

# Azerbaijani-Controlled Road ‘Safe For Armenians’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenians can safely use an Azerbaijani-controlled section of the main highway that connects Armenia to Iran, a senior security official in Yerevan insisted on Monday, November 1.

The 21-kilometer section is part of contested border areas along Armenia Syunik province which were controversially handed over to Azerbaijan following last year war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijani forces set up a checkpoint there on September 12 to tax Iranian commercial trucks transporting cargo to and from Armenia. The move caused serious disruptions in Armenian-Iranian trade operations and raised tensions in Baku’s relations with Tehran.

Officials in Syunik accused Azerbaijani officers of bullying some Armenian drivers and their passengers at the same section of the road that also connects the Syunik towns of Goris and Kapan. Later in September, Russian and Armenian border guards reportedly began escorting Armenian vehicles driving through it.

“It is safe,” said Aram Hakobyan, a deputy head of the Armenian National Security Service (NSS). “I was there yesterday, it’s very safe.”

“True, representatives of the neighboring state [Azerbaijan] are standing there but they do not stop Armenian citizens,” he told reporters.

Commenting on incidents that are still periodically reported from the Goris-Kapan highway, Hakobyan said: “I have no seer SAFETY, page 2

# Dogan Akhanli, Turkish-Born Human Rights Activist, Dies

BERLIN (Combined Sources) — Dogan Akhanli, a fighter for human rights in Turkey and worldwide, and an active proponent of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide died on October 31 from lung cancer. He was 64.



Dogan Akhanli

In 2018, he was awarded the European Tolerance Prize for Democracy and Human Rights. In 2019, he received the Goethe Medal of the Goethe-Institut for his courage to “assert himself with artistic and journalistic works against political, religious or social resistance”, as the laudatory speech states.

Akhanli was born in 1957 in southeastern Turkey, in the province of Artvin near the Georgian border. At the age of 12, he was sent to a school in Istanbul. He studied history and pedagogy, became politically active and later joined the banned Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey (TDKP).

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# Armenian Opposition Demands Probe of ‘Illegal’ Troop Withdrawal

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan must be prosecuted for handing over strategic areas along Armenia southeastern Syunik province to Azerbaijan shortly after last year’s war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the main opposition Hayastan alliance said on Friday, October 29.

Syunik borders the Zangelan and Kubatli districts southwest of Karabakh which were mostly recaptured by Azerbaijan during the six-week hostilities stopped by a Rus-

sian-brokered ceasefire last November.

Armenian army units and local militias were ordered in December to withdraw from the rest of those districts as well as territory located along the Soviet-era Armenian-Azerbaijani border which has never been demarcated due to the Karabakh conflict.

The troop withdrawal sparked angry protests from local government officials and ordinary residents of Syunik. They said they can no longer feel safe because

Azerbaijani forces will be stationed dangerously close to their communities, including the provincial capital Kapan.

Opposition leaders in Yerevan likewise accused Pashinyan of hastily and illegally ceding those lands to Baku. But he insisted that “not a single inch” of Armenia internationally recognized territory was lost.

Pashinyan admitted personally ordering the pullout when he spoke in the Armenian parliament on Wednesday.

“I was convinced that if such a decision is not made, military hostilities will break out there and we will have problems in Syunik,” he said, answering a question from a Syunik-born lawmaker affiliated with Hayastan.

The opposition bloc seized upon the remarks to demand that the Office of the Prosecutor-General launch criminal proceedings against the prime minister. The bloc’s parliamentary leader, Seyran Ohanian, reiterated opposition arguments that the November truce accord did not call for Armenian withdrawal from the Armenian-controlled parts of Zangelan and Kubatli.

“Nobody was allowed to issue an oral order to withdraw, especially from areas which would later become bones of contentions in [Armenian-Azerbaijani] border demarcation,” Ohanian told a news conference.

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# The Armenian Advantage: The Past, Present and Future of Chess

By Cristopher Patvakanian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Much of the world today seems to have discovered (or rediscovered) a passion for chess, arguably due to freed up time during the COVID-19 and the hit Netflix Show “Queen’s Gambit.” For Armenians on the other hand, chess is much more than a quarantine pastime – it’s an integral part of society. This begs the question – how is it that chess is so embedded in the fabric of Armenian culture?

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Students taking chess lessons at the Chess Academy of Armenia.

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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State due in Armenia Nov. 2

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Erika Olson, the newly appointed deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the US Department of State, will travel to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to promote regional cooperation and discuss bilateral issues, the US Embassy in Yerevan said in a statement on Tuesday, November 2.

While in Yerevan, DAS Olson was scheduled to participate in a regional Chiefs of Mission meeting in November 2-4, joining US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne M. Tracy, US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly C. Degnan, and US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Lee Litzenberger, as well as Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations Andrew Schofer and USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Alexander Sokolowski.

“We are excited to resume this long-standing tradition and gather with our colleagues from the region and from Washington, DC, to exchange ideas and information to better coordinate our policy in respect to all three countries in the region,” the Embassy said.

The participants were expected to engage in internal discussions as well as informational meetings with representatives of the Armenian government and civil society.

Most recently, the US Embassy Baku and US Embassy Tbilisi hosted regional Chief of Mission meetings in 2019 and 2018, respectively.

### FlyOne Armenia granted Air Operator's Certificate

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Civil Aviation Committee of Armenia this week granted the Air Operator's Certificate to FLYONE Armenia.

The new national airline said in a news release that it will launch flights from Armenia very soon, offering affordable tickets to Europe and Asia and maximum safety.

Yerevan airport is the point from/to which the airline will fly to Moscow, Tehran, Lyon, Paris, Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Krasnodar, Istanbul, and Tel Aviv.

By now, FLYONE Armenia invested more than 60 million Euros in the Armenian market.

“Furthermore, we have created new jobs, planning to have a team of more than 135 employees, who will be paid higher salaries than the country's average. In the future we aim to grow both in terms of the number of employees and the fleet.

The company's fleet consists of Airbus A320 aircrafts, on which we will operate both scheduled and charter flights. Each aircraft has 180 seats and meets all International Air Transport Association (IATA) and EASA safety standards. Also, in pandemic conditions, the aircraft are equipped with HEPA air filters, which remove 99.97% of viruses and bacteria.

# COVID Spikes in Armenia even as Vaccine Mandate Goes into Effect

By Ani Mejlumyan

YEREVAN (Eurasianet) — Employers are now effectively required to demand proof of vaccinations from their workers. But the country's health care system is now being pushed to the limit.

More Armenians are getting vaccinated against COVID, but the numbers remain the lowest in the region and the country is going through its worst wave of the disease yet.

According to the most recent government data, at most 7 percent of Armenians are fully vaccinated against COVID. That compares to 22 percent in Georgia, and 42 percent in Azerbaijan. And Armenia's real numbers are in fact likely lower than that, as a significant portion of those who have gotten vaccinated in the country are visitors.

But Armenia's pace is picking up: The number of those who have gotten their first shot is double that of the fully vaccinated, apparently in reaction to a new government mandate that requires employers to demand from their employees either a proof of vaccination or regular negative PCR tests.

Nevertheless, the number of registered new infections has reached more than 2,000 per day and the deaths due to COVID have been breaking domestic records, with highs of as many as 57 deaths in a day recorded in the last week. More than 6,000 Armenians have now died of COVID, in a population of under three million.

There have been nearly no COVID-related movement restrictions in the country since the beginning of the pandemic, and the government has signalled that it does not intend to implement strict ones even now. “There are countries that are returning to lockdown. [...] Armenia won't have a lockdown,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said at an October 28 cabinet meeting. “Instead, we have to toughen the restrictions, maybe even making wearing masks outdoors mandatory.”

The employee vaccine mandate is the most significant step that the government has taken toward stemming the spread of the disease, and October 14 was the first day that employers were supposed to start enforcing the new rules. A visit by Eurasianet to Polyclinic 22 in Yerevan on that day found a mob scene, with doctors trying in vain to enforce social distancing rules on the large numbers of people who showed up to get vaccinated.

Many Armenians prefer to get vaccinated at polyclinics rather than the mobile clinics the Ministry of Health has set up around Yerevan and other cities. In Yerevan, those clinics are particularly crowded with foreigners, especially Iranians, who come for the relative ease of getting the jab in Armenia.

The vaccine in highest demand in Armenia is now the Chinese-produced Sinopharm, partly because it has a shorter wait time between doses (28 days) than the other vaccines on offer. There also is a widespread belief that Sinopharm's side effects are weaker than those of the other vaccines.

Sputnik V and AstraZeneca also have been available in Armenia since May, and Armenia also has recently gotten supplies of Moderna. The latter was developed at a firm led by diasporan Armenian Noubar Afeyan, which has given it somewhat of a popularity boost among Armenians. But

reports that the vaccine also is linked to heart problems among young adults has dampened enthusiasm.

At Polyclinic 22, supplies of Sinopharm ran out quickly and doctors told people hoping for that vaccine to return on November 1, when they expected to receive more supplies.

One 60-something man, Samvel (who didn't give his last name), had been waiting outside the door of the clinic for three hours when a clinic worker came out to tell him: “Mr. Samvel, please go home, we only have 25 doses of Sinopharm and more than 50 people in line ahead of you.” But he was undeterred: “If I come on November 1, can you guarantee that I won't have to wait for hours? I don't think so.” He ended up waiting anyway and so many ahead of him in line got discouraged that he got his shot in the end.

On October 18, the Health Ministry announced it was importing a further 200,000 doses of Sinopharm, and four days later it said it was receiving a donation of 620,000 doses of Moderna.

In spite of the vaccine shortages, the government announced on October 26 that it was lifting restrictions on foreigners getting the vaccines; previously visitors had to prove that they had been in the country for at least 10 days to get inoculated.

Under the new employment regulations, the government can make random checks on places of employment to make sure that employees have either proof of at least one dose of a vaccination or a recent negative PCR test. The fine for individuals who violate the rules ranges from about \$40-\$80, for companies it is \$250.

It's not clear how many employees have yet to be vaccinated. The Ministry of Health has recorded about 200,000 people fully vaccinated in the country and 400,000 with one dose, but it doesn't distinguish between Armenian citizens and foreigners in those numbers. The country has more than 600,000 legally employed people, according to government statistics, and the Armenian Statistical Service and the World Bank have estimated the number of unregistered workers in the country at between 300,000 and 700,000. It's unclear to what extent these workers will be subject to the mandate.

As in many other countries where various forms of vaccine mandates have been introduced, some in Armenia are taking shortcuts. On October 13, the National Security Service announced that it had identified more than 700 people with fake vaccination certificates in the second city of Gyumri. Ten doctors have been charged in the case.

As of October 28, there were 3,100 people in Armenia hospitalized with COVID, of those 97 percent had not been vaccinated, Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan said at the cabinet meeting. About 90 percent of the hospitalized had contracted the especially aggressive Delta variant of the disease. Of the 3,100, half are in critical condition, and of those 99 percent had been unvaccinated. Two hundred more infected are waiting to be hospitalized because there aren't enough beds, she added.

Some hospitals have reported ventilators for COVID patients breaking down from overuse, and patients who need them having to do without. At the Vedi Hospital in the Ararat region, of 85 COVID patients only one of them — who had been vac-

inated — didn't require oxygen, deputy hospital director Samvel Khachataryan told RFE/RL.

Universities had opened for in-person classes this school year but on October 27 they moved back to online-only. Schools have extended the already-scheduled fall break for another week in response to the growing outbreak.

Meanwhile, there are regular scandals of senior officials and other elites openly flouting social distancing and other COVID regulations. President Armen Sarkissian hosted participants of a conference, the Armenian Summit of Minds, indoors at his residence; photos of the event showed none of the dozens of people wearing a mask, including Avanesyan, who regularly advocates for even vaccinated Armenians to wear masks. Current regulations require everyone to wear a mask in indoor places.

Anti-vaccine sentiment also remains widespread; Pashinyan tried to mitigate it by sharing his own family's experience.

“There are questions regarding the effectiveness of the vaccines; I want to bring a personal example,” he said at the October 28 cabinet meeting. “Six people in my family are vaccinated, except for the two underaged kids. Recently my 14-year-old daughter caught the virus. [...] But nobody else in my family got it despite finding out late and having been in intensive contact with her.” Still, he added: “We could also get the virus. The protection is not 100 percent.”

## Armenian Opposition Demands Probe Of 'Illegal' Troop Withdrawal

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The former defense minister said Armenia should have at least retained control of strategic hills and roads in that border area.

The troop withdrawal left Azerbaijan in control of a 21-kilometer stretch of the main Armenian highway leading to Iran. Azerbaijani forces deployed there set up a checkpoint there in August before starting to demand hefty fees from Iranian trucks using the road.

The move caused serious disruptions in Armenia's trade with Iran. Pashinyan's government scrambled to speed up the reconstruction of an alternative Syunik highway bypassing the Azerbaijani checkpoint.

## Azerbaijani-Controlled Road 'Safe For Armenians'

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such information.”The Azerbaijani roadblock left the Armenian government scrambling to speed up the reconstruction of an alternative Syunik highway bypassing the border area. The government has assured senior Iranian officials that it will be essentially completed by the end of November.





## ARMENIA

# Digitec Expo Aims to Expand IT Breadth

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The Armenian capital hosted the Digitec information technology expo over the weekend. The event, which was held on the weekend of October 29 through 31 at the Hamalir, brought together some of the biggest names in the local tech scene, some of Armenia's most successful indigenous tech startups and thousands of curious tech enthusiasts around the theme of tech-fostered inclusion in the post-Covid World. (See related story below.)

The Digitec technology expo, which has been held in October every year since 2005 — with the exception of 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and Second Artsakh War — remains the largest annual tech exhibition and conference in the Caucasus designed to, according to organizers, “showcase the achievements and potential of the rapidly-growing tech industry in Armenia.”

The event is hosted by the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) a sort of lobbying group which supports the country's burgeoning tech community and also advises the government on pro-IT sector reforms. This yearly event also enjoys the support of the Armenian Ministry of High Technology. Armenia has long made Information Technology a key aspect of its economic development strategy.

Borne out of a cluster of cutting-edge

technology research and development institutes which found their home in the Soviet Yerevan of the 1970s and 1980s, and bolstered by the establishment of subsidiaries of many well-respected Silicon Valley firms, the Armenian tech scene has the distinction of being one of few sectors which continued to see robust growth throughout Armenia's post-independence era in spite of the economic disruptions felt as a result of the country's transition from a planned to market economy — growth which remains unabated today. Armenian tech even saw a remarkable 2.8 percent expansion in 2020 as the Coronavirus pandemic threw the rest of the world into recession. Currently some 800 active tech companies in the country employ almost 16,000 workers, many in competitively-compensated programming or computer engineering positions.

Over the course of the past 20 years, the industry also matured from a mostly outsourcing-based model into a better-healed indigenous technology startup ecosystem. At least two such Armenian startups have already reached the coveted status of Unicorn, meaning they hold valuations worth more than \$1 billion. These companies, ServiceTitan and Picsart, both maintain offices in the United States, but virtually all technology and product development is located in Yerevan. Experts predict another 4 startups have the potential to reach this important benchmark within the next two years.



Children at a 3D printing station during the Digitec Expo (Photo: Armath)

Armen Kherlopian, PhD, a strategy, innovation, and business leader whose experience portfolio includes Global Fortune 100 Companies as well as government organizations such as the FDA and NASA believes that startups provide Armenia with a strategic economic development boost. “The success of startups in Armenia will have a compounding effect in generating

economic growth at the necessary speed to catch up to those of our resource-rich neighbors,” Kherlopian tells the Mirror-Spectator. In his view, each Armenia-based tech unicorn which successfully exists — either with an IPO or acquisition — instantly creates 50 new millionaires in the country.

Aside from the benefits of the trickle-down effect that this wealth would bring to the local economy, this new breed of millionaires would be different. “These people are from the startup scene, they understand the high-risk — high reward nature of the business,” Kherlopian explains, “their strategic investments would target the next generation of fast-growth startups in the country, startups which command valuation multiples.”

Kherlopian has partnered with another big name in the Armenian tech scene, Emma Arakelyan, to form the angel investing consortium BAJ Accelerator. BAJ has partnered with Cornell University and the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology with the mission of creating an angel investing culture in Armenia. Inspired by the snowballing effect that Skype had on kick-starting Estonia's digital revolution, BAJ even took on one of Skype's co-founders.

BAJ is part of a larger syndicate of angel investors currently sustaining the Armenian startup ecosystem. Others include the Business Angels Network of Armenia (BANA), AICA and FAST. Several of their venture-funded startups were among the exhibitors at the Digitec Expo this weekend.

Also featured at the Digitec Expo was one of UATE's flagship projects at the moment, the Armath Engineering laboratory network. The idea is for an Armath lab to be installed in every high school across the country — and particularly in regions near the borders—to teach STEM to students at a young age. Since last year's war, a particular emphasis has been placed on the development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technology.

“We need to collectively develop an action plan to turn the challenges [of Covid and regional pressure] into new opportunities for Armenian tech to play its role in making our world a better place”, said Raffi Kassarian, executive director at UATE. In his keynote address during the Digitec Summit, Kassarian also laid out the current challenges that the Armenian tech industry faces in sustaining its growth, as well as the opportunities that lay ahead in a world forever-changed by COVID-19.

## Armenian IT Is a Means to Leave Armenia, not to Stay

By Avo Piroyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Among the few positives for Armenia has been the buoyant IT sector which has grown rapidly over the last 5-7 years and is now roughly 5 percent of annual GDP, about \$630 million. It has expanded from virtually nothing into one of the only sectors in the country still growing. Many have pointed to this success as exemplary of what is possible in Armenia. (See related story above.)

While the above is certainly true, those in the IT industry are less glowing in their assessment.

A dampener on the above positivity is that despite there being 800-900 IT start ups a year in Armenia, the number of international copyright IPs (intellectual property – a unique discovery/product that is patented) produced in Armenia can be counted on one hand. By contrast, China produces roughly 300,000 per year.

Among the many problems has been the inability to keep specialists. Jean Mamikonyan is one such specialist. Born in Yerevan, he studied engineering before getting into the IT sector in the early 2000s.

Mamikonyan said, “The demand side is not that big. International companies don't really use Armenia for outsourcing. As for the local ones, financial and telecommunication companies pay for IT but the rest either don't have the money or don't value it which means no investment which means not that many IT jobs.

Top technological innovation for an average business is to have a Facebook page or website.”

Mamikonyan now works in Germany. His career path is not an unusual one. A person hones their skills in Armenia, becomes a respected specialist and takes a job abroad where the average pay is at least double that of the high end income for IT specialists in Armenia.

Aside from the monetary difference, the security and geopolitical situation is a concern as well as the long term lack of opportunities for themselves and their children.

“The main capital is people but it's limited, and geopolitical

situation doesn't help to keep people from leaving,” Mamikonyan added.

### Systemic problems

The reasons why the number of people in IT is limited run beyond emigration.

Armen Orujyan, CEO of FAST (Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology), said, “Among the main problems facing the Armenian IT sector is the education system, from schools to universities.

IT and especially high tech requires a person to have an in depth knowledge based in mathematics and the sciences.”

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia inherited a very strong, if not at times brutally harsh, education system. Children of migrants found that their one year of mathematics from 1980s and 1990s Armenian schools was enough to last several years in western countries.

“That education system has gone,” Orujyan said, adding, “the base curriculum hasn't kept up with modern changes and discoveries, and the teaching specialists have left.”

When asked what was the reason, besides the broader infrastructure, the answer was short and obvious, ‘money’.

“How do you expect a teacher to live on \$100 per month? People take another job, whatever it is just to make ends meet. This has to change before you can expect education to improve,” Orujyan said. Indeed, teachers in Armenia get paid between \$100-200 per month depending on the number of hours they work and years of experience.

### What can be done

The problems are not unsolvable. However, they do require an assertive approach. Comparing Armenia to the Silicon Valley in California, Orujyan said, “they already have the ecosystem in place with a lot of VCs (venture capitalists) that are also locally based.

On top of this, you have Globally renowned Stanford University, and if that is not enough, you have California State University at San Jose, which feeds more students to the Silicon Valley than any other institution.”

In order to compete, Armenia will need to offer something that the others cannot or do not. Things around flexible labor laws and taxes which could make Armenia an attractive base for international companies.

“With the right approach and active outreach, it is certainly doable. The problems and the solutions are clear,” Orujyan said.

For now, however, there is no concerted and organized effort to take Armenia's IT sector from being a training ground and feeder of specialists to other countries to the next step.





## ARMENIA

# The Armenian Advantage: The Past, Present and Future of Chess

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## Early History

Sources date that Armenians have been playing chess as early as the 9th century, which they called “chatrak,” deriving from the Sanskrit word “chaturanga” — the name of a board game theorized to be the ancestor to chess (Soviet Armenia Encyclopedia, 1986). The foundation of modern chess in Armenia hails its origins back to Soviet Armenia when the Armenian Chess Federation was created in 1927. From thereon, lectures on chess and chess clubs began to grow popular in the country, and Armenia hosted its first National Championship in 1934, for both men and women. The “founding father” of chess in the country was Genrikh Kasparyan, who made it to the semi-final of the USSR Championship in 1931 and won the Armenian Championship 10 times from 1934 to 1956, which is still a record to this day. While Kasparyan set the early foundation, many reports credit another player to be the one who truly lit the spark for chess in Armenia.

Tigran Petrosian was born in Tbilisi, Georgia in 1929, and studied chess there until moving to Yerevan in 1946. Nicknamed “Iron Tigran” for his strong defensive playing style, Petrosian won the Armenian National Chess Championship in 1946 and 1947, and became USSR Junior Chess Champion at the age of 17. In 1952, after moving to Moscow, he became one of the first Grandmasters in the world (per FIDE) and went on to win the USSR Chess Championship in 1959, 1961, 1969, and 1975. However, it was Petrosian’s victory over Russian Mikhail Botvinnik to become the 1963 World Champion that was truly his breakthrough moment.

## Rise in Popularity

The popularity of chess in Armenia after Petrosian’s 1963 victory skyrocketed. According to the Soviet Chess Encyclopedia of 1990, there were 30,000 chess players in Armenia in 1962, but upwards of 50,000 by 1986. It is even said that the prevalence of boys in Armenia named “Tigran” spiked after 1963 — no doubt a tribute to Grandmaster Petrosian. In the early 1970s, the now iconic “House of Chess Players” was opened as a hub for all chess activity in Yerevan, an Armenian chess magazine began to circulate, and chess lessons were televised. By the mid 1970s, in the same way Western societies sent their children to play on sports teams after school, Armenians would send their children to chess classes. Playing chess turned into much more than a board game for Armenian society: it was an area of national pride.



Woman Grandmaster and Secretary General of the Armenian Chess Federation Maria Gevorgyan

only in winning the National Georgian Championship in 1938 and 1939, but also by playing in the 1945 USSR Women’s Championship. Another ethnically Armenian player, Nonna Karakashyan, won the National Azerbaijan Championship in 1961, 1963 and 1964, and was a member of the Azerbaijani national team for almost a decade. Karakashyan would later come to be a Deputy Director of the Executive Committee of the Armenian Chess Federation after the collapse of the USSR.

## Chess in Armenia Today

Much of Armenia’s chess success continues to this day. Since independence, Armenia has been punching well above its weight, winning the World Chess Olympiad 3 times, and boasting 24 active Armenian grandmasters,

Well, for some players, it starts in the home. In the words of Woman Grandmaster and Secretary General of the Armenian Chess Federation Maria Gevorgyan, “in almost every family in Armenia, there is a chess player.” WGM Gevorgyan, born in 1994 and a member of the newest generation of Armenian chess stars, began playing chess at the age of three, and when old enough, took classes and began competing more seriously once her talent was discovered. From there on, among her many successes in Armenia and internationally, she placed 3rd in the European Youth Chess Championship in the girls U18 category in 2011, becoming the first female from Armenia in 18 years to win such a title in Europe at the time.

Just like her, children today who are interested and/or talented can go to study chess with a tutor, at a chess camp, or one of the various chess schools and academies in the country. WGM Gevorgyan noted that for younger children, there are many opportunities to take classes and study chess for free. Armenia of course, made history by becoming the first country in the world to mandate the teaching of chess in public school in 2011, though the impact of classes has yet to be fully understood, as the first generation to have taken them is too young to see a result.

As far as other chess “infrastructure,” Armenia is fortunate to have grandmasters and highly ranked players who coach at chess schools or privately. Youth who have talent typically go to additional lessons where they solve more intense puzzles, learn advanced techniques and work with tougher coaches. In some instances, as early as middle school, players with potential choose to either intensify their chess studies or focus on school. Those who choose the path of chess of course still stay in school but prioritize chess.

The support of the government matters quite a lot as well in the advancement of chess in Armenia. After all, former president Serzh Sargsyan is the president of the Armenian Chess Federation, and previously the state was seen as the main supporter of developing chess talent in the country. Today however, Grandmaster Levon Aronian sees governmental neglect towards the advancement of chess, and cites mismanagement by the Pashinyan administration as his reason for leaving Armenia to represent the United States. WGM Gevorgyan noted that when Aronian left, Armenia lost not only a powerful player, but an important role model. He was someone children and young adults looked up to and aspired to be like. Gevorgyan feels strongly about the importance of having such role models and emphasized that “a role model shows what was once thought impossible, is in fact possible.” Victories such as hers in 2011, for example, no doubt inspire other girls to take up chess in Armenia and for the country to take women chess players more seriously.

As far as other challenges chess players face today, WGM Gevorgyan noted that there are limited opportunities for Armenians to compete with international competitors in Armenia and internationally. This is a big contrast with European players, who have more tournaments hosted in their home countries and less financial costs associated with attending competitions. However, Armenia stands out in the world by being one of the few countries where full time chess players can make a living. The country also has a Research Institute of Chess to study the psychological, educational, and sociological issues of chess education - an institution unique to the country. Though the world has much to learn from Armenia, one thing WGM Gevorgyan feels Armenians need to learn from the world is how to better recognize and celebrate its successes. “We are doing incredible things, we just need to show people more about it,” she explained. Other countries are using the regained popularity of chess during the pandemic to publicize and showcase their achievements, not only through traditional media but also with live streams of their games on the internet.

Though Armenia is a fertile ground for developing world class players and has a legacy for doing so, it’s obvious not every child is destined to become a grandmaster. So why encourage children to study chess and not something more “practical”? For Armenians, chess is seen as a way to teach kids how to think critically, creatively, use logic, and manage their time — and preliminary studies show this to be true. Maria Gevorgyan herself is in fact researching the impact of chess education as a part of her doctorate thesis in pedagogy. Though research is ongoing, it seems Armenia’s investment in chess, whether it produces a grandmaster or simply a more well-rounded individual, appears to be a worthy one, and as such remains an integral component of modern Armenian society.



A schoolgirl playing at the 15th School Chess Olympiad hosted by the Chess Academy of Armenia.

Interestingly, though both boys and girls were playing chess, the most celebrated Soviet Armenian players are men. While there were no Soviet Armenian female chess pioneers such as Georgia’s Nona Gaprindashvili, Armenian women players were still making strides in the sport. In 1964, Tamara Boiakhchian won the Armenian National Championship for the first time, and would go on to win more Armenian championships for a total of 7 times. Representing neighboring Georgia, ethnically Armenian Varvara Stepanovna Zargarian found success not

4 women grandmasters, 17 international masters and 4 women international masters; not to mention the fact that Armenian Levon Aronian is the fourth-highest rated chess player in history. Independent Armenia also takes pride in having a woman who is a grandmaster, Elina Danielian — one of only 38 women in the world. Danielian, it’s worth noting, is independent Armenia’s first European individual champion of either sex.

So what exactly is it that has driven Armenians to produce such successful chess players in the 21st century?





## INTERNATIONAL



President Sarkissian, left, with the Grand Collar of the Papal Order of Pius IX, with Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra

## Pope Francis Awards Armenian President with Grand Collar of Papal Order of Pius IX

ROME — Pope Francis on Friday, October 29, awarded President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian with the Grand Collar of the Papal Order of Pius IX for his contributions to the development of the relations between the Holy See and Armenia, as well as for being the first Ambassador of Armenia to the Vatican, the Armenian Presidential Office reports.

“The Pope instructed me to hand over to you the highest order of Vatican. This is a testimony to the unique relations existing between our countries. By opening an Apostolic Nunciature in Yerevan, we want to establish high-level relations and show to the world the importance of the first Christian nation in the history for us,” Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State at the Holy See Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, who has recently visited Armenia, said.

He noted that Sarkissian is the first both in Armenia and the region who has received such an order.

“I accept it as an appreciation of my modest work and also as a recognition of the fact that I have been Armenia’s first Ambassador to the Holy See. I have always worked for the close relations between Armenia and Vatican. Therefore, I accept this, promising to do more,” the Armenian President said, adding that it’s a great honor for receiving such an award.

Sarkissian proposed to mark the 30-year-old diplomatic ties between Armenia and the Holy See with a new exhibition, aimed at once again highlighting the rich historical and cultural heritage. “That would be one more way of telling about the relations between our states and an occasion to talk about the future,” Sarkissian said.

## Aurora Honors Late Vartan Gregorian with \$50,000 Grant To Library of San Lazzaro Mekhitarist Congregation

YEREVAN — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has allocated \$50,000 to support the library of the Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro in memory of Aurora Co-Founder and member of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee Vartan Gregorian, who passed away in 2021. The grant was announced during the 2021 Aurora Prize events in Venice.

Gregorian was an outstanding Armenian-American humanitarian, scholar, author, educator and mentor, and had built a remarkable career that spanned several decades and crossed the lines of academia and philanthropy. Vartan Gregorian saw libraries as temples of humanity’s accumulated knowledge, and this grant honors his outstanding legacy.

“We are very glad for the opportunity to honor Vartan Gregorian’s memory in such a meaningful way. Over the years, Vartan played a vital role in many projects and organizations, but Aurora was always special to him. Today, we continue our work in his name, preserving Armenian heritage while advancing humanitarian efforts,” said Ruben Vardanyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

The library of the Mekhitarist Congregation on the San Lazzaro Island contains



The book repository of San Lazzaro

more than 150,000 volumes in different languages, including manuscripts, ancient books and historical and scientific works. Abbot Mekhitar, the founder of the congregation, and his companions have always seen their mission in publishing, collecting and preserving books, especially Armenian ones. These days, the extensive repository of the Mekhitarist Congregation of the San Lazzaro carries one-of-a-kind historical artifacts, and the monastery remains one of the leading centers for Armenian studies.

“Vartan was a passionate advocate of education and enlightenment, and would have been delighted by Aurora’s decision to support this remarkable library. He referred to books as “stations of hope,” and this gift aims to make sure that the historic records of Armenian culture and heritage

kept safe on San Lazzaro Island can be stations of hope for Armenians for centuries to come,” noted Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

“It is an honor for the Congregation to receive this generous gift from the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, known for addressing urgent humanitarian challenges and providing a second chance to those who need it the most. Vartan Gregorian was truly an exceptional educator, and his legacy will be remembered forever. We are very grateful for this grant and are looking forward to putting it to good use, among the many needs of our library, in Vartan’s name,” said His Excellency Archbishop Levon Zekian, Pontifical Delegate of the Mekhitarist Congregation and Prelate of the Armenian Catholic Church in Turkey.

The 2021 Aurora Prize events took place in Venice, Italy, on October 8-10, 2021. During the weekend, guests and participants, including members of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, Aurora Humanitarians, and other representatives of Aurora’s community, had a chance to explore the rich Armenian legacy of this location. The events in Venice marked the first time the Aurora Prize Ceremony was organized in Europe.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Ethnic Armenian to Be Appointed District Governor for First Time in Turkey

ISTANBUL (Ahval) — A member of Turkey’s Armenian community is set to be appointed as a district governor for the first time in modern history, *Agos* reported on October 29. The Istanbul-based newspaper said lawyer Berk Acar had passed the necessary exams and would be assigned to a district by the interior ministry in the coming weeks.

Born in 1995, Acar graduated from Sahakyan Nunyan Armenian Middle School and Işık High School before studying law at Istanbul’s prestigious Bilgi University. He will be the first member of the Armenian community to hold the position of district governor since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Appointed by the state, governors are tasked with overseeing local government administration in Turkey’s 919 districts.

### Parliament Speaker and Norway Ambassador Stress Role of OSCE

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan received on November 1 the newly-appointed Ambassador of Norway to Armenia Helene Sand Andresen, the Parliament’s press service said. The two discussed a number of issues relating to the development of the Armenian-Norwegian relations. Both emphasized the importance of implementing programs aimed at boosting the inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The Speaker of Parliament highlighted the necessity of deepening cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries in various international platforms. The discussion touched upon regional security and stability. The sides highlighted the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship in the comprehensive settlement process of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Simonyan stressed the urgency of the repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war and civilians held in Azerbaijan. The meeting also covered topics relating to democracy and human rights.

### Grandmasters Share Second Spot at FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian grandmasters Manuel Petrosyan and Gabriel Sargissian are tied for second place with 13 other players at the FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss, having secured 4/6 points each after six rounds. Levon Aronian, meanwhile, follows them with 3.5 points, as does Armenia’s Robert Hovhannisyan, while Samvel Ter-Sahakyan (3 points), Movsesian Sergei (3 points) and Haik M. Martirosyan have yet to catch up.

The participants will get a rest day on Tuesday, November 6.



# Community News

## Artsakh Is at Heart of AMAA Annual Meeting And Banquet

By Philip Tavlian

FRESNO — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) emerged from the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 to hold an outstanding global convocation in the Great Central Valley of California in 2021.

The AMAA held its 102nd Annual Meetings on October 21-24 on the Campus of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church in Fresno. The missionary arm of the Armenian Evangelical Church worldwide, the AMAA gathering included meetings of the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) with delegates from the Armenian Evangelical Unions of North America, France, New East Republic of Armenia, and Eurasia as well as the Stephen Philibosian Foundation in attendance.

The assemblage opened on October 21 with a dinner meeting of the AEWC and continued with conclaves



Banquet Co-Sponsors Dr. John and LindaKay Bedrosian Abdulian

of the AEWC Board and AMAA Board of Directors on October 22. The Men's Forum and Dorcas Women's Guild of the host congregation prepared authentic San Joaquin Valley Cuisine for the delegates and guests throughout the weekend. Reverend Nerses Balabanian, Senior Pastor of the Host Congregation, offered warm greetings on behalf of the Church and larger community.

The 102nd Annual Membership Meeting took place in the Pilgrim Sanctuary on Saturday morning, October 23, and was streamed virtually via Zoom Video. At the conclusion of the business meeting, guests from around the globe participated in a bus tour of "Armenian Fresno," with visits to the epic David of Sassoon sculpture by Varaz Samuelian, the Lawrence Condrajian Cone-designed Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, the William Saroyan Residence, the Masis Ararat Cemetery, the Soghomon Tehlirian Monument, and the Armenian Genocide Monument on the campus of California State University, Fresno. Tour organizer Joyce Kierejczyk, Varoujan Der Simonian of the Armenian Museum of Fresno, and Professor Barlow Der

see AMAA, page 7



Anoush'Ella Owner Nina Festekjian and Armenian Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian

## Armenian Assembly Hosts Winetasting at Boston's Anoush'Ella

BOSTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) hosted a successful Boston Wine Tasting on Thursday, October 21, 2021 at Anoush'Ella, featuring Armenian wines from Storica Wines, as the Assembly gained further momentum heading into its 50th anniversary following events in New York City, Boston and Los Angeles.

Co-hosted by Nina and Raffi Festekjian, the event featured Storica President and Co-founder Zack Armen and Ara Sarkissian, Certified Wine Educator of Storica Wines and Boston University's Elizabeth Bishop Wine Resource Center, who led the tasting.

"It's a privilege for Storica to participate in events with the Armenian Assembly, as one of the most important institutions to the Armenian cause," said Zack Armen. "We're excited to continue collaborating with the Assembly and members of the Boston community and around the U.S. in showcasing the beauty and depth of our wines as representation of Armenia's rich culture and heritage in winemaking."

see WINES, page 9



From left, Storica Regional Sales Manager Simon Baatian, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Anoush'Ella Owner Nina Festekjian, Storica Co-Founder & President Zack Armen, and Storica General Manager & Certified Wine Educator Ara Sarkissian

## Abp. Vicken Aykazian Honored for Half a Century Of Service

CHELTHENHAM, Penn. — The 50th ordination anniversary of a distinguished clergyman and longtime leader of the Armenian Church was marked with a special tribute in October.

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, was



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian

honored on the "golden anniversary" of his ordination, in a heartfelt ceremony and banquet organized by Holy Trinity Church of Cheltenham, PA.

More than 160 people arrived at the church hall for the event on Sunday, October 17, which went forward in compliance with local pandemic regulations.

The day began in the church sanctuary with the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Aykazian himself, with parish pastor Fr. Hakob Gevorgyan assisting, along with deacons, altar servers, and choir members of the parish.

A banquet followed, with the luncheon hosted by Dr. and Mrs. Garo Garibian. In addition to faithful from the Philadelphia area, guests included Bryan Ardouny of the Armenian Assembly, with whom Aykazian frequently collaborates; and Dr. Rachel Goshgarian (of Lafayette College) and Taleen Babayan (of the Armenian Assembly) — both former colleagues of the honoree at the Eastern Diocese.

Representing Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan were Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian and the Diocese's Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan. Both honored Archbishop Vicken with words of praise for his work as Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan's letter of congratulations was read to the crowd by Odabashian. "Through his intelligence, diligence, spirituality and warm personality, Vicken Sr-pazan has been a servant of incalculable value to our Diocese, our church, and the Armenian people in general," wrote the Primate. "A true soldier of our Lord, he provides an edifying example of leadership for us all."

He went on: "As the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director, Vicken see SERVICE, page 7



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Artsakh Is at Heart of AMAA Annual Meeting and Banquet

AMAA, from page 6

Mugrdchian of the CSU Fresno Armenian Studies Program offered expert commentary throughout the tour.

The Saturday sessions culminated in the 102nd Annual Meeting Banquet dedicated to The Artsakh Republic. The Banquet took place in the Fellowship Hall of First Armenian Presbyterian Church, ten city blocks distant from Fresno's Historic Armenian Town.

Guests arrived to find a hall decorated in the colors and embellishments of the Autumn Harvest. Banquet Co-sponsors and Co-Chairs John Abdulian, M.D. and LindaKay Bedrosian Abdulian welcomed the attendees to the sold-out event. Mrs. Abdulian, President of National Raisin Company and AMAA Board Member, served as Master of Ceremonies and thanked AMAA President Nazareth Darakjian, M.D. and Executive Director Zaven Khanjian for their servant leadership.

Tenor Misak Israelyan, a native of Vanadzor, offered stirring renditions of the anthems of the United States of America and Republic of Armenia. Rev. Gregory Vahack Haroutunian, senior pastor of FAPC, offered the prayer of invocation.

Guests screened a special video on the AMAA Camping Ministry in Artsakh, which began near Stepanakert in 1995 and



The members of the Bedrosian family with a painting of the camp they had sponsored in Shushi

sorship of AMAA's Camp Bedrosian in Shushi since 2003. The campsite was lost to the Azeri military in the 44-day war that ended November 10, 2020. Executive Director Khanjian nevertheless advised the banquet guests, "Bedrosian Camp is not a building, land, or soil — it is spirit. We will build a camp in Shushi one more time." President Darakjian presented an oil portrait of Camp Bedrosian to the Bedrosian Family and Harout Nercessian, AMAA Armenia Representative, presented the family with albums of photographs from the 25-year camping ministry. Speaking for the extended family, AMAA Board Member Bryan Bedrosian offered moving remarks in the English and Armenian languages.

The meal was prepared by the Holy Trinity Men's Society and served by the employees of National Raisin Company. Following the meal, Israelyan offered the venerable hymn, How Great Thou Art, in the English language and the Artsakh anthems, Life and Battle and We Will Live, in the Armenian language.

Lilit Makunts, newly-appointed ambas-

sador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States marked her first visit to California at the banquet and warmly saluted the AMAA for offering humanitarian aid, inspiring the Armenian people to hope for a better life and future, and for emphasizing the education of youth. She concluded her remarks by saying, "After the 44-day Artsakh war, we have only one place to go — forward!" Armen Baibourtian, PhD, consul general of the Republic of Armenia in Los Angeles, expressed delight at being present for the banquet and described Fresno as "the place where our Armenian roots are in the Western United States." Baibourtian was accompanied by Berj Apkarian, honorary consul of the Republic of Armenia in Fresno since 2014.

The Banquet Committee introduced the keynote speaker with an AMAA video entitled, "A Success Story Against All Odds." Artak Beglaryan, state minister of the Artsakh Republic, lost his vision in a landmine incident in 1995. A onetime camper at the AMAA Camp in Stepanakert, Beglaryan went on to study at Yerevan State University, University College London, and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Massachusetts. He served as Human Rights Ombudsman of Artsakh for two years and was appointed State Minister on June 1, 2021.

He opened his banquet remarks by say-

ing, "It's symbolic to be in Fresno because it is the symbol of survival and revival after the Genocide of 1915. The example of Fresno will be quite encouraging to us." Beglaryan examined the future of Artsakh following the 44-day war and cited long term and short term challenges. The long term challenges include: (1) security, (2) demography; (3) economic development; (4) government reforms; and (5) education. Beglaryan said the short term challenges include: (1) housing; (2) social and labor productivity; (3) physical and psychological rehabilitation of the populace; (4) infrastructure; and (5) institutional capacity. To address these challenges, Beglaryan called for self-analysis at all levels, unity, strategic thinking, patience, persistence, and an attitude of service. He concluded his address by saying, "Jesus sacrificed His life to give us a chance; the Artsakh soldiers sacrificed their lives for the same goal. We should so live our lives that their lives were not given in vain."

Khanjian presented Beglaryan and his advisor, David Hagopian, with a variety of gifts, including a framed motto, "Perseverance—Never Give Up!"

Rev. Albert Paytyan, president of the Union of Evangelical Churches in Armenia offered the benediction and Rev. Nerses Balabanian led the singing of the Doxology (Park yev Badeev).

The 102nd Annual Meetings concluded with a service of worship on Sunday, October 24 at Pilgrim Church. Rev. Doctor Vahan H. Tootikian conducted the Installation Service of new AMAA Board Members and Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian offered the Memorial Prayer. Rev. Doctor Haroutune Selimian of Syria delivered the worship message in Armenian and Rev. Doctor Ronald Tovmassian of Southern California delivered the worship message in English.

The 102nd Annual Meeting Host Committee included Rev. Nerses Balabanian, Senior Pastor of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church of Fresno; Rev. Kevin Kasper, Associate Pastor of Pilgrim Church; and Edward and Roseann Saliba, co-chairs.

The Annual Meeting Banquet Committee included Dr. John and LindaKay Bedrosian Abdulian, Co-Chairs; Executive Director Khanjian; Katherine Bedrosian; Jane Bedrosian Asmar; Louisa Janbazian; Christine Kutlu; Magda Poulos; Nancy Rivera; Missy Karabian Statler and Marie Viducich.



Artak Beglaryan, State Minister of Artsakh Republic

moved to Shushi in the summer of 2003. The video depicted a quarter century of AMAA camping ministry in Artsakh, with more than 800 young people participating in each annual summer session. The video also saluted Carlotta and the late Ernest Bedrosian, Katherine and the late Krikor Bedrosian, Kenneth and Jane Bedrosian, and their extended family for faithful spon-

## Abp. Vicken Aykazian Honored for Half a Century of Service

SERVICE, from page 6

Srpazan has worked for decades among the world's major interfaith and Christian ecumenical groups.... On countless occasions, his influence has been the major force behind worldwide expressions of ecumenical support for Armenian causes, including Genocide recognition, the preservation of Armenian monuments and, most urgently, the statements of solidarity with Armenia and Artsakh that emerged during last year's bitter war period."

Gevorgyan offered his reflections on the humble nature of the honoree, relating how Aykazian had chosen to serve as a deacon during a recent badarak at St. Mary Church in Washington, DC, to commemorate in a very personal way the 50th year since his ordination.

He added: "Our Eastern Diocese is fortunate to have someone of his stature represent the Armenian Church in the global

faith community for the past generation."

As a special way to honor the milestone, the Cheltenham parish presented Aykazian with a beautiful oil painting of his own portrait.

Born in Siirt, Turkey, in 1951, he moved to Jerusalem as a young man to study at the city's Armenian Patriarchate. There he was ordained a deacon in 1968 and a celibate priest in 1971. In 1992, Vasken I, the late Catholicos of All Armenians, ordained him a bishop at Holy Echmiadzin, the Mother See of the worldwide Armenian Church.

In a ministry that has taken him around the world, he has served the Armenian Church in diverse roles including tenures as primate of the Diocese of Switzerland (1992-96), and as director of the Fund for Armenian Relief's office in the Republic of Armenia (1997-99).

In 2007, he was elected as president of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and served his term from 2008 through 2009. He was the first Oriental Orthodox clergyman to serve as president of America's leading ecumenical organization. He currently sits on the exec-



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and guests pose with a portrait of him.

utive board of the NCC as well as on the board of the World Council of Churches, where his involvement has been extensive and continuous since 1985.

Today, Archbishop Aykazian is recognized around the globe as among the distinguished and influential figures in the ecumenical field.





## OBITUARY

## Olympia Jebejian

### Scientist, Dedicated to Family, Education

ENGLEWOOD, N.J. — Olympia Jebejian, of Englewood Cliffs, NJ, died suddenly on October 19, 2021. She was 81.

Born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1940 to parents Stepan and Marie Tabibian, Olympia graduated with honors at the age of 15 from the Armenian General Benevolent Union's Tarouhi Hagopian Girls' High School. She then studied chemistry at the American University of Beirut, eventually receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees.

While a student at AUB she met, Hagop Shahe Jebejian, her partner for life in every sense of the word. They were married in Beirut in 1967, by then Bishop Karekin Sarkissian, the future Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

Following university, Olympia taught math and chemistry in Beirut at the Armenian Evangelical College and then Haigazian College.

Seeking a brighter future for their family, Olympia and Shahe emigrated to the United States in 1969 and settled in Fort Lee, NJ.

They welcomed their son Sarkis later that very same year, followed by their daughter

Maria in 1973. They built an active social life among old friends from university and new friends in America, all of whom affectionately referred to her as "Ombi".

In 1970, Olympia embarked on her decades-long professional passion, joining the Chemistry Department at Barnard College of Columbia University, rising eventually to Director of General Chemistry Laboratories and Dean of Premedical Students. Over her 40 years at Barnard, Olympia taught and mentored thousands of future scientists, professors and physicians, which was a lifelong source of pride and achievement for her. In particular, for many years Olympia led Barnard's Higher Education Opportunities and Science and Technology Entry Programs dedicated to providing bright and motivated students who are economically disadvantaged access to higher education.

Her family life was equally important to her. She was overjoyed by the marriage of her daughter Maria to Bryan Stepanian in 1999, and then had the pleasure to see her son Sarkis marry Maral Diratzouian



the very next year. For the entire extended Jebejian family, Olympia was a beacon of love and warmth, hosting hundreds of family events, including many Christmas and New Year's Eves. Equally important, the central value she placed on education and professional achievement was an inspiration to her children, her many nieces and nephews and other young, loved ones. In particular, she was a model example of a working mother to many in her family and community.

Active in Armenian community life since childhood, Olympia remained dedicated to the Armenian language and cul-

ture throughout her life. Notable among her many endeavors, she taught for almost 20 years at the Kirikian Armenian School of St. Thomas Armenian Church as well as at the Khrimian Lyceum of the Diocese of the Armenian Church. Olympia and her family generously supported Tekeyan Cultural Association cultural and educational programs.

Perhaps Olympia's greatest joy in recent years were her four grandchildren, for whom she was an endless source of love and support. They loved her dearly and referred to her as "Mammas," hanging on her every word. Highlights from recent years were her joy in watching Robby (20) start college in 2019, her anticipation of Shahe (17) and Arto (17) applying to college this fall, and Katia's (16) Sweet Sixteen Party a few weeks ago in September, when Olympia's speech stole the show.

Olympia was predeceased by her brother, Jivan Tabibian, and sister, Ani Hagopian. She is survived by her husband Hagop Shahe Jebejian, her son, Sarkis Jebejian and daughter-in-law, Maral Jebejian, daughter Maria Stepanian and son-in-law Bryan Stepanian and grandchildren Robby, Shahe, Arto and Katia, and hundreds of family and friends who will miss her very deeply.

Services took place at St. Thomas Armenian Church on Friday, October 22, with interment at Brookside Cemetery.

## George K. Mandossian

### Tekeyan, ADL Leader

BURBANK, Calif. — George Kevork Mandossian, beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, relative and friend passed away peacefully on Sunday October 17, 2021, at his residence surrounded by his loved ones.

A leader of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada (TCA) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), George played an important role in the Armenian Church and the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

He was a founder and guiding spirit of the TCA Arshag Dickranian Armenian School and a member of the founding council of the Montebello Armenian Martyrs Memorial Monument. He enjoyed his profession passionately. As a civil engineer, he has left his stamp on many structures in the Los Angeles area.

George Mandossian was born in Jerusalem on February 24, 1934. He was the third of four children (Krikor, Alice and Fimi) born to the late Antranig and Haiganoush

Mandossian.

He is survived by his loving wife, Hasmig Mandossian; son, Ohan Alex Mandossian and his children, Gabriel and Breanna; daughter, Taleen Petrossians and husband Arthur Petrossians and their children Alex and Grace; sister, Alice Melkonian; sister-in-law, Hilda and Dr. Walid Ghurabi and family; brother-in-law, Dr. Armen and Azniv Goenjian and family; niece, Arda and Ara Artinian and family; nephew, Ara and Terri Melkonian and son; former spouse, mother of Ohan and Taleen, Carol Mandossian; and in-law, Zina Petrossians, and the entire Mandossian, Melkonian,



Petrossians, Goenjian, Ghurabi, Artinian, Hadjian, Malek, Nazarian, Kazanjian families and relatives and friends.

Funeral services, followed by interment, will be held on Tuesday November 9, at 2:30 pm at Hollywood Hills Forest Lawn Mortuary Park, Old North Church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations will benefit the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Orphan and Child Care Program and the AMAA Educational Support in Lebanon and the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada.

Donations to the AMAA can be made online at: <http://weblink.donorperfect.com/gmandossianmemorial> or sent to: AMAA, 31 W. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652.

Donations to the Tekeyan Cultural Association may either be mailed to 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, with Memo: In Memoriam George Mandossian, or given online at: <https://givebutler.com/FR73pE>.

## Haikouhi Koudoussian

### Dedicated to Church, Family

ROCKVILLE, Md. — A beloved daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt, and grandmother, Haikouhi Koudoussian passed away on October 29, 2021.

She is survived by her daughters Rita Koudoussian and Lena (Edvik) Alexandrian, her sister Marie Balian, her grandson André Alexandrian, her sister-in-law Rita Balian, and her nephews Raffi Balian and Sevag (Nairi) Balian. She was predeceased by her husband Hagop Koudoussian and brother Vartkess Balian.

Haikouhi was born on February 7, 1929 as the daughter of Dikranouhi (Ayanian) and Mardiros Balian, who were Genocide Survivors from Adana and Kutahya.

She grew up in Beirut, Lebanon where she attended a Catholic French school. Despite her love of learning and her dream of becoming a nurse, she left school at 15 to help her father support the family by working as a seamstress and then professional dressmaker for many years — a skill she learned from her aunt.

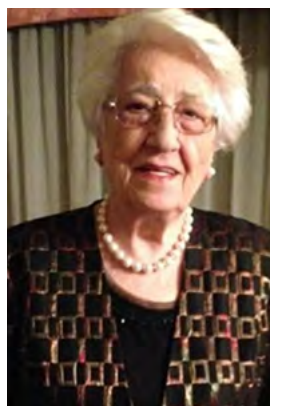
In 1965, she married Hagop Koudoussian and had twin daughters, Lena and Rita, a few years later. After her husband passed away, she emigrated to the United

States with her daughters in 1998 and settled in Rockville.

She found a new spiritual home at St. Mary Church and was an active member of the Women's Guild since 1999.

Speaking five languages, Haikouhi enjoyed reading, especially French literature and Armenian history. She spent countless hours in prayer and had memorized the 24 verses of St. Nersess Shnorhali's "Havadov Khosdevanim," which she recited every morning. Her wisdom, patience, and kindness were inspirations to those who were blessed to know her.

The Funeral Service was held at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, Washington, DC, on Tuesday, November 2. Burial was private. Church attendees were requested to be vaccinated and wear masks.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY



New Boston-area Assembly members

## Armenian Assembly Hosts Winetasting at Anoush'Ella

WINES, from page 6

The Assembly's Director of Development and Membership Mary Jo Bazarian Murray appreciated the presence of many Armenian American young professionals, members of Boston-area Armenian Students Associations, and Assembly Intern Alumni from Boston who joined the event.

"Our collective efforts are a strong voice for the people of Armenia and Artsakh," she said.

"On behalf of the Armenian Assembly of America, we thank Nina and Raffi Festekjian for their generosity in hosting and sponsoring our Boston membership event at their Anoush'Ella Kitchen in Boston," said Assembly Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian.

The Assembly extends its appreciation to Cape Cod hosts Melanie and Seth Bilazarian, and Boston hosts Nina and Raffi Festekjian, and event committee members Teni Apelian, Christopher Babayan, Tamar Barsamian, Ara Bilazarian, Lilit DerKervorkian, and Sophia Kapreilian.

## Reception Held in LA in Honor of Visiting Artsakh State Minister

GLENDAL — On October 27, a reception was held at the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles in honor of the State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan. The reception was attended by leaders of ecclesiastical, political, cultural, business, and benevolent organizations of the Armenian community of California as well as community members. Elected U.S. officials also came to meet with the Artsakh State Minister. Among them were California State Senators Anthony Portantino and María Elena Durazo, California State Assemblymembers Adrin Nazarian and Laura Friedman, Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian, and representatives of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles Ambassador Armen Baibourtian invited Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan for a prayer to begin the reception with an invocation and deliver remarks.

Welcoming the guests, Ambassador Baibourtian stressed the importance of the visit of Artsakh State Minister Artak Beglaryan and noted that it is a good opportunity to get acquainted with the current situation in Artsakh, its future programs, and to outline the important role of the Armenian community of California in these programs. The State Minister presented to the Armenian-American community the five main pillars to build the future of Artsakh: stable security, improved demography, sustainable economic development, high-quality education, and effective governance. State Minister Beglaryan spoke about the plans in the framework of those five pillars and the role of the Armenian Di-

aspora in it.

Speeches were also delivered by the Executive Director/CEO of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Zaven Khanjian, who was also the co-host of the reception along with the Consul General.

Further speeches were delivered by Senior Advisor to the State Minister David Akopyan as well as elected state and local officials present at the event. They presented certificates of recognition to the State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh and assured their continued support and commitment to stand by the people of Artsakh.

At the end of the reception, Baibourtian



State Minister of the Republic of Artsakh Artak Beglaryan, with Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan at right, and Ambassador Armen Baibourtian and David Akopyan

presented a Certificate of Appreciation to executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America -Western Region (ANCA-WR) Armen Sahakyan for his many years of service, professionalism, and effective cooperation with the Consulate General of Armenia as well as on the occasion of completing his mission in California and decision to move to Armenia.

# Dogan Akhanli, Turkish-Born Human Rights Activist, Dies

AKHANALI, from page 1

After the military coup in 1980, he went underground.

In May 1985, he, his wife and his 16-month-old son were arrested. For two years he was incarcerated in the military prison of Istanbul, while his wife and child were released after one year. In 1992, Akhanli fled Turkey and was granted political asylum in Germany, eventually settling in Cologne. Turkey revoked his citizenship because of his stance on military service.

Akhanli began writing in exile in Germany. "Here I found the peace to think about everything I experienced," he recalls in a conversation at the time. "My wife and I were tortured, our child had to watch. We were injured people when we arrived here. But I did not want to accept these injustices that were done to me, to my family and to society as a whole. I used writing as my weapon. That was the only thing I could do. That was my way of raising my voice and resisting," he said.

In his writings, Akhanli dealt with violence. But not only with the violence he personally experienced, but also with the violence against women, against minorities and with historical violence, the genocide of the Armenians as well as with the Holocaust. Four of his novels have been translated into German. Most recently Madonna's Last Dream, a search for clues in the Nazi era.

"Through writing, I can deal with historical violence in a literary way. For me, writing is a tool with which I want to solve

social antagonisms and struggles," said Akhanli.

Akhanli said the Turkish regime had embraced violence as a means of rule. He said this lay at the root of its denial of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and of its handling of Kurdish separatism.

He also said the regime's nationalist ideology created a dangerous environment.

He recalled that Turkish generals "publicly threatened" Hrant Dink, a journalist, in 2007 prior to Dink's murder by a nationalist fanatic.

"Under the Erdogan government, the history of violence is not just a story. It is not passive. It is killing people before our very eyes," he said, referring to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

He said Erdogan's mass arrests of people accused of sympathizing with last year's failed coup, such as Ahmet Sik, another journalist, were part of the same pattern.

"Especially after the failed coup attempt, the violation of freedom of expression have increased sharply," Akhanli observed. Writers and journalists are particularly affected.

"Violence concerns everyone," Akhanli was convinced, even if it happens in a remote part of the world and is not experienced directly. Because sooner or later anyone can be made a target. "This violence is arbitrary. This was as true for the Jews in Europe as it was for the Armenian genocide. These people were killed by the arbitrary exercise of power." In order for the past not to repeat itself, these genocides of

the 20th century must be dealt with again and again, according to Akhanli. To this end, he is also involved in civil society, for example in the project Flight-Exile-Persecution.

### Repeated Arrests

Again and again he was targeted by the Turkish state. When he wanted to visit his sick father in Turkey in 2010, he was arrested upon his arrival on trumped up charges of being involved in a robbery in 1989. Again he was in custody for several months.

In 2017, there is another arrest. During his holiday in Granada, the Spanish police temporarily arrested him in his hotel room on the basis of an Interpol request from Turkey. German politicians as well as the international writers' association PEN, of which Akhanli was a member, considered the arrests to be politically motivated.

After the intervention of German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel he was set free, but he was not allowed to leave Madrid until the court mulled the Turkish extradition request. German chancellor Angela Merkel sharply criticized the Turkish government because of abusing the international institution Interpol.

"Turkish power cannot forgive me because I questioned the basic problems of Turkey," he told the EU Observer then.

The writer said his novels had not made him a celebrity. "I'm not a best-seller," he said.

But he said that "Turkish persecution makes me more known year by year and

makes my words bigger. It is actually a very stupid policy."

He said Turkey's latest attempt to deprive him of his freedom had inspired him to write a new book.

"I'm trying to write a report about my political-literary journey into the Turkish past, which is also my own past," he told this website from Spain.

"I will take a very subjective view of my unfinished persecution, but I will also reflect on how to deal with the history of violence in German, Spanish, and Turkish society," he said.

(The *Mirror-Spectator's* German-based correspondent, Muriel Mirak-Weissbach frequently covered his activities. (<https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/09/01/erdogans-extraterritorial-ambitions-case-dogan-akhanli/>), <https://mirrorspectator.com/2017/08/24/erdogans-extraterritorial-ambitions/>, <https://mirrorspectator.com/2016/08/11/interview-the-implosion-of-the-erdogan-gulen-family-devastates-turkey/>)

The current German PEN President Deniz Yücel wrote, "As President, I mourn the loss of the member of the German PEN, as a reader for a great writer, as a companion for a fighter for human rights, peace and the reappraisal of the crimes against the Armenians."

(A column from Deutsche Welle written by Ceyda Nurtsch as well as a piece from the EU Observer were used to compile this report.)





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Yan Spiration

## Fashion Provides Work and Hope in Artsakh

By Siranoush Sargsyan  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

STEPANAKERT — A year ago Artsakh went through 44 days of war unleashed by Azerbaijan, with the aid of Turkish weaponry and international terrorists. To this day, it is still difficult to talk about any expectation of peace with the continuing of suffering and the loss of civilian life. The people of Artsakh are struggling to see the light at the end of the tunnel while living under a constant state of terror and uncertainty. Yet, despite all this, the spirit of the women of Artsakh continues to soar. Yan Spiration is one manifestation of this spirit.

Anoush Manukyan is a young businesswoman from Artsakh. During the war, she and her family lost not only their house in the city Shushi, but, most painfully, her only brother, Vahe. Despite these very heavy blows, she did not lose confidence in herself. Within a short period of time, she decided to restart the Shushi-based family business, Yan Spiration, in Stepanakert.



Anoush realizes only too well the uncertainty in which her young son lives. In a recent interview she said that the reason why she could find strength within herself was her dedication to the memory of her lost brother and the many other young men who lost their lives as a result of the Azerbaijani aggression. Anoush said she feels that if she lets her spirit break, it would mean a betrayal of the memory of all those defenders of the homeland.

The goal of Yan Spiration is to create internationally-competitive, high-quality fabrics that will allow diasporan Armenians to connect more closely with Artsakh and Armenia through investments rather than just aid. It is one of the most unique textile factories in the whole



The Yan Spiration fashion show at the Paul Eluard Center in Stepanakert

the shareholders are advised not to take their profits out of the business, but to reinvest them in this or other auxiliary enterprises in Artsakh, or even direct them to select social programs.

“Most importantly, we will have skilled, self-employed women with modern handicraft skills and modern fashion tools,” she added.

Yan Spiration aims to make a stable and continuous contribution to the employment of women in Artsakh, constantly creating a strong connection to handicrafts and entrepreneurship through various events. As an additional value, women are gaining confidence and hope for the future.

### Women Working for Their Future

Many of the women working at Yan Spiration hail from regions that were lost to Azerbaijan. They include Arevik Shahranyan, Manoush Harutyunyan, and Susanna Shahnazaryan, all from the region of Taghavard, Lilia Avetisyan from Hadrut and Ina Grigoryan from Madaghis. Having lost their homes as a result of the war, they all settled in the capital of Stepanakert.

What unites these women is their common pain. The craft of needlework, learned from their grandmothers, today allows them not only to earn money to meet the needs of their families, but also to share their pain with each other and try to somehow overcome it.

Hadrut, and it was especially difficult for her to leave the grave of her brother who died in the first war for liberation of the early 1990s.

“During the [recent] war, when Hadrut was in danger, it was difficult for me to persuade my daughters to leave,” she stated, “and because their husbands were in the front-lines, unfortunately my two sons-in-law were wounded.”



Lilia Avetisyan



region, creating products not only for the domestic market but for export.

A marketing campaign is already underway. After only a month and a half of hard work, its first show took place at the Paul Eluard Center in Stepanakert, on September 15; the next one will take place in Yerevan.

Anoush says Yan Spiration will include a number of promising components as a social enterprise. She said that

Every piece of clothing has its own story to tell. They rejoice with everyone because for them this place has become the center of a somehow extended family.

Avetisyan is a math teacher by training. She worked and lived in Hadrut all of her life with her three young daughters. After the war she could not stay in Yerevan and moved to Stepanakert, where she currently lives in a rented apartment. She said she misses the mountains of



Ina Grigoryan





## COMMUNITY NEWS

She added: “We share the same fate. Each of us seems to recount the whole picture of Artsakh, the lost places. Our pain is one — that’s why we understand each other. But we must continue to live here. If we leave, our language would perish. Therefore we are all responsible for the preservation of our Armenian language and heritage, and in our particular case, for the preservation of the sweet dialect of Hadrut.”

Ina Grigoryan teaches the Armenian language. She said, “I was so young during the first Artsakh war, and during this war my children were going through this tragedy. On the first day of war, I picked up the children rushed to a shelter. People came and said that the Turkish aggressors were approaching our village. I saw a pregnant woman helplessly lying on the ground. We all tried to help each other to escape. The indiscriminate shooting from the enemy against the population of Artsakh was relentless and everywhere, but we somehow managed to escape. The Azerbaijani aggressor forcefully occupied our village, where we had all our livelihood, everything we had, and so, leaving everything behind, we ran out. I still miss each and every bush and tree in the village. But we must continue not to lose hope that we will go back to our village someday. My house is there waiting for me.”

Manoush Harutyunyan was also a teacher and taught in her native village of Taghavard before the war. Now half of her village is under the control of the enemy, and that occupied part is where her house is located. She confessed that she had immense difficulty finding any strength to continue living in Artsakh, far from her native village.



The Yan Spiration fashion show at the Paul Eluard Center in Stepanakert



Clothing produced by Yan Spiration displayed at the Paul Eluard Center in Stepanakert

She observed: “I look at these women who have lost their husbands and sons and think, if they can still bear all this unbearable pain, and try continue to live, we must owe something to them, to their inspirational determination. It’s very hard to imagine that these houses we currently stay in all have had people whose relatives perished in that war, and that pain of loss is shared by all of us. But even if we were to leave, those people living there cannot and would not leave, for they have to attend graves of their loved ones which kept them nearby.”

She added, “My children continue to give me strength and hope. My twin sons will go to the army next year, and my 8-year-old daughter says that she is most afraid of forgetting the way to the village. Her words pains me a lot.”

Shahnazaryan spoke with overwhelming emotion about the gardens they used to cultivate in their native village of Taghavard, which today has passed under the control of the enemy. Her son is a soldier who still defends the land. The situation is too much to overcome, with their pain and overwhelming problems. But Susana thinks that a woman should try to overcome all obstacles

by continuing to work and be progressive even under the most difficult circumstances.

During the war, she baked jengyalov hats, an Armenian flatbread which is a specialty of Artsakh — lavash dough stuffed with foraged local greens, for soldiers on the bat-



The staff of Yan Spiration, with Anoush Manukyan holding child in center

tlefield, including her two sons.

Susanna said, “We live in the most beautiful place in the world, but sadly we have no choice but to find a way to get out of this terrible uncertainty. My son is a soldier and he says we should stay here. If our children have an

unwavering determination, then we have no right to be broken. As women, we need to have more willpower to support our husbands and children.”

Lusine Aydynyan, who works as an assistant director of Yan Spiration, and does everything possible to organize all sorts of work, thinks that no matter how heavy the burden of uncertainties may be, they should stay and work to revive their livelihood in their homeland Artsakh.

She says: “All our lives now seem so distinct, before and after this war. My children constantly ask a lot of questions about the war, with every sound of explosion and every loud noise associated with that war. They say how the war has left its dark marks on their childhood and in their souls.



Susanna Shahnazaryan

“All the talk is about the sad events of the war and this will stay with us forever. I tend not to focus on bad things nor on the difficulties we encounter on daily basis. All I want to do is to be progressing as much as I positively can with my work. I do not even know how long we will live here for, but I am determined to live and work here right to the end and I am very proud that there are women like Anoush doing such a great job with such an inspiration,” Aydynyan said.

She concluded, “All women here are displaced, and everyone has the same goal. We work like a one big loving family. We do not only work hard to keep our families safe and keep our homes, but also make our committed contribution to the development of our homeland Artsakh.”



# Arts & Culture

## ACF Releases The Foundation Papers 10

ARLINGTON, Mass. — The Armenian Cultural Foundation announces the release of *Foundation Papers No.10* dedicated to the celebration of 110th anniversary of the birth of Alan Hovhanness (1911-2000), one of the 20th century's great composers. A concert held virtually on April 17, 2021 and internationally in collaboration with renowned pianist Alessandra Pompili of Manchester, the United Kingdom, showcased the event, co-sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance and the Friends of Armenian Culture Society.

The publication includes complete texts of the talks delivered during the event: "Recollections of Alan Hovhanness," reminiscences of the Hovhanness family in his hometown Arlington by Alan's childhood friend and neighbor Dr. Jack Johnston growing up in Arlington, also, "Hovhanness," by Dr. Pasquale Tassone, former music director of the Arlington High school where Hovhanness graduated in 1929. The Paper also includes two academic papers by musicologists specializing on the life and career of Hovhanness: "Hovhanness in India," by Dr. Craig Parker of Kansas State University, and "Alan Hovhanness and Japan," by Dr. W. Anthony Sheppard, Marylin and



Alan Hovhanness

Arthur Levitt Professor of Music at Williams College.

The program highlighted three live performances of pieces by the composer, *Yeraz* (Dream, Op. 56 no. 2), *Lament* (Op. 25 No. 2), and *Greek Rhapsody* (Op. 63, No.1) in a podcast from London, Manchester, and Reykjavík, Iceland, by renowned classical music performers included violinist Levon Chilingirian, founder of the Chilingirian String Quartet, clarinetist Einar Jóhannesson, and pianist Alessandra Pompili. These pieces and the event in its entirety are on YouTube and will be embedded in the ACF's new website to be launched in the future.

The *Foundation Papers* is a periodic publication dedicated to the documentation and dissemination of scholarly presentations of events organized by ACF. The publication of these texts serves two purposes: First, to provide a forum for broader exposure of the views of these scholars and intellectuals, and second, to contribute to cultural life in general, and the field of the Armenian Studies in particular. Also, their printing responds to various requests of audiences and patrons about the availability of the texts.

Copies of the Foundation Paper No.10 can be purchased from the Cultural Foundation. Orders can be made by contacting the ACF at [armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com](mailto:armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com).



Armenian Earthquake (Photo by Asadour Guzelian, 1989, Spitak, Armenia)

## Promise, Armenian Film Foundation Collaborate In Support of Film and Photography at UCLA

LOS ANGELES — The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA — The Promise Armenian Institute is pleased to announce that it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Armenian Film Foundation (AFF) to collaborate on a range of projects that will support Armenian film and photography at UCLA.

On November 18, 2021, the Promise Armenian Institute will host "Aftermath: the Armenian Earthquake of 1988," the first online exhibit of the Armenian Image Archive, which will celebrate the work of Asadour Guzelian. Guzelian is a photographer based in the United Kingdom who went to Armenia shortly after the earthquake in 1988. This Zoom event will feature some of his photographs, which were featured in mainstream newspapers at the time.

The Armenian Image Archive (AIA) is the first of the new collaborations between PAI and AFF. This new archive has three goals — preservation, research and exhibition of Armenian photographers and photography related to Armenian subject-matter. The AIA will identify photography collections around the world, from the mid-19th century up to contemporary collections. It will provide both a repository and an ongoing platform for discourse and study about Armenian photographers.

The Armenian Film Foundation was founded by J. Michael Hagopian, Ph.D., who was instrumental, along with NAASR, in creating the first chair of Armenian Studies at see COLLABORATION, page 13



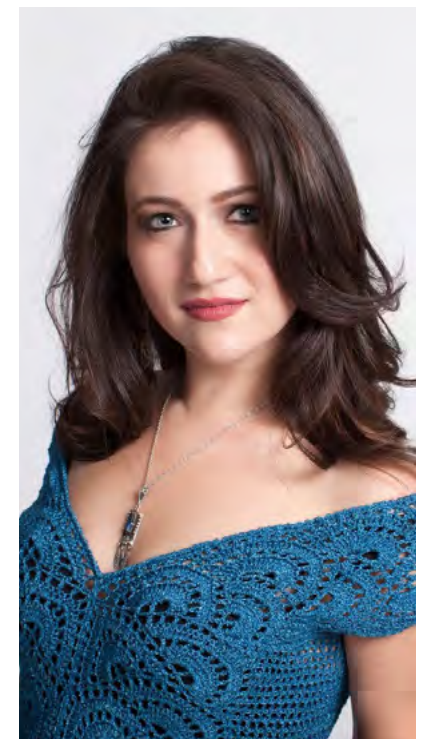
Western tourists at the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, by Garabed Krikorian, Krikorian Studio, ca 1895, Malikian Collection

## Armenian Soprano Mané Galoyan Wins Second Prize At Operalia 2021 World Opera Competition

MOSCOW — In October, Armenian soprano Mané Galoyan won the second prize at the Operalia 2021 world opera competition. Galoyan shared the second award with tenors Bekhzod Davronov (Uzbekistan) and Jonah Hoskins (US).

Russian mezzo-soprano Victoria Karkacheva and tenor Ivan Ayon-Rivas of Peru were the winners of this year's competition.

Operalia was founded in 1993 by Plácido Domingo to discover and help launch the careers of the most



Mané Galoyan

promising young opera singers.

Operalia's goal is to attract singers between the ages of 18 and 32, of all voice types from and all over the world, to have them audition and be heard by a panel of distinguished international personalities, in the most prestigious and competitive showcase in the world.

Galoyan also received the Pepita Embil Prize of Zarzuela and the Rolex Prize of the Audience.

Galoyan is a graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, and holds two degrees from the Yerevan State Komitas Conservatory in Armenia, where she was named the 2013 winner of the President of the Republic of Armenia Youth Prize. She is based in Berlin with her husband, conductor Roberto Kalb.

Galoyan has won numerous international competitions, including First Prize in the 27th Eleanor McCollum Competition and Concert of Arias with Houston Grand Opera, Third Prize in the XV International Tchaikovsky Competition, Fourth Prize in the 6th International Vocal Competition China in Ningbo, Third Prize in the 2017 Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, a 2014 prize in the Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition, and First Prize in the Bibigul Tulegenova International Singing Competition in Kazakhstan.



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Promise, Armenian Film Foundation Collaborate

COLLABORATION, from page 12  
UCLA. Hagopian was a lecturer at UCLA before becoming a documentary filmmaker. With his legacy in mind, the Armenian Film Foundation will support projects at UCLA that tie film and photography to a deeper understanding of Armenian history, culture and the arts.

Joseph Malikian, Ph.D., an expert on early Armenian photography, is working closely with the Armenian Image Archive. Malikian is the author of *The Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: An Anthology and a Photo History*, and an upcoming publication, *The Krikorians on Jaffa Road*.

As part of the Malikian Collection, Malikian has gathered vintage images and the history of many Armenian photographic studios, dating from the 1860s, including Abdullah Freres, Sebah, Sebah & Joaillier, Tarkulyan (Atelier Phebus), Iranian, Gulmez Freres, Lekegian, Krikorian, Sarrafian, Alban, Van Leo, Armand, De Mirjian, Karsh and many others. His collection contains original images from the renowned Armenian photographic studios in Armenia, Tiflis, Baku, and other parts of what was once the Russian Empire.

"The Armenian Image Archive will also identify previously unknown collections

from the Armenian Genocide period," says Carla Garapedian, PhD, of the Armenian Film Foundation. "Over a hundred years have passed, but there are still photos that haven't seen the light of day."

"The UCLA Promise Armenian Institute



A rare photo from the Genocide period, Armenian Film Foundation

is very much looking forward to this new partnership with the Armenian Film Foundation. The Armenian Image Archive, as well as all future projects, will enrich the scholarly inquiry of Armenian photography and film at UCLA and make accessible

to the public and the academic community footage and collections tantamount to a national treasure," said Prof. Ann Karagozian, the inaugural director of the Promise Armenian Institute. "I also want to acknowledge the UCLA Library and the

UCLA Film & Television Archive for their important future role in our AFF partnership. Both organizations are international leaders in preserving and providing access to cultural heritage, and their world-class expertise will amplify the Armenian Image Archive's work advancing our shared goals."

The "Aftermath: the Armenian Earthquake of 1988" webinar will take place on Thursday, November 18 at 10 a.m. Pacific Time. To register, visit [bit.ly/PAINov18](https://bit.ly/PAINov18). To learn more about the Promise Armenian Institute, please visit the PAI website at [international.ucla.edu/armenia](https://international.ucla.edu/armenia) and to learn more about the Armenian Film Foundation, please visit [armenianfilm.org](https://armenianfilm.org).

## 41<sup>st</sup> Volume Of Haigazian Armenological Review Launched

BEIRUT — On October 22, the 41<sup>st</sup> volume of the *Haigazian Armenological Review* was launched in the auditorium of Haigazian University, in the presence of Haigazian President Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, Rev. Megerditch Karageozian, head of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Middle East, the Second Secretary of the Armenian Embassy in Lebanon David Alaverdyan, Father Mesrob Tolapian, Dr. Zaven Messerlian, the editorial board of the *Review*, and a number of book-loving Lebanese-Armenians.

Dr. Armen Urneshlian welcomed the public and noted that due to socioeconomic and Covid-19 crises the three previous volumes (39<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and the jubilee volume) were not launched in public. Urneshlian noted that alongside the bibliography of the 40 volumes, the jubilee volume included research papers on the histories of the Armenian Studies Department of Haigazian University, the *Haigazian Armenological Review*, the Derian Armenological Library, the HU Press, the Armenian Diaspora Research Center, and the series of exhibitions which were inaugurated in the Matossian Arts Center.

In his turn, Dr. Dakessian emphasized that one third of the research papers in the 41<sup>st</sup> volume covered post-1995 issues. He stressed that the *Review* conveyed positive and encouraging messages to all those who were interested in Armenian affairs and

concluded that the editorials of the *Review* reflect the agenda discourse of Armenian Studies in the last quarter of a century.

Due to technical reasons, the guest speaker, Dr. Grigor Arshakian, director of the National Archives of Armenia, could not attend the event. In his words, which Alaverdyan read, Arshakian underlined the significance of the *Haigazian Armenological Review* and stressed the importance of Armenian Studies in the era of globalization and defined its role and functions vis-a-vis Turkish-Azerbaijani falsifications.

In his closing words, Rev. Dr. Haidostian specified that currently the humanities majors are not on the list of the top 25 majors to which students aspire, and that cybersecurity, software engineering and the like have replaced the conventional majors. Haidostian called on Armenian Studies to further evolve towards multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary modes to benefit from various scientific advancements and thanked and congratulated all those who contributed to the birth of the 41<sup>st</sup> volume.

Haidostian concluded that that, like its precedents, the launching of the current volume, is a festive event for the Haigazian community. The event can be watched on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/VIHCEWUBHc4>.



Tekeyan Cultural Association

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# Books

## Armenian-American Federal Judge Sam Der-Yeghiayan Publishes Memoirs

*Honored by Armenia’s Consulate of Chicago*

By Haykaram Nahapetyan  
*Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent*

CHICAGO – “Armenians are an ancient people tracing their roots to 2700 B.C.”: this is how the autobiographical book called *Throw it in the Sea* by Samuel Der-Yeghiayan, which came out earlier this year, begins. The highly successful American federal judge dedicated the beginning part of the biography to highlighting his ethnic roots, the history of the Armenian people, the Genocide of 1915 and the story of the survival of his ancestors. “Son, do good and throw it in the sea,” Lydia Der-Yeghiayan, the judge’s mother, used to say. Her precious advice became this book’s title.

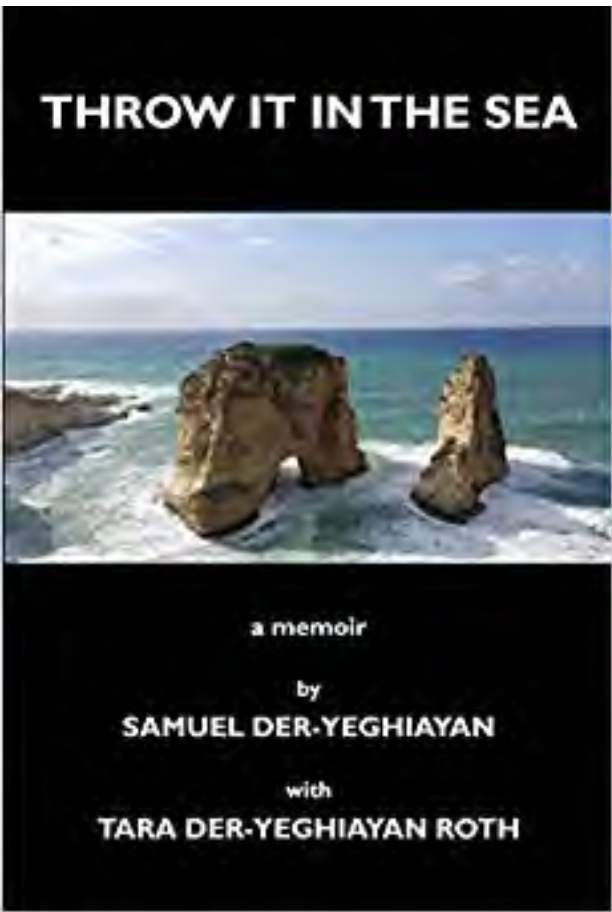
Born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1952, Samuel Der-Yeghiayan



grew up in Beirut and migrated to the US in 1971. After completing his B.A. and M.A. degrees in American schools, Yeghiayan became a clerk for a judge in New Hampshire and served in various capacities with the Justice Department’s Chicago District. In 2003, the US Senate unanimously confirmed Der-Yeghiayan as Federal Judge for Northern Illinois.

In partnership with the Armenian Bar Association, the Armenian Consulate to Chicago honored Yeghiayan’s service at an event organized at Chicago’s Union League Club.

Prof. Alice Kelikian was the event’s moderator, while Judge Amy St. Eve, the Vice-Chair of the Armenian Bar Association Raffi Semerjian, and the Very Rev. Aren Jebajian of the local Armenian church delivered remarks. Oscar Tatosian, the honorary



counsel of Armenia in Chicago, referred to an expression he had heard from Judge Der-Yeghiayan at another event: “I cannot judge without faith.” Coming from a family of clergy (which explains the prefix Der of his surname), the Armenian-American judge consistently highlighted the important role of the Christian faith in his life and career.

Yeghiayan’s biography is available on Amazon.

The following video segment presents speeches by the invitees and the honorable Judge Der-Yeghiayan himself.

## Karapents’ *The Book of Adam* Released in English

Watertown, MA – The Amaras Art Alliance announces the release in English of the popular and celebrated novel, *The Book of Adam* (Adami girke) by the prolific Armenian writer Hakob Karapents. The inaugural publication of the Amaras Press, a new venture of the Art Alliance, was launched on the organization’s 30th anniversary (2020).

This is the second translation of *The Book of Adam*. The first translation in Farsi titled, *Ketabeh Adam* by Andranik Khechoumian, celebrated Iranian Armenian writer, playwright and translator, dedicated to the 95th anniversary of the birth of Hakob Karapents, was released in October 2020.

This English edition of the novel also dedicated to the late inventor, industrialist, humanitarian, philanthropist, and an old friend and patron of Karapents, Sarkis Acopian, and was translated from its original Armenian by Dr. Ara Ghazarians, curator of the Armenian Cultural Foundation of Arlington, MA. In paperback, the book includes an introduction, notes, a glossary and a bibliography of works by the author.

*The Book of Adam* is Karapents’ second novel, written in 1980 and completed in less than a year and almost a decade after his first novel, *The Daughter of Carthage* (1972). It has received rave reviews by several Diaspora Armenian writers and literary critiques. It is the winner of the Armenian General Benevolent Union’s (AGBU) Alex Manoogian Literary Award and French-Armenian Writers Society’s Eliz Kavookjian-Ayvazian Literary Award. The second edition of the novel was released in Armenia in 2012. The novel has also been twice adapted for the stage, once in Tehran (2005) in honor of Karapents’ 80th birth anniversary under the direction of Seto Gojamanian, titled “Where Are We to Be Buried” and then in Los Angeles (2017) by Armen Sarvar titled “Yes, Adam Nourian.”

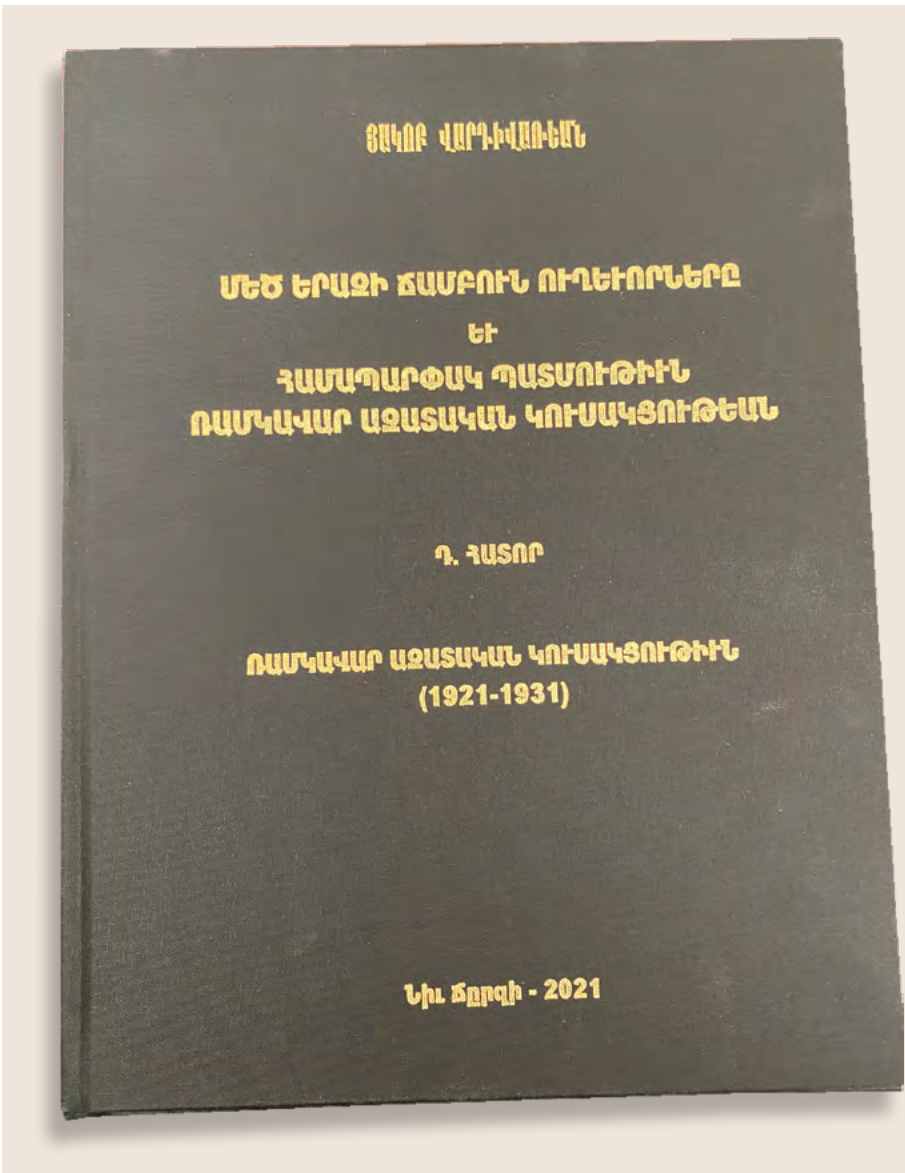
*The Book of Adam* is constructed on three

levels: the state of the American social order in the final decades (1980s) of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the current crisis of the Diaspora Armenian; and the crisis of man finding himself at the end of the twentieth century. The characters and plot serve as the means of linking this triad of knots together and reaching a certain truth. “Aside from flash-

back,” as observed by the late editor, writer and translator Aris Sevag, “the book is written to understand life by the return trip and to live life by the road ahead, the metaphysical with the real, sometimes relying on non-existent realities which are more powerful than the real; therefore, from tie to tie, there surfaces a dry journalistic style

to produce a clash between tangible and intangible realities. From this standpoint, the Book of Adam enters the self-contained current of contemporary American literature, which is a sad and nondescript visit to solitary persons and solitary communities.”

Copies of the book are available for purchase by visiting [amarasonline.com](http://amarasonline.com), the Armenian Prelacy Bookstore in New York and Abril Bookstore in Los Angeles.



## Hot off the Press

*The [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party (1921-1931)*  
*Vol. IV of Travelers on the Path of the Great Dream and a Comprehensive History of the [Armenian] Democratic Liberal Party*

By Hagop Vartivarian

An Armenian-language 425-page hardcover volume.

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





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# The Interconnecting Pathways of Life

By Ann (Gina) Hablanian

WATERTOWN – Recently I was informed that my painting titled “The Artist in His Garden” of Sam Barber, a known Cape Cod American Impressionist, was accepted by the newly renovated Dorothy and

his new-to-be published art book will clarify his pathway. The Mosesian Center, where this painting is to be exhibited, was funded by an Armenian Genocide survivor and his daughters, Elaine Mosesian and Charleen Onanian. Charles Mosesian established the Euphrates Bakery in Watertown, which for



“The Artist in His Garden,” by Ann Hablanian, oil on canvas, 23 by 20”

Charles Mosesian Center for the Arts for a members’ exhibition from November 17 through January 28, 2022.

Before the pandemic, I had sought out Sam Barber in my desire to re-enter the art world and explore the Cape Cod art scene. I had heard much about him from my former neighbor, painter Eleanor Ferri Jones. While accompanying her to art events, she also introduced me to the Cape Cod Fine Arts Museum in Dennis, a gem of a museum. Two of my paintings have since been shown there. About a year ago I accidentally encountered a third one exhibited among the museum’s favorite portraits.

When I wrote to Sam he graciously accepted to see me and to introduce me in a few short lessons to the basics of Impressionist painting. I shall always be grateful for his encouragement. He showed me also his garden, which he and his wife Janie tend with such loving care. My first Impressionist-style painting above of the artist in his garden is the result.

Suddenly it occurred to me that there is a three-way connection here — a common trauma that links most refugees to each other. For the majority of Armenians, the main reason, directly or indirectly, that any of us are in the United States has a basis in the Armenian Genocide of 1915. For me the following tragedy of Stalin’s purges and World War II upheavals is the more recent overlaying one.

For Sam, who is part Armenian, perhaps

many years was one of a kind. The art center was his and his daughters’ way to give back to the town that had contributed to their survival and prosperity. It struck me how interconnected all our life pathways are.

## CALENDAR

### OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

#### MASSACHUSETTS

**NOVEMBER 7 — BARBARA + 2: A Tribute to the Legacy and Talent of Playwright Barbara Bejoian through a Staged Reading of 2 of Her Award-Winning Plays, “The Porch” and “Dance, Mama, Dance.”** 2-5 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington, MA. Co-sponsored by ACF and the Armenian International Women’s Association. \$15 (in advance); \$20, \$5 (students). Reservations: [www.aiwainternational.org](http://www.aiwainternational.org), [info@aiwainternational.org](mailto:info@aiwainternational.org), 617-926-0171.

**NOVEMBER 13 — ANNUAL ARMENIAN FOOD FESTIVAL & BAZAAR** at the Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Rd., (Rt. 125) Haverhill. Free Admission. Saturday, November 13, 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m., Delicious Armenian Food, Losh, Kheyma, Lamb Kebab, Chicken Kebab, Pastry Table, Choreg, Paklava, Khadayif-nuts & cream| Armenian, Kata (Nazoog), Gift Baskets & Cash Raffles, Winner need not be present. Country store selling Armenian Delicacies, Tourshi, Tel Banir (string cheese). Specialty Vendors will be there, Credit cards accepted, Online Ordering Available, Until November 6. [www.HyePointeArmenianChurch.org](http://www.HyePointeArmenianChurch.org) 978 – 372 – 9227

**NOVEMBER 14 — GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION**, Sunday, 2 p.m. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Meet & Greet. Enjoy the Boston Children’s Chorus singing an Armenian Folk Song. Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon Giving Thanks on the Wishing Tree.

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

**DECEMBER 19 — CANDLELIT VIRTUAL LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY**, 4.30 p.m. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Wish on The Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate. Individually-wrapped cookies. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeirtagePark.org)

#### NEW JERSEY

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


#### RHODE ISLAND

**Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence** continues programming the Armenian Cultural Hour programs, every Friday at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>


**NOVEMBER 12 - The Land of the Armenian Kings /Ani, Kars, Edesia, Musal-er/, Documentary in English**

**NOVEMBER 19 - Konstantin Petrossian’s creative evening in Armenia**

**NOVEMBER 26 – Armenian Spiritual Music**



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*on the 100th anniversary of his birth*



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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

A CONVERSATION WITH...

# Eileen Khatchadourian

## Meet the Armenian Björk

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN / PHNOM PENH (Cambodia) — Eileen Khatchadourian Terzian-Sörmark is an award-winning performer and composer who was born in Beirut in 1978 to an Armenian-Lebanese family of musicians. She has performed in Beirut, Istanbul, Berlin, Moscow, Dubai, Yerevan, San Gabriel, California and London. She has been called “The powerful voice of the Diaspora” by Agos newspaper for her unique and bold interpretation of Armenian folk songs and her charismatic and emotionally charged presence on stage.

Her musical career is an ever-evolving mosaic of folk, jazz, rock and electronica.

In 2018, she was called “the Armenian Björk” in Berlin for her audacious experimental compositions and her unique live performances.

Eileen has produced several albums, including “Midan,” which received the “Best Rock Album” at the Armenian Music Awards in Los Angeles in 2009, and “Tinternig” (Butterfly) in 2015, for which she was awarded Best Female Performer Of The Armenian Diaspora at the World Armenian Entertainment Awards. She is currently working on her third album, recording the first three songs at the Greenhouse studios in Reykjavik along with music producers Sandro Mussida and Francesco Fabris, as well as on a collaboration project with Berlin based producer Okydoky.

**Dear Eileen, many singers both in Armenia and Diaspora sing Armenian religious and folk songs. Your interpretations are quite new and fresh. Who makes your arrangements?**

My first album Midan was produced by the excellent



Beirut based music producer and friend Mazen Siblini. It has been 9 years now that I have worked with two other fantastic music producers (co-producers of “Tinternig”) — my second album and my upcoming third album) Sandro Mussida, who is a composer and cellist and electronic performer based in London, and Francesco Fabris, based in Reykjavik, who is a musician and composer and sound designer who keeps on researching electronic music. They understand exactly what I want and they always surprise me. Of course, the original melody starts with me and then Sandro scores it and does the arrangements and the three of us meet for the production, which includes the recording, mixing and mastering, all done by Francesco. Of course Sandro is present also and the three of us discuss it until we finish the song. Spending weeks in a studio and with these two wonderful human beings is one of the best things in life. We haven’t been able to meet for a long time now, due to the pandemic. I miss them so, so much.

**I assume young Armenians love your singing more than the old ones, who might object to your interpretations.**

I suppose open-minded people are found in all age groups. People who like my music are from age 10 to 90. But it is true that my music is not mainstream. I try to make music that expresses my own feelings and moods. Maybe I am not very mainstream myself!



**You always speak about your parents with tenderness. How have they influenced on your formation as a musician?**

At important family gatherings, with all the cousins and aunts and uncles, or even at friends’ gatherings, my father would lock himself up in the bathroom, put some charcoal on his moustache and under his eyes and put on an old black hat and come out imitating Charlie Chaplin, always with a stick and with a red rose that he would eventually offer to my mother and everybody just loved it! He was a natural entertainer and had a great sense of humor. He introduced me to classical music in all of its forms, from baroque to renaissance, etc. He played the piano, and drew very well. He was a well-read humanist, and very interested in Armenian linguistics and of course in love with everything Italian; he spent almost 20 years of his early life studying in Italy, eventually becoming an anesthesiologist.

If my father was the dreamer, my mother was the pragmatic realist and a very wise woman. My father was eccentric to a point that he would wear red tennis shoes with his black suit and attend funerals, while my mother was the very classy elegant lady, never leaving the house without her red lipstick on. My family was well anchored in the Armenian diaspora community in Beirut, and as a kid, I remember that it was hard to be accepted by the Lebanese Arabs. We had different traditions, spoke Armenian, and went to other schools. My mother kept the family together during the war (she stopped working when she had her second child: she used to work in Banca di Roma). She suffered a lot without letting us suffer, she raised three kids almost on her own because my father was often stuck at the hospital in West Beirut and we wouldn’t be able to hear from him for days ... until now I can’t imagine what my mother had been through. My father always told me, “music will save the world.” And when my mom became very sick, he used to put on a CD and listen to Pergolesi or Wagner, holding my mom’s hand.

My dad was Boghos Khatchadourian and my mom Anahid Terzian; they were the greatest parents. When I decided to be a performer — I was thirteen — my parents did not object to it. They let me follow my dream in Lebanon, Paris, or Abidjan or anywhere in the world. Although they are now gone, I feel their presence and their support in all I am doing. I hear their voice in every step I make. I miss them terribly. I miss my mother’s loud voice, I miss my father’s quiet and reassuring voice.

**The Lebanese Armenian community has been always active in the field of music. Whom do you consider to be your teachers in music?**

Gomidas and Sayat-Nova have been big inspirations to me, as to many other Armenian musicians. They were always on in my home. And of course, being a classical music lover, Aram Khachaturian has always been a reference. And I believe there is no Armenian Lebanese who has not been touched by Oror by Parsegh Ganatchian. But the biggest inspiration of all, was my fantastic piano teacher Sevan Karjian Balabanian, who made me love the piano.

**In 2015 you performed at the Istanbul Congress Center, as part of the “In Memoriam” Concert, for the 100 Years Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. This seemed something fantastic — the commemoration of Armenian Genocide in Turkey in a Turkish location. What are your memories from that concert?**

Oh My! One of my best experiences ever! But it was a bit scary, of course: I think I was the only performer that night, who openly talked about the Genocide on stage, in front of this Istanbul audience. It was an overwhelming feeling to perform in the land of my grandparents, who, when they were just kids, were forced to leave the country and barely survived the Genocide. To be there on stage and perform was tremendous also because it was a huge recognition of my people’s sufferings, although not official of course, but still a recognition from fellow artists and from the audience, it made me feel so great.

We performed an electro rock version of Der Voghormia looking into the eyes of the Armenian apostolic priest, and got a standing ovation from the 3,000 people there was a very moving moment. Sadly enough, Osman Kavala, who had organized this event to promote understanding and solidarity among different ethnic and religious communities in Turkey, is now one among many other political prisoners in Turkey. I am not sure this type of event would be tolerated in Turkey today.

**In that concert you said you are happy to be in a country from which your ancestors come. Where are they from?**

My grandfather on my father’s side, Aaron Khatchadourian, was from Kharpert. He was seven years old, when an Armenian Catholic priest saved him in the desert of Der Zor, where his mom died in front of his eyes. He was eventually sent to the Mekhitariste Congregation Boarding School in Sèvres, France. A couple of years later, he was sent to the Moorat Rafaelian College in Venice. He continued his studies in Rome and became a pediatrician. He met my grandmother Aroussiak in Rome, where she was studying piano at the Rome conservatory. They then moved to Aleppo, because my grandfather wanted to be near the Armenian people. He was known to treat poor people for free. He was also an active member of the AGBU of Aleppo.

My mother’s father, Baghdassar Terzian, was from Adana. After the Genocide, he ended up with his younger brother in the Ratisbonne orphanage in Jerusalem and both later moved to Beirut, where he met my grandmother Perouz, also originally from Adana. Baghdassar took care of his little brother and they remained very, very close to each other until the end of their lives. The Terzian family is very close to each other, they taught us to love and respect each other. Other surviving brothers ended up in Argentina, in France and in Armenia.

**What about your concert in Armenia?**

I had a mini acoustic concert with Raffi Vartanian, a fantastic American-Armenian musician and friend, in Armenia in 2012, which was a cute experience. I never had the pleasure to have a proper concert in Armenia.

**Now you live in Cambodia. How did you end up there?**

My Swedish husband, Staffan Sörmark, works for an international organization and he was posted there. That’s why we moved to Cambodia. Now that I have lost my both parents shortly after moving to Cambodia I’d rather not talk about this difficult time. But on the whole, Cambodia has been good to me. I have had the opportunity to meet fantastic people and make amazing friends, whom I will miss dearly when I move to Colombia later this year.

**Do you continue your musical activities there? Armenian songs should seem very exotic for Cambodians and their songs – to us.**

The Covid pandemic hit not long after we arrived to Cambodia and with all movement restrictions it has unfortunately not been easy to organize musical activities. I did an acoustic recording with adorable pianist Meta Legita for a fundraising campaign for Lebanon, it was a beautiful moment of musical sharing. And I launched my EP “Lullaby for Kami” while here.

**Cambodia is one of few countries with no Armenians. However, have you ever met any Armenian there?**

You can count the number of Armenians in Cambodia on one hand. But yes, I made a beautiful Armenian friend from Armenia/Russia here, her name is Svetlana Sahakyan and I just met another Armenian friend from France, Anaid Panossian, and we could have created a New Armenia, but now I am soon leaving so it will be up to them!





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Photo courtesy of David Vartanian

## Celebrate a Vintage Press Thanksgiving

VISALIA, Calif. — Every year, Chef/Owner David Vartanian and his staff prepare an extraordinary Thanksgiving Dinner at the Vintage Press Restaurant in Visalia. The Vintage Press (<https://thevintagepress.com/>) is one of Central California's most prestigious dining destinations. Since 1966, the Vartanian family has welcomed local residents, visitors and dignitaries alike on special occasions and for holiday celebrations. "From the beginning, we have endeavored to offer a classic dining experience balanced by genuine charm and civic purpose. As the founder of several cultural events in Visalia, we savor our role in the community. And as the venue for many exceptional moments and celebrations, we cherish the ability to make every occasion memorable for our guests," says David. (<https://www.tota.world/article/3473/>)

As summer fades, the restaurant's staff looks toward the bounty of the autumn harvest to showcase a new season of flavor. With four unique and distinct dining rooms and curated menus that reflect the season, David and his family invite you to experience a Vintage Press Thanksgiving.

*Wine Spectator* writes The Vintage Press has "one of the best wine lists in the world," while Fodor's raves it is "the best restaurant in the Central Valley," and the Los Angeles Times applauds it as "a bastion of culinary merit."

The Vintage Press has received noteworthy accolades and honors throughout its history – David was voted one of the Best Chefs in America (<https://www.bestchefsamerica.com/david-vartanian>). And David's Whole Baby Pumpkin recipe, a holiday favorite, is featured at the American Pistachio Growers' website: <https://americanpistachios.org/recipes-and-snacking/recipes/roasted-whole-baby-pumpkins>

"The Thanksgiving season is a festive time," says David. "Many of our friends and family return each year to enjoy Thanksgiving Dinner with us, and they always have a wonderful time. While some first-time cooks at home may worry about cooking their own turkey, it's really not that hard," he adds. "If you're a novice in the kitchen, stick to the essentials: turkey, dressing, a fresh cranberry sauce, potatoes or rice, gravy and a vegetable of some kind. The key to not overcooking your turkey is always using a meat thermometer to check the temperature. And, avoid the turkeys that come at a bargain price. If you can, always buy a fresh turkey. A good turkey will make all the difference for your next holiday meal," he adds.

Here are two of David's favorite holiday recipes:

### Sausage and Apple Dressing

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 2 cups chicken or turkey stock
- 12 cups sourdough bread croutons, toasted
- 2 cups diced yellow onions
- 1 cup diced fennel

- 2 cups diced celery
- 2 cups fresh Granny Smith apples, diced
- 6 ounces cooked sausage
- 2 teaspoons coarse salt
- 1/2 tablespoon fresh cracked pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped sage
- 1 cup roasted pistachios

#### PREPARATION:

Melt the butter in a heavy pan, add the onions, celery and fennel. Sauté for 5 to 6 minutes over medium heat. Add the sausage with its juices, apples, croutons, and mix well. Season the mixture with salt, pepper and sage. Add the pistachios and stock, and continue cooking for 8 to 10 minutes.

If you are going to stuff your turkey, completely refrigerate the mixture at this point before stuffing. If you are not going to stuff the turkey, place a lid on the dressing and place in a 325 degree oven and bake for 40 minutes, then serve.

Makes about 10 cups.

### Traditional Roast Turkey with Giblet Gravy

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 14-to-16-pound turkey
- Coarse salt
- Fresh ground pepper
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1/2 fennel bulb, sliced
- 1 cup celery, sliced
- 6 sprigs fresh sage
- 1/2 cup melted butter, more to taste

#### Turkey stock:

- Turkey neck and giblets
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup celery, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 quart water

#### PREPARATION:

In a medium sauce pan, combine the neck and giblets, onion, celery, carrot and water. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Simmer for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Strain stock.

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Rub the turkey with salt and pepper. Season all cavities and under the skin. Fill the cavities of the bird with the onion, fennel, celery and sage. Place the turkey in a large roasting pan and brush with melted butter. Cover the pan with foil. Roast the turkey for 3 to 4 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees.

Baste the turkey regularly during the roasting process. Roast the turkey uncovered during the last 45 minutes. When the thigh is pierced with a fork, the juices should run clear. When the turkey is completely done, transfer it to a carving board and let it rest for 15-20 minutes.

Make a roux by combining 3 tablespoons flour with 3 tablespoons melted butter. Pour the turkey juices into a bowl and skim off the fat. In a saucepan, combine the turkey stock with the pan drippings and bring to a boil. Thicken the gravy with the roux and season with salt and pepper. Slice the turkey and serve with all the trimmings.

Serves 12 to 14.

From: <https://www.texarkanagazette.com/news/features/story/2014/nov/26/creative-recipes-ide-liven-your-holiday-meal/327752/>

Tempting desserts are a Vintage Press specialty.

**PRE-ORDER YOUR VINTAGE PRESS THANKSGIVING DINNER:** For the holiday, plan to enjoy a 4-course prix fixe menu featuring fresh, all-natural roasted Diestel turkey and a host of traditional trimmings plus many Thanksgiving favorites a la carte; boxed to-go or enjoyed inside. Call for information and reservations.

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<http://www.thevintagepress.com/>  
Open for lunch, dinner, and Sunday Brunch  
<https://www.facebook.com/tvpvisalia>  
<https://www.instagram.com/vintagepressvisalia/>

\*The Vintage Press Restaurant has received accolades from the nation's restaurant and wine enthusiasts, and is credited for featuring one of the best restaurant wine lists in the world. In addition to The Vintage Press Restaurant and Catering, David co-owns Jack and Charlie's, The Southern Pacific Depot, and Le Boulevard Coffee Market — all located in Visalia.

For David's recipes featured in *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator* newspaper, see: <https://mirrorspectator.com/?s=david+vartanian>

#### References:

- <https://thevintagepress.com/the-wine-cellar.html>
- <https://www.bestchefsamerica.com/david-vartanian>



# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

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## COMMENTARY

# EDITORIAL

## Erdogan's Vision of Omnipotence on Collision Course with the West



By Edmond Y. Azadian

Since the beginning of the Cold War, Turkey has been the beneficiary of the East-West confrontation. The oft-used phrase that Turkey was a bulwark of democracy against Soviet expansionism is a euphemism for the actual mission that Ankara had been tasked to perform; that is, to do the dirty work that the West would not want to do openly, from the Korean War, all the way to the Arab Spring.

In the meantime, Ankara built up its military force and developed its economy to the point that today it can challenge its erstwhile benefactors.

The largesse of the US, particularly, towards Turkey, has been phenomenal. But today, Turkey is on a collision course with the US on the issue of values and politics.

For Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist AK Party (AKP), religion is a potent component for control and governance of the fanatical masses. Weaponized religion is equally effective in both domestic politics and foreign adventures for Erdogan.

Since the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, Erdogan has jailed hundreds of thousands of judges, military personnel and intellectuals, who have divergent views on Turkey's future, to consolidate his power internally while externally playing the role of the champion of the Islamic world, rallying support from respective nations.

Therefore, yesterday's bulwark of democracy has become today's spring of despotism, precipitating a confrontation with the value systems of the Western nations, which had believed that modern Turkey would become part and parcel of the Western democracies.

The confrontation between Turkey and the West has been simmering for a long time and the recent crisis over 10 ambassadors seeking the release of philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala from jail laid bare the deep deterioration of relations.

Like Hrant Dink, Osman Kavala has a vision for a progressive Turkey, one at odds with Erdogan's medieval philosophy of governing a country.

"What has taxed Mr. Kavala and his friends the most in the 29 months since his incarceration is the question of why he has been singled out so harshly. The answer may be simply everything he stands for," wrote Carlotta Gall in the New York Times back in April 2020, while Steve A. Cook adds in an article recently published by the Council of Foreign Relations, "Kavala himself is no threat to Erdogan, but he does represent a vision of Turkey that threatens Erdogan's long-term effort to force a country in the image of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP)."

In the politicized justice system of Turkey, Osman Kavala has been pushed around from one court to another with absence of evidence, on charges jumping from terrorism, to Gulenism and Sorosism.

In fact, he is a benefactor who founded the Anadolu Kultur Foundation to study and value the many cultures of Turkey's minorities, which have inhabited Anatolia for over a millennia.

Kavala's drive contradicts the narrative that the Turkish government and historians have been feeding Turkey's population that the Turks have inhabited the region since time immemorial and that no other ethnic group is indigenous to Anatolia.

With Kavala's incarceration, Turkey was sliding down into a dark alley, when 10 ambassadors accredited in Ankara, appealed to Erdogan's government to end the charade and to release Kavala, whose case has already become an international cause celebre.

Those ambassadors represented the United States, France, Germany, Canada, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The angered President Erdogan, who ordered Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to begin proceedings to expel all 10 from Turkey as personae non grata.

Referring to the envoys' calls for Kavala's release, Cavusoglu said, "This statement was unacceptable. It included instructions

to the [Turkish] judiciary. I told my friends to make them [ambassadors] know their place."

This diplomatic row could have escalated further and damaged Turkey's relations with its allies, but a solution was found out of the impasse, ironically, not by the Turkish government, whose economic interests were at stake, but by the ambassadors themselves.

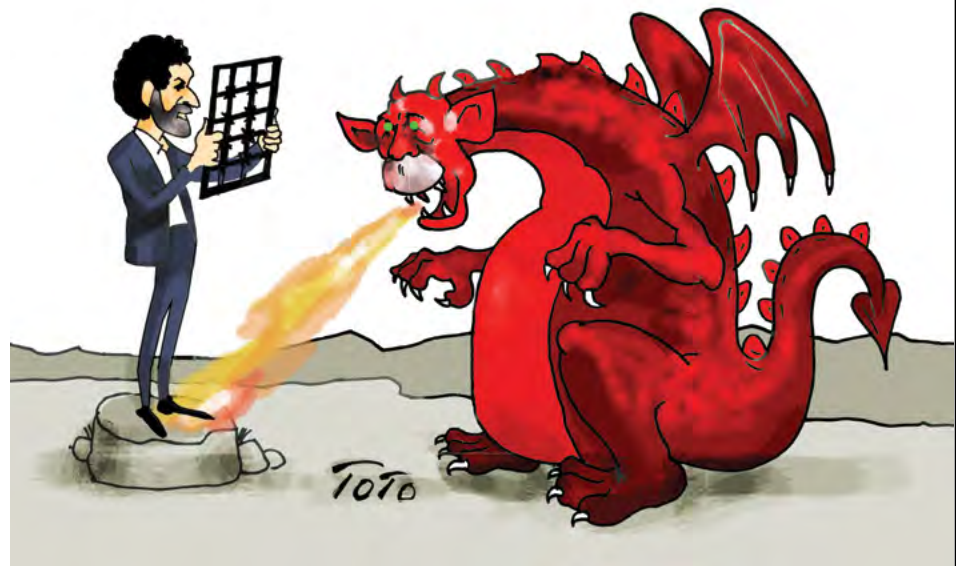
The US ambassador extended a legal olive branch, in the shape of a statement which called for non-interference into Turkey's internal affairs based on a UN convention.

This was a victory for President Erdogan, who exclaimed, when answering a journalist's question: "How did I take a step back? I am on the offensive. There is no backing down in my book."

Mr. Erdogan may brag about his "offensive," which cannot go too far, because the next hurdle facing it is the ruling European Convention on Human Rights, which has determined that "the prolonged pretrial detention of Kavala was in violation of the convention's rules" and it has ordered Kavala to be released by the end of November, otherwise Turkey may face expulsion from the convention.

That may not bother the defiant Erdogan too much, but Turkey's population will further slide into the dark ages.

Turkey violates all of the rules of the European Union, and still clamors to join that union.



However, the ambassadors' crisis is only the tip of the iceberg in the problems pitting Turkey against the West.

Last September, when President Erdogan was attending the UN General Assembly in New York, he was shunned by President Biden. It is on the record that there is no love lost between the two. Before his election as president, Mr. Biden had characterized Erdogan as a despot, and voiced support for his political opposition.

In his turn, Mr. Erdogan had publicly complained that relations were more sour with the Biden administration, when he enjoyed a carte blanche from the Trump administration.

Despite all these misgivings, President Biden met with President Erdogan in Rome this week for 70 minutes, on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit. It was a closed session, which allowed each party to present the outcome the way they chose. The Turkish side claimed that it was positive and constructive but reviewing all the agenda items, one can surmise that the meeting was anything but "positive."

Thus, after paying some lip service to Turkey's partnership in NATO, the US side expressed its displeasure over the purchase of S-400 Russian missiles.

They also covered all the hot spots and there is no indication that any agreements were reached. Syria was on the agenda, and Erdogan has complained about US support for Kurdish forces fighting ISIS.

Other thorny issues included the election in Libya, Turkey's aggressive posture in the Eastern Mediterranean, Afghanistan and the turmoil in the South Caucasus. This last is the region where Ankara is in cahoots with Russia to keep the US and the

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COMMENTARY



# The More Things Change in Armenia, The More They Stay The Same

by Harut Sassounian

The title is derived from a French expression which I have used to describe the situation in Armenia.

After 30 years of independence, one would expect substantial changes in the conditions in Armenia. Regrettably, that is not the case.

In the initial years of independence, whenever someone would point out the flaws in the leaders’ decisions, they would respond: “We are still a young republic.” They continued giving the same excuse without having the slightest interest in listening to any advice and wanting to make any changes. Three decades later, Armenia is no longer a young republic, but the same mistakes are being repeated by Armenia’s current leaders.

In 2018, a neophyte with no experience in governing came to power as a backlash against the despised former leaders. The new prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, cleverly capitalized on the public’s resentment of the previous presidents and gained the people’s trust by making numerous promises for a better future. Armenians everywhere, desperate for a change, believed what they were told and blindly followed the new “savior.”

Regrettably, in the last 3.5 years, nothing substantial has changed in the country. In fact, the situation has gone from bad to worse, culminating in the devastating defeat Armenia suffered during last year’s war. The lavish promises offered by the new leader did not materialize. Pashinyan, the self-described democrat, shockingly campaigned during the June 20 parliamentary elections, while holding a hammer in his hand, pledging to smash the heads of his political opponents. Even though he came to power as the man of the people, he quickly turned his government into a one-man rule, ignoring not only the public, but also the advice of his own cabinet members, resulting in the resignations of two successive foreign ministers.

Not surprisingly, Pashinyan also mishandled Armenia’s relations with the Diaspora. He began by closing down the Diaspora Ministry without consulting with any Diasporan leaders or organizations. When some of them cautioned him not to make such a misguided decision, they were completely ignored.

Pashinyan’s excuse was that the Diaspora Ministry had not been effective. Instead of shutting it down, wouldn’t it have been preferable to restructure it with better leadership? With the same faulty logic, he could also eliminate the Defense Ministry if he thought that it was not operating properly!

After disbanding the Diaspora Ministry, the prime minister appointed Zareh Sinanyan, one of his devotees from Glendale, California, as the “High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs.” In the 2.5 years since becoming “High Commissioner,” Sinanyan does not have much to show for his efforts. He has repeatedly engaged in partisan politics, disparaging the regime’s critics in the Diaspora, which is not his job. Incredibly, he suggested that Armenia attract Arab migrants to boost the country’s dwindling population, forgetting that immigra-

tion is not a part of his duties. His job is to improve relations with Diasporan Armenians, not other nationalities.

On October 21, Sinanyan announced the government’s new plan to appoint “Diaspora Commissioners” in various Armenian communities around the world. These commissioners are to be appointed by PM Pashinyan at the recommendation of Sinanyan. Their purpose “is to develop the Armenia-Diaspora partnership and increase the efficiency of both sides. It also seeks to ensure sustainable relations between the Armenian communities, involve the entire potential of the Diaspora, as well as support the preservation of the Armenian identity, repatriation and the organization of events aimed at the integration of Diaspora Armenians in Armenia.”

This is the modified version of an idea copied from the former Diaspora Ministry which had appointed a Board of Directors to represent the ministry in various countries. I served on that board for 10 years. In addition, the Diaspora Ministry in conjunction with the Foreign Ministry appointed staff in Armenian Embassies and Consulates to serve as a liaison between the government of Armenia and the local communities.

It remains to be seen whom Pashinyan and Sinanyan will appoint as their representatives in Diasporan communities. But given the blatant partisan politics of the current government, no one should be surprised if they appoint their own unqualified supporters whose real task would be to engage in pro-regime propaganda.

Interestingly, it was reported that Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had objected to seeking the approval of foreign governments before appointing local commissioners. He pointed out correctly that such approvals are only needed to appoint diplomats, such as ambassadors, in foreign countries. Therefore, the plan was amended eliminating the need for such approvals. Nevertheless, Sinanyan surprisingly announced that the National Assembly had to adopt a law before appointing local Diasporan Commissioners. It is unclear why the government has to pass such a law. These individuals are to serve in an advisory capacity with no official powers and without pay.

Given the serious split among Armenians both in Armenia and the Diaspora, no matter whom the government appoints he or she will be criticized for belonging to this or that organization, church or political party. There will be endless complaints about these appointees.

There was no need to reinvent the wheel. The proper way to select a Diaspora representative is to have each Diasporan community elect its own representative by popular vote. Only then can it be said that the elected individual is the true representative of his or her community. No one, including the government of Armenia, has the right to appoint such a representative. Ironically, the prime minister and Sinanyan were personally informed of this formula and chose to ignore it. The representatives elected by their communities will then constitute the future Diaspora Armenian Parliament.

Once again, the Pashinyan government is making decisions without consulting with anyone. It is time for the government to consult with the people in Armenia on internal matters and with elected Diasporan representatives on pan-Armenian issues.

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West out. Russia and Turkey have been promoting the 3+3 format for the resolution of the conflict in the Caucasus, to negate the role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Turkey’s foreign policy follows a pattern to relegate all unsolvable issues to a joint committee, through which Ankara hopes to wear down its interlocutors. We should all remember that the same joint committee idea was offered to Armenia to tackle the Genocide issue. The fact that Presidents Erdogan and Biden have concluded their meeting, leaving the problems to a joint committee, means a whole host of unresolved issues remain between the two sides.

Another issue is that of armaments and military planes. After Turkey was ousted from the F-35 fighter jet program, Erdogan pinned his hopes on purchasing 40 F-16 fighter planes with another 80 repair kits. The Turkish side came out of the meeting optimistically while President Biden insisted that the program has to go through the congressional process, where it has many opponents.

Parallel with the Biden-Erdogan meeting, some background voices amplified the divide and warned of more troubled days ahead.

One is the posturing of Washington’s new Ambassador to Turkey, Jeff Flake, and the other is Erdogan’s domestic opponent, Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

During the Senate hearings, Flake warned Turkey and Erdogan, stating, “Any purchase of additional Russian weapons will result in additional sanctions. We will hold Turkey responsible.”

He has also used some pointed terms like the “Erdogan regime,” “oppression,” “democratic backsliding.”

“Our relations with Turkey are facing deep challenges,” he said.

Alarmed, Mr. Kilicdaroglu responded to the new ambassador’s statements: “Did they say ‘Bring Turkey in line again, and turn it into Syria? Did they say ‘Stop Turkey, and if you cannot stop it, suffocate it through terrorism?’ So Mr. Flake, is the coup process, which Biden refers to by saying ‘we will back the opposition and oust Erdogan’ be launched by you?”

Mr. Erdogan’s bullying may intimidate his opponents at home but on the global scene, may generate the adverse impact.

# How Combat Drones Ended a Decades-Long War in 44 Days

By Thomas Mutch

“Don’t worry if you hear an explosion,” our Armenian guide tells us as we creep along the bombed-out streets of Martuni. “By the time you hear it, it has already missed you. You should only really worry if you hear the hum of a drone. Which you will,” he adds with a dry grin. This small town is less than two miles from the front line of a bloody battle between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the long-disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh — an area about the size of Delaware that’s entirely within Azerbaijan and largely inhabited by ethnic Armenians.

The conflict dates back to 1988, flaring up with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But now, in little more than a month, two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) sent up by the Azeris — the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and the Israeli-made Harop — have wiped out the Armenian defensive advantage and laid waste to billions of dollars of military hardware. The Bayraktar, often armed with laser-guided MAM warheads, strikes its targets in the same way a U.S. Predator would hit a terrorist camp in Afghanistan or Somalia. The Harop, by contrast, dives at its target like a kamikaze, exploding on impact.

A few minutes later, our guide takes a call and starts to look worried. “We’ve got reports of incoming drones,” he says, and points our convoy of journalists toward the nearest bomb shelter, which is a cellar repurposed for the town’s garrison of troops. Drone swarms have been targeting similar towns and military positions close to the front lines to soften up Armenian defenses before Azeri infantry and armor can charge their positions. It’s the modern version of the artillery barrage that preceded the storming of trenches in World War I.

To fortify their position in recent years, the Armenians purchased expensive anti-aircraft early warning systems from Russia. But in this war, those tools proved notoriously unreliable in detecting Azerbaijan’s lethal fleet of combat UAVs, which were much smaller and nimbler than the fighter jets the Russian systems were designed to help stop.

Our guide signals for us to stop and keep quiet; then he points to his ears and motions above. We hear a faint noise in the sky, a high-pitched whine that sounds like someone revving a dirt bike, followed by a series of much closer explosions. In the safety of the cellar, a dozen or so Armenian soldiers sit around smoking, sleeping, and playing cards as the shelling continues outside.

After 20 minutes we get the all-clear and dash back to the press van, hoping to outrun the next wave of drones. The wreckage around us is grimly familiar to my colleagues, most of whom are veteran reporters who worked wars in Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. Townhouses have been blown to pieces; telephone lines and bricks are scattered over footpaths. The streets are pockmarked from explosions

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# ATP Expands Work in Artsakh to Provide Villagers with Social And Economic Rehabilitation Programs

WOBURN, Mass. — The Armenia Tree Project (ATP) has developed a social and economic rehabilitation program for villagers from the hard-hit areas of Martuni and Askeran in Artsakh.

As a result of the war, some families lost access to arable farmland. Today, much of Artsakh's food is imported from Armenia and is expensive. To address these problems, ATP will construct small greenhouses (30 square meters) in the backyards of 50 families in the coming months. Additionally, it will establish a nursery in Stepanakert.

Fifty families in Artsakh will receive tools, training, and vegetable seeds to grow food they can consume or sell as necessary through the greenhouse project. ATP's partner, Green Lane NGO, will assist in training beneficiaries in greenhouse management, producing high value crops, and preparing produce for sale.

Residents and newly resettled villagers in places such as Herher, Taghvard, Karmir Shuka, Chartar and Askeran suffered immense losses during the war. This program will provide some economic stability and, most importantly, hope for their future. Additionally, each family will receive



Some members of ATF staff in Artsakh

fruit trees from ATP along with instructions on how to care for the seedlings.

In addition to Green Lane NGO, ATP has benefited from partnership with students at the American University of Armenia and Worcester Polytechnic Institute who collab-

orated with ATP last semester to design a small, sturdy greenhouse which can easily be constructed and maintained using locally available, affordable materials.

In addition to the greenhouse program, ATP is establishing a nursery in Stepanakert; an important project that expands ATP's Community Tree Planting program in Artsakh.

The nursery will produce 20-30 thousand seedlings each year, helping restore the post-war effect on Artsakh's wildlife and nature, and providing fruit trees to local residents. ATP will hire Artsakh residents and train them to become specialists in maintaining the nursery. Additionally, ATP will build a much-needed irrigation system and help provide fresh water.

Since 1994, ATP has been using trees to improve the standard of living in Armenia, focusing on aiding those with the fewest resources. This important project continues ATP's mission, and it is our duty to continue helping our brothers and sisters in Artsakh.

To donate, visit [www.ArmeniaTreeProject.org/en/donation](http://www.ArmeniaTreeProject.org/en/donation) and note 'Artsakh Projects' in the Comment Box.

## How Combat Drones Ended a Decades-Long War in 44 Days

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large and small. The red brick art deco town hall, an impressively imposing and beautiful structure for a town of just a few thousand people, is covered in shrapnel scars, its windows blown out. The square outside is littered with broken glass. The only sound, aside from the whirring in the air, is the endless barking of stray dogs fighting over garbage scraps from the soldiers.

But as we start driving back to the Armenian-controlled regional capital city of Stepanakert, the explosions in the background grow closer. We begin to see dust and smoke coming from nearby streets. Just after we clear the outskirts of the town, an explosion rocks the van. A massive plume of white smoke rises 40 meters to our left. It's exactly what our minder had been so worried about. We've been spotted, and now we're being targeted.

Our driver yells and hits the gas, swerving around potholes over the narrow road at what feels like 90 miles an hour. About a minute later, three smaller strikes explode on a small hill that we'd been driving toward. When we all arrive back to the relative safety of our hotel bunker, we feel shell-shocked and, frankly, a little exhilarated. But we know we were lucky.

Journalists are prohibited targets under international laws of war. Some of our group thought the Azeris' targeting system had failed. Others suspected that this was a warning shot to scare reporters off from the fighting. But just weeks before, several journalists, including several from the French newspaper *Le Monde*, had been gravely injured in a rocket attack in the same town where we were targeted. Avetis Haryutyunyan, a journalist with Armenia TV, was injured after being hit by shrapnel from a GRAD rocket close to where we'd been targeted. "I remember covering the 2016 April war when [the Azeris] barely hit near the targets," he told me. "This time they targeted us with pinpoint accuracy."

A young local officer who liked to visit the journalists in Stepanakert called this a "video game war." These troops were the first generation of fighters whose notions of warfare came not from patriotic war films but from *Call of Duty* or *Halo*. And the main killers of their fellow troops were not their enemies on the front lines, but rather the UAV controllers sitting in comfortable chairs on Turkish military bases.

After our harrowing ride, we sat around a Stepanakert bomb shelter taking shots of a local spirit, an extremely strong vodka-like liquor made from mulberries. Former Armenian colonel Arshak Haryryan recalled the first conflict over the region after the Soviet Union dissolved. "In the first war, we fought in the hills with AK47s and tanks we captured from the enemy... now it is all drones, drones, drones. They don't fight fair. Azerbaijan has a huge military budget, new technologies, and those horrible drones."

He showed me a photo of him and his rifle-wielding platoon, all crowded onto an armored personnel carrier from 1993 that had helped with the capture of the

strategic Nagorno-Karabakh town of Shushi. Now, he explained, anything like this would be quickly blown to bits.

For Armenia, there is a dour irony that its defeat in this war was built on Armenian victories in previous engagements. Azerbaijan had tested out many of its new drone tactics, albeit with less advanced equipment, in a brief "four-day war" in 2016, during which Armenia immediately repulsed the attacks. According to Jack Watling, a fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, the U.K.'s leading defense think tank, "They learned the wrong lessons from their victory in 2016. Drones may not make a huge difference in small tactical engagements, but used at scale, they can radically transform the battlefield."

The dispute over this bleak, beautiful mountain land is the most enduring conflict to emerge from the Soviet Union's collapse. More than 20,000 people died in fighting over the region in the early 1990s, and some 7,000 were killed in this recent war, which lasted just 44 days. Azerbaijan used its oil money to build the superior arsenal of modern military technology and was able to crush its underequipped opponent as a result. While the Azeris had been fighting a determined Armenian force on the front line, their drones had been able to roam the rear, causing extensive human and munitions losses. When the destruction of the Armenians' supply lines caught up to the losses on the front lines, the Armenian position collapsed. Once Azerbaijan had conquered the high ground above Stepanakert, the Armenian government was forced into a surrender.

Military strategists have long noted the potential of drones to revolutionize modern warfare in state-on-state warfare, and now we've finally seen it play out. If the U.S. or NATO were ever drawn into a war with Russia, China, or Iran, they would face similar capabilities. According to the Teal Group, an industry-leading aerospace analyst, worldwide procurement spending on drones will increase 30 percent over the next decade. The Pentagon has invested heavily in drone warfare, and this trend is expected to continue. Between 2018 and 2019, Department of Defense allocations for unmanned systems rose from \$7.5 billion to \$9.39 billion.

Not all details of the Armenian-Azeri conflict apply: Armenia's air defenses were almost entirely sourced from outdated Russian technology, optimized to face fast jets and helicopters. Typically, there is an imbalance between the cost of the air defense systems and the cost of the aircraft — it's a lot cheaper to shoot down a jet than to build a jet. But when it came to drones, their defense systems could not engage something that small and that maneuverable. "Azerbaijan has a military budget of only \$2 billion a year," says Watling. "The idea that you can make a campaign like that for so little cost is a genuine change. What we are witnessing is the democratization of the use of very sophisticated technology that allows one party to control the skies."

Yet analysts are still more concerned about a short-

fall in the United States' SHORAD (short-range air defense) capabilities than they are impressed by the offensive capabilities they possess. The Department of Defense has experimented with a variety of sci-fi-sounding technologies, such as concentrated laser beams and sonic guns, but its experts have yet to find a workable and reliable solution to SHORAD. Russia and China, meanwhile, have been taking their short-range air defense extremely seriously.

Still, Watling says, it is possible to blow the value of drones out of proportion. "There are ways of dealing with combat drones, and it has been proved in Syria. There are ways to stop these systems, and the best-equipped militaries are investing heavily in them." The Bayraktar TB2, for example, is fairly easy to defeat with modern electronic warfare tactics, he notes. "You can deny the link between the drone and the ground control station. You can also locate the ground control station, which can then be struck." Armenia simply lacked these capabilities.

Producing hardened electronics that can evade these advanced anti-drone defense systems are expensive and require robust command links and complicated support infrastructure. In a way, it is just another factor in the arms race.

And in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azeris' advantage in owning the skies extended only to the flat, open terrain in the south of Karabakh. They made much less progress in the heavily forested area north of the region. They also did not attempt to capture Stepanakert, the regional capital, as drones are much less effective against an adversary that is dug into a city and can hide in deep, well-concealed bomb shelters.

The terrain parallels with U.S. deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq are striking. When NATO was in Afghanistan, the uneasy balance between it and the Taliban was largely based on the terrain in which they fought. Overwhelming U.S. air power — increasingly from drones — kept the Taliban from approaching major population centers. But the Taliban retained strength in areas such as the valleys of Helmand or the Hindu Kush mountains near the Pakistan border, where air superiority meant very little.

In the first Gulf War, the U.S.-led coalition exploited the incipient GPS system in order to navigate its forces and target its air strikes against Iraqi forces. The aerial advantage contributed to the rapid destruction of Saddam Hussein's once-mighty army. Now, 30 years later, Azerbaijan used a similar revolution in aerial technology to reverse a decades-long stalemate in just 44 days. The defensive advantage of Armenian forces meant nothing against an opponent that owned the skies. While drones will not completely revolutionize state-on-state warfare, they can quickly turn the balance of combat in the favor of those who possess them and can mobilize them. It is a development that America's enemies are closely watching.

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