

*Russia Mediates
Ceasefire as
Armenia Confirms
Casualties, Loss
Of Military Posts
In Clashes With
Azerbaijan*

YERVAN (RFE/RL) — Russia was able to mediate a ceasefire late on November 16, a day which saw renewed attacks by Azerbaijan on Armenia.

Armenia confirmed casualties — both killed and wounded soldiers — as a result of border clashes with Azerbaijan, the country’s Defense Ministry said.

The ministry said information about casualties was still being gathered. It added that Armenian armed forces also lost two military posts as a result of fighting along the border. (See related story on this page.)

“As of 4 pm, the situation on the eastern border of Armenia continues to remain extremely tense,” the Armenian Defense Ministry said.

Earlier, authorities in Ye-



revan had confirmed that four Armenian soldiers were wounded in the clashes.

Baku has so far reported about two wounded Azerbaijani soldiers.

Reports from both sides suggest the application of armored vehicles, artillery, mortars, and other weapons in the ongoing battles.

Armenia, which is a military and political ally of Russia, has appealed to Moscow to protect its territorial integrity in the face of Azerbaijan’s aggression, Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan told Today Public Television earlier on Tuesday.

see ATTACKS, page 2



Angela Melkonian at a construction site in Qatar, October 2012



Fashion modeling in Qatar, 2013

**Angela Melkonian Brings
Renewable Energy to
Armenia, Iraq and Beyond**

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

PARIS — As climate change becomes the hot topic of the 21st century and the world starts shifting towards clean energy sources replacing fossil fuels, renewable energy from the sun, wind and water

appears to offer an optimal solution. Angela Melkonian works to realize major projects in this field and has played an important role in bringing solar energy to Armenia, Iraq, Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. The multi-faceted Melkonian also is involved in Armenian cultural projects, dragon boat racing and fashion modeling.

Born in Beirut, Melkonian is a third-generation Armenian Lebanese who currently works for Scatec, a Norwegian renewable energy firm, in its Paris offices. In early October, headlines in the international media reported a historic framework agreement between a consortium led by Scatec and the Iraqi government to build a 525-megawatt solar project in the governates of Karbala and Babylon.

see MELKONIAN, page 10

US Department of State Condemns New Killing of Armenian Civilian

*Calls for Return of POWs,
Continued OSCE Minsk
Group Negotiations*

WASHINGTON — The US Department of State condemned the killing of an Armenian citizen near Shushi, which happened yesterday, November 8, when an Azerbaijani soldier opened fire on Armenian civilians working on fixing a damaged water pipes near

the road leading to Shushi in Artsakh. As a result, one civilian was killed and three others reported injured. The latter are being treated at Stepanakert’s hospital.

“We condemn the violence that caused the death of an Armenian civilian,” the Department of State announced on its Twitter account.

Ned Price, Department of State spokesperson, referred, again on November 8, to the one-

year anniversary of the Russia-brokered ceasefire declaration between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“We extend our deepest condolences to the families of those killed and injured during the hostilities last year. We call for the return of all remaining detainees, a full accounting of missing persons, the voluntary return of displaced persons to their homes, comprehensive humanitarian

de-mining of conflict-affected areas, and access by international humanitarian organizations to those in need. We also call for an investigation into alleged human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law,” Price stated. The spokesperson, however, did not highlight that Armenia has released the Azerbaijani POWs, while Baku see CONDEMNATION, page 20

**Pashinyan Replaces
Defense Minister in
Wake of Renewed
Hostility on Border**

By Raffi Elliott
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenian President Armen Sarkissian signed a decree dismissing Defense Minister Arshak Karapetyan on Monday, November 15, on recommendation from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The move follows reports of yet another attempt by Azerbaijani forces to penetrate the Armenian border in Syunik Province.

see DISMISSAL, page 3



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, center, addressing the Armenian defense community along with former Minister of Defense Karapetyan, right, and his replacement, Suren Papikyan

**Bill on Armenian
Genocide Recognition
Submitted to UK
Parliament**

LONDON (Public Radio of Armenia) — Member of Parliament Tim Loughton on November 9 submitted a bill to the UK House of Commons, requesting the government to formally recognize the Armenian Genocide to establish an annual commemoration to the victims of the genocide.

The UK can help right an “appalling historical injustice” see RESOLUTION, page 6

ARMENIA

**The Road to
Revival**



CALIFORNIA

**Bay Area Commemorates
One-year Anniversary of
the Artsakh War w/Prayer
Vigil**



NEW JERSEY

**For Alecko
Eskandarian Soccer
Runs in the Blood**





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Ombudsman Says Azerbaijani Army's Removal from Armenia a Priority

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian ombudsman Arman Tatoyan on November 15 weighed in on Azerbaijan's recent incursion into Armenia, maintaining that the removal of Azerbaijani servicemen from Armenian villages and roads is a priority.

"Deployed near our villages and on our roads are those Azerbaijani services that tortured and killed our servicemen and civilians during the war and remained punished," Tatoyan said Monday, November 15.

"This threat has not disappeared. The Azerbaijani authorities have deepened their hatred of Armenians and propaganda of hostility."

No More PCR Test at Yerevan Airport

YEREVAN (Arka) — Starting from December 1, 2021 foreign nationals entering Armenia through Zvartnots airport will have to carry a negative PCR test for Covid-19, the airport said on November 15.

According to airport officials, the station where arriving foreigners could take a PCR test there has been removed. It said also that only the entry of fully vaccinated foreigners is allowed, and only 14 days after the administration of second dose of the vaccine.

Previously, everyone who arrived in Armenia by air could take the test at the airport.

President Wants Russian Peacekeepers 'Forever'

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — President Armen Sarkissian believes that the Russian peacekeepers should stay in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) forever.

"The Russian army has been on this territory for decades and centuries, its presence is extremely important. What the peacekeepers are doing is of great importance for regional politics, and for possible negotiations on the status of Karabakh, on the future of the region, so that there is no war tomorrow," Sarkissian said in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* on November 8.

He noted that the Armenian side had 26 years to translate that victory into a stable peace "but we didn't take that chance and were left behind."

"Because Azerbaijan, even under the leadership of Heydar Aliyev, realized that oil is their advantage. And it did everything to take it to the international market. As a result, we lost all our advantages over time. In addition, the Azerbaijani side purchased large quantities of weapons, openly brought NATO weapons to the battlefield through Turkey, and gathered thousands of mercenaries from all over the world."

He also said he raised the issue of a NATO country fighting with Armenia but was not able to get answers.

Armenia Confirms Casualties, Loss of Military Posts in Clashes with Azerbaijan

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"Since the attack is against the sovereign territory of Armenia, we appeal to the Russian Federation to protect the territorial integrity of Armenia within the framework of the 1997 agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation and within the framework of the logic of fulfilling mutual obligations under the agreement," Grigoryan underscored.

The secretary of the Armenia Security Council said that his oral application would also be followed with an application in writing. "Armenia expects Russia to provide assistance and expects that Armenia will have the opportunity to restore its territorial integrity," Grigoryan concluded.

Later on Tuesday TASS news agency quoted Armenian ambassador to Moscow Vardan Toghyan as saying that Moscow and Yerevan are currently conducting consultations via military and diplomatic channels over the escalation along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry also issued a statement, stressing that under the UN Charter, the republic has the right to repel aggression against its territorial integrity and sovereignty "by all available means."

"We call on the international community and our international partners — Russia, CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization], OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship and Co-Chair countries — to express a clear and targeted response to these actions of the Azerbaijani side, which undermine regional peace and security, and undertake effective steps aimed at its prevention as well as unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Azerbaijani armed forces from the territory of the Republic of Armenia," the ministry said.

The latest flare-up of tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan comes amid a call from international mediators to de-escalate the situation along the volatile border.

In a statement issued late on Monday, the American, Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group also urged the sides "to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions, and implement

in full the commitments they undertook under the November 9 statement and other jointly agreed [Nagorno-Karabakh] ceasefire arrangements."

Armenia is a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, a defense pact of former Soviet republics also including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Armenia also has a bilateral military agreement with Russia and hosts a Russian military base in its territory.

Yerevan has confirmed that 12 Armenian soldiers have been captured by the Azerbaijani military.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said the situation on the country's eastern border with Azerbaijan remained "extremely tense" as of 2:30 pm.

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In a telephone conversation with President of the European Council Charles Michel on Tuesday Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed that "the Azerbaijani authorities are deliberately escalating the situation with the aim of aborting the implementation of trilateral agreements."

As quoted by his press office, Pashinyan said that "the international community should not remain indifferent to Azerbaijan's encroachments on the sovereign territory of Armenia."

Michel said on Twitter that the situation in the region remained "challenging," and that the "EU is committed to working with partners to overcome tensions for a prosperous and stable South Caucasus."

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, who is the current OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, expressed her full support

for the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, who issued a statement on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border tensions and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh earlier this week.

"I share the deep concern of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs regarding reported incidents in the region, including those along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. I express my full support for their efforts and call on the sides to de-escalate immediately and take steps to resolve the outstanding issues," Linde wrote on Twitter.

In an interview with RFE / RL's Armenian Service on Tuesday senior member of Armenia's ruling Civil Contract party Eduard Aghajanyan claimed that the current border escalation is a response by Azerbaijan to the failure of its policy to force Armenia to provide the corridor.

"The Republic of Armenia will remain sovereign and there will be no [extraterritorial] corridor through its sovereign territory," Aghajanyan underscored. "The [sovereign] status of the Republic of Armenia that was formed in 1991 is not subject to negotiation."

Seeking Pashinyan's Resignation

The Hayastan Alliance, which has the second largest faction in Armenia's National Assembly, said in a statement issued late on Tuesday asked that Pashinyan step down, adding that the formation of a new government may be a way of resolving the current situation.

The opposition bloc led by former President Robert Kocharyan put direct blame on Azerbaijan for "launching a large-scale attack in the eastern direction of the border, violating international norms and committing new war crimes" and described it as an urgent need "to stop the advancement of the enemy and expel it from Armenia's sovereign territory through the consolidation of all-national forces. "It, however, criticized the Pashinyan government that "brings casualties, territorial losses, division, chaos."

"A full solution to the situation requires the resignation of this government." Nikol Pashinyan's resignation should be followed by the consolidation of all capable forces, the formation of a new government, the provision of a policy for solving foreign and domestic problems," the Hayastan Alliance said.

Azerbaijani Incursions Close to Breaking Armenia's 'Spine'

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On November 14, Azerbaijan's armed forces committed one more in a series of aggressive acts. At 1 p.m. local Yerevan time, Azerbaijani forces at the country's frontier advanced towards the borders of the municipality of Sisian in the province of Syunik and took control of four Armenian bases or strongholds about 1-2 kilometers inside the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Sasun Danielyan, a historian and archaeologist who has studied Armenian architecture for many years, including in Syunik, and knows this area well.

Danielyan stated that the Azerbaijani action in Syunik province was not simply an attempt at advancing territorially. He said, "Armenia's spine is separated from its head only by a 20-kilometer strip of territory. Just now, according to information which I have received, the 'Turks' have advanced approximately two km. forward from the eastern side of that strip."

Considering any advances by Azerbaijan on any part of the border as dangerous, and



Sasun Danielyan

understanding the geographical importance of Syunik, Danielyan said what has taken place is the most dangerous and irreversible development.

"If Azerbaijan today has moved forward two kilometers, then let us calculate after how many more such advances we will lose Syunik, Armenia's spine. With four such

advances, the enemy will appear on the interstate road," he said.

Compounding that, Danielyan said, is the silence of state bodies who seem to want to keep the situation secret. He concluded, "Again negotiations are declared. We know the results of such negotiations in Khtsaber, Sev Lake, Verin Shorzha, Kut and other areas. Let us calculate approximately after how many such advances we will lose Armenia."

On November 15 the two sides, through the mediation of Russian military units, reached a certain agreement to consider the four disputed positions as part of the neutral zone. In other words, compromises were made by both sides. This was revealed by the Armenian Ministry of Defense, the day before it was still denying the loss of these positions as the result of Azerbaijani aggression. Meanwhile, the prime minister had removed Defense Minister Arshak Karapetyan from his post and replaced him with Suren Papikyan, who in the past had been minister of territorial administration and infrastructure. Unlike Karapetyan, Papikyan does not have even the slightest experience in military leadership.



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Replaces Defense Minister

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According to the Ministry of Defense, Armenian and Azerbaijani forces have been engaged in a series of intense fire-fights over the weekend near Syunik’s Ishkhanasar area, directly adjacent to occupied Karvajar, which was transferred to Azerbaijani control following last year’s ceasefire. Videos emerged on the internet on Sunday, November 14 purportedly showing Azerbaijani soldiers negotiating with Armenian servicemen in Armenian positions, some at least 1.5 km (1 mile) inside sovereign Armenian territory. Others showed Azerbaijani infantry fighting vehicles in the distance, apparently advancing towards Armenian trenches.

This incident comes at a time of increased border tension between Armenia and Artsakh. Last week, Azerbaijan announced that it would be installing customs checkpoints on the small 3 km length of road it controls along the Goris-Kapan road, effectively blocking it to local traffic. This move has been interpreted by many analysts, as well as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, within the context of increasingly desperate attempts by Baku to put pressure on Yerevan to sign a peace treaty on their terms before Armenia completes its post-war recovery. Armenia has so far resisted attempts to start border demarcation or accept a loss of status for Artsakh. Armenia has responded by building a series of new by-pass roads across Syunik province to secure domestic and international traffic.

The presence of light armored vehicles was denied by the Ministry of Defense on Sunday, though it did acknowledge that Azerbaijanis had “attempted to capture Armenian positions” without specifying their fate. The ministry did insist that no Armenian soldiers were killed or wounded during the incident and that Russian peacekeepers were on site to help de-escalate the situation.

Still, news of Karapetyan’s sacking as defense chief prompted questions regarding the events which unfolded the previous day. Karapetyan, who served in the role for just over 100 days, had ironically been appointed to the position under similar circumstances, coinciding with a fatal shootout on the border near the town of Yeraskh in July. A long-serving career officer, Karapetyan left the Army to become defense advisor to Nikol Pashinyan following the revolution. Thought to be one of the prime minister’s trusted advisors, and known for close ties to the Russian defense community, he was promoted to minister of defense as part of the new cabinet formed after last June’s election. Karapetyan also triggered a minor diplomatic incident last week when he travelled to Stepanakert to meet with his Artsakhian counterpart, provoking the ire of Baku.

Pashinyan confirmed that Karapetyan’s dismissal was directly related to the weekend’s border incident in a televised meeting of the Security Council on Monday morning. “I invited Mr. Karapetyan in the morning to thank him for his work as minister of defense,” the prime minister announced, adding that he appreciated his efforts but

that a change in leadership was necessary to better deal with this crisis. Karapetyan was replaced in the role by Suren Papikyan, currently serving as deputy prime minister.

Pashinyan thanked the former minister for his efforts yet again during a joint press conference at the Ministry of Defense where he also introduced Papikyan to the army brass. He repeated an earlier statement that the military establishment needed fresh leadership. “We have a clear idea of what steps need to be taken in order to navigate the country out of this challenge,” the prime minister said. Karapetyan, in turn, expressed his confidence in the abilities of his replacement, calling on his ministry to “do everything you can to support the new minister in his important work.” Papikyan responded by saying he was ready to take on this difficult responsibility, adding “I will work day and night to serve the Republic of Armenia.”

Papikyan, 35, is a former academic who made a name for himself after the 2018 revolution by undertaking a series of massive infrastructure development projects in Armenia. While minister of infrastructure and territorial administration, his ministry repaved hundreds of kilometers of decaying Soviet-era roads across the country connecting previously underserved communities, including the road that loops around Lake Sevan, as well as new aqueducts, and power lines. His office also oversaw the retrofitting of dozens of public buildings across the country to meet new seismic safety standards.

Perhaps as relevant as his recent reputation as a competent manager, Papikyan, a long-time member of the governing Civil

Contract party, is also seen as belonging to the prime minister’s inner circle. Critics have long accused Pashinyan of delegating sensitive decision-making to a small clique of his political allies which he considers trustworthy rather than experts deemed better experienced to deal with these issues. Recent key appointments of allies — such as Ararat Mirzoyan as minister of foreign affairs, the diplomatically inexperienced Lilit Makunts as ambassador to the United States and former Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan as board member for the economically strategic Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine, suggest a dearth of readily-available talent or experience at the government’s disposal.

Still, the appointment of non-military candidates to the post of defense minister is far from uncommon in the world. The majority of currently-serving defense ministers in NATO member-states have no military backgrounds whatsoever. US President Joe Biden even provoked some controversy when appointing recently retired army officer General Lloyd J. Austin III as secretary of defense this year, with critics voicing concern that a time-honored US tradition of separating the military and political spheres was being overturned. As Duke University specialist on military-civilian affairs Peter D. Feaver argued, the founders of the US sought to keep the profession of arms out of politics for a reason. They sought to ensure that civilian leaders “have a right to be wrong,” but also to keep the military professional and nonpartisan.

Indeed, Papikyan is not even the first non-military officer to be appointed to the largely bureaucratic role of minister

of defense. Vigen Sargsyan, as part of the process of being groomed for office by ex-president Serzh Sargsyan, served in the role between 2016 and 2018. The minister of defense role is traditionally a political appointment which coordinates with the Army General Staff, which must, by law, be headed by a ranking military officer, and the National Security Council to make national defense policy, articulate military doctrine, and coordinate arms procurements.

Following a meeting of the National Security Council, which includes the prime minister, defense minister, and chief of the Army General Staff, held on the morning of November 15, a communiqué was released confirming that Azerbaijani forces had indeed advanced into sovereign Armenian territory and assaulted at least four Armenian entrenched positions. The press release also acknowledged that the Azerbaijani assault was supported by armored vehicles, in contrast with the previous day’s denial by the ministry of defense. The letter goes on to say that the Azerbaijani intruders were repulsed back across the border to their starting points and Russian peacekeepers were brought in to help deescalate the situation.

The Security Council also called on the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a defense alliance of which Armenia is a part) and the international community to take note of “the ongoing aggression of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and actions directed against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and regional security and stability of the Republic of Armenia.”

Armenian Activists Say Police ‘Intimidation’ Shatters Promises of 2018 Revolution

By Amos Chapple

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — When anti-government protests swept Yerevan, in 2018, Seda Grigoryan was on the streets alongside thousands of like-minded marchers.

After protest leader Nikol Pashinyan was made prime minister, he drew cheers of approval from crowds who gathered to hear him speak: The revolution, he vowed, marked the beginning of a new era in which the voices of Armenia’s citizens would be heard, and the years of corruption and trampled rights were over. Several months later, Yerevan Mayor Hayk Marutyan was voted into power echoing those sentiments, giving many hope that deeply controversial demolitions of historic buildings, and charmless high-rise developments would end in the city.

Three years after the revolution, Grigoryan says her hopes of wholesale change faded as she tailed two plainclothes policemen rifling through her family home on November 6, searching for “a can of red spray paint.” The search was part of a criminal investigation sparked by her opposition to a high-rise project.

Grigoryan, a media professional, lives in the leafy suburb of Phys-Gorodok, named after the Soviet-era physics institute built around in the 1950s.

Phys-Gorodok is beloved by locals for its park-like green space and is seen as something of an oasis in Armenia’s often hectic and fume-clouded capital city.

In February 2021, Armenia’s Culture Ministry declared the suburb a “local cultural monument,” effectively preserving its unique atmosphere. But shortly afterwards, a section of Phys-Gorodok disappeared from the “cultural monument” map, exactly where property developers had planned a 12-story building.

In addition, according to local activists the high rise was planned on public land that had been illegally privatized in the early 2000s.

Arthur Mnatsakanyan, deputy director and co-owner of Ratko LLC, the property-development company behind the project, said the land was purchased legally and they had the rights to begin construction. They also vow that the development will improve the area.

After vocal protests against the development, the dispute became increasingly bitter and began to attract local media attention. In August 2021, police violently dispersed protesters at the

After police searched the apartment of a woman protesting a Yerevan property development, locals say hopes of change after the 2018 revolution are fading.

site as construction began.

Then, in early September, graffiti appeared on a temporary fence put up around the construction site. In large red letters, the messages included “Public property, free the trees” and “Free the district.”

It was that graffiti that led to Grigoryan receiving a knock on her door. Two men told her they were from the investigative committee of Armenia and that they had a warrant from a judge to search her apartment.

“They let me read the warrant and said they were looking for a can of red spray paint,” Grigoryan says.

The warrant stated that CCTV camera footage captured a young woman approaching and possibly spray-painting the fence, “that’s why they think it was me.”

A spokesman for the investigative committee told RFE/RL that representatives from Ratko had accused Grigoryan of vandalizing their property. The spokesman added that “the search of her apartment was necessary and unavoidable; the police are not trying to intimidate her.”

But Grigoryan calls the search an “obvious” act of pressure from the authorities in the context of Phys-Gorodok locals’ repeated attempts at legal action over the high-rise development.

“There have been three years of struggle for the rights of the citizens to protect their public space, and so far we haven’t seen much interest from the responsible authorities to follow up with this case,” she says. “But, on the other hand, when this graffiti appeared, the entire police department of this district is working hard to prove that it was me. They are searching my apartment and they are making this the number one case in the framework of the whole issue.”

Grigoryan says the Phys-Gorodok issue is bitterly disappointing after the hopes of 2018 and the explicit promises made by Yerevan’s mayor to increase the city’s green spaces.

“To me the revolution was part of a bigger struggle,” Grigoryan said. “For as long as I remember I have been speaking up for others and myself, being active about the heritage of Yerevan being destroyed or damaged due to construction. After 2018 we were promised that our voices would be counted, yet now we see the opposite picture. We are met with police violence, and being threatened and intimidated with searches in our apartments.”



ARMENIA

The Road to Revival

By Lilit Shahverdyan

YEREVAN — November 10, 2020. I woke up early as usual, when the hazy autumn sky still blended with the dark-blue hues of the night, and I barely realized that I was awake. This time, I did not do my usual dance in my head with the alarm clock's song because my mother's and grandmother's conversation had replaced that melody. The vague word combinations I heard that morning in my half-asleep fog made me wonder whether I was still sleeping, or whether my life indeed had changed at that very moment.

"It was all useless, preplanned," my grandmother said in a voice dripping with tears, sharing the mental state of my mother, who had accidentally spoken too loudly. "It's unreal," she said. "I can't believe we handed Shushi to the Turks."

These vague whispers became the first forewarning that I had entered a new chapter of life, where I'm forever deprived of the feeling of genuine happiness. However,



Lilit Shahverdyan on her way to Stepanakert, November 14, 2020.

I was really happy to hear that the war was over, and I could return to my house in Stepanakert, naively believing that my cat was slumbering in front of our enormous entrance door, expecting to finally hear my footsteps.

Throughout the war, I had poured my thoughts onto the pages of my diary, as it seemed to be the only thing that could bear the burden of my broken heart. On November 10, my body and mind got so listless that I was unable to do anything other than endlessly shed tears while scrolling through old photos on my phone, losing track of my thoughts.

Statements like "Everything was sold" or "Putin decides our destiny" were circulating everywhere, especially inside the "cage" where my family didn't stop chattering and crying, aggravating my condition.

I had made a clay model of our house long ago, which I had started embellishing, adding a magnolia tree made from a fresh leaf, the vibrant oleanders from an herbarium and the gates from painted matchsticks. The risk that my wonderful house could be utterly demolished by one rocket kept me in a state of agitation. I acknowledged during those days that no matter where I live, my soul is tied to Stepanakert through my memories; to lose it forever would horrify me.

The next day my father informed us about his upcoming visit to Yerevan, and I decided to return to Stepanakert with him.

I hadn't seen my father since September 17, 2020, the day I had left Stepanakert for a trip to Yerevan. I remembered him as always being robust, and despite his 54 years, still sported a head of lustrous black hair, while his peers were gradually going grey and bald, as well as an authentically Armenian aquiline nose which I had inherited, a few wrinkles on his face and a beaming smile.

On November 12, when he arrived, I saw a different person, exhausted and drained, with white hair dotting his head, and the smile no longer there. He had come to buy



A writing "I recognize Artsakh" inside a destroyed building in Stepanakert. The building was burnt down by locals after the ceasefire agreement and is being renovated today. November 15, 2020.

toothpaste, slippers, and other necessary supplies that his hotel lacked due to the war. He didn't intend to take us back; the city was not safe enough, he said.

My older sister, Nina, and I, however, insisted on going back home and were able to convince him after long arguments.

The following morning, November 14, we hit the road with my father, sister, and our driver.

Our gray Pajero car was large, so we didn't sit too close together. We bounced around inside, driving through the bumpy and dusty roads so peculiar to Armenia. We always drove through Karvachar, a mountainous region in Karabakh, like it was a scene out of American movies. The ideally smooth asphalt pierced into the tremendous brown cliffs, cleaving them into two parts and paving the long way to Stepanakert. This was our last chance to experience the astonishing sceneries of Karvachar before it was handed to Azerbaijan, so we decided to go that way despite the unending traffic jam we knew awaited us there. Usually, the road takes five hours but this time it took a whole day, and I witnessed the consequences of the war from the closest possible angle: houses burning, rockets on the roads, exploded bridges and marauders in the streets.

The first part of the road was quiet, as always, without any signs of war, but things changed as we got closer to the border with Karabakh. We stopped to see how far the chain of cars extended and couldn't find its end: we appeared to be in a traffic jam we couldn't get out of. I had no signal on my phone, and my battery was running down and I worried about losing contact with everyone.

At any rate, I had my family and the driver with me, whom I consider an older brother, so I wouldn't get lost in the crowd.

Two hours later, we noticed the traffic moving little by little at twilight, when we could finally distinguish the two sides of this traffic by the headlights. Yet it didn't make me any happier: I saw the actual length of the jam, expanding through the hills, and that reminded me of the horrifying imagery of the mass evacuation a few days before.

After many miles, there we were, in the middle of an interminable chain of cars that resembled a getaway from the war, when one Smerch rocket would be enough to destroy thousands of lives.

As we were moving sometimes, I could see the miserable displaced villagers, with sofas on their car roofs with a glimmer of hope for a return, or compelled to say their last goodbye to the burning walls of their houses. Driving through the narrow streets of the town of Karvachar, I saw the looters, most in worn out military uniforms or other cast-off clothing, moving things out of the houses so nervously that one could immediately spot that they were not there lawfully. Their slovenly faces were dark, mostly unshaven, and they kept grumpily gazing at us as we dared to intervene with their plans of theft.

We stopped near an exploded bridge because my dad wanted us to experience what it meant to live through the fear of my fellow people. Standing on the edge of the road, on wobbling pieces of concrete, I felt fear and trembling all over my body as I imagined myself falling down the gorge; just one more step and I would fall into the embrace of a deep hole where a rocket had crashed.

Driving ahead, we stopped near a complex of burning cottages that resembled small, compact rooms. While my dad was talking to the owner, I did not want to hear how someone could find the strength to turn into ashes the fruit of his lifetime of labor. I slowly went through the buildings under the unending smoke of the fire which expanded and soon devoured everything around, leaving only broken pieces of roofs and walls. I barely distinguished the thin fragments of wallpapers that would soon turn into ashes, and the irregular frames the where windows once were.

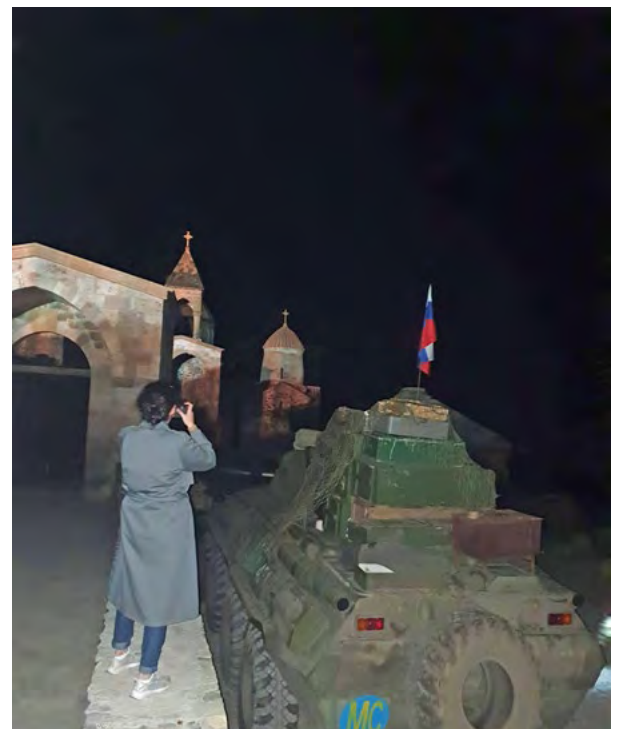
Despite the enormous crush of cars on the roads, only a few strayed from the path and turned left to climb the hill where the holy monastery of Dadivank was standing. In my previous life, we stopped near Dadivank every time we went to or returned from Yerevan because my father couldn't help admiring that glorious panorama again and again. This last visit was different, full of emotions that everyone kept inside because the least perceptible emotion would make all of us fall apart, for being unable to save the monastery.

The incredible vistas were invisible in the mélange of smoke and the black night, and the only distinguishable objects were the visitors with their flashlights, Russian military equipment, and the monastery.

The light brown walls were commanding: those were the last days these holy walls could hear the prayers of Christians.

We turned on our flashlights, entered the hall and went our separate ways, each of us with their private memories and thoughts. I lit my last candle in the mysterious darkness of the hall, near the embroidered portrait of the Virgin Mary, whose eyes were certainly in deep sorrow as she would soon be handed to strangers, vandals.

continued on next page



Dadivank monastery under Russian's control on November 14, 2020. Armenians do not have access to the monastery today.



ARMENIA

from previous page

I wasn't the only one who came to gaze at her one last time; there were many other melting candles near mine, and we probably shared the same last wish — to see the monastery liberated again.

I attempted to keep my emotions under check as I was looking for my dad. I knew he couldn't endure the pain and would break down if he saw me cry. I found him in a small hall, standing in a profound silence. I quietly approached, trying not to make any noise to disturb him. All I could see and hear was my dad, meticulously touching everything on the walls and the alter, and weeping. I stayed petrified for a few minutes then went outside to digest everything. Seeing the Russian servicemen and their flags, I could only feel sorry for my dad — the person who organized the reconstruction of Dadivank and dedicated all his vigor to it, who knew each fresco, each icon, all the secret entrances and exits, and all the flowers and trees in the surroundings. Instead of reveling in the result of his dedication, now he had to bear the agony of seeing Russian tanks and flags, which would soon be replaced by the Azerbaijani ones. I looked at the time — it was 23:15 and we had to get home.

I couldn't recognize Stepanakert: the Tatik-Papik monument that was always the first sight to welcome the visitors was not illuminated as the backlight was missing, and I hardly noticed that we were already in town. We arrived very late and were not surprised to see the complete darkness with no signs of life.

The roads were as gloomy as in the middle of the highway where no electricity stations functioned, and the same ghost-like atmosphere prevailed in the city. Our car was the only moving object despite the crowds behind and beyond us and it felt like we were the first returning to town.

We reached our narrow and short street, with a dozen of old and modern houses, adorned with plants in little lawns. We could not differentiate any colors; the houses were hidden in all the shades of a November night when even the moon decided to stay away and not reveal itself. I got out of the car, my eyes filled with tears that I could no longer keep inside. I opened the front door and turned on the lights. I appeared in the same corridor, between the same thick walls and looked into the black mirror on the center of the wall. I saw myself, my red swollen face, and my exhausted body. But the most genuine happiness pierced into my soul, and I started to cry. I walked through the first floor, examining all the rooms to make sure that everything was untouched. Then I went to the terrace to meet my cats who suspiciously didn't welcome us in the entrance, and I heard no reaction to my "meow-meow" in the garden. They are gone, they definitely ran away, I thought, and a sudden feeling of emptiness and loss replaced the joy of being home. I went upstairs to see my room and finally stood on the scale to see how much weight I had gained under stress, but the numbers didn't disappoint me. I was mourning for my cats because they disappeared in my dead hometown. I went downstairs, and we drove to a hotel for the night as our house was too cold. It was the first night of my new life.

The next morning, we saw all the ruined houses, the remnants of burned infrastructures, abandoned buildings, and starving animals, that hadn't eaten for days. We returned to our house and lit the fireplace. Nina made pasta with parmesan and pepper flakes and roasted cauliflower, and we celebrated the first family dinner in the house. Later I noticed a cat on the terrace that I didn't recognize. She looked like she'd been tortured and starving, and her gray hair that was standing like icicles because of the dirt. She was thin and small, unlike my chubby Slivka. Only later did I realize it was Slivka after all.

Soon, I started seeing people filling the empty streets, sometimes even my neighbors who never left town, and I was happy to see every passer-by. The voices of the cleaning ladies could be heard in the streets in early mornings, and I noticed how soon the dense piles of fallen leaves disappeared from the sidewalks.

Once I saw a school guard woefully sitting on a bench and I greeted him. He smiled and invited me to have coffee inside, but I refused; I couldn't trust an unfamiliar old man when criminals prevailed in the town.

I remember standing in a queue near the municipality to get expired sell-by date sausages for my cat or asking for other dairy products from a neighboring shop. I managed to bring Slivka back to herself very soon after I returned. Still, the image of the innocent faces of stray dogs and cats left by their owners never leaves my mind. But we were all back, back to the place we belonged. We entered our new lives together where the most important values became our families, safe and sound, and our homeland to which we owed all.

Kindness, Corruption and a Battle over Ideas: The State of Armenia's Education System

By Avo Piroyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenia inherited its education system from the Soviet Union. For better or worse, during Soviet times there was a clear curriculum, system and comparatively reasonable funding.

30 years later Armenia is still trying to forge a new path with all three aspects in limbo.

Pre-Pashinyan era

The Soviet education system was rigid and intense. "It was heavily focused on teaching knowledge and to a lesser extent skills," said Sofya Hovsepyan, a former Armenian parliamentarian and expert on Armenia's education system.

The Soviet education system continued into the 1990s but was gradually more and more eroded by corruption. The plague of corruption grew to a point of becoming an informal system within a system by the time Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005. This persisted until the 2018 revolution.

"It costs \$3,000 to get a job as a teacher, that's two years' salary upfront just to get the job. In the 1990s, this would only occasionally happen but by the mid-2000s it had become an unofficial requirement," said Hovsepyan.

However even beyond this, low pay has made the profession an unattractive prospect. At best, a teacher's pay is around \$200 per month. Most jobs, skilled or unskilled, pay higher.

Reforms and Attempted Reforms

Armenia's government has made several attempts at improving and modernizing the state of the education system. The overarching idea has been to move away from the Soviet system that prioritizes knowledge/information and to a lesser extent skills to one that prioritizes the teaching of skills and problem solving.

"The idea is that in the modern world information is easily accessible and fluid. Therefore, children can learn things on their own, either now or later in life," said Hovsepyan.

However, mainly due to the endemic corruption and a tussle over the curriculum/system between schools and outside influences, there has been no consistent progress.

"There have been many attempts at re-training teachers. However, this has not worked," said Hovsepyan.

In part this has been due to the conflict between schools and the government over the curriculum. Due to being cash strapped, Armenia's government has been very welcoming of international aid directed at the education system.

However, this aid has come with conditions and caveats regarding the curriculum. The most common areas of interest have been around history and literature with those providing the funding promoting globalism at the expense of focus on national literature, history and culture.

"The funding is not long term but a one off for a specific program, for example, 5 million euros towards the establishment of a history curriculum. There is an ideological struggle going on.

"The government always invites teaching associations for consultations but if they want the [foreign] money, they must meet the criteria required," said Hovsepyan.

Post-Pashinyan

Following Pashinyan's rise to power in 2018, corruption in schools ended almost overnight. However, all other problems including the issues in teacher training, funding and the curriculum remained. More recently, corruption has once again started to become a problem.

"The anti-corruption reputation with which we came to power was enough to scare everyone away from giving or receiving bribes [including to get a teacher's job].

"This lasted for 1.5-2 years but then it started to go back to the old system depending on the region," said Hovsepyan.

Oversight of the education system is devolved to

regional governors. With hostility between the old and new regimes now in the open and the Armenian central government's authority and credibility badly weakened after the 44-Day War, regional governors appear to now be operating without concern about the central government.

Armenian Humanity Shines Through

Despite the corruption and financial struggles, one area Armenia's education system has made great progress is with special needs children including those with autism, down syndrome etc.

"Eighty percent of these children go into normal classes without a problem. They are not put under any pressure and if they only learn 1-2 letters then fine," Hovsepyan said. The aim is to support them, provide a positive experience and pass on life skills, she added.

"The other 20 percent are taught out of class and there are provisions for them with specialist teachers and psychologists in schools," said Hovsepyan.

Speaking of her own experiences while attending teaching seminars on special needs children in the UK and Germany, Hovsepyan said, "I was amazed to see that despite the huge difference in resources, in Arme-



Sofya Hovsepyan

nia, we were having similar levels of success [to the west] and in some cases we were doing better."

The reasons appear to do with approach. "In Germany, there was an attitude that nothing can be done and these kids are just this way. The children were managed more than they were cared for," said Hovsepyan.

In Armenia, teachers have tended towards a far more caring and humanist approach which is likely a reflection of wider, deep rooted Armenian values and principles that go far beyond the education system.

This bodes well for the future as it demonstrates that the core base on which a successful education system can be built on already exists in Armenia.

Should the state take a consistent approach to teacher training, commit to a single direction on the curriculum that is not opposed by teachers and end corruption then even with the existing low levels of funding, Armenia's education system has very strong prospects for the future. Should the funding improve at the same time, then Armenia's education system will highly likely rival the very best in the world within a short space of time.

Hovsepyan became an MP in 2018 along with Nikol Pashinyan. However, shortly after the 44 Day War, in December 2020, she left Pashinyan's party and as a result lost her parliamentary seat after the June 2021 elections.

She has been working in and campaigning for Armenia's education system for around 17 years.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

MEP Demands PACE Suspend Azerbaijan's Mandate

STRASBOURG (PanARMENIAN.Net) — An Armenian member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), lawmaker Hayk Mamijanyan from the opposition “I Have Honor” bloc has demanded that PACE suspend the mandate of the Azerbaijani delegation to the organization.

Mamijanyan said in a Facebook post on November 16 that he participated in the PACE Monitoring Committee and briefed his European colleagues on the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

Second Eurasian Congress To Take Place on December 2 in Moscow

YEREVAN (Arka) — The Second Eurasian Congress will take place in Moscow on December 2, hosted by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) with support from the Government of the Russian Federation, EDB said on November 16.

The Eurasian Congress is a forum for open dialogue between governments, businesses, academia, and the expert community on the most pressing issues of development in Eurasia and cooperation between countries to foster the advancement of national economies.

This year, delegates will discuss how businesses, development institutions and public-private partnerships can play a greater role in unlocking the potential of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU); key cross-border infrastructure projects in transport, logistics, and the water and energy sector; how to ensure food security; priorities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; green finance and ESG projects; and digital transformation in the countries.

Armenia Expects EU To Abandon Double Standards Amid Provocations

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan spoke on November 15 about the international community's generic calls on both sides when it comes to Azerbaijan's provocations, urging the European Union to cease the double standards policy.

Addressing the Eastern Partnership Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting on November 15, Mirzoyan noted that generic statements may indicate indifference and lack of commitment from international partners because Armenia makes credible steps towards peace, while Azerbaijan continues the escalation of the situation.

“If you want to help us reach stability in the region, there is no other way than being frank on these issues and communicating to us your vision of human rights and use of force in our region without applying double standards. We stand ready to be a genuine partner with the European Union in this regard,” Mirzoyan said.

Iran, Turkey Agree to Draw up New Roadmap for Long-term Cooperation

TEHRAN (*Tehran Times*) — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu arrived in Tehran on Monday, November 15, and met with his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir Abdollahian at the Iranian Foreign Ministry and was attended by a number of Iranian and Turkish officials.

After the meeting, Amir Abdollahian and Çavusoglu held a joint press conference. “Today, we had useful and important talks on the development of relations between the two countries. We agreed on expert talks with diplomats from both sides to draw up a new roadmap for long-term cooperation between Tehran and Ankara,” Amir Abdollahian said, noting, “We hope that in the future visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Tehran, we will be able to finalize the document containing the roadmap for long-term cooperation between the two countries.”

He added, “We agreed to start our diplomatic talks on the provisions of the roadmap for long-term cooperation between the two countries, and we hope that this document will be signed in the presence of the presidents of the two countries during the next visit of the Turkish president to Iran.”

The Iranian foreign minister noted, “We had useful and good discussions on various regional and international issues.”

Amir Abdollahian said his talks with Çavusoglu focused on developments in Afghanistan, the need to develop stability, security and calm in Western Asia and to pay attention to the neighborliness policy of the two countries. He added that they underlined that the Iranian and Turkish governments are “pragmatic” and that they “must quickly remove any possible obstacles in the way of relations between the two countries.”

The Iranian foreign minister said, “In this meeting, we reached joint mechanisms to accelerate bilateral cooperation. There is a lot of potential in the field of mutual investments and private sector activities in both countries.”

He added, “The relations between the two countries are historical, friendly and cordial, and we will pay special attention to these historical and deep relations between the two countries in the development of cooperation.”

Amir Abdollahian continued, “In today's talks, we paid special attention to the development of economic and trade cooperation and the increase of cooperation in the field of energy, the facilitation of transit traffic and the strengthening of cross-border trade and consular issues, and fortu-

nately we do not see any serious obstacles to accelerating this cooperation.”

He added, “What has overshadowed some of the bilateral relations over the past two years is due to the coronavirus conditions prevailing in the world.”

The Iranian foreign minister also noted that the issue of environmental protection and dealing with environmental threats, which is one of the concerns of the world today, is of interest to both countries.

the talks in Vienna will be successful,” the Turkish foreign minister said.

He continued, “Currently, there is cooperation between the two countries not only on bilateral issues but also on regional issues such as Afghanistan, Iraq and stability in the South Caucasus. We are ready to cooperate with Iran in the framework of the proposed 3+3 format.”

The 3+3 format includes Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia and their three big neigh-



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (R) welcomes his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu (L) in the capital Tehran on 15 November 2021. [AFP via Getty Images]

The Turkish foreign minister, in turn, voiced Turkey's readiness to develop relations with Iran. “Turkey is always ready to provide any services with its brother. As Mr. Amir Abdollahian said, we reviewed the development of cooperation in all areas, and at the same time today, we talked with my brother Hussein between the delegations to prepare the seventh High Cooperation Council between the two countries. And at the suggestion of the Iranian side, a long-term roadmap between the two countries will be prepared and signed on the sidelines of the council,” Çavusoglu said. He also said that sanctions against Iran are “cruel.” “Those who left the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or Iran nuclear deal] must return to this framework and lift the unilateral sanctions they imposed on Iran. I would like to congratulate you on the start of the talks and I hope that

bors- Russia, Turkey, and Iran. The format is intended to end territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Çavusoglu went on to say that “we are for stability in Iraq and we condemn the attack on the Iraqi Prime Minister. Regarding Syria, we hope to hold high-level meetings. We are in line with Iran about Afghanistan and its stability. We are very concerned about the situation in Afghanistan and the humanitarian situation in this country, and we believe that the establishment of an inclusive government can be the solution.” Commenting on the Turkish president's upcoming visit to Iran, Çavusoglu said, “This trip will take place before the end of the year and we must make the necessary preparations. In Iran and Turkey, result-oriented governments are at work, and this trip is not just for a meeting, but to accelerate relations between the two countries.”

Bill on Armenian Genocide Recognition Submitted to UK Parliament

RESOLUTION, from page 1
by recognizing the Armenian Genocide, the MP said.

Loughton, who chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Armenia, noted that despite the fact that no fewer than 31 coun-



Member of Parliament Tim Loughton

tries now officially recognize the Armenian genocide, the UK has still “failed to follow suit.”

“Refusing to recognize the Armenian Genocide risk conveying a dangerous message of impunity that a crime unpunished is a crime encouraged or downplayed,” he said.

Loughton insisted “glossing over the uncomfortable inconveniences of past history is not the basis for strong and constructive relationships.”

He told MPs: “We cannot legitimately call out and stand up to genocide still going on in the 21st century by sidelining and neglecting the genocides of the 20th century.

“Refusing to recognize the Armenian

Genocide risk conveying a dangerous message of impunity that a crime unpunished is a crime encouraged or downplayed.”

He noted that the bill is strongly supported by members from at least five parties across the House, before adding: “We have the opportunity to do our best to help right an appalling historical injustice and as a leading advocate of human rights on the international stage, send out a clear message that we recognize genocide wherever and whenever it has been committed, as the worst crime against humanity and we will call it helped defend the victims and bring the perpetrators to justice.”

The next reading will take place on March 18, 2022.



Community News

NAASR Panel to Look at 'Fractured Regions and Small States: The Impact of Shifting Geopolitics On Armenia'

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will present a webinar on "Fractured Regions and Small States: The Impact of Shifting Geopolitics on Armenia" on Thursday, December 2, at 12 pm (Eastern)/9 am (Pacific).

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel.

The program will feature a panel of experts: Dr. Gohar Iskandaryan, Chair of Iranian Studies, Department of Oriental Studies, Yerevan State University; Dr. David Lewis, Associate Professor in International Relations, University of Exeter; and Dr. Carter Malkasian, author of *The American War in Afghanistan: A History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2021).

The panel will be moderated by Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Stonehill College.



Dr. Carter Malkasian

Throughout much of the 20th century, Armenia was tucked in geopolitically as a Soviet Republic. Currently, with heightened geopolitical competition and great power rivalry between the U.S. and China in the backdrop, shifting global geopolitics pose a range of regional implications for Armenia. In particular, the U.S. pull-out from Afghanistan is set to reshuffle and challenge state governance in South Asia and the Middle East, with a range of implications for Russian and Turkish foreign policies. As states in Armenia's political neighborhoods develop new strategic partnerships and the role of superpowers, particularly the U.S., evolves, what is the impact on Armenia? How should Armenia position itself in these increasingly turbulent times?

This program is sponsored by the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



The Harvard Armenian Law Students Association posing with Minister Beglaryan after the talk.

At Harvard Law School Artsakh State Minister Beglaryan Details Azerbaijani Human Rights Violations

By Cristopher Patvakanian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — On November 8, the Harvard Armenian Law Students Association (ALSA) and the Harvard Law School (HLS) Advocates for Human Rights hosted a discussion with State Minister and former Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan.

Beglaryan, who holds the highest governmental position in Artsakh after the president and speaker of the parliament, presented the experiences and stories of Armenians who suffered many human rights abuses on the ground during the 2020 Artsakh war.

The ALSA co-president, Hagop Toghramadjian, stated that the two Harvard groups wanted to organize the event to "give the Harvard community the opportunity to hear firsthand about Azerbaijan's war crimes from someone who lived through them personally," with hopes for the event to bring about a coalition for justice for Artsakh.

The talk was organized as an overview of the war and war crimes committed, followed by a separate question-and-answer portion.

Beglaryan highlighted the fact that Azerbaijani atrocities committed during the war were a broader part of anti-Armenian government policy in Baku, which was heightened last year. Beglaryan explained: "During the war we witnessed the most intense violations through the deliberate targeting of civilian objects and the civilian population." As examples, he cited the guided munition strikes on the Ghazanchetsots Church in Shushi and the more than 60 cases of civilians killed under Azerbaijani control, in some cases as beheadings. Beglaryan reminded the audience that during the war, Azerbaijani forces deliberately targeted international journalists reporting there, again in violation of international law.

He explained that much of the Azerbaijani strategy — before, during and after the war — is to instill fear to scare Armenians away from Artsakh. "They could not see HARVARD, page 8



State Minister Beglaryan discussing the Azerbaijani military trophy park, projected in the background.

Turkey's Surreptitious Influence in US Exposed By Center for International Policy

WASHINGTON — A recent report titled "Turkey's Lobby in the United States" exposing Turkey's undue and surreptitious attempts to influence U.S. policy through Congress, the mainstream media and think tanks was released by the Center for International Policy (CIP), reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

The 30-page report by the CIP, an independent, non-profit center dedicated to realizing a "peaceful, just and sustainable world as the central pursuit of U.S. foreign policy," analyzed Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) documents filed by organizations registered to work on behalf of Turkish clients in 2020, including Greenberg Traurig LLP, Mercury Public Affairs LLC, Venable LLP, Capitol Counsel LLC, and others.

Key findings in the report include:

- * 11 organizations were registered under FARA to work on Turkey's behalf in 2020 (at a cost of over \$5 million);

- * Those organizations reported making 2,319 contacts on behalf of their Turkish clients;

- * 568 campaign contributions, totaling \$526,177, were made by those firms and their registered foreign agents;

- * 17 elected officials received nearly \$37,000 in contributions from firms that had contacted their offices on behalf of Turkish clients;

- * 1 Senator received a campaign contribution from a firm that had contacted their office on Turkey's behalf that same day.

The report emphasizes that the common denominator is lobbying, noting that "Turkey has been the object of considerable lobbying, public relations, and related attempts at influence by Turkey's foreign agents in the U.S." The report further highlights that in addition to Senate and House leaders, key Members of the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committees, Senate and House Armed Services Committees, along with leaders of the Congressional Caucus on Turkey were also contacted.

In addition to thousands of "political contacts," the media was contacted 377 times, "specifically the New York Times (83), Bloomberg (52), the Washington Post (37), CNN (35), and the Wall Street Journal (34)," and included "submitting pitches for stories, op-eds, or letters to the editor." Think tanks, along with businesses and business networks, were also courted with 145 contacts between them.

see TURKEY, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

At Harvard Law School Artsakh State Minister Beglaryan Details Azerbaijani Human Rights Violations

HARVARD, from page 7
remove all the people by force, so they're engaging in everything they can do using psychological terror," Beglaryan emphasized. Psychological pressure aside, even today civilians in Artsakh are still being targeted physically by Azerbaijani forces,

as evidenced by the recent killing of a 22-year-old Armenian man who was repairing water pipes.
After the formal lecture, audience members, primarily non-Armenian students of Harvard Law School, posed a range of questions. When asked about the importance

of legal recognition, Beglaryan emphasized that as an unrecognized state, Artsakh is isolated from the international community in essentially all respects and being recognized would provide them with not only engagement, but security. On the role of Russia in the conflict, Beglaryan stated the fact that it was only through Russian mediation and peacekeepers that the war ended. He said, "Every country has their own interests, and in Artsakh, the Russian interests matched ours," resulting in the ceasefire agreement.
When asked about the status of prisoners of war, and if more could be done to bring them home, Beglaryan answered that "given the Azerbaijani attitude and what we've seen so far, it will not be easy to get a result." He referred to the examples of the Arme-



Artsakh State Minister Artak Beglaryan speaks at Harvard Law School.



Co-presidents of the Harvard Armenian Law Students Association Anoush Baghdassarian and Hagop Toghramadjian

nians providing landmine maps and some mediation efforts with Georgia and said that despite this "the Azerbaijanis were not satisfied and wanted much more," despite the fact that all POWs were supposed to be returned home per the ceasefire.

The talk ended with a final question by Anoush Baghdassarian, the co-president of the ALSA and also co-president of the HLS Advocates for Human Rights, leaving the audience charged with a call to action. Baghdassarian asked what their organization, and students more broadly at HLS, could do to support Artsakh and help fill gaps in law or evidence gathering to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Beglaryan emphasized the importance of research and publications, and that contributing to the scholarship on Artsakh is an important way to give a voice to the people on the ground who may not have the ability to reach the international community. Additionally, coalition building and working with law students in Artsakh, whether it be simply networking, mentoring or providing educational opportunities to the latter, would fill a great void and provide a more well-rounded education, something they are currently deprived of. By interacting with, teaching, and also learning from students in Artsakh, the HLS community can serve as a bridge and "ambassador for voices of Artsakh in the international community."

In fact, this is now one of the goals of the Harvard Armenian Law Students Association. Though it was originally formed to foster a sense of Armenian community at HLS, the war changed the tenor of the group and its mission. "Our members became much more involved with Armenian affairs during and following the war, whether it be writing articles, working with the HLS Advocates for Human Rights to draft legal documents or hosting events like this to engage the community," Toghramadjian explained. As a result of the talk, more students reached out to the ALSA and there is an interest in the group to expand on their initiatives with Artsakh in scholarship or educational opportunities.

He added, "On future engagement with Artsakh, he explained, "realistically it has to be sparked by Armenians within HLS, but I do think the university is a good platform for us here to make connections and get non-Armenians involved in our cause. If we don't do it, nobody is going to do it. The objective for the group is to organize in ways beyond the efforts of one person and create something that is lasting and will endure on its own."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Turkey's Surreptitious Influence in US Exposed By Center for International Policy

TURKEY, from page 7

The report also highlighted that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's aggressive foreign policy decisions, including recent military interventions and support for proxy terrorists in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as his authoritarian rule in Turkey, have "made US-Turkey relations more strained than ever before" with Greenberg Traurig, Mercury Public Affairs, Venable and Capitol Counsel ending their contracts after the Armenian-American community brought to light Turkey's full-scale support of the war that Azerbaijan launched last Fall against the Armenian people, including the recruitment and use of jihadist mercenaries.

The report made clear that "this analysis is just one part of Turkey's influence in America" and does not, for example, "address the influence of the Turkish Heritage



Organization, a non-profit convener that regularly hosts events providing a platform for Turkish officials in the U.S. Nor does it discuss illicit influence operations, such as the work Michael Flynn did on Turkey's behalf."

"We commend the Center for International Policy for this timely and thorough report," stated Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. "Anti-democratic regimes freely operating in Washington and undermining U.S. policy to the detriment of the American people must end. Passage of the ENABLERS Act by Congress would be a good first step, along with the OCCRP's continued work unveiling the corruption in Azerbaijan as well as the influence exerted by multinational corporations with vested interests in Turkey and Azerbaijan."

OBITUARY

Lucille Apcar

Granddaughter of Ambassador, Born in Japan

MARIPOSA, Calif. (*Mariposa Gazette*) — Lucille Apcar, an active member of Mariposa County, passed away at the age of 95, it was announced on October 7 from natural causes.

She was born on January 1, 1926, in Yokohama, Japan, to Michael and Araxe Apcar.

In her book, *Shibaraku, Memories of Japan 1926-1946*, Lucille told of her extraordinary childhood. A descendant of a long line of Armenians, her ancestors ran a steamship company known as the Apcar Line that "plied the waters of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea ending at the Port of Kobe, Japan."

Lucille's grandparents married in Rangoon, Burma, in 1889, and after a short stay there they settled in Kobe, Japan, and from

Lucille's grandmother died and the family fortune "rapidly went downhill." Servants were let go. Lucille's aunts, who had immigrated to the U.S., wrote letters pleading the family to leave, but father refused to do so.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lucille's father was arrested, their home ransacked and valuables taken — some by their own staff. The Japanese government declared ownership of their home, although did not evict them at the time. Amidst all of this, Lucille's 17-year-old sister died of diabetes. Her father remained in prison for 13 months experiencing torture and near starvation.

The Apcar family, along with other "westerners," were forced to leave and relocate to the small, remote mountain community of Karuizawa. This was their home for two years where they suffered from inadequate housing, bitter cold, near starvation and ash from several eruptions of the nearby volcano.

When the war ended, they returned to Yokohama to find their home totally destroyed. Now 19, Lucille worked for the International Red Cross; then later did secretarial duties for a brigadier general. Finally, by the fall of 1946, the entire family was able to relocate to San Francisco to begin a new life.

Among Lucille's many jobs over the years was that of an escort for tours, mostly to the Far East countries. In 1955, she founded Astra Travel Inc. in Menlo Park, Calif. and operated it for more than 30 years. She also led travel tours of her native Japan and Asia.

She moved to Mariposa in 1989 after her tour company substituted her at the last minute as a guide to Yosemite — a place she had never visited. She researched, pulled it off and fell in love with the area. Once settled here, she contributed her tour guide expertise as a docent and volunteer for Mariposa Museum and History Center.

An accomplished writer, she was active in the late Marge Mueller's Mariposa writing class and eventually led that group. In addition to *Shibaraku*, she published a biography about her remarkable grandmother. Her work was also featured in the book *Inspiring Generations, 150 Years, 150 Stories in Yosemite* published in 2014 by Yosemite Conservancy.

A granddaughter of Diana Agabeg Apcar, a noted Armenian writer and philanthropist, Lucille completed and published in 2004 one of her grandmother's unfinished books, "From the Book of One Thousand

Tales — Stories of Armenia and Its People, 1892 – 1922."

Lucille was also a proud member of the Mariposa Democratic Club where she served on the scholarship committee for many years as well as the Democratic Central Committee as their secretary.

Lucille started a Chinese Mah Jongg Club at the Mariposa Senior Center. She taught everyone to play this game that she enjoyed throughout her life. When the Mariposa Senior Center closed due to Covid-19 she opened her home so they could continue to play twice a week. They are still playing today and will continue to do so.

Lucille was an active member of the Mariposa Garden Club.

She survived cancer twice.

She was predeceased by her parents, Michael and Araxe Apcar of Los Altos, brothers, Michael Jr. of Pleasanton, and Richard Alexander, of Sunnyvale, sisters, Katherine Berberian of Santa Cruz, and Dorothy Apcar, who died in Japan as a young woman.

Lucille is survived by nieces and nephews and their families: Leonard and his mother Gladys Miroyan Apcar, and Michael, Richard, Katherine and Margaret Berberian.



there to Yokohama where they established an import-export business — A. M. Apcar & Co. The grandfather died young and Lucille's grandmother, Diana, raised a family and ran the business until her son, Lucille's father, was old enough to take over. During the Armenian Genocide, Diana welcomed refugees into her home and even purchased houses for them in the community. She was not only a humanitarian, but a diplomat, correspondent, and writer — a strong and independent woman — characteristics she passed down to her granddaughter, Lucille.

Lucille and her four siblings lived a comfortable life complete with servants, in a Victorian style home on a bluff overlooking the harbor.

Things began to change in the 1930s. Businesses suffered due to Japan's growing hostility toward the west. Food and other commodities became scarce. In 1937,

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Angela Melkonian Brings Renewable Energy to Armenia and Beyond

MELKONIAN, from page 1

Iraqi Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul Jabbar said the value of the agreement was approximately \$500 million. Melkonian played a key role in the negotiations for this first large-scale solar energy project in Iraq.

Iraq

She said that while the recent framework agreement is a high-level accord, the power purchase agreement (PPA) that now is being discussed is even more important as it will cover all the technical, financial and legal aspects of this transaction.

Melkonian explained that Iraq is seen generally as an oil producing country, but that it also has a huge electricity deficit because it exports its oil as a source of income and consequently is heavily dependent on natural gas from Iran. Recently, the US has been pressuring it to stop this commerce with Iran, which gave it more incentive to become self-sufficient and develop other energy sectors. Consequently, in 2020, it launched a tender including seven projects in five different projects for a total of 755 megawatts. Scatec focuses on emerging markets, and it decided to give a very competitive bid, together with its two consortium partners who have local knowhow due to preexisting projects in Iraq.

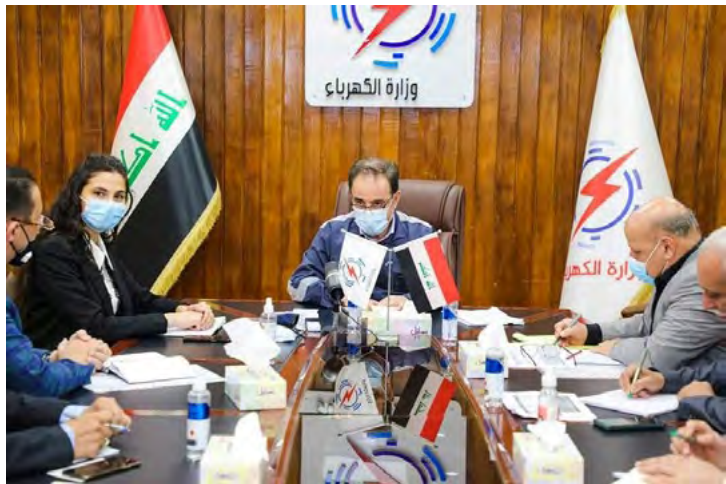
The consortium won the two big projects of 225 and 300 megawatts in the two aforementioned regions to the south of Baghdad. Before this, there were only small rooftop projects and one unrealized solar program attempt by the government at a largescale



Angela Melkonian viewing Lake Sevan, near Mets Masrik, in January 2018

see a stable future for Iraq.

Her Armenian background turned out to be quite positively received in Iraq. The current Iraqi minister of electricity is Kurdish. During a meeting with 15 people from the Iraqi side and 5 from the Scatec consortium, she recalled, the minister suddenly stopped the conversation and, looking at Melkonian, asked, 'you are not French and you are not Lebanese. Where are you from?' Melkonian said that after she replied that her background was Armenian, he completely changed his tone and body language, exclaiming, "Oh my God, I love the Armenians!" In the middle of the discussion, he broached the topic of the Genocide topic and said that the Armenians have been unfairly treated. He ordered coffee



Meeting with the Iraqi Minister of Electricity

project in 2017. As a gage of scale for readers, a medium-sized industrial warehouse rooftop would produce almost 1 megawatt of solar power and cover its energy needs.

One complication, Melkonian explained, is that up until now, Iraq financed all such projects through commercial banks and short-term loans or its own balance sheet and did not have project finance precedents. Therefore, Scatec must do some educational groundwork as the first to open the Iraqi market to development banks, which operate in a different manner, to finance this and any future similar projects.

One of the encouraging signals in the country is that a large conference took place in Baghdad with world leaders in September in which it was decided that Iraq should play a role in regional stability, despite the complicated political situation there. This, Melkonian said, boosted confidence that these leaders



Signing of the framework agreement for the 525 megawatt Iraqi solar project on October 7. The gentleman seated next to Angela Melkonian is the director general of the Electricity Directorate in Babylon and is signing on behalf of the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, while standing behind him is the minister of electricity.

to be served to everyone and then invited Melkonian and her team to his personal office after the meeting.

Melkonian added that in Lebanon too, Armenians are held in high esteem as hard workers, smart and good in business and craftsmanship.

Armenia

Prior to working for Scatec, Melkonian worked from Dubai for the Spanish company Fotowatio Renewable Ventures (a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Saudi Arabian company Abdul Latif Jameel Energy and Environmental Services) from 2015 to 2019 initially as a development manager and later as the development and technical manager for the Middle East and North Africa. She helped negotiate, as project manager for Fotowatio the first largescale solar program for Armenia, in the Mets Masrik municipality of Gegharkunik province, near Lake Sevan. She said, "This was first a personal achievement, as it was the first solar program in Armenia, and I was the project manager for it." Additionally, she said that it was a great chance for her to see Armenia, as she went there many times for this project.

Andrea Wiktorin, European Union (EU) ambassador to Armenia, evaluated this project very highly, declaring: "The Masrik Solar Energy Project will play a fundamental role in Armenia achieving its energy and climate objectives in line with the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also has the potential to provide a range of new jobs, create new industrial opportunities in the region and contribute to economic growth, just as the EU promotes with the new European Green deal."

The Armenian government instituted a competitive application process in which twenty international developers competed for this project. The negotiation process was prolonged and took over a year, Melkonian said, because, as in Iraq, when there is a first largescale solar project in any country, the negotiation process of the project agreements with the government takes time because it necessitates bringing the different local stakeholders up to speed with the renewable energy market legal frameworks.

The most important takeaway is enabling the project finance scheme through development banks which offer very competitive loan interests to finance this kind of projects. Hence the negotiated agreements with the governments must be what is called "bankable," continued Melkonian, which means that they should have minimum risk on the sponsors and on the lenders.

Solar plants financed under a build, own, operate (BOO) regime, are not sold for a lump sum, but rather under a PPA scheme for every kilowatt-hour (kWh) sold, similarly to purchase of electricity from the national grid. Under such a scheme, the banks want to be sure that the payment risks are mitigated under the agreements with the government.

While Melkonian is no longer with Fotowatio, she said she follows what is happening with interest. The war in Armenia in 2020 delayed the construction process, which initially was estimated as taking one year.

In early 2021, a PPA was signed with Electric Networks of Armenia, which will distribute the electricity. The 55-megawatt solar plant will produce enough energy to supply more than 20,000 homes, and, according to Fotowatio, avoid the emission of over 40,000 tons of CO2 per year. The project is supported with \$38.4 million in financing from the International Finance Corporation, which is a member of the World Bank Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Union, while Ameriabank will provide a loan to finance VAT needs.

The Road to Expertise

Melkonian grew up in Bourj Hammoud and Anjar and went to Armenian school until 9th grade. She continued her education at an Armenian Catholic high school, Collège Hripsimiantz, and graduated with a French baccalaureate degree in biology from a French Lebanese school, Collège des Soeurs des Saints Coeurs Sioufi in Ashrafiyeh. She ended up studying mechanical engineering, which she thought would be a practical field for work, at the American University of Beirut.

Right after graduation, at the age of 22, she found a compelling job in engineering and sales for the international firm HILTI in Qatar and stayed there three years. She said, though her parents were very open-minded, she sought a new environment, declaring: "I wanted to get away. I wanted to discover my identity away from any predispositions: I wanted to create myself."

Hilti Qatar is a very large multinational company headquartered in Liechtenstein selling construction tools, materials and software, and indeed, Qatar was a completely different environment for her. She



COMMUNITY NEWS

began as an account manager but after a year, she was moved to field engineering. Every day she had to make five or six construction site visits, and sometimes drive to the middle of the desert, where she would demonstrate power tools to site engineers and construction workers.

Engineering traditionally is a male-dominated field. There were three female engineers in the company and the rest, around 30 people, were men, Melkonian said. She recalled: "People used to ask me, was it safe? It was Qatar. If someone says something or does something wrong, they would cut off his hand or tongue. It was extremely safe. I would enter construction sites alone, and there was not even a whistle — nothing. There was a lot of respect."

Melkonian wanted to do more and particularly to enter the renewable energy field, which was always her passion, so she began looking for new employment opportunities in this sector. She said, "My passion was always to work in something that has a humanitarian effect, something to make the world a better place. In engineering, if you think about it, what better thing is there other than fighting climate change and working in renewable energies." Qatar had a lot of oil and gas and therefore did not feel the need to advance in this area. Consequently, she had to apply to firms elsewhere.

Melkonian did not have any experience or formal expertise in this new field, so she received many rejections at first to her applications. She pointed out that "I don't think you can learn project management theoretically. You learn it all on the job. It really requires hands-on experience."

Finally, advice from a friend led her to go to the World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi and do some interviews. That led to a position with Building Energy, an Italian independent power producer (IPP) headquartered in Milan, which was opening an office in Dubai. Melkonian's fluency in French, English and Arabic (and Armenian), as well as her sales experience, motivated nature and willingness to start at a modest salary in order to enter this new field won her the post as business development manager (2014-15). During this year and a half, the company won two 50 megawatt projects in Egypt, in Benban in the Aswan governorate, in the western desert, as part of the first utility scale photovoltaic project. This 100 megawatts was part of a huge 2,000 megawatt project. Soon, the Benban Solar Park became one of the world's largest solar complexes, visible even from space.

However, Building Energy decided to close its Dubai branch offering her a position in its Capetown office, but she did not want to move to South Africa as she had just started to get comfortable in Dubai. Instead, she found a position with Fotowatio, a competitor of Building Energy, in its Dubai office, and again worked as a business development manager, at first.

Fotowatio also had recently won a 50 megawatt project in the Benban lot and it directly assigned Melkonian to be the project manager for this. Afterwards, five companies involved in developing the entire 2,000 megawatt solar plant decided to form a body called the Benban Solar Association to discuss issues common to all the developers. Her company placed Melkonian on this board. It decided on and launched work through contractors that was necessary for the entire plant, such as waste management or traffic management.

Fotowatio then needed someone on its technical team, and due to Melkonian's background as an engineer, they appointed her as a technical and development manager.

Melkonian worked on three projects in Jordan, but, in addition to the Mets Masrik

project in Armenia, she said the other major achievement of her time at Fotowatio was the bid preparation and award for a major 800 megawatt project for the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). In this project, prior to exiting the opportunity, Fotowatio was initially partnering with Masdar, the Abu Dhabi government funded and owned independent power producer.

The Nature of the Job

At Fotowatio, Melkonian explained that when the company would win a project, she would go to the sites, first to meet the government officials and different stakeholders, and then to see the nature of the land to assess the technical feasibility of the project. She said, "My job was not purely technical. There is a lot of PR, a lot of rela-



In a dragon boat race, Dubai, 2019

tionship building. It is very important that we go to the sites and talk to local people, and manage their expectations vis a vis the project and its socio-economic impact on the nearby communities.

Melkonian had lived three years in Qatar and five in Dubai. She said, "I spent my twenties in the Gulf. It was time for me to see a different environment and do something else. I always thought of coming to Europe." She told recruiters who were contacting her that she only would be interested in positions there, and that is what happened. Though taxes are high and salaries lower than in Dubai, she was ready to make that sacrifice in exchange for the change in lifestyle, she said.

At Scatec, her focus is primarily the Middle East, rather than North Africa. Along with public relations, the technical side of her work entails the preparation of the entire technical proposal for projects. She said, "I coordinate it internally with the engineering team and with the procurement team, to optimize the cost-benefits of the technology that we are selecting to have a competitive edge in the tenders where we are participating." Scatec initially focused on solar energy projects, but by now additionally it works on wind, hydroelectric power, battery storage and green hydrogen, Melkonian added.

In Iraq, as in her prior projects, Melkonian said she didn't see any issues with being a woman working in her field, where 98 percent are men. She said, "For me, to be honest, I didn't have the issue of my gender, but I felt hierarchy and age are extremely important there."

Lebanon

The Mirror-Spectator asked Melkonian for her opinion as an energy specialist and as a Lebanese-Armenian, on the causes of the current energy crisis in Lebanon. She

immediately pointed to corruption as the primary culprit. The electricity sector in Lebanon constitutes one-third of the government deficit every year. Beside under-the-table deals, there is also a lot of theft, with many electricity bills remaining unpaid. Moreover, the transmission grid in Lebanon is extremely bad, therefore on top of an already existing power generation deficit, there are technical losses over this generated power.

Instead of maintaining existing power plants or building new ones, she said that during recent years, the government subcontracted for electricity. Ships from Turkey were brought called Karadeniz to power Lebanon with 300 megawatts capacity. This only supplied a part of the power. This was not a sustainable plan nor did it help Lebanon become self-sufficient by any means.

An unstable political scene and hyperinflation also put various upcoming tenders for power production in Lebanon on hold. Melkonian pointed out that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is asking Lebanon to reform its electricity sector as one of the requirements for being bailed out, and renewable energy is one of the pillars of these requested reforms.

One of the problems in the electricity regulatory sector, Melkonian said, is that Lebanon does not have an independent regulatory authority,

her own regrets that she did not enter such pageants.

During her years in Qatar, Melkonian lived a double life. During the day she did her field work, wearing construction boots and facing heat of 50 degrees Celsius, but after 4 p.m. she walked on the fashion runways at five-star hotels. She approached a modeling agency which booked her in fashion shows. The Qatari market for fashion and luxury goods is one of the fastest growing in the world, she said, because many Qatari women have a lot of money but don't work, and they channel their interests toward fashion.

In Dubai, Melkonian did not spend time on modeling because she worked late hours and focused on her primary career interest which is the renewable energy sector. On the other hand, Melkonian was able, to participate in dragon boat racing contests, and her team went to Hungary to compete in the world championship in 2018. Though her team did not win, it was, she said, very important to even make it that far.

Singing is another activity that Melkonian has always loved. She said she came from a musical family, and that her father, who passed away last November, had an enchanting voice ("better than Adiss Harmandian"). Her father's brother played the accordion and piano, and her grandfather, a self-taught musician, played many instruments, including the guitar, violin, mandolin, flute, harmonica and piano. So when there were big family gatherings, there was music and her father used to sing.

In Beirut, and then in Dubai, Melkonian took a lot of singing lessons. When she



Angela Melkonian with fashion designer Abed Mahfouz, Qatar, 2013

separate from the Ministry of Electricity, to oversee competitive tenders and fix power rates in the country. Many countries have what is called an energy regulatory authority, which ensures a fair competitive tendering program among qualified bidders and excludes conflicts of interest when the Ministry of Electricity issues contracts. In Armenia, for example, it is called the Public Services Regulatory Commission. However, every year, the Lebanese government postpones the creation of such a body.

Lebanon would be a great market for renewable energy investments, Melkonian concluded, but first the IMF would need to help the country stand back on its feet.

Fashion, Sports and Singing

Melkonian is not your typical engineer. She always pursued other interests in life, and fashion has been one of them. As a teenager in Lebanon, she won three beauty pageants, Miss Teenager presented by MTV Lebanon, in 2002; Miss Dhour Shweir Teenager, the following year, when she was 14; and first runner-up in Miss Model of Lebanon when she was 15. Her mother encouraged her, as it was one of

moved to Paris, she joined a jazz band, but COVID happened and everything closed down. Then the French-Armenian community Armenopole invited different artists to submit songs or music for an April 24 event this year. As she had not yet recorded any Armenian songs, the group asked her to act as the master of ceremonies for the event streamed online, presenting the show and the artists. In June 2021, the same group organized a music festival and again asked Armenians around the world for their submissions. This time, Melkonian decided to record something as a tribute to her father.

She took the traditional song *Ov Sioun Sioun* (also known as *Ov Tu Keghetsig*), and did a bossa nova cover of it, which has not been done before. It was shown as part of the Armenian music festival organized by Armenopole.

Melkonian said that hopefully she will continue in this vein with Armenians, and also do non-Armenian music. She said, "I really enjoy being involved in multidisciplinary activities especially when they have an artistic dimension. It gets me out of the engineer stereotype and gives me an eccentric edge."

SAS to Sponsor a Talk by Professor Armen Sargsyan the President of Artsakh State University

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies will sponsor a talk via Zoom by Prof. Armen Sargsyan (President of Artsakh State University, Stepanakert). Titled “Artsakh State University: Past, Present, and Future,” the talk will take place on Saturday, November 20, at 12:30 p.m. ET (9:30 a.m. PT). After discussing the history of Artsakh State University, Sargsyan will discuss the challenges facing the University after the Second Artsakh War. Simultaneous translation into English will be provided. The Zoom Registration Link is <https://bit.ly/31UhZBy>.

As part of its new policy to strengthen ties with academic institutions in Armenia and Artsakh, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) signed an Agreement on Cooperation on October 25, 2021, with Artsakh State University (ArSU). The Agreement aims at cooperating on different academic projects that would be beneficial to both parties and to advance the field of Armenian Studies.

Sargsyan was appointed as president (Rector) of Artsakh State University (ArSU) in 2018. In 1992, he graduated from the Stepanakert branch of Kirovakan Pedagogical Institute and finished his postgraduate at



Prof. Armen Sargsyan

the National Academy of Sciences Republic of Armenia, Institute of Language after Hrachya Adjaryan. In 1998, he was a candidate of Philological Sciences. Between 1999-211 he served as the Dean of ArSU Philological Faculty and between 1998-2000 head of the Artsakh branch of State Language Inspectorate of RA Ministry of Education and Science. In 2011, he served as the Academic Secretary of ArSU. In 2015, he was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Artsakh. In 2016, has was awarded the Title of Honored Scholar of the Republic of Artsakh. He is the author of more than a dozen scientific works and about 60 scientific articles.

Artsakh State University is the oldest and largest university in Artsakh. Over the course of its nearly 50-year history, ArSU has produced over 20,000 graduates in 60 fields of study. Currently, the university prepares specialists in 31 areas.

The SAS, founded in 1974, is the international professional association representing scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. The aim of the SAS is to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature and social, political and economic questions.

For more information, contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu



After the IFS presentation in Detroit sponsored by Tekeyan Cultural Association and St. John’s Armenian Church

IFS Representatives Give Presentation in Detroit

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — The representatives of the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen (www.1000plus.am) continued their tour of the US with a stop at St. John Armenian Church to discuss operations, transparency and governance, at a program sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Sona Baghdasaryan Presenting On IFS to the Detroit Armenian community

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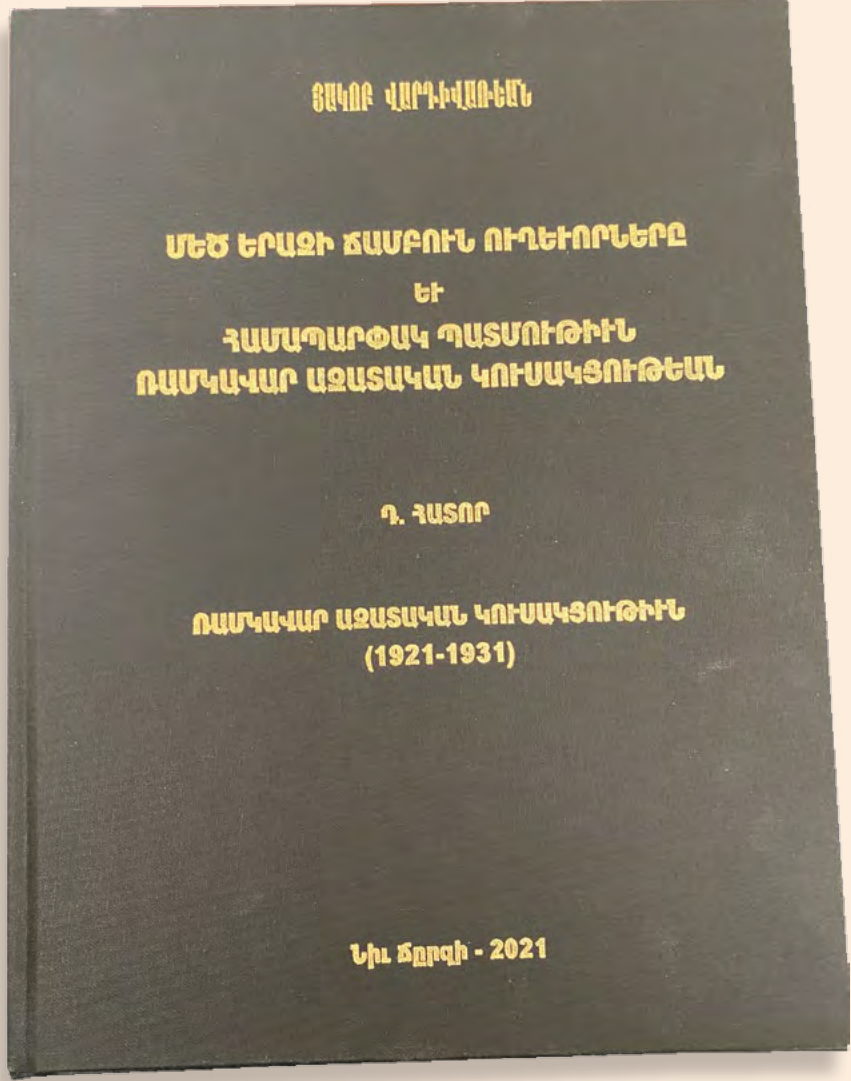
Narine Galstyan and Sona Baghdasaryan presenting on IFS to the Detroit Armenian community



Narine Galstyan presenting on IFS



Sona Baghdasaryan



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COMMUNITY NEWS

For Alecko Eskandarian Soccer Runs In the Blood

By Maria Cozette Akopian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

MAHWAY, N.J. — Alecko Eskandarian grew up in New Jersey with a father who had an illustrious soccer career. Quite literally, Alecko followed in his father's footsteps and in doing so, forged a path to success.

His father, Andranik Eskandarian, was a star member of the Iranian team winning the Asia Cup and reaching the Olympic Tournament in Montreal in 1976. Andranik also played in the World Cup of 1978 — Iran's first appearance in the tournament.

When asked whether his father's legacy was what fueled his drive to pursue soccer, the younger Eskandarian replied: "There are different personality traits that are indicators of success. While I greatly benefited from my dad coaching me, I always had that personality and commitment, which were the underlying factors that took me to the next level." His older brother Ara was also a source of inspiration.

Soccer as a spectator sport is not as popular in the United States as in the rest of the world, but Alecko gravitated towards the sport as he surrounded himself with mentors and idols. He explains soccer as his outlet to expend the seemingly inexhaustible energy he had throughout adolescence.

"Soccer helped with my confidence. I committed myself, did the best that I could and got the rewards immediately. I became a mad man when I played. I had to be so good that nobody could deny my performance or capabilities," he said.



Alecko also said he discovered the importance and purpose of his Armenian identity. He has consistently utilized his platform to promote the Armenian cause by connecting with fellow Armenian athletes, getting involved with numerous non-profit organizations, and creating popular posts about what an Armenian is.

"Our revenge is to survive," he stated in one of his posts that gained massive traction amongst Armenians and non-Armenians alike.

During the Artsakh war of 2020, Alecko dove into researching charitable avenues to support Armenia. He connected with a handful of non-profit organizations that he had solidified relationships with, including the Armenian Relief Society and Focus on Children Now. He used his network, raised money, and allocated the funds to five



Alecko Eskandarian

charities that he believed had missions with a meaningful impact.

Concurrently, on a joint mission with fellow Armenians, Alecko felt compelled to be a voice to spread awareness about the war. He said, "My non-Armenian friends have been blown away by the realities of what my country faces."

If one scrolls through his social media accounts, one can find notes echoing his pride in being Armenian, the values that his family has instilled, and commemorative messages on the Armenian Genocide.

As a young adult and professional athlete, Alecko became an outspoken ambassador for all things Armenian, making an impact in both the Armenian and the non-Armenian world.

"It's everything; it's our responsibility," Alecko responded immediately as I asked why he thought it was important for Armenians to give back to their cause: "When you look at the history of our people, it's built upon those who have kept it, cherished it, and passed it on." He explained the parallels of his career with what Armenians represent in the global context. "I've been the underdog but when my back is up against the wall, I'm going to fight and when I fight, you're going to get everything and more that you can handle. I feel the same about being Armenian. When push comes to shove, I'm never going to waver."

Eskandarian played for D.C. United in 2003. His talents led the team to win the 2004 Major League Soccer (MLS) Cup and earned him the D.C. United Coaches Award, as well as a spot on the MLS All-Star team. Alecko won the championship by scoring two goals in the first half, making it the fastest pair of goals in MLS Cup history. After sustaining a head injury, he ended the season early but came back to the game in 2006 with a vengeance. Alecko's shining return earned him the Commissioner's Pick as an MLS All-Star.

Chivas USA acquired Alecko in 2008 and in 2009, he was traded to Los Angeles Galaxy. He debuted with a game-winning goal but in 2010, at the age of 27, Alecko hung up his cleats due to multiple head injuries that prevented him from receiving medical clearance to play any further.

"It was a reality check. I woke up one morning, looked in the mirror and thought, 'Who am I now?'" he related. Using his strong mindset and athletic resilience, Alecko went back to school at the University of Virginia to finish his bachelor's degree requirements and spent time reflecting on his next steps.

A friend reached out to him with a comment that resonated, igniting a new journey he would begin from that day

forward. "You've always been much more than a soccer player," said his friend. That stuck, and Alecko instantly opened his heart to the possibility of becoming a coach.

He reminisced: "I've been so blessed to have the life I've had, to have gone pro. What a waste it would be if I didn't pass this on to someone else."

Eskandarian reached great heights in serving as a youth technical director for the Philadelphia Union soccer club.

He then went on to become assistant coach for the New York Cosmos — the club where his father used to play. In 2015, he led the Cosmos B squad to the National Premier Soccer League. He finished his first season as head coach, playing in front of the largest crowd ever for an amateur soccer match in the US.

He later went on to MLS in an administrative position and is currently there to help the league make strides in further popularizing the sport in the United States.

No interview with Alecko Eskandarian can be complete without touching on The Date: Several years ago, he received a phone call from Kim Karsashian's mother Kris Jenner. She asked if Alecko would like to take Kim on a date. This would also be part of an episode of "Keeping Up with the Kardashians."

Alecko recalled the experience as "insane" since he walked up to a table for two already fully set up to be filmed at a local Los Angeles restaurant.

"In the morning, I got a phone call from Kris Jenner. Within one day, we set up the date. The way that whole thing came about was random. I was playing for Galaxy and living in Los Angeles... I have nothing but good things to say about Kim. She is super down-to-earth and funny, and we had a great time. For me, it was more like meeting a fellow Armenian and striking up a friendship."

In conclusion, when asked what advice he would give to aspiring athletes, he said, "Work hard, practice, and dream big. If you think small, you're going to be small. Find who the top person is and measure yourself with them. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable."



Antranik Eskandarian with his two sons, Ara and Alecko



COMMUNITY NEWS

Eastern Diocese Completes Fall Season of Regional Youth Retreats

NEW YORK — Throughout the fall, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America has held a series of in-person and virtual youth retreats in several regions, targeting the ACYOA Juniors and Seniors age groups.

Two retreats for ACYOA Juniors took place on the weekend of November 6-7, organized by the Diocese's Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Kath-

ryn Ashbahian led the retreat at Holy Martyrs Church (Bayside, NY), while Jennifer Morris led the one at St. John Church (Southfield, MI). Similar events were held in late October at Holy Resurrection Church (New Britain, CT) and St. James of Nisibis Church (Evanston, IL), with a total of more than 100 teens participating in the four regional gatherings.

The ACYOA Juniors enjoyed sessions



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and Rev. Vasken Kouzouian with the participants



The members of the ACYOA juniors in Southfield, Mich.

focusing on teamwork, topical discussions, and Bible study. Most of all, they appreciated the chance to spend time with fellow Armenian youth in a church setting.

Meeting concurrently with these was the National Retreat Series aimed at ACYOA Seniors, which wrapped up on November 6 with in-person gatherings at Holy Trinity Church (Cambridge, MA) and St. James

of Nisibis Church (Evanston, IL). Additionally, a "Virtual Retreat" met online on Sunday evening, November 7. An earlier ACYOA Seniors retreat took place in October at St. Leon Church (Fair Lawn, NJ).

ACYOA Central Council members served as retreat leaders for the more than 60 young adult participants from across the Eastern Diocese.

San Francisco Area Commemoratives One-year Anniversary Of the Artsakh War With Prayer Vigil

SAN FRANCISCO — On Sunday, November 14, San Francisco Bay area Armenian clergy led a prayer vigil and commemorative memorial service to honor the soldiers of the 44-day war in Artsakh and to pray for the immediate and safe release of the POWs still illegally held captive by Azerbaijan. The gathering was held in San Francisco at Mt. Davidson Cross, the historical landmark dedicated to the Armenian Genocide.


Local Armenian organizations and com-

munity members joined together in this solemn gathering to show respect to all the victims of the tragic war.


Mt. Davidson Cross is home of the historical San Francisco landmark which adorns spectacular views from the highest point in San Francisco and also includes trails, nature, meditation, and a forest in the middle of an urban environment. The mission of the Cross is to promote the Armenian culture and historical heritage, and to provide documentation and information on Armenian issues, particularly as to the Armenian Genocide. Mount Davidson Cross is home to the annual April 24 Armenian Genocide Commemoration and Easter Sunrise Service.

On July 12, 1997, the Council of Armenian-American Organizations of Northern California (CAAONC), a coalition of over 30 Armenian-American Organizations outbid other groups, purchased the Cross from the City of San Francisco. On November 4, 1997, the CAAONC became the legal owner of the Mt. Davidson Cross and assumed the responsibility for maintaining it.





A jubilee celebration dedicated to the renowned composer
ARNO BABAJANYAN
 on the 100th anniversary of his birth



Tekeyan Cultural Association
 Los Angeles and Metro Los Angeles chapters

Under the Auspices of
 His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate
 Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America

Anahit Nersisyan - soprano
Suren Mkrtchyan - tenor
Armine Ghazaryan - piano
Armen Mangasaryan - violin
Hovhannes Meghrikyan - violin
Hovhannes Fishyan - viola
Hovik Hovhannisyan - cello

Mistress of Ceremonies:
Lilit Keheyanyan

Friday, December 10, 2021 at 7:30 PM
 Armenian Society of Los Angeles
 117 South Louise Street, Glendale, CA 91205

Refreshments following the program. Admission is free.
 Please observe local COVID-19 protocols.

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Arts & Culture

Innovating Armenian Enterprise:

Victor Zarougian and Judy Saryan Integrate Art and Agriculture in the Homeland

By Lisa Kradjian

BOSTON — After successful careers in real estate and finance, Victor Zarougian and Judy Saryan of Boston have championed Armenian philanthropy in many ways. Their latest effort combines their passion for sustainable agriculture and for art. In doing so they are raising awareness for both organizations and creating new opportunities to sustain Armenian enterprise.

Victor Zarougian was born in Cairo, Egypt and immigrated to the US in 1962. After attaining his BA at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, he pursued a career in urban real estate management and development. He has a strong interest in geography and developmental economics which he has put to excellent use in his philanthropic efforts, particularly in Armenia, with organizations such as the Tufenkian Foundation, Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE), TUMO and others.

Judy Saryan was born in Delaware and graduated from Wellesley College with a major in economics. She spent her career in the financial industry, most recently at Eaton Vance Management, where she was vice president and a portfolio manager. She has provided financial commentary for several media outlets. After retirement, Saryan decided to pursue her passion for literature and history, and in partnership with the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA), published translations of Zabel Yessayan and others. She also has worked on philanthropic projects with AIWA, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, among others.

The couple's passion for supporting Armenia took a new turn in recent years, as they decided to pursue two major goals concurrently: to support sustainable agriculture in Armenia, and to support Armenian artists — both areas that have long been part of Armenia's history and accomplishments.

ICARE's EcoFarm and the Armenian Artists Project

In 2005 Texas A&M University, Armenian National Agrarian University and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, founded ICARE — a non-governmental and non-commercial organization in Yerevan. It provides degrees in agribusiness education to achieve sustainable entrepreneurial activities in the food and agriculture sector in Armenia. ICARE is an umbrella institution for see ENTERPRISE, page 17



Filmmaker Emile Ghessen (Photo: Emile Ghessen's Facebook page)

Emile Ghessen's New Documentary Depicts the Artsakh War: '45 Days: The Fight for a Nation'

By Maydaa Nadar

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Around one year ago, on September 27, 2020, the Second Karabakh War erupted. It was only halted after 44 days through a Russian-mediated ceasefire agreement. Former British Royal Marines Commando who now makes documentaries, Emile Ghessen, travelled to the region to observe what was occurring there and to relay information about it. He recently sat down for an interview.

Could you give us a brief introduction about your films?

I served as a Royal Marines Commando for 12 years in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was not trained for media, yet, and after the military service, I bought a camera and followed international volunteers who were heading to Iraq and Syria to fight against the Islamic State. This was for a documentary feature which I made discussing what was motivating them to battle. Afterwards, I attended a film school to shoot my second feature film about men travelling to Ukraine in order to confront the pro-Russian separatists. "45 Days" is my third independent feature film.

How did you discover your passion for documentaries?

My passion was born with me narrating stories that I have vividly lived and with my desire to give voice to the voiceless, with the aim of educating people.

What were the challenges that you faced while shooting the documentary "45 Days: The Fight for a Nation"?

The biggest challenge was the restrictions because of COVID-19. Getting access to the frontline to be with the soldiers also presented a challenge. It took time, but I eventually got the permission to be present with them and tell the story.

How was the film's title selected?

The war lasted 44 days. The 10th of November was the 45th day and I believe it is a turning point in Armenia's future. So my work included the period of 45 days and not just the 44-day war.

Why do you think this documentary is important?

The documentary is important because there was a lack of news revealing what was happening here. The Armenians continued to be under threat from their neighbors; if the story is not told, it will be forgotten. Making this film was about documenting history.

Why did you choose to go to Karabakh?

I chose Armenia because I saw that its case was not given the deserved attention and that almost no one else was speaking about it; so I thought it was important to tell the story from its perspective.

see GHESSEN, page 17

The Immersive Rodolphe Barsikian Experience

PARIS — After unveiling last month his first collection of works available in non-fungible token (NFT, basically a unique image that can be monetized), Rodolphe Barsikian will soon present his latest works in an exhibition in total immersion, mixing digital and installations, in Armenia.

From Thursday, November 25 to Sunday, December 12, 2021, this new kind of exhibition will be held at the Gabriel Sundukyan State Academic Theater in Yerevan.

Under the auspices of the French Embassy in the Armenian capital, it will be relayed by the French Institute as part of the 4th edition of its event November Digital 2021.

From his work on computer to his physical work (paintings, sculptures, altarpieces...) for his first exhibition in March 2021, then to video and now to NFT, Rodolphe Barsikian continues his "Digital Life" with this new exhibition imagined as a totally immersive journey.

By returning to the sources of an identity whose influences mark out his work, this presentation in Yerevan is symbolically a step in the international journey he is beginning.

Barsikian takes particular care to stage his exhibitions himself. On the walls of the exhibition room, no picture rails, no paintings are hung. He said, "'Digital Life' is the fruit of a 20-year journey. I am delighted to share this project today with the whole world, in this first international stage in Yerevan, a high-tech hub in Armenia. I worked on a 100-percent immersive experience as a connection between 3D sculptures inspired by traditional Armenian khatchkars and videos of my latest NFT creations."

Barsikian confronts the darkness of the 150-square-meter exhibition room and offers the public a singular dive into his hybrid work.

The artist perceives the blockchain technology and the world of NFT as "a great opportunity," allowing to lift the barriers between his works and the public.

This choice to make part of his work accessible in this new format allows the artist to broaden his scope by making his work accessible to a wider community, integrating new collectors and opening it to new ways of collecting art.

With his passion for drawing, Barsikian invents forms, trajectories and digital embroidery.

Barsikian's artistic expression tends towards an abstraction made of lines, interlacing, superimpositions and knots. It is a factory of the visible, with radical and pure images in their conception and willingly delirious once delivered to the viewer.

The banks of images that Rodolphe Barsikian constitutes are the equivalent of libraries, whose contents the artist manages with requirement. Their constitution elaborated after

see EXHIBIT, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Maureen Abood's Cranberry Sauce

Maureen Abood's Cranberry Sauce With Rose Water & Pistachios

"Cranberry sauce is such a natural with rose water, which brings out the cran-flavor and balances the sweet-tart beautifully. Be sure to use the rose water with restraint," says Maureen Abood about this holiday recipe posted at her Middle Eastern website on November 14, 2017. See: <https://www.maureenabood.com/cranberry-sauce-rose-water-pistachios/>

Maureen is a second-generation Lebanese American, and an expert in Lebanese and Mediterranean cuisine. Pomegranates and pistachios. Floral waters and cinnamon. Bulgur wheat, lentils, and succulent lamb. These lush flavors of Maureen's childhood, growing up as a Lebanese-American in Michigan, inspired her to launch her award-winning blog, Rose Water & Orange Blossoms, and write her acclaimed 2015 cookbook, *Rose Water & Orange Blossoms: Fresh & Classic Recipes from My Lebanese Kitchen*.

Her culinary guides and inspiration, from grandparents to parents, cousins, and aunts, come alive in her stories. "Lebanese cuisine isn't widely available in the United States, so Abood's book is a splendid primer for those who want to learn more. The ingredients alone are intoxicating," says The San Diego Union-Tribune.

"My website began as a blog where I wrote stories that expressed my culinary journey. I've been humbled by the ongoing overwhelming reception my book has received, especially because that means so many of us share the same passion for these recipes, stories, family, and gathering around the table together," she adds.

"These tested recipes are made better with the right ingredients and tools. You'll find opportunities to explore and buy my highly curated product collection throughout this website, including Lebanese olive oils, spices, flower waters, pomegranate molasses, preserves, and more. Gift-giving is a favorite of our community, so you will always find a fresh and exciting collection of gifts to send to your people with pride and excitement."

Discover outstanding ingredients, kits, skills, and tools to make all your home cooking and entertaining more appealing and enjoyable at [MaureenAboodMarket.com](https://www.maureenaboodmarket.com).

A long-time writer and cook, Maureen's work has been published extensively, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, Saveur, and the Huffing-

ton Post. She furthered her passion for food at Tante Marie's Cooking School in San Francisco, from which she graduated in 2010. Taking an ingredient-focused approach that makes the most of every season's bounty, Maureen presents over 100 irresistible recipes in her cookbook that will delight readers with evocative flavors: Spiced Lamb Kofta Burgers, Avocado Tabbouleh in Little Gems, and Pomegranate Rose Sorbet. There are the touching stories of Maureen's Lebanese-American upbringing, the path that led her to culinary school and to launch her blog, and life in Harbor Springs, her lakeside Michigan town.

"Take it ever so easy on the rose water — its meant to bring out the flavor of the sauce rather than stand out on its own. Add the rose water, then taste, then add more if you like. This is a perfect make-ahead dish for any occasion or holiday, as it is best served chilled and will hold in the refrigerator for a week," says Maureen.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup sugar*
- 1 cup water
- 12 ounces cranberries
- 1/2 teaspoon rose water
- 1 cup (8 oz.) canned crushed pineapple or drained pineapple chunks
- 1 cup canned mandarin oranges, drained
- 2 tablespoons chopped pistachios or toasted walnuts, plus more for garnish

PREPARATION:

In a medium saucepan, combine the water and sugar and bring to a boil over medium high heat. Stir in the cranberries and reduce to simmer, stirring occasionally and cooking until the cranberries pop and the mixture thickens a bit, about 20 minutes.

Remove from the heat, and add the rose water, pineapple, and drained mandarin oranges. Cool to room temperature, then chill completely (at least a couple of hours). Immediately before serving, stir in the nuts and garnish with more nuts on top.

Serves 12.

*Note: Will honey work as a substitute for the sugar in this recipe? Maureen says, "The honey will sweeten this nicely — a different flavor than granulated sugar. I can't say about the consistency of the final result not having tested this. But it's worth a try."

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- <https://www.youtube.com/user/maureenabood>

ORDER TODAY: Maureen Abood's acclaimed Lebanese cookbook is a treasure trove of "Fresh and Classic Lebanese Recipes," and the reviews have been superb across the country, including in the New York Times. To order a signed copy of *Rose Water & Orange Blossoms Cookbook*, go to: <https://maureenaboodmarket.com/products/rose-water-orange-blossoms-cookbook?variant=27928893697>

"Not nearly well known enough in this country, the rich and fragrant Lebanese cuisine finally gets this worthy representation both in the range of dishes presented and the gorgeous, mouth-watering illustrations of them." — Mimi Sheraton, longtime food critic of The New York Times and author of *1,000 Foods to Eat Before You Die*

"Maureen is a special kind of cookbook author — insightful, mindful of tradition, always appreciative. *Rose Water and Orange Blossoms* celebrates life, family, beautiful recipes, and Lebanese (culinary) food ways. She uniquely uses charm, experience, warmth, and evocative storytelling to invite us into the seductive realm of her Lebanese table — rose water, orange blossom, pomegranate, sumac, dates, and all." — Heidi Swanson, author of *Super Natural Every Day*

Recipes: [MaureenAbood.com](https://www.maureenabood.com)

Shop: [MaureenAboodMarket.com](https://www.maureenaboodmarket.com)

Blog: <https://www.maureenabood.com/blog/>

Videos: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmymBze_wpNMAAHiZ-V4ualg

Baklava Made Easy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35YG6T7eYOo>

Cookbook: <https://www.maureenabood.com/the-book/>

Shipping: <https://maureenaboodmarket.com/pages/shipping>

The Immersive Rodolphe Barsikian Experience

EXHIBIT, from page 15

long researches all azimuths, are the object of a relentless work quasi-obsessional.

Barsikian is an artist of today: his favorite techniques are the computer, the computer mouse and graphic design software.

A practitioner of the computer, of digital plastic language and Adobe Illustrator software, he creates "in partnership with the machine."

Through his works, which infuse a vital energy, Barsikian delivers a snapshot of his emotions. At the turn of the 21st century, he is resolutely an artist who inherits a long tradition born in Central Europe and inscribed in modernity.

Creating, for Barsikian, implies going beyond the mere

plastic effect, and playing out his life in lines, graphic trajectories that translate an existential path.

Born in 1977, he grew up in Sarcelles, in a cosmopolitan environment.

His passion for drawing was not born by chance. As a child, he spent entire days in his maternal grandfather's textile workshop, who also passed on to him a part of his Armenian cultural heritage.

Barsikian studied graphic design in Paris and attended the Institut Supérieur des Arts Appliqués (LISAA), after studying at the Ecole Professionnelle Supérieure d'Arts Graphiques (EPSAA).

For a time, Barsikian worked as a clothing designer and then as a professional graphic designer, but he soon divid-

ed his time between his active life and personal creation. Little by little he invented his own style. His compositions on computer, drawn in vectorial, are nourished by specific schemes, that the artist weaves between them, by connecting them by an emotional thread.

He has chosen to use digital technology, in a desire to dematerialize the graphic material, the central theme and aesthetic of his work. If his computer screen has supplanted the painter's canvas, it is by hand that he creates on this tool all the shapes, all the lines that guide his creations.

He has participated in several group exhibitions including at the Biennale HYBRIDE4 in Lens in 2021.

For more information on him visit www.rodolphebarsikian.com

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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

From Border Escalation to Existential Threat



By Edmond Y. Azadian

While Armenia's titular ally, the Russian Federation, is distracted by many incidents on its borders, Azerbaijan has been creating facts on the ground to make a final settlement with Armenia difficult or even impossible.

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan has stated that the defeated Armenia is a broken nation and it has to accept that fact and negotiate from that position. This is the mentality of Armenia's enemy, which claims in international fora that it brings peace to the region.

Besides its 44-day war against Armenia in 2020, Azerbaijan has been conducting a war of attrition for the last 30 years and continues that war even after the ceasefire on November 9, 2020.

The main goal of that war of attrition is to render Armenia and Karabakh uninhabitable so that it can take over those territories.

Since Armenia became independent, 800,000 citizens have left it. Before the second Karabakh war, the population in that entire enclave was estimated to be 140,000. As of today, fewer than 90,000 of the displaced Karabakh Armenians have returned there, while beleaguered Armenia is extending massive support for rehabilitation and resettlement.

Since the signing of the trilateral ceasefire by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, Armenia's borders were incident-free only for four days.

On the first anniversary of the ceasefire, a new agreement was supposed to be signed, reflecting the results of the work and the eight sessions of the three countries' deputy prime ministers. That agreement was to follow the process of demarcation and delimitation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, based on the maps provided by the Russian military. Both the agreement and the border work have been delayed indefinitely, while Azerbaijan's provocations into Armenia proper continue.

After the ceasefire, a 21-kilometer section of the Goris-Kapan road came under Azerbaijani control. Baku rushed to set up checkpoints on that road to render it prohibitively expensive for Iranian cargo trucks. Armenia decided to build an alternative route to bypass the Azerbaijani checkpoints, but that road still is under construction. Before Armenia could catch up with that Azerbaijani obstructionism, Baku blocked another road between Chakaten and Goris, turning a 10-minute trip for Armenia's citizens into a three-hour one through rural roads.

As if those provocations were not enough, Baku resorted to a new border incursion. Indeed, on November 14, Azerbaijani armed forces invaded Armenia's sovereign territory in one of the eastern sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in Syunik.

A communique issued by the Security Council of Armenia states: "Due to the actions of the Azerbaijani armed forces, four combat positions of the Armenian armed forces were besieged. As a result of negotiations, the Azerbaijani military equipment and troops that invaded the sovereign territory of Armenia left the territory of Armenia. The units of the Armenian armed forces have been withdrawn from the aforementioned four combat positions. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani servicemen who have invaded Armenia's sovereign territory since May of this year continue to be deployed in the aforementioned section."

There were rumors that Armenian forces were ordered not to shoot but that issue became an academic one when the invasion triggered a ministerial crisis in Armenia.

Most probably the Azerbaijani side was itching for retaliation to justify a full-scale invasion, but Armenia prudently avoided that faceoff.

In the meantime, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan replaced Minister of Defense Arshak Karapetyan with Suren Papikyan, an academic with no military experience.

Opposition critics, even friends of the administration, have been blaming Pashinyan for giving in to Azerbaijani provocations and the prime minister's response is that if Armenia does

not offer minor concessions on border issues, Azerbaijan will force the issue of the Zangezur Corridor. However, Aliyev is using every possible forum to raise the issue of the Zangezur Corridor, even after Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk visited Yerevan and assured the leaders that all the roads and communication lines opened will remain under the jurisdiction of their respective countries. That statement was also confirmed by the Russian Foreign Ministry, based on the results of the work and negotiations of three nations' deputy prime ministers.

The US side was no less confident that the issue of the corridor would not infringe on Armenia's sovereignty.

Writing in the National Interest, Michael Rubin states, "Initially, there was optimism among Turks and in Central Asia that vehicular traffic from Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani exclave separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenia's Zangezur corridor, could revive the moribund economy in eastern Turkey and expand trade and tourism across Central Asia. Aliyev's cocky belligerence soon quashed that possibility. 'The creation of the Zangezur corridor fully meets our national, historical, and future interests. We will be implementing the Zangezur corridor, whether Armenia wants it or not,' he said earlier this year on Azerbaijan's state-controlled television. That Secretary of State Antony Blinken certified that Azerbaijan had committed itself to diplomacy and eschewed military force just two days after



Aliyev made his threat demonstrates either State Department incompetence or a deliberate violation by Blinken of the Freedom Support Act."

Regardless of what the Russian Foreign Ministry states or US Secretary of State Blinken reassures, Azerbaijan continues to insist on the issue of the corridor.

On November 11, the foreign ministers of the newly renamed Organization of Turkic States, formerly called the Turkic Council or the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, met in Istanbul, where Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov took the podium to blast Armenia and assured his audience that "The joint statement by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020 was further processed by the adoption of a trilateral statement on January 11, 2021, which refers to unblocking of communications in the region. Concrete steps are being taken to unblock the transport roads, including the very important Zangezur Corridor, which will contribute to the growth of trade in the region. We hope that the colleagues of the Turkic Council will also use these opportunities."

In addition to its position on the corridor issue, the Turkic Council summit meetings of this organization provide a stage where another mockery takes place. The participating states include Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan (observer) and Hungary (observer). Some of these states (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) are also members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) headed by Russia. While Armenia's security council was reaching out to its "allies" on the CSTO for help against the recent Azerbaijani aggression,

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

First Step Crossed in UK Recognition of The Armenian Genocide: Many More to Go

by Harut Sassounian

I would like to dispel a few misunderstandings about the bill proposed last week in the UK House of Commons to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Some reports accurately described the news as simply the First Reading of the proposed bill. Others misrepresented it as full recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the UK government. Going further, some analysts wrongly concluded that the British government decided to side with Armenians on this issue in order to teach Turkey a lesson!

This is the first time in UK history that the Armenian Genocide has been introduced in the House of Commons through a Private Members’ Bill. In the past, the topic was raised through Early Daily Motions (EDMs) which are ineffective to attain recognition.

Here is the full text of the proposed bill 190 58/2, titled: “Recognition of Armenian Genocide Bill.”

“A bill to require Her Majesty’s Government formally to recognize the Armenian genocide of 1915-23; and for connected purposes.

“Be it enacted by the Queen’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

“1. Recognition of genocide: Her Majesty’s Government must formally recognize that the killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the surrounding regions during 1915-1923 were genocide.

“2. Commemoration and education: (a) There shall be an annual commemoration of victims of the Armenian Genocide, which may be part of a wider commemoration of genocides; (b) The Secretary of State must encourage education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity and war crimes.

“3. Interpretation: In this Act, ‘genocide’ has the meaning given in Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; ‘Crimes against humanity’ has the meaning given in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; ‘war crimes’ has the meaning given in Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

“4. Extent, commencement and short title: (a) This Act extends to the whole of the United Kingdom; (b) This Act comes into force on the day on which it is passed.”

The bill was introduced on November 9, 2021, under the Ten Minute Rule by a Member of Parliament. While any other Member has the right to oppose the presentation, no one did. The procedure to adopt legislation is long and complicated.

Member of Parliament Tim Loughton, who chairs the All-Party Parliamen-

tary Group for Armenia, has no Armenians in his constituency. The Private Members’ Bill he introduced had 15 cosponsors from six different political parties: the Conservative Party, Labour party, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Democratic Unionist Party, and Plaid Cymru. In his remarks, Loughton thanked the Armenian National Committee UK and its chair Annette Moskofian “for all her help and support both for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Armenia and in preparing the Bill.” He also thanked Varuzhan Nersesyan, Armenia’s ambassador to the UK: “I am glad to see and be able to acknowledge the presence of both of them in the Public Gallery.”

The next step is the Second Reading of the bill which may take place on March 22, 2022. However, it is not known if this bill will be taken up at that time, since it is not a government-backed bill. A similar bill is planned to be submitted in the House of Lords next year.

This bill provides an excellent opportunity to raise the Armenian Genocide issue in the UK. The Turkish government and media made no public objection to the introduction of this bill. However, the Turkish government probably will quietly lobby to block its adoption. Already, Turks and Cypriot Turks, who are the constituents of MP Iain Duncan Smith, one of the cosponsors of the bill, expressed their outrage at his support. Just days before the First Reading of the bill in the House of Commons, a fundraising dinner was held for him at a Turkish restaurant which was attended by many Turks. The event was partly sponsored by Turkish Airlines and Cyprus Paradise, “the largest tour operator to [Turkish-occupied] North Cyprus.” Members of the Turkish community said they will not back Duncan in the future.

All proposed bills have to be read three times in both houses of Parliament. Bills have to go through three stages: committee, reporting, and consideration. Once a bill crosses these stages successfully, it then goes to the Royal assent.

Contrary to the mistaken analyses of various Armenian pundits, this bill does not have the backing of the British government. It is simply the initiative of Tim Loughton and several other Members of Parliament. When the time comes to pass the bill, the British government will probably try to block it. As Loughton recalled in his remarks, in a 1999 internal memorandum, the UK Foreign Office shamefully stated: “Given the importance of our relationship (political, strategic, commercial) with Turkey... recognizing the [Armenian] genocide would provide no practical benefit to the UK.”

The British government has not changed its denialist policy regarding the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the UK has enhanced its ties with Turkey by signing a \$25 billion dollar trade deal with Turkey last year.

It is hoped that the reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide by Pres. Joe Biden earlier this year would boost the support for the UK recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The British government, which was fully aware of the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide while they were taking place, should have been the first nation to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, not the last. Nevertheless, it’s better late than never. All people of goodwill should pressure the British government to change its denialist policy on the Armenian Genocide. They should flood the offices of the Members of Parliament with messages urging them to support the proposed bill.

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the representatives of several of those countries were in Istanbul congratulating Azerbaijan on the anniversary of its “victory over Armenia.” This is proper material for the theater of the absurd.

Incidentally, the Turkic Council was initially proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in 2006 [initiated by Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in 1992] to bring together the Turkic-speaking nations linguistically and culturally, and founded in Nakhichevan in 2009.

Last year, the president of the council was Azerbaijan and this year, the presidency was turned over to Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan first proposed to change the name of the council to the Organization of Turkic States and converted its focus from cultural and linguistic matters to political, beginning with seeking help in his war against the PKK. Indeed, Mr. Bayramov was inviting the councils’ fellow members to use the Zangezur Corridor for doing so.

It was no wonder that during the victory parade in Baku on December 10, 2020, Erdogan exalted Enver Pasha, whose dream was to create a Turkic empire extending to Central Asia.

With these proposed changes to the council, Mr. Erdogan is on the path to realize Enver Pasha’s vision.

The issue of the corridor had ruffled some feathers in Iran. Currently, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is in Tehran to mend some fences. President Erdogan is also expected in the Iranian capital to reinforce the mission.

Iran earlier had warned that any border changes in the Caucasus was considered a red line. As Iran is returning to the negotiation table for its nuclear deal, Ankara is looking to see what it can offer Tehran to change the colors of that red line to facilitate Baku’s march toward the Zangezur Corridor.

As the voices of Russia and the US become mere lip service, Turkey and Azerbaijan may move with impunity to force on Armenia the issue of the corridor, which will compromise that country’s sovereignty, escalating a border incident into an existential threat.

Why Turkey and Azerbaijan Won’t Get a Corridor Across Armenia

By Michael Rubin

IT HAS NOW BEEN ONE YEAR since Armenia and Azerbaijan accepted a ceasefire ending the forty-four-day war between Azerbaijan and Artsakh, the unrecognized Armenian state in Nagorno-Karabakh. The war left Artsakh as a rump state and saw Armenia return Azerbaijani districts that it had occupied during the first war with Azerbaijan shortly after the Soviet Union’s fall. The agreement, published on the Kremlin website, also allowed Russia to insert nearly 2,000 troops as peacekeepers between the two sides and called for an exchange of prisoners of war and other hostages. The final clause declared:

All economic and transport connections in the region shall be unblocked. The Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport connections between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions. The Border Guard Service of the Russian Federal Security Service shall be responsible for overseeing the transport connections.

In recent months, however, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev have sought to redefine the clause in two

important ways. Firstly, they interpret it as granting them a corridor that will bisect sovereign Armenian territory. Secondly, they ignore the first sentence that seeks to unblock economic and transport connections across the region. The Biden administration should make clear such reinterpretation is unwarranted and illegitimate.

Initially, there was optimism among Turks and in Central Asia that vehicular traffic from Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani exclave separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenia’s Zangezur corridor, could revive the moribund economy in eastern Turkey and expand trade and tourism across Central Asia. Aliyev’s cocky belligerence soon quashed that possibility. “The creation of the Zangezur corridor fully meets our national, historical, and future interests. We will be implementing the Zangezur corridor, whether Armenia wants it or not,” he said earlier this year on Azerbaijan’s state-controlled television. That Secretary of State Antony Blinken certified that Azerbaijan had committed itself to diplomacy and eschewed military force just two days after Aliyev made his threat demonstrates either State Department incompetence or a deliberate violation by Blinken of the Freedom Support Act.

Regardless, Turkey supported Aliyev’s bluster. Turkey’s official state-run television channel blamed Joseph Stalin who, while People’s Commissar for Nationalities, awarded Zangezur to Armenia, which the channel claimed was until then Azeri. The irony here, of course, is that Stalin had similarly transferred Nagorno-Karabakh, historically Armenian territory, to Azerbaijan. By laying claim to Zangezur, the Turkish and Azeri governments undermine the legitimacy of Aliyev’s claims to Nagorno-Karabakh. A subsequent Turkish article argued, “The Zangezur Corridor was the most important clause in favor of see CORRIDOR, page 20



Hagop Vartivarian, seated second from left, with some of the Tekeyan and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party leaders of the Montreal area

Hagop Vartivarian Signs New Volume on the ADL at Montreal Tekeyan Center

MONTREAL — Hagop Vartivarian, secretary of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and Vice Chairman of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Supreme Council, visited the Tekeyan Cultural Association Center in Montreal on Friday, November 12 to present the recently published fourth volume of his series *Travelers on the Path of the Great Dream and Comprehensive History of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party*.

The event was organized by Ara Balian, chairman of the ADL Eugene Papazian Chapter of Montreal, and took place in the Haroutiun and Sima Arzoumanian Hall with a good turnout despite the negative effects of the ongoing Covid pandemic. After Balian's words of welcome, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, member of the ADL Supreme Council and vice president of the TCA of the US and Canada, spoke on the importance of the work. Vartivarian, who had come with his wife Maria from New Jersey, then spoke at length about the extensive new volume before signing and donating copies. The current volume covers the history of the ADL from 1921 to 1931.

To order this or previously published volumes of the series, write to: Tekeyan Cultural Association, 572 Glasmere Rd., Mahwah, NJ, 07430, or contact the author at (201) 406-9771 or hhvartivarian@gmail.com.



Hagop Vartivarian speaking at the Montreal event

Why Turkey and Azerbaijan Won't Get a Corridor Across Armenia

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Azerbaijan and Turkey," no matter that the ceasefire agreement called for a transport link rather than a formal corridor.

Erdoğan addressed the issue with more finesse than his Azeri partner. He said that any meeting with the Armenian leader to discuss ending Turkey's blockade of Armenia required first fulfilling Azerbaijan's demands. "God willing, the problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia will be overcome with the opening of the corridors," Erdoğan said in September. When Armen Grigoryan, secretary of the Security Council of Armenia, acknowledged in October that Armenian roads could be open to Azerbaijani and Turkish traffic albeit under Armenian control and without a loss of sovereignty, Aliyev again allowed his triumphalism and expansionism to get in the way of a pragmatic solution. Speaking at a joint news conference with Erdoğan, Aliyev said, "Both Turkey and Azerbaijan will take necessary steps for the realization of the Zangezur Corridor... to unite the entire

Turkic world."

Both President Joe Biden and Blinken have repeatedly declared that "diplomacy is back," but when it comes to the South Caucasus, it is absent. This is unfortunate because there is a real opportunity to promote peace within the region and advance American interests. A common refrain among the State Department's unofficial Turkey lobby and beneficiaries of Azerbaijan's "caviar diplomacy" is that Azerbaijan is a better ally to the United States than Armenia because of Yerevan's ties to both Moscow and Tehran. Put aside that, in reality, Azerbaijan's ties to Russia and Iran have grown exponentially over recent years. If Washington's goal was to scale back Armenia's ties to Russia and Iran, then the best way forward would be to pressure Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift their double blockade of Armenia in order to reduce Armenian dependence upon Russia and Iran. Turkey should open its borders to Armenian trade as should Azerbaijan. While Turkey hopes its trucks could drive through Zangezur to Armenia,

Armenian vehicles should likewise be able to drive from Yerevan to Istanbul. If Turks hope to enjoy unhampered trade with Central Asia all the way to the Chinese border, then Armenians in Artsakh should enjoy the same unhampered trade through Turkey all the way to France or the United Kingdom.

Aliyev made a mockery of the Section 907 waiver allowing U.S. assistance to the autocratic petrostate. It is time to revoke the waiver until the Azeri dictator proves his commitment to peace and diplomacy by opening Azerbaijan's borders to Armenian trade. Likewise, if Blinken truly wants to encourage peace in the region, he should recall newly appointed Jeffrey Flake, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, and direct him to return to Ankara only when he can drive there from the Armenian capital.

(Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, where he specializes in Iran, Turkey, and the broader Middle East. This commentary originally appeared in the *National Interest* on November 9.)

US Department of State Condemns New Killing of Armenian Civilian

CONDEMNATION, from page 1 continues to hold the Armenian prisoners of war.

The Administration also reaffirmed the US government's commitment "to promoting a secure, stable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the South Caucasus region." "We urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue and intensify their engagement including under the auspices of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to find comprehensive solutions to all outstanding issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," Price said in the concluding part of his statement. He noted that US Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Erika Olson is currently in the region to discuss bilateral issues with all three countries and to explore opportunities for regional co-operation.