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Armenia Reassures Iran as Tehran-Baku Tensions Mount

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent his foreign minister to Tehran on Monday, October 4, one day after publicly ruling out Armenia's involvement in any anti-Iranian "plots" amid stern warnings issued by Iran to Azerbaijan.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian for the second time in less than two weeks.

Amir-Abdollahian reportedly sounded satisfied with their latest talks, saying that the two sides agreed to boost Armenian-Iranian political, economic and cultural ties. He also said Iran will not allow "some foreign states" to damage its relations with neighbors, including Armenia.

Mirzoyan visited the Iranian capital amid mounting tensions between Tehran and Baku underscored by large-scale Iranian military exercises held along the Islamic Republic's border with Azerbaijan.



Foreign Ministers Ararat Mirzoyan (left) of Armenia and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian of Iran meet in Tehran, Oct. 4, 2021

The Iranian military reportedly began massing troops there after Baku set up on September 12 a roadblock on the main highway connecting Armenia with Iran.

The Armenian government controversially ceded a 21-kilometer section of the road to Azerbaijan following last year war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani police and customs are now collecting a hefty "road tax" from Iranian trucks and other vehicles passing through it, causing significant disruptions in cargo traffic between Armenia and Iran.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry last week linked the drills to Azerbaijan's military ties with Israel, saying that Iran "will not tolerate Israeli presence near its borders."

Amir-Abdollahian on Sunday also pointed to the widely documented participation of Sunni Muslim militants from the Middle East in the Karabakh war on the Azerbaijani see TENSIONS, page 5



Ardem Patapoutian

Patapoutian, Julius Win Nobel Prize in Medicine for Work on Heat and Touch

STOCKHOLM (DW) — David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian have been awarded this year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

The Nobel Committee's Thomas Perlmann said Julius and Patapoutian had "unlocked one of the secrets of nature," and that is how we sense and feel our way around in the world. Our sense of touch, how we sense depth, reach out for things, and also how we experience pain.

In a year when many may have expected the prize to go to at least one of the makers of a COVID-19 vaccine, Perlmann said this was deemed the most important discovery in Physiology or Medicine in 2021. He said he couldn't say more without "breaking confidentiality."

This is basic research, which the committee says will have benefits for future drug development.

As for the developments in coronavirus research over the past year and a half, the committee would only say that it worked on the basis of discoveries that had been nominated.

see PRIZE, page 12



David Julius



International Conference Brings Medical Training to Armenian Physicians, Pays Tribute to Late Raffy Hovanesian

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — More than 1,000 medical professionals from 35 countries participated in a virtual conference September 11-12 which provided free continuing education credits to doctors in Armenia and Artsakh while honoring the memory of a physician who had dedicated much of his life professionally to medicine and personally to Armenia.

The first "Dr. Raffy Hovanesian International Digestive Disease Virtual Conference" was organized by the International Center for Professional Development see CONFERENCE, page 10



Armenian Ex-Defense Minister Arrested for Embezzlement, Faulty Weapons Purchases

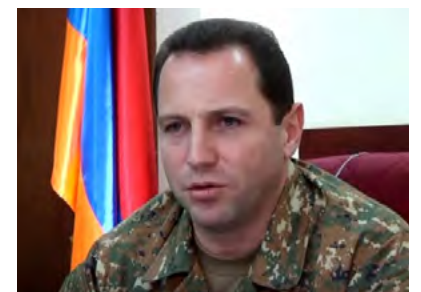
By Ani Mejlumyan

YEREVAN (Eurasia.net) — The Armenian authorities have detained a former defense minister and a major arms dealer on charges related to purchases of faulty weaponry.

The National Security Service (NSS) announced on September 30 that it had detained former defense minister Davit Tonoyan on charges of "embezzlement of large sums of money, falsifications, committing publicly dangerous acts." The NSS also detained David Galstyan, the head of a defense contractor supplying weapons to the Armenian armed forces. Together, the two are charged with stealing approximately 2.3 billion drams (\$4.7 million).

The case involves the purchase of missiles — the seller, type of missile, or year when they were purchased was not identified — that were produced between 1985 and 1991. The NSS also said that "large-scale" investigations are continuing to fully uncover the chain of crimes and all the people involved.

On September 25, the NSS — citing the same amount of embezzled money — said that it had arrested another senior military figure, the head of the aviation department of the armed forces. According to the NSS, the officer knew in 2011 that the mis-



Davit Tonoyan

siles were faulty and unusable, but bought them anyway. The statement did not name the officer, but from 2009 to 2019 that post was held by Major General Avetik Muradyan.

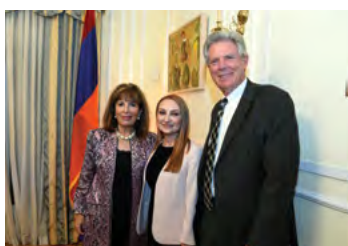
"Some of the missiles failed to fire shortly after delivery, and were taken out of the arsenal. The rest were not used at all, including during the 44-day war that began on September 27, 2020," the NSS said in its statement. Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces Stepan Galstyan was also questioned in the case, the NSS reported.

Davit Galstyan, the arms dealer, is already facing a similar charge that was filed in February. In that see TONOYAN, page 3

WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador Hosts Reception in Honor Of Armenia's 30th Anniversary

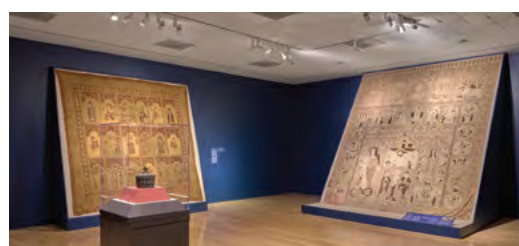
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MASSACHUSETTS

Armenian Church Textiles Displayed at Tufts University

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ARMENIA

A Mystical, Musical Drink Is Launched

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NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Military Truck Damaged in Azerbaijani Shooting

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — An Armenian military truck was damaged in Azerbaijani shooting late on Monday, the Defense Ministry reported on Tuesday, October 5. The logistics vehicle of the Armenian army came under Azerbaijani gunfire in the Yeraskh section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border at around 11:30 p.m. There were no casualties as a result of the shooting, the ministry said.

Two More Bodies Found in Artsakh Search Operation

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Artsakh rescuers on October 5 found the bodies of two more fallen Armenian soldiers as a result of their search operations for the 2020 Artsakh war casualties. The remains were retrieved from the Varanda (Fizuli) region, the State Service of Emergency Situations of Artsakh's Interior Ministry reported. The bodies are yet to be identified through a forensic medical examination. As the source said, the future directions of the search operations will be communicated further. Since the end of hostilities, a total of 1,680 bodies of Armenian soldiers and civilians have been found and recovered from the Artsakh territories temporarily occupied by Azerbaijan as a result of the 44-day war unleashed by it.

Armenian General Arrested In Corruption Probe

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The National Security Service (NSS) has made another high-profile arrest in an ongoing criminal investigation into supplies of allegedly faulty ammunition to Armenia's armed forces. Lieutenant-General Stepan Galstyan, a deputy chief of the Armenian army's General Staff, was charged with fraud and abuse of power and remanded in pre-trial custody on October 2 two days after being summoned to the NSS for questioning. Galstyan denies the accusations. His lawyer told News.am that he would appeal against a district court's decision to allow investigators to hold the general in pre-trial detention. The NSS arrested former Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and an arms dealer reputedly close to him on September 29 as part of the same criminal case. It charged them with fraud and embezzlement that cost the state almost 2.3 billion drams (\$ 4.7 million). Both men deny the charges. Tonoyan's lawyer said on October 1 that he will petition the Court of Appeals to release his client from custody pending investigation. Another Armenian general was arrested earlier in September. The NSS claimed that the general abused his powers to arrange for personal gain a \$ 4.7 million contract for the supply of outdated rockets to the armed forces.

According to the security service, the Defense Ministry had refused to buy those rockets from a private intermediary in 2011.

Iran Offers to Help Armenia Build Bypass Roads

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) — Iran is ready to help Armenia build highways connecting the two neighboring states and bypassing Azerbaijani-controlled territory, a senior Iranian government official said during a visit to Yerevan on Tuesday, October 5.

Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Kheirollah Khademi said Armenian roads leading to the Iranian border are of strategic importance to his country.

An official Iranian delegation headed by him arrived in Yerevan on Monday amid continuing disruptions in cargo traffic between Armenia and Iran resulting from an Azerbaijani roadblock set up on September 12 on the main highway connecting them.

Khademi said the purpose of the trip is to discuss with Armenian officials the transport hurdles and the ongoing reconstruction of an alternative road which also passes through Armenia Syunik province bordering Iran and Azerbaijan.

"We are negotiating with the Armenian side so that cargo and passenger traffic through that road gets on track as soon as

possible," he told the YouTube channel Armenia-Iran Friendship.

"We are ready to assist Armenia in the construction of the new road," he said. "Iran is ready to share its technical and engineering capacity with Armenia."

The Islamic Republic, Khademi went on, can also provide similar support for the Armenian plans to build or refurbish other Syunik roads leading to the Iranian border.

"Armenia is also building the North-South highway which starts from the Iranian borders and stretches to the Georgian border... We are ready to cooperate with Armenia on that as well. Iran has extensive experience in road construction, and our contractors are ready to share their experience with Armenia," he said.

The official Iranian IRNA news agency reported that Khademi's delegation will explore in Armenia Iran possible involvement in the bypass road construction. It said the Syunik roads also connect the Islamic Republic with Russia and Europe.

The delegation flew to Yerevan as the Ar-

menian and Iranian foreign ministers met in Tehran for talks that focused on transport issues. Echoing statements by other Armenian officials, Foreign Minister Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan assured his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian that work on the alternative Syunik road will be completed before the end of this year.

Azerbaijan gained control over a 21-kilometer section of the existing main Armenia-Iran highway last December following an Armenian troop withdrawal from border areas along Syunik. Azerbaijani officers deployed there began taxing on September 12 Iranian trucks delivering goods to and from Armenia. Many truck drivers have refused to pay the "road tax" reportedly worth \$ 130 per trip.

Opposition Lawmaker Challenges Travel Ban

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A senior opposition lawmaker standing trial on what he sees as politically motivated charges on Tuesday, October 5, again asked a court in Yerevan to allow him to attend sessions of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) in Strasbourg.

Armen Gevorgyan is the sole full-fledged opposition member of the Armenian parliament's delegation in the PACE. He is affiliated with the Hayastan alliance led by former President Robert Kocharyan.

Kocharyan and Gevorgyan face bribery charges, strongly denied by them, in an ongoing trial that began more than two years ago. They were both banned from leaving Armenia without the court's permission.

Anna Danibekyan, the judge presiding over the trial, refused last month to let Gevorgyan participate in the PACE's autumn session held on September 27-30. Two other opposition lawmakers, who have the status of "substitutes" in the 8-member delegation in the Strasbourg-based assembly, boycotted the session out of solidarity with him.

During the latest court hearing on the high-profile case, Gevorgyan's lawyer, Lusine Sahakian, petitioned Danibekyan to lift the travel ban, saying that it is unjustified. The trial prosecutors objected to the request.

The judge did not grant it while leaving open the possibility of allowing Gevorgyan to travel abroad later on. She said she will consider such permissions on a case-by-case basis.

Gevorgyan, 48, is also the chairman of the Armenian parliament's standing committee on "regional and Eurasian integration." He was an influential aide to Kocharyan when the latter ruled the country from 1998-2008. Gevorgyan also served as deputy prime minister from 2008-2014 in the administration of then President Serzh Sarkisian.

Earlier in September, Danibekyan refused to allow Kocharyan to visit Moscow at the invitation of Russian ruling party. Hayastan condemned her decision, saying that it was made under strong government pressure.

The judge had repeatedly given Kocharyan permission to travel to Moscow before the June 20 parliamentary elections in which the ex-president's bloc finished second.

AEF Awards Scholarships to 185 Veterans of Artsakh War

YEREVAN — For more than 71 years Armenian Educational Foundation's (AEF) mission has been to render financial assistance to Armenian students and educational institutions. Just one year ago, while many AEF students enlisted or re-enlisted to join the war, two students — Andranik Grigoryan and Shirak Hambardzumyan — made the ultimate sacrifice. AEF established veteran scholarships in memory of Andranik (24), born and raised in Noyakert Village, Ararat Marz and a 5th year medical student

donation from the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund (AWHF), AEF was able to award full tuition scholarships to all 54 new soldier applicants. An additional 21 war veterans, including 14 wounded, received scholarships matching American University of Armenia (AUA) financial aid to bring their support to 90-100% of tuition.

Arina Zohrabian, AUA's Dean of Admissions and volunteer on AEF's Armenia Scholarship Committee stated, "During several AEF scholarship interviews, I met



A veteran receiving a certificate of a scholarship

at Yerevan State University, and in memory of Shirak (23), born and raised in Stepanakert, Artsakh and a 5th year student at the Agrarian University-Shushi, majoring in Transportation.

This year, AEF is awarding scholarships to 185 Artsakh war participants, including 73 wounded soldiers and eight who lost their brothers. AEF wanted to honor these soldiers by awarding them Certificates of Appreciation for their service, bravery and sacrifice. This event was covered by several local Armenia television stations and newspapers. As a result of the media coverage, AEF received 54 additional requests for scholarships from veterans who participated in the war. With a generous \$50,000

several veterans who spoke with an admirable amount of calm and certainty for a bright future. Even as they reminisced of near-death experiences, you could hear their determination. From nearly dying from a Bayraktar drone hit, to miraculously surviving 70+ days in enemy-controlled territory, these students will no longer have to worry about funding their university studies, instead, they can focus on education and fighting with knowledge for Armenia's future."

For more information on the Armenian Educational Foundation or to become a scholarship sponsor, please visit aefweb.org. Scholarship sponsorships are \$1,000 per year for four years.



ARMENIA

Knowledge as Ammunition: AUA Donor Serving on the Frontline of War

YEREVAN — Dr. Shant Garabedian, a supporter of the American University of Armenian (AUA) and medical doctor based in Tennessee, rushed to Armenia when the 2020 Artsakh War broke out. “I knew I wanted to be there to help. Though, I wouldn’t make the best infantryman, I could be valuable as an emergency doctor wherever the need was the greatest,” he recalls. Dr. Garabedian serves as the Medical Director at the Dyersburg Hospital Emergency Department. When the 2020 Artsakh War flared up in September 2020, he heeded the call to defend the homeland the best way he knew how, immediately volunteering his medical expertise to support the Armenian soldiers wounded at the front line.

Born in 1970 in Beirut, Lebanon, Garabedian was raised in a highly-respected family of Genocide survivor-descendants. His father, born in Kharpert in 1920, would tell him stories about Shant’s grandfather who was spared from the Turkish atrocities because he was a talented blacksmith who could skillfully repair horseshoes. His mother was born in Aleppo in 1933 to an orphan, who was taken to the Birds’ Nest Armenian orphanage as a five-year old after her entire family was massacred during the Armenian Genocide. These and many related stories have stayed with Garabedian throughout his life and have grown in him the determination to succeed and dedication to his nation.



Dr. Garabedian outside the Goris Medical Center

Settling in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1985, Garabedian was involved in the youth activities of the local Homenetmen, Armenian Youth Federation, and the Armenian Church. He gradually grew an impressive professional record of success, which includes an undergraduate degree in physiology from the University of California,



Dr. Garabedian with a group of full-time and volunteer physicians at the Military Hospital in Vardenis

nia, Davis; a degree in medicine from the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri, followed by a family medicine residency at the University of Tennessee program in Jackson, advancing all the way up to his current position as Medical Director of the Dyersburg Hospital Emergency Department in Tennessee.

Garabedian recounts his thoughts in the early days of the Artsakh War that started in September 2020. Determined to fly out as soon as possible, he thought he would be most helpful “within the first one or two hours of a soldier’s injury to bring to bear the initial stabilization.” He immediately began preparing for his trip establishing the necessary contacts, while acquiring from personal funds the necessary emergency room supplies to take with him. These included sutures, bandages, tourniquets, and IV kits, as well as endotracheal tubes for intubation, and bag valve masks for resuscitation. Advance arrangements in place and all packed, he was on a flight to Armenia on November 2, 2020.

Garabedian believes that it is the duty of every Armenian to serve the homeland however one can. “This is a matter of protecting our homeland, our sovereignty, our existence as a nation,” he admits as he explains the risk every serviceman takes of the unknown, the risk of not returning home, and also the risk of being permanently handicapped.

Garabedian was assigned to Goris since the Lachin thoroughway had closed by the time he arrived, barring safe passage to Artsakh. At the hospital in Goris, which functioned as back-up to the Khndzorsk mobile military hospital, Garabedian



Dr. Garabedian on his way to Goris with the medical supplies

was involved in stabilizing the wounded soldiers brought there who would then be transferred according to the type of medical treatment or surgery they would need.

Garabedian was subsequently commissioned to Vardenis following the intensification of the fighting in Shushi, where he worked as an intensivist in both the civilian and military hospitals. “The military hospitals at Khndzorsk and Vardenis were well-prepared,” he recalls, “and had properly-trained medics to stabilize the wounded in the field.”

Garabedian speaks with deep emotion recounting his days in those hospitals and what he has witnessed. He then commends the volunteers, all those dedicated men and women, young and old, as well as the soldiers who exhibited such heroism and bravery. “These young soldiers would be brought in very badly wounded, and they

would plead with us to quickly patch them up so they would go back to the battlefield. These soldiers displayed immense camaraderie for their fellow servicemen in battle and were determined not to let them down, and ultimately not to let down their nation.”

Speaking to the future of Armenia, Garabedian believes the country needs to modernize its defense system and artillery based on a thorough analysis of the lessons learned from the 2020 Artsakh War. He wants to see Armenia “modernize our technology, especially in unmanned warfare, to be well-equipped and prepared to defend ourselves.”

Garabedian goes on to speak of the role AUA is playing in educating the future generations, including with the new capital campaign, Build a Better Future With AUA, he is confident that a strong STEM education will significantly contribute to building a better and more powerful Armenia. Especially with the new labs and ancillary spaces to be built, the University will be even better positioned to educate the next generation of technologically-advanced young leaders. AUA will be in a superior stance and strength to engineer innovative drone solutions, tackle chemical-mechanical challenges, realize key transformations in electrical engineering, machine learning-based innovations, and much more.

He believes in the projected long-term solutions that an AUA higher education can provide, and wants all young people to have access to it, elaborating that, “specifically AUA, has the quality of education that is unsurpassed in Armenia, with a strong foundation in the UC system. Without this type of education, Armenia will stagnate and the country will not push forward. Armenia needs to become a powerhouse, and with the use of brain power as our ultimate natural resource, that could become a reality.”

Himself an AUA scholarship program supporter, Garabedian admits that the recent war has reawakened his belief in the urgency of empowering the next generation, preparing the leaders of tomorrow, and especially supporting our veteran students. Placing added emphasis on the need to amplify and further stretch the available sources of education, Garabedian recalls the benefits he had once received as an undergraduate student from the U.S. Federal Student Aid and asserts “there’s no reason why we couldn’t do the same to support our own Armenian youth. Today, we have veterans missing arms and legs, many who have gone through tremendous mental anguish and have developed stress disorders. Yet, they’re trying to make their lives better by aiming at a brighter future through education. The least we can do is to do our small part by supporting their education,” he urges.

As a diasporan himself, Dr. Garabedian calls upon all Armenians living in the Diaspora to contribute to this new ‘Build a Better Future with AUA’ campaign. “The easiest and least intrusive way for Diasporan-Armenians, and especially American-Armenians, is to help financially; this is the bare minimum we can do, for AUA and for each of those students to benefit from an AUA education.”

“We must now stand in remembrance of those who fell, but also with commitment to reinforce what we have and to strengthen our collective capacity to prepare the next leaders who will build Armenia. Now, more than ever before, we need that powerful new force to get back up on our feet and build a technologically-advanced Armenia. I invite you to join me in this imperative national endeavor.”

Armenian Ex-Defense Minister Arrested for Embezzlement, Faulty Weapons Purchases

TONOYAN, from page 1

case, Galstyan’s firm Mosston Engineering (an offshore company registered in the Seychelles) is accused of embezzling \$1 million. That case involved the purchase of artillery shells: Mosston was contracted in 2018 to supply the military with a certain type of shell, produced between 1983 and 1986, but the firm instead bought Czechoslovakian shells produced in 1977, which were “significantly inferior.”

Galstyan’s lawyer told journalists on September 30 that his client denied the charges, and that “this is a completely new case, has nothing to do with the old case.”

Tonoyan hasn’t been named in the first investigation, even as a witness, even though he was appointed defense minister in 2018.

Tonoyan has spent almost his entire career since the late 1990s in the armed forces and defense ministry. He appeared to enjoy an unusual amount of trust from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, as his tenure lasted more than two years — a rarity in the quickly churning government. Tonoyan resigned last November, a week after the end of the war with Azerbaijan, following public pressure.

Galstyan has long been known as a murky operator. A 2011 United Nations Security Council report found that one of his firms, “DG Arms Corporation,” illegally bought and transported ammunition to Libya in violation of international sanctions. In another episode, Mosston was reported to have transferred 275,000 euros to an offshore account belonging to Ukraine’s

then-president Petro Poroshenko for a VIP jet service.

None of that stopped the government from working with him.

On August 21, 2018, the Ministry of Defense announced that it had reached an agreement with a firm owned by Galstyan, Royalsys Engineering LTD, to produce Kalashnikov rifles in Armenia. No such company is registered in Armenia, but the Panama Papers leaks included information about a similarly named company with a spelling error: Royalsys Enginerring.

Tonoyan was confronted at the time by a journalist from the news outlet Civilnet about the fact that no such company existed in Armenia, but Tonoyan denied it. In 2019, Davit Galstyan was appointed adviser to Tonoyan.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Preparations Underway for Putin-Pashinyan Meeting

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan plans to visit Russia, and preparations are underway for his in-person meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told TASS on October 4. Earlier that day, Russian Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko met with President of the National Assembly of Armenia Alen Simonyan. “[Pashinyan’s visit to Russia] is expected. A personal meeting [with Putin] is being prepared,” the Kremlin spokesman said. This year, Putin and Pashinyan met in person three times, and they spoke over the phone more than ten times. According to Matviyenko, these active contacts set the pace to the entire range of Russian-Armenian relations.

Georgia, Azerbaijan Sign Military Cooperation Plan

TBILISI (Panorama.am) — Georgian Defense Minister Juansher Burchuladze and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Zakir Hasanov, signed a bilateral cooperation plan in Tbilisi on October 5, local sources reported. The document was signed as part of Hasanov’s official visit to Georgia, where he had meetings with the Georgian high-ranking political and military leadership. At the meeting, the military officials discussed the military-political situation in the region and stressed the importance of mutual support for the territorial integrity of the two countries. It was noted that the development of bilateral military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia will ensure regional stability and security. The sides also appreciated the steady development of relations in the defense sphere between the two countries.

Catholicos of All Armenians To Meet Pope Francis

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, departed for Rome on October 5 to participate in the People as Brothers and the Future of the Country: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue Conference and Inter-Church Prayer, organized by the Sant’Egidio Community. As the Information Department at the Mother See reports, the Catholicos will meet with Pope Francis. The delegation members accompanying the Catholicos are Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and representative of the Catholicos of All Armenians in the Vatican; Bishop Moushegh Babayan, Grand Sacristan of the Mother See; Arman Tatoyan, Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia; Very Rev. Fr. Karekin Hambardzumyan, director of the Mission Department and the Department of the Preservation of Spiritual-Cultural Heritage of Artsakh operating in the Mother See; and Rev. Anania Tsaturyan, Staff-bearer of His Holiness.

New Anthology in German Looks at Genocide Aftermath

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — On September 21 Armenians throughout the world celebrated 30 years of independence for the Republic of Armenia. In official venues, like the Armenian Embassy in Berlin, the event was commemorated in the presence of public figures from political life. It was an occasion to reflect on 1991 and to cast a glance to the future, enriched by the lessons learned in the intervening period. On that same day, a group of Armenians and Germans, scholars, writers, civil society activists and others, convened in a virtual Zoom meeting, to offer insights into events of the far more distant past, the genocide a century ago. But here too the intent was to reflect, learn and prepare for a better future. The occasion was the appearance of a recently released book that tells the story of the genocide in a bold, new form.

The title, *Wurzeln in der Luft: Völkermord und Lebensspuren* can be translated “Roots in the Air: Genocide and Traces of Life.” Roots normally live in the ground, and reach down ever more deeply to establish stability, but here are the roots of men and women, violently torn out of the earth by the trauma of genocide, floating dispersed in the diaspora for generations, yet preserving the indelible signs of life and the will to persevere.

Tessa Hofmann, renowned genocide scholar and author, organized the book presentation, sponsored by the Association Working Group Recognition – Against Genocide, for International Understanding (AGA). She was a founding member of AGA, which is a human rights group that has been campaigning for recognition of the Ottoman genocide against the Armenians and other Christian minorities. Her contribution to the book is an essay sketching the story of how she found the theme that was to engage her activities for decades.

To introduce the new anthology, published by Projekt Verlag in Bochum, Hofmann asked Heide Rieck, one of the two editors, how it came into being. Rieck is herself an author of 14 books and a leading literary figure in Bochum. In 2013, she related, she had attended a play that introduced her to the history of the genocide. Following the theatrical performance was a panel discussion that included descendants of survivors. She was so moved by one family’s story, she said, she “had to do something” to spread knowledge of these events. She sought Armenian contacts and found Azat Ordukhanyan, a Yerevan-born journalist now living in Bochum and president of the Armenian Academic Society. Together they organized a German-Armenian cultural program that sponsored some 40 cultural and political events for several years. The idea for a book presenting personal stories of the genocide grew from this collaboration, and the two co-edited the volume. As she explained, the concept evolved over time, as they expanded the scope to include not only Armenians but also Greek Orthodox and Assyrian-Aramaean; they decided to look for contributions also from the side of the perpetrators, Germans and Turkish. As Ordukhanyan added, following the resolution on the genocide passed by the German Bundestag (Parliament) in 2016, which called for the topic to be included in school curriculum, there was a need for adequate textbooks. The aim was to educate youth on the history of the genocide and the loss of the homeland.

The authors they looked for fell into three categories: the children and grandchildren of survivors, qualified experts on the sub-



ject, like Tessa Hofmann and Roy Knocke of the Lepsiushaus, and descendants of wartime allies Germans and Turks. Rieck added that they hoped to stimulate debate in schools and universities, to educate pupils and students of various backgrounds in multi-ethnic Germany about their history. It is a task that demands courage on the part of educators, and is prerequisite to understanding among peoples and eventual reconciliation. Hofmann noted that it was not only the work of direct descendants on the Turkish side that was crucial, but also research published by scholars not represented in this book, like Dogan Akhanli and Taner Akçam.

Robbed of Identity

The presentation unfolded in a series of selections from the book, interspersed with musical interludes. Ani Serobyán, an associate of Hofmann’s, read first from two Armenian authors whose accounts portrayed the loss of identity. Lusin Arshaluys Bakircian-Dolas was born under the name of Necla Bakirci in Ra’s al-‘Ain near Urfa in Turkey, the sixth of 13 children. In the selection titled “No Lullaby in the Mother Tongue,” she tells Heide Rieck on the telephone about her childhood. Once she had arrived in Germany, she dared to recover her Armenian family name as well as her grandmother’s first name. “When I was 18,” she said, “I married an Armenian, who had lived in Germany five years” and explained that as a “hidden Armenian” it was important to marry in her own ethnic group. Many immigrant Armenians followed this practice as a means of preserving their culture, after having lost their own language and traditions. Her own mother sang songs to her in Kurdish and told stories about her own mother, who had been so traumatized as a child that people later considered insane. Though Lusin had never spoken Armenian, and used Turkish in school, in Germany she had decided to learn Armenian, to be able to “sing to my grandchildren in Armenian.” She promised Rieck she would submit a piece for the anthology, since “our story belongs in schoolbooks,” so history will not be repeated. “In the end we are all human beings. We should live in peace.”

The second selection came from this author, and also told the tale of loss. As members of a group of Armenians from America, we travelled with Armen Aroyan on one of his countless pilgrimages to the Old Country. Looking for the villages of our parents, Mashgerd and Tsack, we found their names had been changed, but, like the “hidden Armenians,” their identity could be recognized. Despite the official government policy of denial, which includes the imposition of superimposed names and descriptions, “the stones cry out” in reality, and ancient Armenian churches and other monuments declare their heritage to the

knowing eye. By the same token, if officialdom denies the past, those villagers whose ancestors had been resettled there from the Balkans, had no problem telling us what they knew and remembering the last Armenians who lived in their midst.

Tessa Hofmann read selections from Anastasia Kasapidou-Dick’s story, who was born in Greece as the fourth child of a Pontic Greek survivor. The Pontic Greeks, at least those who had survived the genocide, lost their lands and homes in the forced population transfer sealed by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. Anastasia’s grandparents had been transferred from Pontos to Platanía. In the evenings they would gather together in “Parakathi” and she would sit opposite the storytellers, those who, like her grandmother, knew the history of the Pontos. “They talked about how they lived in peace with one another and with the Turks, and how this idyll ended.” Forced labor gangs, escape, the “Great War,” political machinations and civil war, dictatorship and exile — all these tragic experiences were episodes in the storytellers’ tales. In the “Parakathi” they came together as if they were the chorus in an ancient theatre play. “The chorus mourned the catastrophes that made up their lives,” she wrote. The narrators told their sad and tragic tales to the next generation, to leave this legacy for the future. A Greek song that followed lamented the lost fatherland, whose memory lived on in the heart.

Abdulmesih BarAbraham, an Assyrian who has lived in Germany since 1967, has published accounts of their history, diaspora and human rights. The selection, read by Ani Serobyán, recounted his memories of life as an adolescent in Midyat, the religious center and seat of the Bishopric of the Orthodox church, as well as trade center of southeastern Turkey. There, in the city that had a Christian majority population up to the 1970s, any reference, even in the church, to the genocide was forbidden; if victims were remembered, it was as members of the community of Christian martyrs. No books containing references to the genocide were available. As witnesses to the past there were, however, the ruined churches and monasteries, and facades of houses riddled with bullets. Otherwise, there were the “countless, invisible scars in the hearts and souls of the survivors,” and these were the subject of dirges sung by his mother and grandmother to their children, songs about the *Sayfo*, the catastrophe. It was only with the immigration to Europe in the 1960s that Assyrians in his parents’ generation managed to overcome their fears and blocks, and began to talk about the genocide.

The reading ended with a contribution by Ali Ertem, who came in 1961 to Germany from his native land Turkey. His story is emblematic for many Turks who first learned about the genocide only after moving to a European country. In his native village where there were no schools, he received early instruction from a sister, and later studied in Ankara. By chance he learned of employment opportunities in Germany and with luck succeeded in qualifying for training. During a training course in electrotechnics in Bochum, he experienced “the most important phase in my life.” At the Ruhr university where he also attended courses, he heard one day from an Armenian student about the charges of genocide and was deeply shaken. “What suffering my forefathers were to have inflicted on Armenians in 1915! I experienced this as a profound insult.” He never thought that such an accusation would shape the course of his life, and actually become a vehicle of his salvation.

see ANTHOLOGY, page 5



INTERNATIONAL

Iran Starts Military Drills Near Azerbaijan Border

TEHRAN (RFE/RL) — Iran began on Friday, October 1, major military exercises along its border with Azerbaijan which were criticized by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev earlier this week.

The Iranian military reportedly began massing troops there after Baku set up on September 12 a roadblock on the main highway connecting Armenia with Iran. The Armenian government controversially ceded a 21-kilometer section of the road to Azerbaijan following last year war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijani police and customs have since been collecting a hefty “road tax” from Iranian trucks and other vehicles passing through it, causing significant disruptions in cargo traffic between Armenia and Iran.

Aliyev said on Monday that Baku set up the roadblock because Tehran ignored repeated its warnings to stop Iranian trucks from shipping cargo to Karabakh. He described the Iranian military buildup as “very surprising.”

“Every country can carry out any military drill on its own territory. It’s their sovereign right... But why now and why on our border?” Aliyev told Turkey’s Anadolu news agency.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry dismissed

the criticism on Tuesday. A ministry spokesman effectively linked the drills to Azerbaijan’s military ties with Israel, saying that Iran “will not tolerate Israeli presence near its borders.”

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian likewise told Azerbaijan’s new ambassador to Tehran on Thursday that the Islamic Republic is taking measures against the “Zionist regime’s activities against its national security.”

The Iranian army did not specify the number of soldiers involved in the exercises. The commander of its ground forces, Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, was quoted by Iranian news agencies as saying only that they would be backed up by tanks, artillery, combat helicopters and drones.

Heidari also said the war games are aimed at assessing the army’s combat readiness and “testing” its weapons.

The Armenian government has reacted to cautiously to Baku’s decision to tax Iranian vehicles entering Armenia. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan suggested on September 15 the move is aimed at pressuring Armenia to open a transport corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. But he stopped short of demanding an end to the serious hurdle to Armenia transport links with Iran.

Pashinyan’s deputy, Suren Papikyan, told the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan on Wednesday that Armenia will complete by the end of this year work on an alternative road that will allow Iranian trucks to bypass the Azerbaijani roadblock.



LONDON – On September 30, a welcome reception for Ambassador Varuzhan Nersisyan was organized by the Armenian community of the UK with the leadership of the Armenian Community Council. In the photo the ambassador and his wife are pictured with the Ramgavar Party (ADL) leadership of England.

Armenia Reassures Iran As Tehran-Baku Tensions Mount

TENSIONS, from page 1

side. He said those “members of terrorist movements” were deployed in areas south of Karabakh bordering northwestern Iran.

“The presence of Zionists and terrorists [in Azerbaijan]... seriously worries us,” the foreign minister told Iranian state television. “It can create problems for the government of Azerbaijan in the near future.”

“Since we are not sure that they [Sunni militants] have left the area, the drills will convey a message to them,” the commander of the Iranian ground forces, Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, said, according to Iran Press TV.

His Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei commented on “the problem that arose on our northwestern border recently” when he addressed graduates of Iranian military academies earlier on Sunday.

“We will not allow alien forces to intervene in processes taking place there. He who thinks he can ensure his own security by pinning hopes on outsiders will get a slap,” Khamenei said in a warning clearly addressed to Baku.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry rejected Tehran’s “baseless” claims. “Unfortunately, friendly Iran never condemned the [Armenian] occupation of our territory just as resolutely,” said a ministry spokeswoman.

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev criticized the Iranian war games on September 27. He also said Baku set up the roadblock on the Armenia-Iran highway because Tehran ignored its repeated warnings to stop Iranian trucks from shipping cargo to Karabakh.

The road mostly passes through Armenia southeastern Syunik province which is sandwiched between Azerbaijan and its Nakhichevan exclave and also borders Iran. Earlier this year, Aliyev threatened to forcibly open a transport corridor to Nakhichevan, drawing strong condemnation from Armenia.

Mojtaba Zonnouri, a senior Iranian parliamentarian, on Monday accused Aliyev of trying to “cut Iran’s access to Armenia” with the help of Turkey and Israel. The official IRNA news agency quoted Zonnouri as warning that Azerbaijan and Turkey “will pay a big price if they pose a threat to Iran.”

Zonnouri was apparently among 165 members of the Iranian parliament who issued a joint statement on Sunday saying that the Islamic Republic would not tolerate “any geopolitical change and alteration of the borders of neighboring countries.”

On September 28, a conservative Iranian newspaper reputedly controlled by Khamenei’s office published a commentary that accused Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of helping the United States and Israel to hatch a geopolitical “plot” against Iran and Russia.

A columnist for the *Kayhan* newspaper also charged that Pashinyan has joined the “hidden alliance” of the four states and is willing to “cede Syunik province to Azerbaijan.”

The Armenian prime minister responded to the allegation on Sunday at the start of an official visit to Lithuania.

“It is no secret that there are some circles that manage from time to time to pub-

lish articles in the Iranian press saying that Armenia is involved in some conspiracies against Iran,” Pashinyan told members of the Armenian community in the Baltic state.

“I am sure our Iranian colleagues know that Armenia has never been involved and will never be involved in a conspiracy against Iran because those relations [between Armenia and Iran] are extremely important to us.”

Pashinyan has been facing similar allegations from his political opponents and other critics at home. They have deplored his failure to explicitly condemn Baku’s decision to start taxing Iranian vehicles.

Pashinyan and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi discussed the Armenia-Iran traffic disruptions when they met in Tajikistan’s capital Dushanbe on September 17.

Amir-Abdollahian was reported to expressed hope on Monday that Yerevan will speed up the ongoing reconstruction of an alternative Syunik highway that will allow Iranian drivers to bypass the Azerbaijani checkpoint. Armenia’s Deputy Prime Minister Suren Papikyan said last week that the roadwork will be completed by the end of November.

Meanwhile, the Iranian army drills continued on Monday, involving special forces, heavy artillery, tanks and helicopter gunships. Images aired by Iranian television suggested that they are taking place on Iran border with Nakhichevan.

In what may be a related development, Turkish media reported that Azerbaijani and Turkish troops will start on Tuesday joint exercises in Nakhichevan

New Anthology in German Looks at Genocide Aftermath

ANTHOLOGY, from page 4

Struggling with pain, shame, empathy and mourning, Ertem decided to search the truth, to do the research to find out about the genocide. Studies followed as he read works by Johannes Lepsius, Jakob Künzler, Vahakn Dadrian, Franz Werfel, Tessa Hofmann, Wolfgang Gust and many others, sought contact with intellectuals, attended commemorations. In the course of his 20 years of study, he came to the conclusion that he had no right to accept judgments from others on subjects that he himself had not personally investigated. “I had to learn,” he concluded, “that Turkish government officials and educational institutions officially lie.”

Discovery in the Classroom

Ali Ertem’s experience is not unique. Dogan Akhanlı and Taner Akçam are two well-known intellectuals from Turkey who came to Germany and here embarked on scholarly investigations into a subject that in their former homeland had been banned from public discussion, not to mention educational institutions.

Although, as mentioned, the 2016 Bundestag resolution called for introducing genocide studies into school curricula in Germany, very little progress in this direction has been made. It is at the federal state level that Germans decide on what is presented in the classroom. As Hofmann has reported, of the 16 German federal states, two-thirds now allow for genocide lessons, but many educators and school officials hesitate, out of fear. Her proposal is to campaign for such instruction to become obligatory, and to prepare teaching materials for classroom use.

The new book edited by Rieck and Ordukhanyan is made to order. For advanced study of the genocide, its historical and ideological background, its organization and personalities, scholars rightly go to the archives, to study official government documents and establish the incontrovertible facts. For youngsters in school, it is not only the facts and figures that matter, but the confrontation with a human tragedy, mediated through the highly personal stories of discrete individuals, especially those who experienced it as children, or received the traumatic memory through generational transmission. In the anthology there are 27 true stories of persons from five nations, each told in as a unique experience, each different, and yet all partaking of a shared destiny.

“This book rescues the ‘prototype of genocides of the 20th century’ from oblivion, in that grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the victims dare to tell the story of inextinguishable memories in a breathtaking manner.” This is the view of Arno Lohmann, former Director of the Evangelical City Academy in Bochum. “It is not an easy book,” he goes on. “One cannot simply narrate what is gruesome. But for precisely this reason, the book is brilliant, courageous and at the same time encouraging, because it dares to name the impossible by name — and thereby to open the way to hope and freedom. The book is an unmistakable call to peace and must be available in schools, universities and adult education.”



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan's Ruling Aliyev Family and Their Associates Acquired Dozens of Prime London Properties Worth Nearly \$700 Million

By Miranda Patrucic, Ilya Lozovsky, Kelly Bloss, and Tom Stocks

LONDON (OCCRP) — A vast network of offshore companies, administered by service provider Trident Trust and fronted by a small group of trusted cronies, helped the Aliyevs secretly own vast real estate holdings in the British capital.

For centuries, London has been one of the world's top destinations for shopping, dining, and good living. And a development boom over the last few decades has only expanded the range of attractions.

Visitors and locals alike have enjoyed cutting-edge “molecular gastronomy” at the Hibiscus restaurant, shopped on charming Sicilian Avenue, or stopped for a Guinness at the gothic-style, 19th-century Bloomsbury Tavern.

Residential developments with names like “The Knightsbridge” and “Thornwood Gardens” have sprung up just steps from Harrods department store and Hyde Park.

These impressive buildings in the British capital have one thing in common that no admiring passerby — or even a savvy local real-estate reporter — would ever know: They are or have been owned by some of the people closest to Azerbaijan's dictatorial president Ilham Aliyev.

Aliyev's two daughters, his son, his father-in-law, and two of the family's close business associates have held, at their peak, a staggering £429 million (\$694 million) in London real estate — including prominent historical buildings, commercial developments, and luxury apartments in prestigious neighborhoods.

Their ownership of this property empire has been systematically hidden for years behind offshore companies with generic names like Sheldrake Six and Fliptag Investments.

But thanks to the Pandora Papers, a new leak of offshore documents obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and shared with OCCRP and other media outlets, reporters have been able to pierce the veil of secrecy that surrounds these companies.

In total, OCCRP found 84 previously unknown offshore companies, registered in the British Virgin Islands, that the Aliyevs and their associates have owned since 2006.

The Pandora Papers

The Pandora Papers is an investigation into millions of records leaked from 14 offshore service providers — the law firms that help anyone looking for secrecy establish secretive companies in far-flung jurisdictions. Media partners from around the world collaborated for months to analyze the data and reveal the stories of the super-rich and the powerful — including more than 30 world leaders — who appear in it. The confidential documents also feature a global cast of fugitives, convicts, celebrities, football stars and government officials.

A number of the companies were incorporated during the first term of Ilham Aliyev's presidency, which began in 2003. He is now well into his fourth term, the head of an increasingly autocratic regime built on the jailing of journalists, lawyers, and activists, fraudulent elections, and massive corruption.

His son, Heydar, acquired his first offshore company while he was still in grade school. His daughter, Arzu, who studied psychology in London, had just turned 19 when she acquired her own.

Reporters did find that at least eight of their companies received multi-million-dollar infusions of cash from vast money laundering and transfer systems previously uncovered by OCCRP, including the Azerbaijani, Russian, and Troika Laundromats. As of 2017 the Aliyevs had transferred £125 million (\$191 million) in real estate into a secretive trust that was established and controlled by the president's father-in-law.

'Enhanced and Ongoing Scrutiny'?

The Aliyev family's rule over Azerbaijan began with Ilham's father Heydar Aliyev, a longtime Soviet official who took control of the country two years after it gained its independence in 1991.

The elder Aliyev was an authoritarian leader, and under his watch Azerbaijan began developing into a corrupt petro-state. But those familiar with the country remember his regime as different than that of his son.

“Heydar Aliyev maintained very tight control of corruption,” said Richard Kauzlarich, the U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan between 1994 and 1997. “He certainly wasn't blatant about it in the way Ilham and his wife Mehriban

and their respective families are today.”

“I mean, they're basically all in it for themselves.”

It didn't take long for this to change after Ilham ascended to the presidency in 2003. Within a few years, his younger daughter Arzu, 19 then, was already the shareholder of Strahan Holding and Finance, an offshore company with a Swiss bank account that acquired three apartments worth £5.1 million (\$9.7 million) in the London district of Knightsbridge.

Trident Trust would go on to administer many dozens of companies for the Aliyev family and their associates.

Trident Trust had already incorporated at least 16 offshore companies for Arzu Aliyeva. In addition to the three apartments in London's Knightsbridge, these firms had already acquired a penthouse in the same building and a large commercial property in Romania.

If the report gave Trident Trust any pause about continuing to work with the Aliyev family, the services provider didn't show it. Starting that year, it also took on as clients Arzu's older sister Leyla and her 11-year-old brother Heydar: Leyla became the owner of her own Trident-administered company which held a large office building near London's world-famous Regent Street, while young Heydar became the “landlord” of a Michelin-starred restaurant, an art gallery, and the head office of Conde Nast.

By 2010, OCCRP and other media outlets were already uncovering the Aliyev children's wealth. These stories of offshore company empires, natural resource extraction, and telecommunications were a striking contrast to their apparent careers in the arts and media.

In 2010, the *Washington Post* reported that Azerbaijanis with the same names as Aliyev's three children owned \$75 million in properties in the United Arab Emirates.

Subsequent reporting from the Panama Papers and other investigations showed that Arzu and Leyla Aliyeva owned over a dozen companies in various jurisdictions. These shells held luxury properties in European capitals, three telecom operators (which allowed the government to spy on Azerbaijani citizens), a construction and banking conglomerate called AtaHolding, and even a literal gold mine.

The Partners

Neither Aliyev nor his wife, Mehriban, have ever declared their net worth, and Azerbaijani law does not require them to do so, although a few presidential candidates have volunteered such information.

In search of explanations for their wealth, journalists have spent years investigating the connections between the Aliyev family and the oligarchs that have grown wealthy in Azerbaijan under Ilham's rule.

Two key figures, both former tax ministry officials, have emerged: Fazil Mammadov and Ashraf Kamilov are tied to Azerbaijan's first family through a business conglomerate called AtaHolding, which was worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

As part of the Panama Papers investigation, OCCRP showed that the business, which Mammadov founded and which Kamilov would go on to lead, was created months before the election that cemented Aliyev's rule. It also showed how Mammadov invited the Aliyev family to join him in the company.

The profits from the AtaHolding structure were likely meant to flow into a secretive Panamanian foundation Mammadov established with the help of Mossack Fonseca, the offshore services firm that became infamous after its doings were revealed in the Panama Papers.

Much of the companies' activities is unknown, but documents from their administrator, Trident Trust, show that some were established to hold bank accounts in Switzerland and in the Czech Republic. Others were declared as investment vehicles or trading businesses. A few owned functioning businesses in Azerbaijan.

What is known is that some of them held valuable assets: dozens of properties in all, almost entirely in London, worth £429 million (\$694 million) at their peak.

In one of the most curious cases, Heydar owned four buildings on Maddox street in the tony district of Mayfair when he was just 11 years old.

The most expensive property owned by a member of the Aliyev family was a commercial development on Conduit Street, acquired for £35.5 million (\$58.8 million) by Kamilov and transferred to Arzu Aliyeva, then 22, several weeks later.

The largest asset in the company network was a £208-million (\$343-million) commercial development called Holborn Links, which spans several blocks in the

heart of London. It included a historic pub called Bloomsbury Tavern just steps from the British Museum. Before being sold in 2016, the development was held by a company owned by Kamilov.

Laundromat Payments

In most cases, the leaked Pandora Papers documents contained no information about how money entered the offshore empire of the Aliyevs and their associates.

But in 2013, the company that later bought Holborn Links, Perez International, received more than \$1.2 million from Westburn Enterprises, one of three main shell companies at the heart of the Russian Laundromat, a \$20-billion money laundering and transfer system.

Three other Kamilov companies also received money from Westburn, making for \$16.6 million in Russian Laundromat transactions.

A second core company from the Russian Laundromat sent \$6.1 million to Quandu Finance, which bought a £29-million (\$47 million) townhouse that was transferred to Ilham Aliyev's father-in-law.

And another BVI company, co-owned by Gurbanov, received nearly \$800,000 from a shell company whose account was set up by the Lithuanian Ukio Bank as part of the Azerbaijani Laundromat, a separate money laundering scheme uncovered by OCCRP in 2019.

As is typical with such “laundromats,” the payments were described as being for “equipment” or “building equipment,” despite it being extremely unlikely that these shell companies were actually buying or selling any physical items.

Into the Family Trust

After years of steady wealth accumulation, things appear to have reached a peak around 2015. That year marked the beginning of a financial crisis for Azerbaijan, with drops in oil prices and massive devaluation of the currency. The offshore empire of the Aliyevs and their associates also appears to have been affected.

They also sold off three of their commercial investments, including the massive Holborn Links development.

But they didn't sell everything, or even close to it. Kamilov and Gurbanov kept a significant part of their holdings. And the Aliyevs transferred \$191 million in properties, including the elite Knightsbridge apartment where the Aliyev daughters appeared to live, into a secretive family trust administered from the Isle of Man.

Apparently to disguise their trail, the companies that owned these properties were first acquired by Ilham Aliyev's elderly father-in-law, Arif Pashayev, now 87. He then transferred them into another company whose sole purpose was to acquire them and then to move them onward into the trust. Pashayev did not respond to requests for comment.

These maneuvers made it look like the properties had been transferred away. If not for one document found by reporters in the Pandora Papers, they would have been lost from public view as they disappeared into the trust, which is protected by the Isle of Man's strict corporate secrecy laws. However, Pashayev filed a declaration form with Trident Trust when he moved the properties, estimating the value of the trust's assets at £100 million and indicating that he was the source of the funds.

That's where the trail of the properties is lost.

In one of the last documents in the Pandora Papers known to pertain to the Aliyevs and their associates, Trident Trust requests more information about Arzu Aliyeva from her representatives:

“During our normal ongoing world check screening, a hit was indicated for the beneficial owner of the above companies as a [Politically Exposed Person],” the November 2018 email reads. “The beneficial owner is the daughter of the President of the Azerbaijan national government.”

“We will require the following documents in order to satisfy our requirement for enhanced due diligence: bank reference letter, professional reference letter, CV.”

Aliyeva's representatives replied on the same day, attaching an old reference letter from Aliyeva's bank in Azerbaijan. “Ms. Arzu Aliyeva is well known to us for more than 10 years,” it read. “We consider the above-mentioned person trustworthy and we believe that she would not take any commitment she would not be able to fulfill.”

Alexandra Li (OCCRP/Kloop) contributed reporting.

(The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project participated in the Pandora Papers project.)



Community News

Chairman Menendez Presses Ambassador To Turkey Nominee Flake on Genocide Affirmation

WASHINGTON, D.C. - During the confirmation hearing of former US Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) to serve as the next US Ambassador to Turkey, on September 28, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), pressed Flake on Turkey's ongoing denial in light of US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide by President Joe Biden, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

Menendez stated that "for many decades, the Armenian Genocide has been denied by the descendants of those who perpetrated it. In 2019, the Senate recognized the Armenian Genocide for the first time. In April of this year, on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, President Biden joined us in acknowledging this truth. In the past you've voted against reso-



Former Sen. Jeff Flake (Politico photo)

lutions that recognized the Armenian Genocide. Will you join this body and the Administration in reaffirming the Armenian Genocide?"

Flake responded: "Yes."

Menendez continued: "If you're confirmed, will you reiterate that commitment on April 24, which is Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day?"

Flake responded: "I will."

In addition, Menendez, along with his colleagues, raised a number of concerns about Turkey's continued intentions to purchase additional Russian-made S-400 anti-aircraft weapons systems, which military analysts have determined compromise NATO and US security. They also raised questions about Turkey's visible lack of respect for human rights and freedom of the press, with more journalists in prison than any other country, with the exception of Communist Party-controlled China.

In light of Turkey's continued pursuit of Russian weaponry and flouting of NATO disapproval, the importance and need for instituting the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) were emphasized on a bipartisan basis.

In addition, Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) asked how Senator Flake would advance democratic values and human rights, while Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) expressed concerns that "President Erdogan has taken Turkey way off track and in the wrong direction, both with respect to NATO see FLAKE, page 12



A total of 33 kits were given to 29 schools. (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

Twenty-Nine Schools Across Artsakh's Martuni Region Receive Science Lab Kits

MARTUNI, Artsakh — Twenty-nine schools in Artsakh's Martuni region recently received portable science laboratory kits through the Tufenkian Foundation's "Tufenkian for Martuni's Schools" program.

The Micro Lab 7 (ML7) kits, which are designed and built by Aleksandr and Tigran Yesayan, the grandson and great-grandson of famed Armenian writer Zabel Yessayan, were donated by Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian of Massachusetts. Thirty-three kits in total were donated to the schools.

"We visited Aleksandr's laboratory at Yerevan State University (YSU) back in 2019. He and Tigran showed us the lab kits that they had developed for classrooms because only a handful of schools have lab equipment in Armenia," explained long-time supporter, Judith Saryan. It was then that Judith and her husband Victor decided to donate several of the kits to schools in Artsakh. "The kits will give students opportunities to use microscopes and experience how experiments are conducted. Experiential learning is extremely important in the see KITS, page 9



Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian



A scene from the handover event, which took place at the Martuni Regional Administration building on Sept. 16 (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

The First in History Women's Leadership Development Program Is Coming to California State University

By Ani Duzdabanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — A while ago I was invited to attend an online seminar with the title "How to Be Assertive and Not Aggressive as a Woman" on the job searching platform, Indeed. The moderators, two women in their 40s, were talking about the issues women face in the workplace, how they need to stand up for their rights and assertively say "no" to discrimination.

Until then, I never really thought about that. Of course, I was conscious about the barriers of acceptance coming from male coworkers. But my generation — Gen Xers — was more conservative than revolutionary anyway. At least that was the case in Armenia, where I grew up and started my career.

As it turns out, the picture isn't that perfect in the US either. Even though 56 percent of the country's workforce are women, they only occupy 15 percent of C-level executives' positions. These are facts that Prof. Maria Cozette Akopian learned from her research. According to the same research, nine out of ten participants of her study had confidence issues.

"This says a lot about how women perceive themselves and are viewed in the society," she shares. She dug even deeper during her doctoral studies at the University of Southern California (USC) and finally decided to create a specific program made according to the needs of women: "Women First: Leadership and Professional Development Program."

The program has been adopted by the California State University, Los Angeles' College of Professional and Global Education where Akopian also serves as a marketing professor. It is the first women's leadership program in the university's history; those finishing the course will qualify for a certificate.

Akopian's research shows that organizations measure leadership according to masculine traits: Being assertive, demanding, more aggressive.

"Women learn and lead differently. They are more empathetic, collaborative and actively work on team building. They are also pursuing a higher education at a faster and higher rate than man. Women have a number of unique challenges such as motherhood, social barriers, and societal misconceptions of what a female should be therefore it is necessary to offer a leadership development program that is specific to our needs and motivational influences," she said.

As the program is being offered remotely, women from all around the world can take part in it. And for Akopian, it is a great opportunity to include women from Armenia.

She was born in Armenia and immigrated to the US when she was only one month old. During her visit to the homeland in 2018 she was see LEADERSHIP, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Ambassador Hosts Reception In Honor of Armenia's 30th Anniversary

WASHINGTON — On September 30 a reception was held on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Armenia at the Armenian Embassy to the US.

Under Secretary of state for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya, Congressman Frank Pallone, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, officials from Department of State and other government institutions, Ambassadors accredited to the US, representative of the diplomatic corps and military attaches, representatives of Armenian Apostolic church and American-Armenian community were present at the reception.

In the beginning a minute of silence was held paying tribute to the memory of servicemen and civilians who lost their lives in the second Artsakh war.

In her speech (Makunts touched upon the challenges Armenia has faced during the three decades of independence as well as the achievements underscoring Armenia's efforts of strengthening democratic values in the past few years.

She highlighted the importance of the final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh



Ambassador Makunts with Under Secretary of state for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya



Various Tekeyan Cultural Association chapter executives and members with the visiting guests seated at the center

Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board Delegation Holds Meetings in LA

ALTADENA, Calif. – Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA), and TCA Central Board member Mihran Minassian during a working visit to Los Angeles met with various community leaders as well as local TCA executives in mid-September.

They had meetings with Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, the Consul General of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles, officials of the Armenian American Museum in Glendale. On Sep-

tember 17, they participated in a special dinner with local TCA chapter leaders and members, TCA Central Board members, members of the TCA Beshgeturian Center Administrative Committee, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian, at which the latter, Amb. Baibourtian, and Azadian spoke. Baibourtian praised the cultural and patriotic role of TCA, while Azadian spoke on its activities in Armenia, its assistance to Lebanon, and its work in North America as well.

tember 17, they participated in a special dinner with local TCA chapter leaders and members, TCA Central Board members, members of the TCA Beshgeturian Center Administrative Committee, and TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian, at which the latter, Amb. Baibourtian, and Azadian spoke. Baibourtian praised the cultural and patriotic role of TCA, while Azadian spoke on its activities in Armenia, its assistance to Lebanon, and its work in North America as well.

issue in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship based on the right of self-determination. Ambassador expressed her gratitude to the US for the mediatory efforts towards the release of 15 Armenian POWs earlier in June this year.

In her speech she emphasized the importance of taking steps towards deepening and expanding bilateral relations within the framework of Armenia-US Strategic Dialogue.

Zeya highlighted the 44-day war, extending condolences to the families of victims underscoring the necessity of the release of the POWs and other detainees. Ms. Zeya dwelled upon the final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. Under Secretary also touched upon the development of democracy in Armenia highlighting the achievements of the recent years.

Representatives Frank Pallone and Jackie Speier, Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian issues, spoke about the activation of bilateral relations, the final settlement of the Artsakh issue highlighting the interparliamentary cooperation.



Ambassador Makunts with Rep. Jackie Speier, left, and Rep. Frank Pallone



ARF Youth Protest New Ambassador

WASHINGTON — Uniformed secret service agents were present for security during a demonstration by young members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) against new Armenian Ambassador to the US Lilit Makunts during an event dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Armenia. Young ARF members gathered outside, describing the event inside as insulting when Armenian prisoners of war are still in Baku. According to the protesters, this issue should have been a priority. First, the embassy staff asked the gathered to leave. They did not go, claiming that they were not breaking any law. The embassy then summoned secret service for security. When asked by the young people whether they were violating any law, the police gave a negative answer and the youth remained.



COMMUNITY NEWS

First in History Women's Leadership Program Is Coming to CalState

(RAY PRO PHOTO)

LEADERSHIP, from page 7

collaborating with UNICEF, the AGBU and through the Together4Armenia platform, she shared her experiences directly with a female audience.

"In speaking to all the women there, I learned a great deal about their aspirations. I realized that many of them are very interested in leadership development therefore I feel that they would definitely benefit from the Women First program. Therefore, my program will be right for them." This is her way to give back to her people. "And I never go to Armenia as my party destination. I never could understand how others even do that! Every visit entails some form of philanthropy. Investing in our knowledge is one of the greatest things we can do for our Homeland," she said.

I can't help noticing a colorful row of cloths in the background where Akopian is sitting.

"Oh, those are my stage cloths," she smiles. We take a slight turn to Maria's "creative outlet" as she likes to call it — singing. For the Armenian community Maria Cozette is primarily known as a singer, songwriter, and TV host, which, again, never left her without challenges as a woman.

No matter what the challenges were, she never indulged self-pity as a justification when faced with obstacles.

"The moment you do that is the moment you lose. Whenever you face a challenge is when you have to find courage within to overcome any obstacle. Incidentally, because of the unique challenges women face, they become resilient. Resilience is a very key part of being a good leader so we are then, naturally well suited for leadership roles to revamp and rescue organizations."

In 2009 Maria pioneered the first television English-language TV show to air on an Armenian network. "I approached every Armenian TV station who I had a relationship with through my music. I explained that to



Prof. Maria Cozette Akopian

engage our Armenian youth in the diaspora, we must cater to them by having an English-language show discussing Armenian culture as they couldn't grasp the complexity of the language spoken on television." But the answers weren't encouraging, based on mostly conservative views of preserving culture and identity. Finally, Horizon Armenian TV agreed to air her program. It was a huge success. "It gained massive popularity with the youth and they were given the opportunity to learn about our rich culture and performing arts," she says proudly.

Does her creative outlet contradict her title as a professor? Apparently, it's even helpful: A lot of her songs are inspired by her students. "It makes me very human and relatable to them. They see me as an atypical professor. My students see a bit of themselves in me and I think that helps in effectively engaging them," she noted.

On October 27, Akopian with the Cal State LA's College of Professional and Global Education will hold a webinar to answer all the questions about the Women First: Leadership and Professional Development Program.

Additional information can be found on WWW.calstatela.edu/dtla or by emailing to pageprograms@calstatela.edu.

Twenty-Nine Schools Across Artsakh's Martuni Region Receive Science Lab Kits

KITS, from page 7

sciences and needs to be emphasized in classrooms," Saryan added.

The Tufenkian Foundation hosted a gathering of the principals of Martuni's schools at the Martuni Regional Administration building on Sept. 16, to hand over the kits that will be used by seventh graders across the region. During the event, the Deputy Head of the Martuni Regional Administration Vadim Danielyan thanked the Tufenkian Foundation on behalf of the town's residents.

According to Manush Vanyan, the principal of Sos' Hayk Hakobyan Middle School, the kits are a necessary addition to the classroom. "These kits, which were graciously donated to our schools today, were put together with the mandated seventh-grade curriculum in mind and will be put to good use right away," said Vanyan, who also happens to teach biology at the school. "The labs will help us teach with a more practical, hands-on approach. It's one thing to learn through a textbook; it's another thing for the students to look through a microscope and examine the slides themselves," she added.

Earlier this year, Tigran Yesayan, who is pursuing his Ph.D. at Yerevan State University (YSU), won first place in the AbioNET Startup competition for his ML7 kit. The AbioNET Startup competition was held in cooperation between YSU and the Technical University of Dresden with funding by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

The donation of the ML7 kits is a part of the Tufenkian Foundation's Martuni Region School program, through which the Foundation is refurbishing and restoring educational institutions, providing learning materials and technology, and retraining teachers across Martuni. "Several schools in the town and villages of Martuni need desperate attention. Through the "Tufenkian for Martuni's Schools" program, we ensure that future generations learn in a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment," explained Tufenkian Foundation operations director, Greg Bedian.



The ML7 kits include microscopes and other necessary materials for Artsakh's seventh-grade curriculum (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

Giragosian

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OBITUARY

Garbis Nalbandian Syrian Immigrant, Entrepreneur

WALTHAM, Mass. — Garbis Naldian passed away peacefully on September 27, 2021, 11 days after his wife of 61 years Mary.

Garbis Nalbandian was born in Aleppo, Syria on December 1, 1931. He was the youngest son of Kaloust and Azniv Nalbandian.

Garbis was the youngest brother of the late Asdghig and Antranig Stepanian, late Ghevont and Victoria Nalbandian, late Sarkis and Marie Nalbandian, late Verjin and Hovsep Yeretzian, late Haygoohi and Der Vartan Arakelian.

On May 1, 1960 Garbis married Mary Nalbandian and together established a loving family with two sons, Ariss and Shahe Nalbandian.

Garbis received his law degree from Damascus university then joined the Syrian army, eventually attaining the rank of a one-star general.

Garbis became the principal of Karen Jeppe Jemaran (school) in Aleppo Syria (1970-1974). He was also involved in HMEM organization, and Was a member of ARF Syrian Central Committee. After

being drafted to war in 1973, he felt the need to provide security and future stability for his family and thought moving to the US would do just that.

In 1974, Garbis with his family moved to Watertown, Mass.

Garbis and his wife Mary started a grocery business in Watertown called "Hye Mart." They worked day and night to make sure the business would not fail and the kids were provided for. Soon after, they purchased a larger store in Arlington and moved to their current residence in Waltham. A few years later, the boys got married, and Garbis became the proud grandfather of Tatiana, Vazken, Katarena and Liana.

Garbis and Mary continued their work and this time they bought Magnificent Muffins & Bagel in Somerville, where they enjoyed having breakfast together every morning.

He leaves behind his son Ariss and wife Jayne, son Shahe and his wife Zovig, and four grandchildren, Tatiana, Vazken, Katarena and Liana, as well as many loving nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, on Friday, October 1.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Conference Brings Medical Training to Armenian Physicians

CONFERENCE, from page 1
 (ICPD) and sponsored by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), including its Dr. Raffy Hovanesian Education Fund and Dr. Edgar Housepian Medical Education Fund as platinum sponsors, and Izmirlian Medical Center as Gold level sponsor. The partners of the conference were the Ministry of Health in Armenia, and Arabkir Medical Center. The Skill Event Management Company was also a partner and took the lead in the logistical and technical aspects of the conference.

ICPD.am was founded by Doctors Rafi Avitsian, Ara Babloyan, and Gevorg Yaghjian, with the mission of expanding medical education in Armenia. Together, the trio and Dr. Ara Nazarian form the ICPD board of directors. The organization has put together several conferences on topics such as COVID, pain management and post-conflict rehabilitation.



Dr. Rafi Avitsian

Chairing the conference was world-renowned gastroenterologist Dr. Asadur Jorge Tchekmedyan, of Uruguay. Keynote speaker Dr. John Bilezikian (Columbia University, US) led a roster of 54 speakers representing 23 countries.

For Rafi Avitsian, this seminar is another step toward bringing the latest in discoveries and methods in medicine to the professionals in Armenia or Artsakh who may not have other ways of easily continue learning.

As for why the inaugural Hovanesian program would be dedicated to digestive health, Avitsian said, “During conversations with medical practitioners and specialists in Armenia as well as diaspora, ICPD recognized an important educational gap in this specialty. Most importantly, GI and specifically colorectal cancer screening is in dire need of attention with focus on endoscopy. Since Dr. Raffy Hovanesian was a specialist in gastroenterology, this was the best opportunity to plan an international world class meeting which not only addressed the educational need, but also created networking between specialists in Armenia, Artsakh and worldwide to learn from each other’s experiences.”

Avitsian added, “The purpose of the conference was to bring together world class educators in digestive diseases to provide key instructions in such high quality, that would be useful for continuing medical education, not only for physicians in Armenia and Artsakh, but also all physicians worldwide; honor the memory of the late Dr. Raffy Hovanesian, who dedicated a good portion of his professional life to bring advanced healthcare education to providers in Armenia; provide an opportunity for physicians in Armenia to access and collect continuous medical education credits required by the Ministry of Health in Armenia, these credits can also be used in European Union countries and even be converted to the credits used by physicians in United States of America, hence the world class quality of the conference and finally demonstrate the capability of an Armenia-based educational establishment at a global stage to attract professionals worldwide in receiving their required continuing medical education.”

Avitsian is a professor of anesthesiology in the department of General Anesthesiology at the Cleveland Clinic. He also serves as the Secretary of Medical Staff Office of Cleveland Clinic. He is the program director of Neuroanesthesiology Fellowship and

is one of the founders of International Council for Perioperative Neuroscience Training (ICPNT). He is an American Board of Anesthesiologists’ Applied Senior Examiner, and the past president of Society for Neuroscience in Anesthesiology and Critical Care (SNACC), as well as a member of the Association of University Anesthesiologists and recipient of ASA-SEA Distinguished Education Award. He has more than 45 published, peer-reviewed manuscripts, among other written works, and is on the editorial board of *Journal of Neurosurgical Anesthesiology* and an ad hoc reviewer for *Anesthesiology*, *Anesthesia Analgesia*, *World Neurosurgery Journal*.

Tchekmedyan added that the goal was “To bring the best GI educational activity with top international speakers, leaders in their respects fields. Through this educational summit we create a wide network of specialties with similar aims to pursue the best care for our patients both in Armenia and worldwide.”

Many of the doctors participating come with extensive and impressive resumes and are renowned globally.

Tchekmedyan concurred, “This conference brought together than 70 participants with more than 1,000 attendees. These outstanding professionals are among the best gastroenterologists and endoscopists



Dr. Asadur Jorge Tchekmedyan

worldwide and in addition are key leaders in their topics of reference.”

“While interacting with the Armenian healthcare professionals, this amazing group of experts felt that they could contribute to a better, healthier future for Armenia’s people. Also, everyone feels proud to develop this kind of cooperation for a part of the world that is struggling with difficulties and is being kept in isolation by acts of foreign aggression,” Tchekmedyan noted.

He continued, “Our biggest aim is to help bring down the barriers that Armenia is facing while dealing with digestive diseases. We wish we could contribute to

bring down these barriers and help build a network of professionals aimed to build a stronger healthcare system in the GI field. The accessibility of the specialties to free international educational activities is scarce and is a problem for several countries. If also you need to face a pandemic and an unfair foreign aggression then is not only a matter of cooperation if not a debt and a responsibility as Armenians wherever we are. On the other hand, I am proud to talk about our roots with my colleagues and I feel enthusiastic when they become familiar with our ancestries and culture.”

He continued, “From the beginning I was convinced that this was the only way to make a real impact. I am thankful to the leadership of ICPD, to our generous contributors and the time and dedication of an amazing team that worked tirelessly and with devotion to achieve this.”

Physicians in Armenia are mandated by the state to receive continuous training. Achieving this can be expensive, even prohibitive, and time-consuming. This way, they were able to bypass costs and learn from the best.

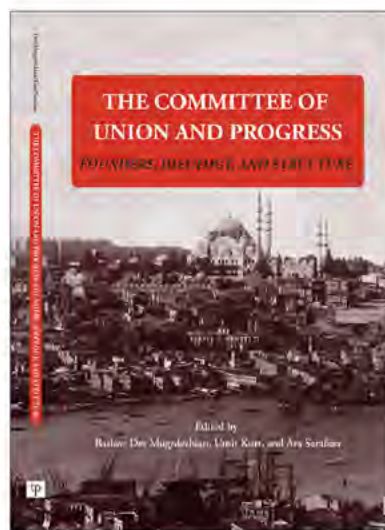
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**THE ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE
 AND TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER
 PRESENT**

**“THE COMMITTEE OF UNION AND PROGRESS:
 FOUNDERS, IDEOLOGY, AND STRUCTURE”**

**ԳԻՆԵՋՈՒՆ-BOOK LAUNCH
 WITH PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN
 ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE**



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



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

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

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian said the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Armenia “has realized the importance of continuing Medical Education (CME) for health care professionals in Armenia. Accruing CME points is mandatory for all physicians practicing in Armenia after year 2021. Thus, quite important steps have already been taken in the Republic of Armenia. In this respect, the vision of the future is related to maximizing the CME system in Armenia to international standards, conclude CME credits with developed countries, ensure access to continuing education through the use of modern technologies, and digitalize the CME process.



Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian

“Hence, the objective is to lay a solid foundation for continued professional development. These steps are related to the creation, improvement or development of legal, financial, practical and technical means by the state. Having modern CME/CPD systems in place, makes it easier to have this recognized in the perspective of pan-European CME harmonization. Considering the fact that continuous professional development of health care providers is a key component of improving health care and that Armenia is the first country in the region to introduce the CME system as a mandatory requirement for a health care provider’s professional activity, international recognition of CME national credits will also promote the recruitment of highly qualified medical professionals to pursue their continuing education in the Republic of Armenia and receive internationally recognized credits,” he added.

Noted Avitsian, “We were planning to have this conference in an affordable manner with a nominal fee, but thanks to our sponsors we were able to make it free for registrants. We were planning to create networking between specialists, but we found out that there are internationally, even non-Armenian, famous specialists who are ready to come to Armenia and provide live sessions of training. We were planning to convince speakers and moderators to participate with minimal honoraria, but we discovered they ALL accepted to participate, out of their comfort zone dedicating their time and effort freely, some participating at their very inconvenient local time to make it easier for participants in Armenia. Thus, we could say we not only reached but exceeded all our expectations.”

“There will come a time, hopefully with normalization of the economic situation, when the participants will be able to participate with minimal registration fees, however as mentioned the goal of ICPD is to always make it affordable, with less expenses for registrants in Armenia and Artsakh,” concluded Avitsian.

Tchekmedyan said that for him, the GI field is not just his specialty but a calling. “GI is a mix between physical disease and the impact of feelings on the GI tract. Endoscopy is an instrument to approach (in other ways) unapproachably or extremely difficult to access diseases and immediately resolve them in a minimally invasive way. This allows us to solve the situation quickly and reliably and in harmony with the needs of our patients. Obviously it is an invasive procedure and we need to practice it with the highest skills to minimize the risks. Digestive diseases and endoscopy are my passion and my job.”

And to share his field with Armenian colleagues was a “dream,” he said. He explained that those who guided him in his current profession made such an impact on his life that he would like to pay it forward.

Tchekmedyan is the chief of endoscopy at Asociación Española, Montevideo-Uruguay and president of the Interamerican Society for Digestive Endoscopy. He has been involved in GI education and endoscopy activities as Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology at the state university in Uruguay for many years. He was the President for the 24th Panamerican Congress of Digestive Endoscopy (March 2020) and co-chair of the LoC for the second World Congress of Endoscopy – ENDO 2020. Now he sits on the steering committee for the third world congress of endoscopy to be held in Japan next year. He has worked with the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding radioprotection for patients and staff for many years. He is also an Aurora Forum Goodwill Ambassador.

He got his medical degree in Uruguay at the University of La República in Uruguay and completed his training in Spain and Chile. Before entering medical school, he studied Armenian history at the University of La Verne in the US, something he calls “an amazing experience academically if not an incredible experience, sharing education and living with students from all over the world.”

Tchekmedyan singled out the Armenian Association of Gastroenterology and the Armenian Association of Endoscopic Surgeons and GI, endoscopists, surgeons, pathologists among several professionals involved. “During more than 20 years of practice, I have learned from several of these international faculties, and they were my source of inspiration. Having this roster all together, supporting the education in Armenia is a dream come true. I can only thank all who get involved. May God bless each and all of them,” he added.

Avitsian praised Tchekmedyan for being able to gather such a roster of speakers, all for free. The speakers had prerecorded their talks but were present for questions. “A highlight of the conference was the keynote speech by Dr. John Belezikian, who through his talk shared some memories he had from Dr. Hovanessian, as well as the important topic of COVID-19,” he added.

Yaghjian offered some grim statistics about medical care providers in Armenia. According to 2017 data in Armenia, the latest available, the absolute number of workforce (doctors and nurses) employed at public, private, academic, research, higher and secondary vocational educational institutions was 29,760 and the absolute number of doctors including all specialties (including dentists) was 12,964 (43.51 per 10,000 population), which compared with 2011 is less by 526 – i.e. 13 490, (41 per 10,000 population), and for nurses by 1688, accounting 16 796 in 2017 (56.5 per 10,000 population). The overall concentration of active physicians for Armenia differs greatly across the capital city and peripheries. In 2017 the number was 57.8 per 10 000 population in Yerevan and only 21.4 in provinces (*marzes* in Armenian) (Lori). The lowest rates are seen in Gegharkunik (12.7 per 10 000 population) and Armavir (13.6)

Yaghjian is a specialist in plastic and reconstructive surgery. In addition to his own full time surgical practice, he offers his expertise as a consulting surgeon to the leading general and sub-specialty surgeons in Armenia and Karabakh. He is the former vice rector of the Postgraduate and Continuing Medical Education at Yerevan State Medical University from 2007-20011, he is Associate Professor at the university Hospital’s at Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. In 2010 he was awarded the Gold Medal for Excellence in Teaching from Yerevan State Medical University (devoted to 90 anniversaries). In 2011 he was honored with the Drastamat Kanaian Gold Medal from the Ministry of Defense

of the Republic of Armenia.

Over the past 10 years, Yaghjian has taken part in educational and professional training programs at renowned medical centers and universities around the world— University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, Cornell University, University of Salzburg, among them. In 2008, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Yale University, which he has had to postpone due to the extraordinary demands of his thriving surgical practice and teaching commitments. In 2013 he was again awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in Boston University Medical School.

He served as Director of Medical Programs at the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia and as Acting Director of the Isotope Production Center in Armenia from start to completion from 2011-2015.

Dr. Raffy Hovanessian’s widow, Vicki Shoghag, expressed her delight with and pride in the program.

“The first Dr. Raffy Hovanessian International Digestive Disease Virtual Conference was a tremendous success having speakers from five different continents, 1000 attendees as well as 64 physician speakers. Heartfelt thanks to the visionary organizers Dr. Ara Babloyan, Dr. Rafi Avitsian, and Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian, Dr. Asadur Tchekmedyan and Dr. John Bilezikian. The mission of the Symposium was that education is a pathway for credentialing the healthcare professionals of Armenia and Artsakh. Thank you for making Dr. Hovanessian’s vision of Continuing Medical Education a reality through this stellar Symposium,” she said.

FAR Executive Director Garnik Nanagulian similarly expressed his satisfaction with the program. “FAR’s sponsorship of this particular ICPD conference has a special meaning to us, because of our connection to a longtime hero of the Fund for Armenian Relief, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian. He was a great figure in FAR’s history, a champion of many initiatives FAR launched in Armenia and Artsakh, a caring and dedicated mentor.”

ICPD, Avitsian Paid Tribute to FAR And Hovanessian.

“ICPD is cognizant of its duty towards honoring all those who spent a significant portion of their career in helping to improve the healthcare and physician education in Armenia and Artsakh. Dedicating a conference series to such individuals is just a natural response for such an organi-



Dr. Raffy Hovanessian

zation as ICPD. Dr. Raffy Hovanessian was a shining beacon and a perfect symbol of how Armenian physicians and scientists living in diaspora, should not forget their ancestry and hear the calling to assist in expanding access to high standard health care in Armenia. FAR has also been a leader in transforming healthcare professionals into medical ambassadors in their communities. We are happy that FAR has seen the value of collaboration with ICPD, the result of

which will be better preparation of physicians in Armenia,” Avitsian said.

According to Avitsian, the ICPD “relies on live conferences, online modules, workshops and simulations to offer the latest advances in healthcare to specialists, not only in Armenia and Artsakh, but also regional countries and beyond. ICPD is growing and continuously increasing the number of educational resources and quality conferences to physicians, nurses and other healthcare providers.”

COVID is never far from the picture, unfortunately. Avitsian added, “The ICPD is continuously in contact with the Ministry of Health in Armenia to identify educational needs in healthcare and plan its activities accordingly. Regarding COVID, the first international virtual conference addressed the COVID pandemic in July 2020 in which more than 1000 participants benefited from the COVID Pandemic- Lessons Learnt conference. Since COVID is a disease affecting many organs, each specialty conference naturally includes relevant COVID issues specific to that specialty. In the recent conference, Dr. John Belezikian, who presented the keynote speech, addressed COVID in gastroenterology topic.”

Avitsian said that in addition to the seminar in 2020, COVID issues and continuous educational programs are “continuously being added to the website for members to review.”

Another medical issue facing the medical community in Armenia and Artsakh is war-related injuries. “Regarding the war injuries, this is also on top of the priority list. There were two important educational conferences in this regard, the ‘Essentials of Pain Management After Trauma’ presented in March of this year addressed specifically acute and chronic pain after trauma during war, and the two-day virtual ‘Post-Conflict Rehabilitation’ conference organized in collaboration with Therapists for Armenia and Armenian American Sports Medicine Coalition. These two conferences were very well received by participants and was useful to help those injured in the recent conflict in Armenia and Artsakh.”

Tchekmedyan noted that he hopes to help Armenia deal with COVID too, based on his native Uruguay’s efforts. “Uruguay did well dealing with the pandemic because of years of building a solid and accessible health system. In this way we are trying to cooperate via the Minister of Health of Uruguay and with the vice minister that is also of Armenian origin, Jose Luis Satjian. In fact, via the Uruguayan consul in Armenia, Eduardo Rosenbrock, there are some ongoing projects to see the possibility of cooperation.”

Dr. Hambardzum Simonyan, Deputy Country Director and Health Programs Director for FAR in Armenia, noted, “since its inception in 1988 the continuing medical education was on the top of FAR’s healthcare programs agenda. FAR has been one of the pioneers in implementation of various CPDs’ in Armenia and. The recent initiative by ICPD was one of the examples. Great conference, with the most actual topics relating to the gastrointestinal diseases (one of the most common and problematics in Armenia), which were delivered by world famous specialists. These kinds of conferences have at least two tangible outcomes — knowledge improvement and network development.”

Concluded Nanagulian, “ICPD is becoming a major forum not only for doctors in Armenia, Artsakh, but for every medical doctor everywhere in the World. I see it becoming very soon one of the most wanted conferences in hot topic items of the modern medicine – for the international medical community.”

To learn more about ICPD, visit ICPD.am.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Patapoutian, Julius Win Nobel Prize in Medicine for Work on Heat and Touch

PRIZE, from page 1

They wouldn't say whether drug and vaccine discoveries against SARS-CoV-2 had been nominated.

Julius and Patapoutian's work will be used in future drug developments

Red Hot Chili Receptors

We move about in the world as though it were second nature — and, indeed, it is.

But until this novel research into proprioception, the Nobel Committee says we had yet to work out how temperature and mechanical stimuli get converted into electrical impulses in the human nervous system.

That is how we sense and perceive temperature, and even pain, and why those senses and perceptions are different for many people.

Some of us feel the cold more than others. Some of us can walk over burning coals, and others simply can't stand the heat.

And it's the way that the nervous system interprets those electrical impulses that determines how we react and feel.

Perhaps that's why David Julius landed on capsaicin as a basis for his research.

Capsaicin is a chemical found in chili

peppers. It's what makes chilis burn the nerve endings on our tongues or our eyes if we touch them after cutting up a chili.

Julius used that chemical irritant and the burning sensation it creates "to identify a sensor in the nerve endings of the skin that responds to heat."

His work led to the discovery of TRPV1, an ion channel that is activated by painful heat. Ion channels are proteins that allow ions, such as sodium, potassium, calcium, to pass through the cell membrane. They are vital for the nervous system, the contraction of the heart and skeletal muscle and other physiological functions.

And this particular one allows us to understand pain just a little bit better.

And Novel Receptors

Ardem Patapoutian, meanwhile, used "pressure-sensitive cells to discover a novel class of sensors that respond to mechanical stimuli in the skin and internal organs," the committee writes.

Patapoutian's team switched 72 individual genes in a cell off and on, one by one, and poked that cell with a small pipette (a micropipette) to observe how the genes within the cell reacted.

They first found a gene that appeared to

be responsible for pain, because when they "silenced" that gene, the cell was "rendered insensitive" when the researchers poked it.

Then they found a second, similar gene.

The two genes were named Piezo1 and Piezo2. "Further studies firmly established that Piezo1 and Piezo2 are ion channels that are directly activated" when pressure is exerted on cell membranes, writes the Nobel Committee.

Their Work Together

It's now said that TRP and Piezo channels influence a range of physiological functions that depend on how we sense temperature or "mechanical stimuli" — that could be the prick of a vaccine needle — and how we adapt to those sensations.

Placed together, the discoveries have been influential for our understanding about core body temperature, inflammatory pain, protective reflexes, respiration, blood pressure, and urination.

"This knowledge," says the Nobel Committee, "is being used to develop treatments for a wide range of disease conditions, including chronic pain."

David Julius is a biochemist and professor of physiology at the University of California, San Francisco. In 2020, Julius was

awarded the Kavli Prize in Neuroscience for this same body of research. It was cited as having created new approaches for the development of safe and targeted painkillers that may have lower addictive properties than opioids.

Ardem Patapoutian, a professor of neuroscience at Scripps Research, an institute in California in the US, shared that 2020 Kavli Prize with Julius. It wasn't the first time: In 2019, they shared the Rosenstiel Award for Distinguished Work in Basic Medical Research. And now they share a Nobel Prize.

[Patapoutian was born in Beirut and is the younger child of the writer and playwright Sarkis Vahaken (Patapoutian) and teacher and principal Haigouhi Adjemian-Patapoutian. Vahaken is an active member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party who is the author of a number of Armenian-language novels (e.g. Arshile Gorky; Beautiful Hadjin), plays, short stories and translations of poetry from French. He and his family moved to Los Angeles as a result of the Lebanese civil war.]

Chairman Menendez Presses Ambassador To Turkey Nominee Flake on Genocide Affirmation

FLAKE, from page 7

commitments overall, as well as other malign actions in the region and undermining human rights at home... We also have seen him aiding and abetting the attacks against Armenia."

Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) noted that Senator Flake will "have a difficult balancing act" as there are a lot of issues to "hold Turkey accountable for, from Cyprus to the repression of religious minorities, to ongoing tensions with Greece, to Armenian Genocide recognition."

In his written testimony, Senator Flake stated that: "If confirmed, I will encourage Turkey to support efforts to find a sustainable long-term solution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and encourage peaceful and diplomatic resolutions to disagreements in the Eastern Mediterranean."



Sen. Robert Menendez

"We applaud Chairman Menendez's commitment to human rights, democratic values and the importance of US affirmation of the Armenian Genocide," said Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. "In addition, it remains critically important for the US to continue to support the Armenian people in the face of ongoing aggression and threats emanating from Azerbaijan and Turkey," Ardouny added.

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Arts & Culture

Tateon

A Mystical, Musical Drink Is Launched

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armen Karapetyan was born in Vardenis in 1970 and graduated from the vocal department of the Komitas Conservatory. The first time I met him in 2000, in Paris, he had just started his career as a baritone with his wife, soprano Lianna Haroutounian. In the ensuing decades, Lianna gained fame in the Western opera world, but Armen moved from music to another, slightly unexpected field.

Armen, you were working out of Armenia for 24 years. How did you find yourself in France?

In 1995, the Academic choir of Armenia, led by Hovhannes Chekijian, in which I had sung, toured various European countries, including France. From a young age, thanks



A bottle of Tateon

to literature and cinema, France was a dream for me, and when we got there, we decided to settle in that country. As a young man, unfortunately, you often do not see the future in your country, on the other hand, these were difficult years in Armenia. Since 1997, Lianna and I have always been in France, where we were very busy with our profession, we went to many auditions. I have perfected my vocal skills with various teachers, and for that purpose I often went to Italy, particularly taking lessons from the famous operatic bass Bonaldo Giaiotti.

What did France give you?

First of all, France re-educated the inner person among us, who may have had some merits, some talent, but all that was added to the discipline towards work and human and professional relations.

Many people go out to the big world and make a purposeful career, but you seem to be very calm about it.

see TATEON, page 14



Installation view of Connecting Threads / Survivor Objects at Tufts University Art Galleries, 2021, featuring in foreground, a *saghavard* or priest's hat of 1822 from Tokat, and in the background, at left an 18th-19th century altar curtain from India or Iran, and at right, one made by Hakob of Tokat from 1766 (Photo Julia Featheringill)

Armenian Church Textiles Displayed at Tufts University

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

MEDFORD, Mass. — The Aidekman Arts Center of the Tufts University Art Galleries presents an exhibition of Armenian church textiles from August 5 to December 5 called "Connecting Threads / Survivor Objects." It is a small but varied collection of 11 embroidered, block printed and painted objects that are rare surviving legacies of Armenian culture. The exhibition was organized by Christina Maranci, Arthur H. Dadian and Ara T. Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture, and Chiara Pidotella, Research Curator.

Dr. Maranci related the origins of the exhibit: "Basically it came about by me poking around through the website of the Armenian Museum and also the Museum of Fine Arts and noticing the wealth of liturgical textiles. I thought it would be a nice way to exhibit Armenian art by looking at textiles because of the ways in which textiles speak to the early modern experience. I talked about it with Dina Deitsch, the director of the art galleries. That is how it came about and it seemed like a really great opportunity to teach."

The materials for the exhibition emerged from the work conducted in Maranci's spring 2021 seminar, *The Threads of Survival*, which included ten undergraduate and graduate students. She said, "My intention was never for this to be a large show. It was always to be something that was the product of student research. The crucial thing actually was taking objects that had been almost completely unstudied, barely catalogued, and to do deep research on them. Each student was assigned a single object, and had a chance to do that kind of careful work with a single object over the course of a semester."

Deitsch said, "For us as an academic art space, what was exciting was the collaboration that we were hoping to do with Christina and Chiara, and the fact that the students' scholarship was able to have a physical realization in an exhibition. I think it was a wonderful collaboration between the Armenian Museum of America and eventually the MFA [Museum of Fine Arts] that Chiara managed from start to finish."

Deitsch said that such a collaboration between students, faculty and the galleries had not been done recently, though historically there had been such efforts. One of the things that shifted was that Tufts acquired the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and a stronger relationship was established with the MFA. "So we were thinking through different models. This was almost a prototype of a model that was really successful and exciting. This was something we tried to link to the galleries, to connect the faculty's research, but we had not been able to do it so profoundly and robustly. This was the first iteration of that," Deitsch stated.



Curtain by unknown maker, India or Iran, 18th-19th century, resist-dyed, printed and painted cotton, which includes the inscription in Armenian of Witness Mahemed (photo courtesy Armenian Museum of America)

Stockton University Gallery Exhibit Reflects on the Armenian Genocide Through the World Of Art

By Margarita Ivanova

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP, N.J. — Everyone processes trauma in a different way, whether by suppressing it, or by speaking out to the world. Ryann Casey, an adjunct professor of art at Stockton University, is an advocate of the latter approach, and as such, has spent the past two years as guest curator preparing *Before, After: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide*. The show opened on September 7 and is set to display in Stockton University's Art Gallery until October 17, both in person and virtually.

"The things that are hardest to talk about are the things we should be facing head on," said Casey in an interview with the *Mirror-Spectator*. "Don't allow it to hide behind you in the shadows affecting your work. Confront it because silence is the worst part about trauma."

The exhibit consists of the works of 11 Armenian artists, each one possessing a unique Armenian cultural history within their families. Casey talked about her approach to curation, in which she emphasized that storytelling should always be in the voice of the people who represent the community.

"I look to make sure that it's not someone who's just helicoptering themselves into a community to take



Marsha Obadashian in front of one of her abstract paintings (photo Karen Klein)

a photograph and then leave, because that's sensationalization and exploitation in most cases," she said.

Providing artists and creators with a safe space allows them to tell their stories in more personal ways than the average person would. Casey says that communities should be represented in their voices as much as possible.

"It's the idea of passing the microphone, whether that is through words or pictures. We should be trying to pass the mike [microphone] to the best of our ability. I don't want to tell someone else's story. I want to hear it from them."

Casey's initial connection to Armenian history came from exploring different art that stemmed from loss — specifically seeing how the artist responded to loss on a community and individual level.

see REFLECTIONS, page 16

see TUFTS, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Tateon: A Mystical, Musical Drink Is Launched

TATEON, from page 13

Making a career for singers is important. We are all careerists when we are young. But for me, my career has never been a top goal. It was more important to understand myself, to find myself. Finding yourself is not about achieving success and getting rich, to say one day that I am a great singer. Self-knowledge is much more important to me. From the age of 17-18 I became interested in mysticism, yoga, meditation. Many people told me that I was strangely calm. In fact, that peace is the work of years. The question is, what is more valuable in life — would being on the big stage make me happier than, say, sitting and talking to you like this? That is why I did not limit myself only to my profession. When the euphoria of the first years in France passed, I realized that it would be right to do something else as well. I have always had a sense of business; I still did something in Armenia during the crisis years. We were two singers at home, and I always saw Lianna ahead of me. She was always more successful in the auditions, taking prizes in competitions. A few years later, I realized that it was impossible for the two of us to move forward, so I left singing.

Wasn't it painful to do so?

To some extent. There was the issue of raising a family; our son was growing up, but I decided to move on to other activities, although singing has always been with me, until now. There was a time when my son lived in Caen, Normandy, and Lianna and I lived in Marseilles. I decided that it was not right for my son to grow up away from his parents, so I went to Caen and bought an Iranian restaurant there. Adding a few Armenian dishes, a unique Armenian-Iranian restaurant was created, which I ran for nine years.

Lianna Haroutounian is a sought-after famous opera singer today. She is constantly on tour. Isn't it difficult to be the husband of a famous singer?

(Laughing). This is a very interesting

question. It was difficult until the time when I was striving for a career, because no matter how dear a person is next to you, when you see him or her successful internationally, being a person in the same profession, naturally you want to see yourself there, too. But now I absolutely do not have that complex as a singer. Now the difficulty is seeing this person with such a career always under stress to do her best, at least keeping on the same level all the time.

When we met in Yerevan three years ago, you said that you want to start a business in Armenia. Recently I tasted a new Armenian alcoholic apple drink and then I learned that you are the producer of that brand new product. How was the idea born and how did it go?

Before 2018, when I was singing at festivals, mainly secondary roles, I felt that I was far from something, missing a kind of happiness. In 2018, after all that had happened in Armenia, it seemed that we were going to build a strong country and we should all participate in that. Already in June, Lianna had performed at the Yerevan Philharmonic hall (I should say that because of that one concert, she refused 10 performances of the Opera Bastille in Paris). And in the fall, when the apple ripened, I noticed in my native Vardenis that the villagers could not sell it and often fertilized the soil with an apple harvest. They also often cut the apple trees, because it is a headache for them. I was shocked after living in the Calvados region of France, I saw that every single apple was consumed there. And I immediately had the idea to produce apple brandy, calvados, in Armenia. My younger brother Henrik and I started the initial production of two tons of apples in our sister's garage to understand if we could get calvados in Armenia. After buying those two tons, I realized that we are on a path that will take us all to a pleasant destination. People were going to dump the fruit they had grown, but now they are selling it, so a mutually beneficial deal is

being made.

With the help of our relatives, we squeezed the apple, distilled it, got the alcohol, and filled the oak barrels. Calvados seemed ready, but my mind was wandering. Why calvados, and not something completely different? And as often during



Henrik and Armen Karapetyan

meditations, the idea arose to create a new apple drink. I started experimenting with the alcohol we got. I probably got 40 different types of drinks, but each time I felt that something was wrong, until one day I thought that the apple tree's wood could be used in the drink. When I first put the apple branches in the oven and felt the sweet smell of smoke, I immediately imagined it in the drink. Eureka, I found what I wanted! I managed to create a new drink, only from apple fruit and wood. By the way, all that is also connected with music. Every time I wanted to create something, I would walk around listening to Beethoven or Wagner's overtures, and those thoughts always brought me to the music. There is a lot of music in our drinks. We were supported

in this case by our closest friend, Lianna Haroutounian, who believed in our idea, made a significant investment, and last year we bought 60 tons of apples. It was like a festival, when people brought apples to us with their old Soviet Zhiguli cars. I felt that we were doing something that was

from my heart, that there was love and beauty in all that. Some said why not call it just "Armenian calvados" or "Armenian liqueur," but since it is a new drink, it differs from the rest by the production technology, so it is better to give this completely new product a new name.

And that name is "Tateon." Where does this name come from?

The drink was already ready, with its yellow color, special taste and smell. I started looking for names. I was attracted to mystics, but my son, Vram, said that it would be better to associate the name with my birthplace. I read that my

ancestors are from the settlement of Tateon or Diadin in the Ayrarat province of Greater Armenia, who joined the Russian army during the Russian-Turkish war of 1828. However, under the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, when the Russians returned Tateon to the Turks, most of the settlement's Armenians were forced to emigrate to Eastern Armenia, settling mainly in what is now Vardenis. Tateon was remembered by Movses Khorenatsi, noting that in 378 a large number of Greek soldiers were killed in the Tateon area due to the war and were buried there. The clergy called that part "dieri tun — the house of corpses," and Tateon gradually became Diadin, but we chose the original name. I think it is a valid name for the product.

Yes, both in terms of historical memory and sounding well. It will soon be a year since you started production.

Last year we procured 40 tons of apples, just during the war. When Azerbaijani drones flew over Vardenis, we continued our work. Sometimes our defense is underestimated, but I have witnessed many times in Vardenis how our air defense unmistakably hit the drones that invaded Armenia's airspace. Both sons of one of our working women were at the front, and she kept working with tears in her eyes. Thank God they both came back.

And where is it possible to get "Tateon"?

Of course, in Vardenis, as well as in the shops and the airport in the center of Yerevan. We will try to enter the international market and have online sales. We are going to take part in beverage festivals in France and the US.

I wish "Tateon" success. It is really interesting - a drink created and produced by the singer.

Let me say something at the end, from the field of mysticism. It is known that living bodies are formed during the fermentation of apple juice. I imagined them dancing a waltz in pairs. Billions of living bodies dancing the waltz. And in those barrels, where the apple juice was fermented, we put loudspeakers, and for 14 hours I made them "listen" to classical music. Numerous waltzes from Strauss to Aram Khachaturian. I do not know how much it helped, but I am sure that the drink also has a memory, and the bottled "Tateons" keep the spirit of the high music!

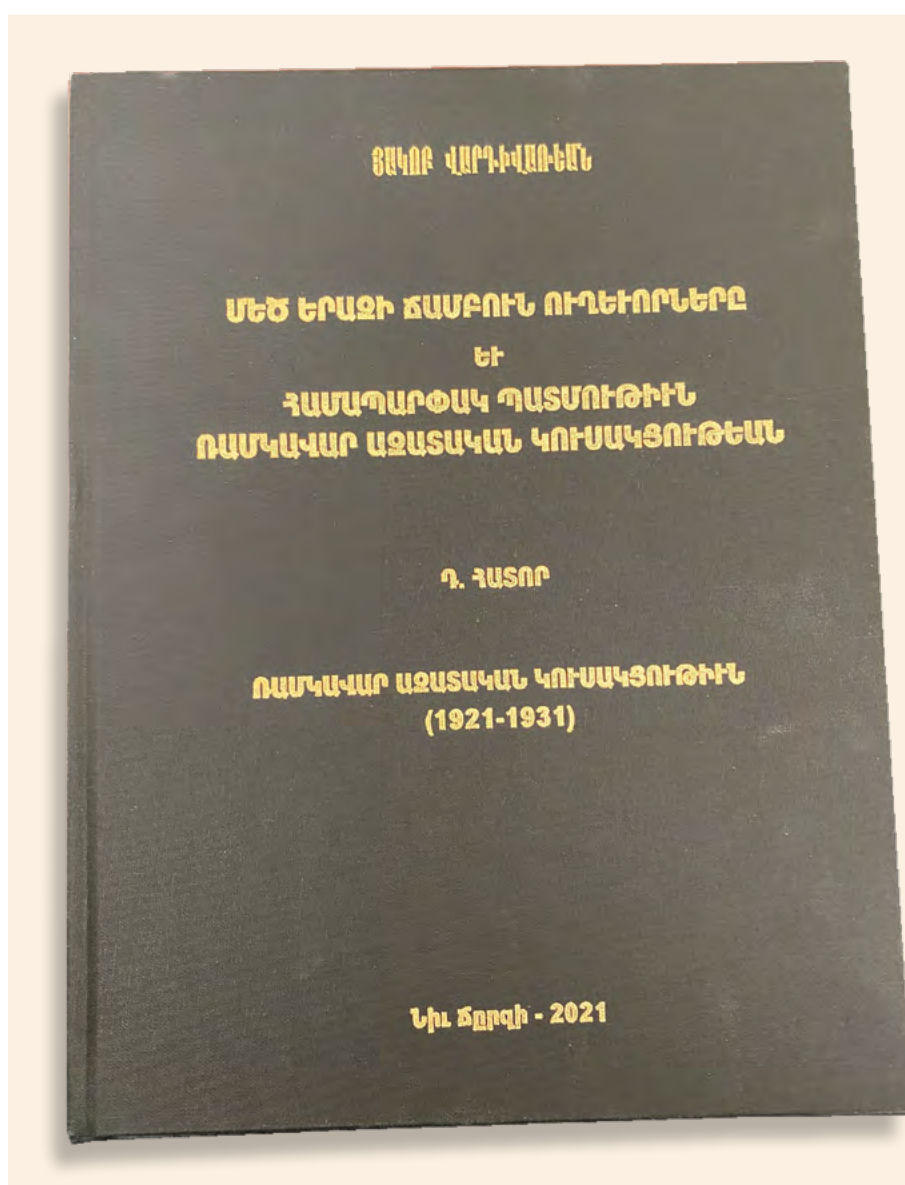
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ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Church Textiles Displayed at Tufts University

TUFTS, from page 13

It is also an unusual exhibition for the galleries because they usually display contemporary art, from the 20th century to the present, and don't often show historical works, Deitsch said. The Armenian focus adds to its uniqueness.

With the exception of two objects, a fragment of a late 18th-century altar curtain possibly from Constantinople, loaned by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts for the show, and a facsimile of a Gospel book, from Tufts University's Tisch Library, the remainder of the exhibition consists of textiles from the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown. There are many Armenian textile collections elsewhere in the United States but Maranci pointed out that these textiles are delicate objects, making transportation complex, so the choice of Boston-area institutions was intended to allow students easy access to working with items.

Maranci examined what was in these collections and selected suitable objects. She explained: "I chose things that have inscriptions, for the most part, because I wanted students to be able to do the research about where the items came from. I wanted objects in general to have iconography, so they could study where this artistic tradition comes from, and I wanted to have a range of objects, so that we could talk about the dif-



Shurchar (cope or priest's robe), by unknown maker in Surabaya, Indonesia, dated from the late 19th century to as late as 1933, with silk, metallic thread, machine lace trim, metal clasps; lining printed cotton and silk (photo courtesy Armenian Museum of America)

ferent kinds of textiles and how they were used. It was deliberate and I was glad to get the okay from both museums to be able to do that."

As only two of the students could read Armenian, reading the texts was a group effort involving the Armenian Museum staff, Maranci herself, and her graduate student Erin Piñon, who in fact co-taught the class. Many of the inscriptions are in *gabrik*, with ligatures or combined letters, and many letters are also dropped, making them difficult to decipher even for readers of Armenian.

Maranci used the textiles as a starting point for the students to learn about various dimensions of the Armenian experience. In class, she said, "We talked not just about history and artisanship but about liturgy, and how the object functions within its liturgical context. We talked about iconography and the viewers' experience. We had clergy come and lecture to us. I think it was meaningful for the students to have this rounded sense about how the textiles functioned."

The exhibition includes "survivor objects" as part of its title because the communities which created them no longer exist. They have disappeared or have been exterminated, and often even the physical traces of the Armenians have been eliminated. Consequently, Maranci said that the class talked a lot about cultural genocide. The brochure accompanying the exhibition mentions not only the 19th century Hamidian massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman

Empire and the Armenian Genocide of the World War I period, but also ongoing destruction of Armenian culture by Azerbaijan as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakh war of 2020.

The Textiles

The students uncovered interesting information in their studies, as each item has its own story. Maranci gave the example of a cope (priest's robe) or *shurchar* from Surabaya, which is made of a special Indonesian fabric called *prada*, gilded with gold leaf, dust or thread. She said, "We had a student working on it who happens to be of Indonesian background who happens to be half-Indonesian, and so had a particular interest in this region. The cope is a product of the Armenian trading colony that was established there in the 18th century, and into the 19th century. She was able to track down what we believe is the family of the patron who produced it and whose name is on the clasp of the *shurchar*. This is the Apkarian or Apar family, very famous in the context of Indonesia and Surabaya in particular."

The students approached the liturgical vestments, curtains and objects in different ways, depending on their personal interests and expertise. Maranci pointed out that the largest piece in the exhibition, a liturgical curtain made in Yevdokia (Tokat), was destined, according to its inscription, for the church of Surp Kevork (Saint George) in Mardin. This church, unlike many others, survived but was listed as one of *Europa Nostra's* seven most endangered sites in 2013. Maranci said, "My student in the School of Fine Arts, who was taking my seminar, digitally reattached the curtain to its original interior space in a wonderful way."

A potentially controversial conclusion concerns a cotton ecclesiastical curtain which is resist-dyed, printed and painted in India or Iran in the 18th or 19th century. Maranci and her student, Atineh Movsesian, consulted with people who work on Isfahan and New Julfa, in Iran, and experts on India, but they found nothing obvious indicating it

belongs to artistic traditions in those areas. It is an unusual curtain with a *huqqa* (hookah) smoker alongside traditional images of saints, ecclesiastics, and Adam and Eve, among others. Christ is featured in profile. Most unusual, however, is an inscription which reads in Armenian "Witness Mahemed" and a seal bearing a hand below the inscription to its right.

Maranci cautiously speculates, "I may be wrong, but I think what we might be looking at, based on the iconography and the inscription, is evidence for the longtime tradition that the Prophet Muhammad insured the safety of Armenian Christian sites in and around Jerusalem. We know this tradi-



Installation view of Connecting Threads / Survivor Objects at Tufts University Art Galleries, 2021 (Photo Julia Featheringill)

tion from Armenian medieval sources. This might be a very late visualization of that decree, or edict, of the prophet."

She added that this shows how much work remains to be done on such curtains. This particular object had previously been entirely unstudied. She added, "If I am right, then we have precious unique testimony for something that was known from sources but not in visual terms." She went on to raise more interesting questions, such as what community made this object, and, if indeed it referred to the famous "Oath of the Prophet," why was this important for that community to this extent?

The Installation

Maranci and her students provided the texts for the installation of the exhibition. She said, "This was the first time that I was involved in the installation of a professional show, where there are discussions about how the walls should look, what color the paint should be, and so on. There is a lot that goes into it and it was really a conversation. Sometimes I was a part of it and sometimes I wasn't." She provided ideas about how the accompanying map should look and what made sense about placement of the liturgical textiles which originally would have been seen in a church, moving about in ceremonies, and not statically hanging from walls or under vitrines. There was an attempt, she said, to give a sense of the pre-modern meaning of the objects by avoiding a sterile, traditionally white gallery space.

Pidatella, Research Curator at the Tufts University Art Galleries, said that the exhibition was two years in the making. The art gallery has its own professional staff, and she represented the latter in supervising the students together with Maranci. She said, "I was the project manager, making sure that everything was going well and on track. It was a group effort, as we all have different skills to contribute."

Maranci said, "Chiara is a scholar of Italian art, with a doctorate in this field. She helped us navigate through the museums, the students and the gallery, and did a lot of the legwork. It is a huge job. Even with a small exhibition like this, there are a lot of moving pieces. She was incredible in making it all work and also in putting together the guide."

The Armenian Museum of America was the first institutional partner, and then Pidatella, Deitsch and Maranci visited the Museum of Fine Arts to talk with the curator there about lending a piece. "Unfortunately," Pidatella said, "COVID hit, and it was not easy to work on the loans, but all the partners were really eager to get this exhibition out. It is so relevant, considering the current situation [i.e. in Artsakh]."

"The Armenian Museum of America was so generous," Pidatella said. "There was a pandemic but it accommodated the students so they could go there and study objects in person. They could look at the technique and make a lot of considerations which they could not have done just by looking at an image in a book. Unless you are really standing in front of the objects, you lose all of these dimensions."

Pidatella pointed to the two large altar curtains and said, "We did not want to hang them on a wall, because of the stress. We are always mindful about preserving these textiles,

so we came up with these slanted displays. We were also looking at the Met's Armenia! Exhibition a couple of years ago for ideas. We are not the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art], but we were really committed and invested." She said that everything, even the lighting, was meticulously calculated, and during the installation process, officials from the two lending institutions were also present to supervise.

While Tufts does not have the facilities to carry out conservation treatment, fortunately, the Museum of Fine Arts decided to do some work on its loan item, which appears to be a fragment of an altar curtain from the late 18th or early 19th century. Pidatella said that the conservator during this process discovered some traces of wax and oils, and this says a lot about the original location of this embroidered textile. Susan Lind-Sinanian, textile curator at the Armenian Museum, did some reinforcement of the textiles loaned by this museum before they came to Tufts.

Viewing and Events

Pidatella said, "Our goal is to reach out not only to the Armenian community, but to the larger Tufts community and the Boston communities. It is a one-of-a-kind exhibition." The exhibition actually ended up taking place a year earlier than originally scheduled due to the effects of the Covid



Dr. Chiara Pidatella in front of an altar curtain loaned by the Armenian Museum of America (photo Aram Arkun)

pandemic, and gallery hours are back to normal (Tues.-Sun. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.) at the Koppelman Gallery of the Aidekman Arts Center at Tufts University (40 Talbot Avenue, Medford). For more information, see <https://artgalleries.tufts.edu/blog/news/2021/01/30/connecting-threads-survivor-objects/>.

There are a number of events connected with the exhibition, including a November 18 workshop with Samantha Fields, a faculty member from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and a closing tour with Dr. Helen Evans, who recently retired from the Met, on December 5. For more information, see the aforementioned Tufts website.

A video made at Tufts, which can be viewed either at the entrance to the exhibition or [online](#), features Maranci providing basic background information accompanied by maps and images, and visitors can download an [educational guide](#) on their smart phones. There is also a brochure available for visitors which includes descriptions of the displayed items and an essay by Piñon on the block-printed church curtains. The brochure places items in historical context with insights into their relevance.

Galleries director Deitsch concluded, "We haven't had a general non-student public in a long time, so we are thrilled with this." Maranci in turn said, "I hope it is reflected in the show that this material connects with so many different worlds. It isn't just a tiny, obscure culture, but is one that has a lot of power to speak to a lot of different kinds of people. That was made abundantly clear from my experience with the students and their own experience with the objects."

ARTS & CULTURE

Stockton University Art Exhibit Reflects on the Armenian Genocide

REFLECTIONS, from page 13

“The whole goal of the show was to talk about grief in a more personalized way. It’s about moving outward and seeing how we look at the grief over generations and through a community,” Casey said.

Casey has been a photographer for most of her life, as well as a freelance art curator for the past 10 years. She has spent the last five years focusing on lost trauma and memory throughout her exhibits, in hopes of creating a safe, encouraging atmosphere.

She spends years researching and reaching out to a variety of artists before putting a show together. Jackie Kazarian and Marsha Odabashian are two of the talented creators that Casey happened to encounter.

Kazarian is a Chicago-based visual artist who primarily works with painting and video. Her Armenian background shapes her work, which uses a combination of abstraction and realism to capture sentimental



“Project 1915” by Jackie Kazarian (photo James Prinz)

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 10 — Armenian Business Network Presents Boston premiere of the film “Gate to Heaven” Sunday, 2:30 p.m. Director Jivan Avetisyan will be present. West Newton Cinema, West Newton. Purchase tickets online. Tickets \$25. COVID-19 prevention measures will be strictly enforced in accordance to Massachusetts Department of Health Advisory and Guidelines. For more info about the event, please contact armenianbusinessnetwork@gmail.com.

OCTOBER 13 — Sts. Vartanantz & Hye Pointe Golf Outing @ Butter Brook Golf Club, Westford, MA 10:30 AM Shotgun Start; Annual Scholarship Fundraiser. Open to all Golfers of all skill level. Meal and Awards. Any questions call Mark Kazanjian at 508-633-7447 or go to website: Home (stsvartanantz.com)

OCTOBER 16 — St. James 74th Annual Bazaar – Noon to 6 pm. Armenian Food and Pastries by PRE-ORDER ONLY. Enjoy OUTDOOR SEATING under our large tent (No indoor seating). Browse our St. James Marketplace! St. James Artisans Craft Table, Armenian Items, and more. Online Silent Auction. \$100 Raffle. For full details and to order meals and pastries starting Oct. 1st, visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar, or call the Church office. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com.

OCTOBER 24 — The Armenian Museum of America’s seventh Online Concert featuring young musicians from the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. This free event is sponsored by the Dadourian Foundation. Streaming online at 2:00 pm via the Museum’s Facebook page, YouTube Channel and website: www.armenianmuseum.org/concerts

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@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org

DECEMBER 4 and DECEMBER 5 — Holy Trinity 2021 “Grab and Go” Christmas Bazaar. Saturday and Sunday, Holy Trinity Armenian Church grounds, 145 Brattle St, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

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.

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 14 — Screening of Documentary Film “45 Days: The Fight for a Nation” from 6:45 pm at SVA Theatre, 333 West 23rd Street, New York. Q&A with Director Emile Ghessen to follow. In partnership with Cultural Impact Foundation. Tickets (\$55) online: <https://45daysfilmmnyc.eventbrite.com/> Proceeds to benefit Armenian charities. For more info: geeserm@hotmail.co.uk

Armenian images, referencing churches, landscapes, and symbols.

“I believe that abstraction and overt configuration can live together in the same piece,” she said.

Her most famous piece, “Project 1915,” encapsulates all of these unique features, including symbols living within the landscape. The 11.5 x 26 foot painting was made to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide, and promote awareness to the culture and tragedy.

The piece shares a common theme with all of her other work — unifying different motifs to create a story. Kazarian’s work depicts a series of ancient churches, including some reference to ancient Armenian maps. The names of villages targeted during the genocide are written phonetically in Western Armenian. At the bottom of the painting, you can see two hands gesturing outwards in reference to her grandmother’s gesture when she was praying.

“She was an evangelical Christian, and growing up she took care of us [her and her siblings]. We always had to keep silent when we saw her praying gesture,” Kazarian said. “I thought of that being sort of a gesture of resignation; a gesture of receiving grace, and trying to receive acceptance.”

Encapsulating personal experience and family history in paintings has allowed Kazarian to connect with her audience on a much more emotional level.

“When I present these large pieces, I enjoy when they’re looking for the names of their families in the different villages of their ancestors. These are villages that no longer exist,” Kazarian said. “It surprises me a lot. Everyone has different associations that they identify with, whether it’s a color or a feeling.”

Marsha Odabashian, whose work is found in Ryann Casey’s exhibit, has also generated many connections with her family’s heritage and the audience. Her most famous art technique itself dates back to an Armenian tradition that is hundreds of years old — using red onion skins as dye.

It wasn’t until after art school that Odabashian truly got to explore her Armenian roots within the world of art. “I went through a very Western approach at art school. We weren’t taught to experiment with cultural heritage at all.”

The technique originally stemmed from brainstorming more natural, less expensive ways to use paint throughout her work.

“I started the technique in graduate school and a large part of it started by thinking of ways to use less paint. I was a painting major so I wanted to save the money and resources,” said Odabashian.

It reminded her of her childhood. Memories soon came flooding back as she con-

quered the canvas with the revolutionary vegetable.

“This was a period when I was becoming more interested in Armenian themes. I had always been fascinated by the onion skin dye since I was a child because my mother used to dye Easter eggs with it,” Odabashian said.

The dual cultured artist used several sets of painting techniques that transformed her art into a mix of modernist abstraction and realism. This gave her the opportunity to create narratives centered around anthropomorphic creatures, something exhibited in Casey’s show. Odabashian said that the abstract fantasies originally started because she began using the areas of the paint that seemed like they wanted a narrative.

“It seemed like something was missing,” Odabashian said. “It all pulled together with the onion skins because I started dropping them right onto the canvas, and looking at the stains, and developing the narratives happening within them. They were like little interactions between these anthropomorphic creatures.”

The history behind these creatures appears in Armenian manuscripts and some of the stone sculptures that depicted famous Armenian myths and folktales.

Much like these myths and stories, Odabashian’s four grandparents who lived through the genocide, play a vital part in her work. When asked what she would do if she had the chance to see them again, she said this: “I would like to know more about their background because one of my grandmothers always said she would tell me more when I was older. Unfortunately, she died when I was 19 and that was not old enough. I would want to ask them about their experience in the genocide. My one grandmother who came from Istanbul during the genocide also definitely has some interesting stories about her role in helping other Armenians.”

The lost time, history, and generational trauma has had an impact on every Armenian family to this day. The art works created by Armenians like those mentioned above may resonate in their lives and perhaps strengthen a sense of community and solidarity.

Casey’s exhibit, “Before, After,” brings together the works of 10 artists. It has the potential not only to impact Armenians’ lives but to educate and spread awareness in the general population through beautiful art which tells personal stories. This exhibit is a display of sacred voices through a visual language. It includes talks among artists on October 4 and 14.

To learn more about the show and future exhibitions, go to <https://stockton.edu/art-gallery/index.html>.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Diane Boyajian's Braided Bread

This story originally appeared in Fresno's St. Paul Armenian Church Dajar Newsletter, July/August 2021. It is contributed by Tracy Beberian, and has been edited for this publication. Photos and recipe are courtesy of Diane and Tami Boyajian.

Serving St. Paul Armenian Church was something Diane Boyajian learned at a young age. One of her fondest memories of her talented mother, Helen Shehrian, took place around 1943 at the church which was then located at Santa Clara and L. Streets. There were no crosses on the altar curtains, so her mother obtained permission one day, got on a ladder, took her needle and thread, and sewed crosses on each one as little Diane watched on.

Growing up, Sunday school, ACYO, and parish dinners were part of Diane's early childhood. Her mother would often be the first to volunteer with church events and activities with her young children in tow.

In 1949, Diane became a charter member of the first Junior ACYO at St. Paul Church, and held various positions including president. When she was 15, she met a handsome young man named York Boyajian, who was a member of the Senior ACYO. York and Diane became close friends, and later when he offered Diane the keys to drive his beloved red convertible Chevy, everyone knew it was serious. The couple was married in 1957 at St. Paul Church, and their marriage was blessed with three children, Tamara, David, and Karen.

As Diane settled into life with her husband and young children on their farm, supporting her church remained important to her. In 1967, she joined the Junior Ladies Society, and was elected as vice president within one year. One of her early efforts was chairing the annual Mother's Day Luncheon, a signature event of the Ladies Society. "We invited the mothers, in-laws, and grandmothers to enjoy a homemade Armenian meal together," Diane says. She and her committee planned the menu, purchased the food, decorated the hall, cooked the meal, and served over 200 guests. "It was an incredible experience to see so many people come together to honor and celebrate the cherished mothers and grandmothers at our church."

Diane later became involved with the Raisin Wives of California, where she served as president for four terms. "The organization worked to promote Fresno

raisins locally and globally while providing scholarships to agricultural students at Reedley College and Fresno State, and running a country store each fall," she adds.

"My mother (who was born in Erzurum) was an excellent cook and a skilled seamstress. She could knit and crochet, and was dedicated to the church and her family. I learned by following her directions. She was known for her delicious sou boureg and paklava," says Diane. Guided by her mother's lessons, Diane continued to improve her cooking skills, and would often consult the Ladies Society Procedure Books, the treasured binders that document recipes and preparation at church. When the church hosted the California State Assembly gathering for the Diocese, Diane agreed to plan the menus for over 400 attendees. "Three full days of breakfast, lunch, and dinner events were managed with an amazing committee, solid organizational skills, and the gift of creating memorable Armenian food," she says.

Diane has cooked for church luncheons, the annual Blessing of the Grapes Picnic, and California State Assembly meetings, to list a few. When asked how she managed so many tasks with such ease, she humbly says that it would not have been possible without the friendship and support of her fellow members. "It is the love we share for our church that holds us together," she adds. One of her favorite meals was for the annual luncheon for members of the California Armenian Home in Fresno. The Ladies Society planned the menu that residents were invited to enjoy with their families. After tasting the traditional Armenian dolma and madzoon one year, one of the elderly residents said, "This is just like what my mother used to make for us." That was about the sweetest thing you could say to Diane.

Diane taught Sunday school and served on the Parish Council for 14 years. She is grateful for the many close friends she has enjoyed at church, and for her three children and four grandchildren. "In the true Armenian tradition of abundance, our appetites and church have been blessed by Diane's many contributions through the years," adds Ladies Society member Tracy Beberian.

Here's Diane's recipe for braided bread that she's made for over 30 years. "This is dough from an authentic bierocks recipe. It came from my sister's in-laws who are Russian-Germans and who lived in Fresno. One day, I had extra dough so I made a loaf of this bread. It was so good, I use it as a bread recipe all the time. It's a family favorite." Bierock is a yeast dough pastry pocket sandwich with savory filling, originating in Russia, she says. The dish is common among the Volga German community in the United States and Argentina. It was brought to the United States in the 1870s by German Russian Mennonite immigrants. The bierock originated in Russia, and is known there as pirogi. "I take this bread to our church bake sales, and everyone loves it. I even use this recipe and form it into Armenian chorag, it is very tasty," she adds.

INGREDIENTS:

2 envelopes yeast (about 2 scant tablespoons)
1 cup warm water
1 tablespoon sugar
Combine yeast, water and sugar in a medium bowl, and set aside to proof, until it starts bubbling.

Dough:

1 cup scalded milk
1 cube butter (add butter to the scalded milk and let cool)
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sugar
2 large beaten eggs
6 – 6 1/2 cups King Arthur Flour
1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water for egg wash

PREPARATION:

Combine the cooled milk/butter mixture with salt, sugar, and eggs.

Here's Diane's process for the next step: "In a large bowl, I put in the milk/butter, sugar, eggs, and salt, and beat well with an electric mixer. Then I add the proofed yeast mixture and beat well again. I start adding the flour, about one cup at a time, and beat in with the mixer. After two or so cups of flour, the dough gets too thick so I start using a spatula until I can get my hand in to begin kneading. I add the last cup of flour a little at a time; when the dough feels sticky to the touch but doesn't stick to your hands, it is ready."

Place kneaded dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise until double the size, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

For the bread:

Divide dough into 3 or 4 portions, each will be a loaf. Shape as desired; brush with egg wash. Let dough rise again on a parchment-lined baking sheet. For the braids: Divide each portion of dough into thirds, make ropes about 12 to 14 inches long and braid. Tuck in ends. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-18 minutes, until golden brown. Do not overbake. Test as you would for a cake, and let cool on racks. Makes 4 small loaves or 3 large loaves.

To support or donate, contact: St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First Street, Fresno, CA 93726. Phone: (559) 226-6343

ORDER TODAY: Some of Diane's favorite recipes are featured in this church cookbook. To purchase *A Taste of Fresno Armenian and American Cuisine Cookbook* for holiday gifts for family and friends, contact: St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St, Fresno, California 93726, (559) 226-6343. Each cookbook costs \$20.00 each plus shipping and handling. Make checks payable to: St. Paul Armenian Church Ladies Society.

Photos and recipe are courtesy of Fresno's Diane Boyajian and Tami Boyajian.*



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EDITORIAL

Armenia Becomes Collateral Damage in Iran-Turkey Standoff



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Observers of the Caucasus had come to believe that with the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, as the latter kept calling it, the region could return to a peaceful era. Little did they know that the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan served as a prelude to new volatility in the region, because Azerbaijan was not alone in that war; Turkey openly participated in the conflict, Pakistan sent its military pilots and Turkey mobilized its hordes of Islamic mercenaries from Syria, while Israel guided its UAV weaponry from its own territory. Each participant harbored an agenda which came to the fore after the conflict.

At the present time, Turkey is well settled in the Caucasus after reaching an accommodation with Russia. Azerbaijan has become a captive nation under Turkish rule and its president, Ilham Aliyev, is all but a ventriloquist dummy to his master, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. With the expansion of Azerbaijan's border with Iran through gains in Armenia proper, Israel has broadened its surveillance capacity over the latter. Terrorist hub Pakistan is there to foment the kind of political horror which it has created in Afghanistan.

Russia is hopelessly fighting to maintain the status quo, which already has tipped the balance in Turkey's favor. With the NATO garrison on Russia's border in Poland and unrest in Ukraine and Belarus, in addition to the Turkish push in Central Asia to create a wedge between Russia and China, Moscow can ill afford a second Chechnya. Consequently, it has taken Ankara's threat seriously that the latter can blow up the Russian Federation from within, using Russia's 25 million Muslim population.

Russia's inactivity and cautiousness was manifest in its foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's cowardly statement that the Kremlin is not in a position to force the release of Armenian POWs in Azerbaijan, because they were captured after the declaration of November 9, buying into President Aliyev's argument.

Within this political perspective, Ankara has been engaged in new initiatives using Azerbaijan as a tool. Azerbaijan's newly-found belligerence is nothing but an obedient performance at Ankara's bidding. At this time, Turkey has decided to provoke Iran into an open confrontation, motivated by more than one cause; Iran, like Armenia, is an impediment to Turkey's pan-Turanist plans, therefore, it has to be destroyed. If strong countries such as Iraq, Syria and Libya crumbled under similar outside pressure, Iran's destiny could also be in danger. It was no surprise that pro-government paper *Yeni Safak* in Turkey recently came up with the headline "Iran will Disappear from the Map."

Ankara's aggressive posturing intends to win the good graces of Washington, which has a stake in Iran's fracture.

Although Turkey and Israel have been in a public standoff, they seem to have agreed to disagree since they were in bed with each other, using Azerbaijani territory to attack Armenia.

Israel has understood President Erdogan's position as barking without biting on behalf of the Palestinian Cause, because after the debacle of the Mavi Marmara in 2010 when Israeli forces attacked pro-Palestinian ships operated by Turkey, kill-

ing several activists, Erdogan has not engaged in another adventure to damage its reputation on behalf of the Palestinians.

Israel also has found a silver lining in Erdogan's ineffective rhetoric on behalf of the Palestinians, because that rhetoric cuts into the Iranian contention of being the defender of the Palestinian cause.

Turkey is in the driver's seat in the Caucasus and is manipulating Aliyev to provoke a fight with Iran. With all the macho rhetoric emanating from Tehran, the leadership there is extremely prudent not to fall in the trap set up by Turkey. Aliyev could never become so bold as to provoke a fight with Iran, without encouragement from Ankara. Aliyev's assertiveness has also been threatening Armenia, which is just so much collateral damage in this standoff.

We have to be reminded that the 44-day war in Karabakh was preceded by a series of joint military drills between the Azerbaijani and Turkish militaries. Today, the military landscape is tenser, again with a series of military exercises conducted there. The joint naval exercises of Turkey's and Azerbaijan's forces in the Caspian Sea this month breached the Caspian Sea Convention, which does not allow any military force outside the littoral states in those waters. But Turkey has established a pattern of violating international laws with impunity. First Ankara sought legal rights in the Eastern Mediterranean on behalf of illegally occupied Northern Cyprus. Today,

it treats Azerbaijan as a Turkish-occupied territory, giving Turkey the right to introduce its naval forces into the Caspian Sea. No country argued against this lawless act, except Iran, which, ironically is the only country which has not ratified that convention.

With a series of war games continuing, one cannot miss the atmosphere of pre-war Karabakh.

Now come the military drills in Baku, with joint forces of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Pakistan, followed by wargames with the joint forces of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and the last one planned for October 5-8, to take place in Nakhichevan with the military forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan. One could rightfully wonder why so much militarization in the region in such a short span of time, if there is no war planned in the immediate future?

Of course, these threatening military movements have rightfully alarmed the

regime in Iran, which began flexing its own military muscles by conducting massive military exercises on Azerbaijan's borders, to which President Aliyev expressed his surprise.

Baku began its provocation by taxing Iranian cargo trucks moving along the 21 kilometers of road recently acquired by Azerbaijan in Armenian territory. Then came the arrest of two Iranian truck drivers still held captive in Azerbaijan. Adding insult to injury, there was an attack on the Iranian Embassy in Baku. Nothing happens spontaneously in an authoritarian country like Azerbaijan. All these incidents were coupled with vitriolic exchanges between the two capitals.

On September 17 Iranian cleric Ayatollah Hassan Ameli said, "Since Azerbaijan and Turkey did not respect Iran's right as a neighbor, we ask the Supreme National Security Council to allow Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps to demonstrate just one-half of Iran's power on this side of the border to tell them, 'Do not play with the lion's tail.'"

continued on next page





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pres. Aliyev's 11-Year-Old Son Owned \$45 Million Property in Central London

This sensational report was exposed by the international news media on Oct. 3, 2021. While this is not the first time it has been revealed that the family of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has purchased hundreds of millions of dollars of properties in foreign countries through offshore companies, it is the latest and most detailed such scandalous news.

The report about Aliyev's 11-year-old son Heydar Aliyev was exposed by the Pandora Papers — the largest collection of leaks of concealed financial documents. These secret files were organized by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) with the participation of over 650 reporters worldwide. The records contain “nearly 12 million documents and files from 14 financial service companies in several countries, the British Virgin Islands, Panama, Belize, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and Switzerland,” according to the BBC.

While many of “the revealed transactions involve no legal wrongdoing,” there are serious “concerns that some property buyers could be hiding money-laundering activities,” the BBC stated. “Offshore companies can offer to help people hide dodgy cash or avoid tax. They are using those offshore accounts, those offshore trusts, to buy hundreds of millions of dollars of property in other countries, and to enrich their own families, at the expense of their citizens,” added Fergus Shiel from ICIJ.

The BBC went on to report that “The Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his family, who have been accused of looting their own country, are one example. The investigation found the Aliyevs and their close associates have secretly been involved in property deals in the UK worth more than £400 million [\$540 million]. Azerbaijan's ruling Aliyev family, long accused of corruption, have built a vast offshore network to hide their money.” Pres. Aliyev's annual salary is \$228,000.

BBC also revealed that the Aliyevs bought 17 buildings in the UK, including an entire block of office buildings in the posh Mayfair area of London for \$45 million in 2009 for the president's 11-year-old son, Heydar Aliyev, who was then in grade school.

The Aliyevs bought another building in London for \$47 million in 2008 and sold it in 2018 for \$89 million, making a profit of \$42 million. The Aliyevs sold that property “to the Crown Estate -- the Queen's property empire that is managed by The [UK] Treasury and raises cash for the nation.” BBC reported that “The Crown Estate said it carried out the checks required in law at the time of

purchase but is now looking into the matter.”

A separate article on the ICIJ website, under the title of “The Power Players,” highlighted the incredible wealth of Azerbaijan President's three children: Arzu Aliyeva, Heydar Aliyev, and Leyla Aliyeva.

The ICIJ article explained that “Ilham Aliyev became president of Azerbaijan in a 2003 election widely regarded as manipulated.... He has de facto control over the state oil fund, which generates annual revenue of \$9 billion. His presidency has been marked by brutal political crackdowns and human rights violations, including the imprisonment and torture of journalists and dissidents. Despite accusations of running a kleptocracy, Aliyev maintains close relationships with European leaders through what has come to be known as ‘caviar diplomacy.’ The 2017 Azerbaijani Laundromat investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project revealed how almost \$3 billion linked to Aliyev was laundered through shell companies, with much of the proceeds spent on gifts for European politicians. Other media investigations, including ICIJ's Offshore Leaks and Panama Papers, have shown that the Aliyev family controls significant wealth in Azerbaijan and that the president's three children also own properties in the U.K. and Dubai.”

ICIJ further revealed that “The Pandora Papers provide a view of the startling scale of the Aliyev children's luxury property investments. They were shareholders of 44 companies registered in the British Virgin Islands between 2006 and 2018. The records show the children owned five companies used to buy more than \$120 million worth of high-end London properties between 2006 and 2009, many of which were later sold for vast profits.”

Besides the \$45 million London office building owned by then 11-year-old Heydar Aliyev, his sister Arzu purchased another office building one block away through an offshore company for \$47 million. “In 2009, a company owned by the eldest child, Leyla Aliyeva, bought a \$13.5 million corner building behind London's Oxford Circus, which has housed a string of businesses run by Aliyev family friends,” according to ICIJ.

In an effort to obscure the ownership of these properties, “starting in 2013, the children transferred shares in their offshore companies to their maternal grandfather, Arif Pashayev. The holdings were later transferred to a series of trusts based in the Isle of Man, a British dependency and secrecy haven. Pashayev and two close associates bought further properties in and around London worth more than \$500 million between 2006 and 2017,” ICIJ revealed. Not surprisingly, none of the Aliyev family members responded to ICIJ's repeated requests for comment.

While it is disgraceful that funds belonging to the citizens of Azerbaijan were misused, the good news for Armenians is that Azerbaijan did not use these large sums to purchase more arms, to inflict further damage on the people of Armenia and Artsakh!

from previous page

The response from Azerbaijan's official quarters was “We will cut that tail.” So escalates the rhetoric.

Armenia is caught in this melee unprepared.

Azerbaijan and Turkey have been pushing their version of the November 9 peace treaty and for the beginning of demarcation and delineation between the two countries. Armenia is the clear loser in this scenario. This policy on one hand will entail Armenia's recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity with no status for Karabakh and on the other side, the ceding of the “Zangezur Corridor” through Armenia's sovereign territory to Azerbaijan.

Although Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and National Security Secretary Armen Grigoryan have been insisting that the corridor issue is not on the agenda of discussion, the Iranian government is not fully convinced, nor is the population in Armenia. All these political shenanigans are played out in plain view of the Kremlin, which is keeping a treacherous silence.

Opposing a corridor through Armenia, Tehran offered its own territory to Azerbaijan to have access to the Nakhichevan exclave. But there were no takers in Baku. Today, Tehran has officially declared that any border change in the region is a red line for Tehran.

Israel has had a presence in Azerbaijan for almost 30 years. The regime in Iran was cognizant of that fact but it never expressed its concerns as forcefully as it is doing these days because with the expansion of the border with Azerbaijan, Israel's capacity to threaten Iran has grown exponentially.

Also, the Tehran government does not believe that Armenia can or is willing to defend its own territorial integrity and that is why it is taking responsibility for its own country's security.

All along, Tehran and Yerevan have maintained good neighborly relations. But recently some concerns were expressed in Tehran and even the pro-government paper *Keyhan* accused Armenia of colluding with the West in a plot against Iran. Prime Minister Pashinyan assured Iran publicly at a press conference in Lithuania that Armenia cannot and will not plot against Iran. As if that were not enough, he dispatched Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to reassure the leaders in Tehran that Armenia does not have such an intention.

This suspicion arose with the growing belief in Tehran that the Pashinyan administration is exercising a pro-Western policy. Turkey and the US may be at odds politically, Israel may frown on Erdogan's belligerent rhetoric, and Azerbaijan may be hostage to Turkey, but all their goals converge at one point, which is the dismemberment of Iran along its ethnic fault lines. Should that happen one day, the fallout would be disastrous for the entire region.

Will Armenia's inept and inexperienced government be able to navigate through these troubled waters and save Armenia? That remains anyone's guess. One thing is obvious, that rather than seeking internal solidarity to withstand outside pressures, the government is arresting former military leaders and opposition leaders, deepening the polarization in the country.

Cautious thinkers are deeply concerned that the demise of the country is not too far.

Armenian Vaccination Mandate Faces Backlash

By Karine Ghazaryan

New regulations virtually mandating that all employees in Armenia have a COVID shot are aimed at boosting the country's extremely low vaccination rate: When the new rule was announced at the end of August, fewer than 5 percent of Armenians had been fully vaccinated.

But the law, which comes into effect on October 1, has sparked fierce political resistance and a new wave of anti-vaccine campaigns. And while vaccination rates have risen following the announcement, it appears that hundreds of thousands of employees will still be unvaccinated come the start of the month.

According to the new regulations, virtually all workers in the country will have to either present their employers with a certificate proving they were vaccinated, or take a PCR test every 14 days. With tests costing the equivalent of a substantial portion of most Armenians' monthly salaries, it effectively amounts to a vaccine mandate.

The largest opposition force in parliament, the Armenia Alliance led by former president Robert Kocharyan, issued a statement on September 10 opposing the regulation. It said vaccines “should be a result of everyone's conscious decision, not a mandate.” The alliance also argued that the government should subsidize the cost of PCR tests for workers. On September 24, the alliance applied to the Constitutional Court asking for the suspension of the new regulation.

Robert Hayrapetyan, a lawyer who was one of the Armenia Alliance's candidates in this summer's elections, was one of many who posted instructions on Facebook for people who wanted to break the new rules. “If you come to work without a vaccination or a negative PCR test, the employer has no right to fire you,” Hayrapetyan wrote. “Remember that no one has the right to force you to be vaccinated, especially by the order of the Minister. You can be vaccinated only according to your free will.”

In another post he offered similar guidelines for employers, warning that in case of an “illegal” dismissal employers could be sued and subject to substantial fines.

The backlash was exacerbated by the government's clarification that the rules would not apply to high-ranking officials like the prime minister, president, or members of parliament. The Ministry of Justice explained the exceptions by the legal difficulty of applying them to officials who do not have a supervisor; there is no one, for example, who could deny the president his job because he wasn't vaccinated.

That news nevertheless was met with a negative reaction among Armenians who saw a double standard. Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan attempted to explain see BACKLASH, page 20



Armenian Vaccination Mandate Faces Backlash

BACKLASH, from page 19

it away by saying that most high-ranked officials are already vaccinated anyway.

Meanwhile, far-right movements have seized on the mandate to launch a new wave of attacks on the vaccination process. One activist group calling itself “The Army of Light” announced that it would organize regular street rallies to protest what it called “mandatory vaccination” and “mandatory clinical trials” forced upon the Armenian population. Since then the group has organized several protests in Yerevan, generally attracting dozens of participants and wide media coverage.

Right-wing politicians also established groups and initiatives aimed at combating government vaccination efforts. One such initiative, “Free Will,” led by the head of the Chamber of Advocates, a non-profit organization, has encouraged Armenians to send information about cases of “serious complications and deaths” related to vaccines for their member doctors to investigate.

The group also applied to the parliament’s opposition-led Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs and managed to get a meeting with Health Minister Avanesyan. During the

meeting Avanesyan argued that the spread of the highly infectious Delta variant made it necessary to yet again wear masks even if one is vaccinated. Many news outlets, particularly opposition-affiliated ones, latched onto vaccine-skeptical angles with headlines like, “Vaccination does not exclude the fact of getting the infection: Anahit Avanesyan.”

This resistance is likely to intensify in the upcoming weeks as the restrictions begin to be implemented.

Legally, the regulations are weak and the government failed to make the necessary changes in the labor law to make them enforceable, said the head of the Republican Union of Employers, Gagik Makaryan, in an interview with public television. “It is now the second year that we are in the coronavirus chaos, but the respective [government] agencies do not address these issues; there have been no substantial changes in the labor law.”

As a result, Makaryan argued, the regulations pose significant risks for employers: On the one hand, they could be fined by the government for not implementing the restriction. On the other hand, they could be sued by workers and fined by the courts for implementing it. “I spoke to around 30 em-

ployers. Except for one employer who said they support vaccination, [...] 29, including major taxpayers, employers with hundreds of workers, are simply in a state of uncertainty, they don’t know what is possible,” Makaryan said.

The authorities insist that employers have the right to dismiss employees who don’t obey the rules. The Health and Labor Inspection Body declared it has the right to conduct checks in enterprises twice a day if necessary and can fine businesses up to 120,000 drams (around \$240) for a violation.

The looming requirement has influenced vaccination rates. The number of daily vaccinations recorded has been rising, from around 5,500 on July 7 to almost 10,000 on September 22. But the country has a long way to go.

According to official data, 408,000 people in Armenia have received at least the first dose of the vaccine. But that includes everyone, including the unemployed, retired, and an unknown number of foreigners who flocked to Armenia to get vaccinated when the country was offering them to anyone. There are more than 600,000 employed people in the country. (The population is just shy of 3 million.)

Meanwhile, there are widespread rumors of large-scale traffic in fake vaccine certificates.

Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) told Eurasianet that two cases of producing fake vaccine certificates are currently being investigated. If found guilty, suspects face a fine of up to 800,000 (around \$1,600) or up to four years in prison.

The number of fake certificates is likely far higher than what the NSS has uncovered. There are widespread discussions online about doctors issuing fake certificates, and some social media users have been advising how to get a fake certificate rather than a jab.

Under one post about the new restrictions in a private, woman-only Facebook group with 110,000 members – “Women’s Corner” – one user advised people to “find a way to get a certificate but not vaccinate...” When another user responded that that can be risky, the first replied: “In Russia, 50 percent have done that, and vaccination is risky, too.”

(Karine Ghazaryan is a freelance journalist covering Armenia. This analysis originally appeared on Eurasianet on September 29.)

Opposition Lawmaker Challenges Travel Ban

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A senior opposition lawmaker standing trial on what he sees as politically motivated charges on Tuesday, October 5, again asked a court in Yerevan to allow him to attend sessions of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) in Strasbourg.

Armen Gevorgyan is the sole full-fledged opposition member of the Armenian parliament’s delegation in the PACE. He is affiliated with the Hayastan alliance led by former President Robert Kocharyan.

Kocharyan and Gevorgyan face bribery charges, strongly denied by them, in an ongoing trial that began more than two years ago. They were both banned from leaving Armenia without the court’s permission.

Anna Danibekyan, the judge presiding over the trial, refused last month to let Gevorgyan participate in the PACE’s autumn session held on September 27-30. Two other opposition lawmakers, who have the status of “substitutes” in the 8-member delegation in the Strasbourg-based assembly, boycotted the session out of solidarity with him.


During the latest court hearing on the high-profile case, Gevorgyan’s lawyer, Lusine Sahakian, petitioned Danibekyan to lift the travel ban, saying that it is unjustified. The trial prosecutors objected to the request.

The judge did not grant it while leaving open the possibility of allowing Gevorgyan to travel abroad later on. She said she will consider such permissions on a case-by-case basis.


Gevorgyan, 48, is also the chairman of the Armenian parliament’s standing committee on “regional and Eurasian integration.” He was an influential aide to Kocharyan when the latter ruled the country from 1998-2008. Gevorgyan also served as deputy prime minister from 2008-2014 in the administration of then President Serzh Sarkisian.

Earlier in September, Danibekyan refused to allow Kocharyan to visit Moscow at the invitation of Russian ruling party. Hayastan condemned her decision, saying that it was made under strong government pressure.

The judge had repeatedly given Kocharyan a permission to travel to Moscow before the June 20 parliamentary elections in which the ex-president’s bloc finished second.



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