repeated tactics in the Kavala and Demirtaş cases aimed at ensuring the prolongation of their unlawful detention and circumventing the authority of the European Court," said Ayşe Bingöl Demir of the Turkey Litigation Support Project. "The committee should pursue robust measures against Turkey to press for full implementation of the judgments and end a cycle of malpractice which flagrantly violates Turkey's obligations under the European Convention."

The Committee of Ministers has the authority to take infringement proceedings against a Council of Europe member state that refuses to carry out European Court judgments. It was used for the first time in 2017 when the government of Azerbaijan repeatedly refused to secure the unconditional release of a wrongfully jailed opposition politician, Ilgar Mammadov.

Infringement proceedings are provided for under article 46/4 of the ECHR. Two-thirds of the Committee of Ministers need to vote to start infringement proceedings.

Once the process is triggered, the case reverts to the ECtHR for a further opinion on whether the state has met its obligations to comply with the judgment. If the ECtHR confirms that Turkey has failed to carry out the ruling, the Committee of Ministers may then take additional measures, including ultimately suspending Turkey's voting rights or membership of the Council of Europe.

(This column originally appeared on the website Ahval.)



COAF Opens New Child and Family Services Center in Rural Armenia

YEREVAN — Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) secures rural access to social welfare with the opening of its cutting-edge Child and Family Services Center (CFSC) in Hatisk village (Armavir region) on September 10.

Armenia’s rural communities are burdened by poor socio-economic conditions in a variety of ways, which are worsened by the absence of social services. To confront local issues—including mental health problems, challenging social contexts, speech disorders, and a lack of preschool education—COAF extends community-based

support to rural areas through its Child and Family Services, offering psychological services, speech therapy, social work, and child development programs.

More than 80 guests attended the momentous occasion, including the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Narek Mkrtchyan, the Governor of Armavir Hambardzum Matevosyan, the Mayor of Hatsik Artur Yeghiazaryan, and the COAF team, to gain a first impression of the new Center’s strengths.

COAF’s work in Hatsik, a village of over 2,400 people, began in 2014 and encompassed numerous initiatives to steer the community toward better education, health, and socio-economic conditions.

The opening of the new CFSC in Hatsik builds on the organization’s previous accomplishments in the villages of Karakert and Myasnikyan in Armavir, where COAF had established Child Development Centers. Seeking to expand its impact beyond early childhood education to enhance family



Kids enjoying their playtime at the Center

well-being and parenting capacity, the organization relocated its facility. CFSC was established in loving memory of Angela Asatryan, Ara Tavitian, Aram Bagamian, Armenouhi Oughourlian, Berge Nazarian, Dr. John H. Chaglassian, Rozi Berberian, Sahak Safakian, and with the generosity of Newman’s Own Foundation.

With over 1,367 square feet of workspace and five rooms available, the new venue accommodates separate areas for COAF’s psychosocial services, tending to the privacy needs of community members from the age of six onwards while creating necessary conditions for higher efficiency. Children aged 3-6 will benefit from a dedicated educational area equipped with developmental toys and didactic material, including LEGO, sensory toys, climbing and writing walls, to foster and elevate children’s physical, social, and cognitive skills. All CFSC staff members are highly qualified specialists trained by COAF.

“The main motivation to open the CFSC



Cutting the ribbon of the newly-established Child and Family Services Center in Hatsik village

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Managing Director Korioun Khatchadourian presenting the services of the Center

in Hatsik was to bridge rural and urban disparities. By changing the perception of social and mental health care and increasing rural access to social services, we aim to produce favorable social outcomes in our beneficiary communities. Additionally, the CFSC gives high priority to early childhood education to prevent structural inequalities. This is particularly critical for Hatsik, where 3-6-year-old children don’t have access to preschool education due to the lack of a kindergarten,” stated COAF Managing Director Korioun Khatchadourian.



The Governor of the Armavir region and the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs were also present during the opening ceremony