

# Catholicos Celebrates Divine Liturgy for Feast of Nativity

ECHMIADZIN — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II led the Pontifical Divine Liturgy at Yerevan’s cathedral of St. Gregory the Illuminator, marking the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of Jesus Christ, on January 6.

In a message directed to Armenian faithful throughout the world, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians assured listeners: “With the miraculous mystery of the Nativity of Christ, today once again the hope and grace of salvation descends again upon the world troubled by disasters and calamities.”

see NATIVITY, page 4



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II during the liturgy



## Azerbaijanis Shoot in Direction of Verin Shorzha

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — Hostile Azerbaijan started the new year with openly aggressive actions and terrorist acts against peaceful settlements. The most recent incident took place in Verin Shorzha of Armenia’s Gegharkunik Province, where the Azerbaijani occupying forces opened fire on January 8 in the direction of the village. Despite the equivalent response of the Armenian side, countering the attack, the year started with unpleasantness for the people.

“The shooting took place during the day. It lasted about 45 minutes. The sounds could be heard in the distance, but I talked to the boys. They said it was calm now. We did not suffer any injuries. Our people silenced them. For each shot they fired, our people fired ten shots. At the moment, there is a pause,” said Artyom Yeranosyan, the community’s administrative leader.

see SHOOTING, page 5



Verin Shorzha village sign

# PM Pashinyan Praises CSTO Intervention in Kazakhstan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed hope that troops sent by Russia, Armenia and other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will help Kazakhstan end domestic unrest as he chaired a virtual summit of the Russian-led alliance on Monday, January 10.

“We hope that the efforts within the framework of the CSTO aimed at assisting friendly Kazakhstan will help restore the country normal life in the shortest possible time,” Pashinyan told the emergency video conference attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“The purposefulness of our actions towards the earliest possible stabilization of the situation and the return of the country to normal life is obvious,” he said. “This is a critical moment



for ensuring basic living conditions for citizens and the security of strategically important facilities.”

Cities throughout Kazakhstan have been struck by protests that initially erupted in the western region of Mangystau on January 2 over the

see KAZAKHSTAN, page 6

## Armenians Take Dim View of Deployment to Kazakhstan

By **Ani Mejlumyan**

YEREVAN (Eurasianet.org) — News that Armenia is deploying soldiers to Kazakhstan has not been received well among Armenians.

The Defense Ministry confirmed on January 7 that it had sent 100 soldiers from a peacekeeping unit as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) peacekeeping mission to Kazakhstan. (See story on this page.)

The Armenian involvement in the CSTO mission is ironic on several levels.

see DEPLOYMENT, page 6

**GYUMRI**  
Group of Dreamers  
Helps Revitalize Gyumri  
With Technology



**INTERNATIONAL**  
New Film Relates  
Story of American  
Help to Armenians  
During Genocide



**NEW YORK**  
A Variety of Styles  
On View at 2021  
AGBU Film  
Screenings







ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Arman Tatoyan Discusses Armenian Community Situation with Kazakh Counterpart

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan on January 10 held a phone conversation with Human Rights Commissioner of Kazakhstan Elvira Azimova to discuss issues related to the rights of Armenian community in light of recent developments in Kazakhstan. As the Ombudsman's Office said in a press statement, Azimova stressed that the rights of the Armenian community remain in her focus and expressed her readiness to offer support if necessity. During the conversation, Tatoyan expressed his condolences over the victims of the ongoing developments in the country.

### Armenian FM, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Discuss Situation in Kazakhstan

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau on January 10. Mirzoyan congratulated his counterpart on Poland taking over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), assuring him that Armenia will support the efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability in the OSCE area of responsibility.

Mirzoyan and Rau discussed the situation in Kazakhstan. Mirzoyan presented the position of the Armenian side on this issue, reflected in the January 6 statement of the Armenian Foreign Ministry which said, "The reports about the penetration of terrorist groups is alarming. We strongly condemn violence, we are convinced that it cannot be a way to solve political problems." Mirzoyan noted that according to the official application of Kazakhstan, based on the Collective Security Treaty and the Charter of the Organization, as well as the CSTO Peacekeeping Agreement, the CSTO Collective Security Council decided to send peacekeepers to Kazakhstan for a limited period of time to protect strategically important facilities. Touching upon regional security issues, Mirzoyan stressed the need for a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict under the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. In this context, he stressed the support of Poland, as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, for the co-chairs' efforts aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the conflict based on known principles and elements.

### Armenian FM, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Discuss Situation in Kazakhstan

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau on January 10. Mirzoyan congratulated his counterpart on Poland taking over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, assuring him that Armenia will support efforts aimed at ensuring peace and stability.

# Fresh Fighting on Armenian-Azeri Border

YEREVAN (RFE/RL/Panorama.am) — One Azerbaijani and two Armenian soldiers were killed in heavy fighting that broke out on Armenia's border with Azerbaijan on Tuesday, January 11.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said Azerbaijani forces opened fire late in the afternoon at its positions in Armenia's Gegharkunik province bordering the Kelbajar district west of Nagorno-Karabakh. The positions were shelled and attacked with combat drones later in the day, the ministry said in a statement.

"The Armenian side took proportionate actions," it said. "The exchange of gunfire was continuing as of 6 pm [local time.]"

Two Armenian soldiers, Artur Mkhitarian and Rudik Gharibyan, were killed and two others wounded in the fighting, the ministry said in another statement released later in the evening. It said the situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is now "relatively stable."

Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry reported, meanwhile, that Armenian troops shot and killed an Azerbaijani soldier at a Kelbajar section of the border.

A local official in Gegharkunik reported an exchange of gunfire in the same border area on Saturday. The Armenian military did not officially confirm that information.

Tensions in the area have run high since Azerbaijani forces reportedly advanced a few kilometers into Armenian territory last May. Yerevan has repeatedly demanded their withdrawal. Baku maintains that its troops took up positions on the Azerbaijani side of the frontier.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said the latest ceasefire violations there are "yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's continuing infringements of Armenia territorial integrity that began on May 12, 2021."

The situation on the border was on the agenda of Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan's phone call on Tuesday with Karen Donfried, the US assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs.

The Foreign Ministry said Mirzoyan

briefed Donfried on "recent days' ceasefire violations by the Azerbaijani armed forces" and stressed the need for "steps to de-escalate the situation."

In addition, Armenia's Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan on Tuesday provided details of an incident, in which Azerbaijani forces threatened an Armenian driver and his family with guns and stoned their car on the way back home. The full text of a statement released by the ombudsman is provided below.

"On January 2, 2022, between 2 and 3 p.m., when a resident of Lori Province of Armenia was on his back from Artsakh with his wife and a 3-year-old child with in his Nissan Teana car, several Azerbaijani servicemen with aggressive behavior pointed their guns at his car on the Stepanakert-Shushi road, yelled and threw a big stone at the vehicle.

"As a result, the front bumper, the car amplifier and the radiator were damaged, while the vehicle registration plate was lost.

"The Armenian citizen suffered damages of more than 200,000 drams as a result of the criminal acts of the Azerbaijani troops.

"The resident of Vanadzor city of Lori Province alerted the Human Rights Defender of Armenia about the incident.

"The citizen informed the competent bodies of Armenia and Artsakh about the incident. Artsakh Human Rights Ombudsman Mr. Gegham Stepanyan officially confirmed this incident to Armenia's Human Rights Defender Mr. Arman Tatoyan. Yesterday, an official release was disseminated about the incident from Artsakh.

"Obviously, it was clear to the Azerbaijani armed forces that they were threatening and throwing the big stone at a civilian's car, in which a woman and a minor child were travelling; however, they continued their criminal acts. The acts were aimed against the rights to life, health, and property of Armenian peaceful civilians, and disrupted their secure travel through the road.

"The above-mentioned incident proves

once again that there should not be Azerbaijani armed servicemen in the vicinity of villages of Armenia and Artsakh, and on the roads connecting Armenian communities. The nature of the Azerbaijani violations in Armenia and Artsakh are similar.

"Their presence itself is infringing the right to life and security of civilians, other vital rights. The mentioned incident proves this, considering also the fact that a child was present in the car. The removal of the Azerbaijani military is imperative to restore the violated rights and the normal life of people. There are regular incidents of similar nature.

"The statement of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia is also substantiated by other incidents that took place yesterday in Artsakh: Azerbaijani servicemen opened targeted shootings at Karmir Shuka and Tagahvard communities of Martuni region and Nakhichevanik community of Askeran region; one of the shootings was in the direction of a house located on a distance of around 50 meters from a kindergarten. These facts were confirmed by official statements from Artsakh.

These facts, the Azerbaijani criminal acts and the urgent need of their removal will be presented to international organizations."

In addition, four farmers were targeted by Azerbaijani forces when doing agricultural work in pomegranate orchard near Nakhichevanik village in Artsakh's Asekran village, Artsakh Police informs.

Different types of firearms were used during the shooting the intensive shooting that lasted 15 minutes. The regional police department was notified.

The fire was stopped by the mediation of Russian peacekeepers, and the citizens of Artsakh were evacuated unharmed.

Agricultural machinery was partially damaged.

Earlier in the week, on January 8, the Azerbaijani side opened fire in the direction of the Karmir Shuka community, a vehicle caught fire near the kindergarten.

(See related story on Page 1.)

# Armenian Army Chief Indicted

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — State prosecutors revealed on January 10 that Armenia's top army general has also been charged in a criminal investigation into supplies of allegedly faulty ammunition to the armed forces.

Two other generals as well as former Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and an arms dealer were arrested as part of the same investigation in September. The National Security Service (NSS) charged them with fraud and embezzlement that cost the state almost 2.3 billion drams (\$ 4.7 million).

The accusations stem from the purchase of allegedly outdated rockets for the Armenian army.

According to the NSS, a private intermediary delivered the rockets to Armenia in 2011 and that the Defense Ministry refused to buy them at the time after discovering that they are unusable. The ministry re-commissioned them after Tonoyan was appointed as defense minister in 2018.

The NSS for months did not confirm reports that it has also indicted Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan, the army chief of General Staff.

A spokesman for the Office of the Prosecutor General, Gor Abrahamyan,

listed Davtyan among seven indicted suspects in the case. Abrahamyan said he stands accused of abuse of power but did not elaborate.

The suspects include Lieutenant-Gen-

eral Stepan Galstyan, one of Davtyan's former deputy who was sacked in December.

Davtyan has not been dismissed despite the indictment. It is not clear whether he will plead guilty to the accusations during his trial expected to start soon.



Lieutenant-General Artak Davtyan, chief of the Armenian army's General Staff.

nied any wrongdoing. In a statement, the former defense minister insisted that the ammunition did not go past its expiration and was successfully used during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Tonoyan warned that he must not be made a scapegoat for Armenia's defeat in the six-week war. He pledged to make "surprise" revelations in that regard.





ARMENIA

# The Power of Giving: Young Diasporans Awarded for Leadership

YEREVAN — On December 20, 2020, after miraculously surviving 70 days in hiding from the Azerbaijani armed forces, Nikolay Stepanyan, a 2019 alumnus of the Birthright Armenia program, and five other soldiers were rescued. Exactly one year later, he was among the nominees of Birthright Armenia and Armenian Volunteer Corps' annual Alumni Leadership Recognition Awards for Valor.

Each year, Birthright Armenia and AVC's 2,000 and growing group of alumni nominate candidates for awards in the following categories: Valor, Artistic/Cultural Achievement, and Civic Participation/Public Service. Birthright Armenia and AVC's Board and Staff then select the final recipients. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$2,000 for a total of \$5,000 and are then donated by recipients to the causes closest to their hearts.

Nikolay ultimately won a \$2,000 award along with three other alumni who took part in the 44-day Artsakh War. All four men chose to donate their funds to the Lorik Humanitarian Fund. The remaining recipients supported VOMA, All for Armenia, and the Women's Center - Shushi.

All for Armenia Fund, one of the organizations that received a donation, was founded by alumni Araz Kekejian-Sahakyan and Matthew Sahakyan. Their goal is to provide much needed assistance to the Armenians displaced as a result of the war and support development of Goris's border villages.

"As an organization, we highly value that our alumni continue to engage in Armenia. In these critical times, their actions and contributions are significant. As an organization, we truly appreciate all of their efforts and hard work and encourage others to find ways to make their own contribu-



All for Armenia Fund helps people living on Goris' border villages.

dance and Armen Adamyan, US, for his work digitizing Armenian Folk music.

Civic Participation/Public Service Award: Araz Kekejian-Sahakian, Lebanon and Matthieu Sahakian, France, for their work supporting border villages through their newly established All for Armenia NGO.

Civic Participation/Public Service Award: Araz Chiloyan, US, for her work

nians aged 21+ and Armenians aged 32+ for the duration of one month to a maximum of one year through the Junior Corps, Professional Corps, and Senior Corps programs. Certain volunteers who hold at least five years of full-time work experience can

volunteer for as little as two weeks.

Individuals interested in volunteering through Birthright Armenia or Armenian Volunteer Corps may apply through [birthrightarmenia.org/en/register](http://birthrightarmenia.org/en/register), [armenianvolunteer.org/registration](http://armenianvolunteer.org/registration).



Sevan Ozkul

tions. This award gives us one more opportunity to use the power of giving to contribute to Armenia's development in these areas," says Lida Balasanyan, Next Step Program Coordinator of Birthright Armenia and AVC.

## 2021 Alumni Leadership Recognition Awards

Valor Award: Nikolay Stepanyan, Russia; Mher Almasian, US; Sevan Ozkul, France and Shant Abrahamian, US for their outstanding efforts serving in the military during the 44-day Artsakh war.

Artistic/Cultural Achievement Award: Natalie Kamajian, US, for her work on educating the public on traditional vernacular

at the Ministry of Health supporting COVID-19 relief efforts and providing invaluable information to the community related to vaccination efforts.

Birthright Armenia provides Diaspora Armenians 21-32 years of age a financially supported opportunity to connect with their ancestral homeland. Program participants commit to 30 hours of volunteering per week for a minimum duration of nine weeks and a maximum of one year. Participants aged 25 years and older who are employed full-time may also consider the Birthright Lite program, a shorter volunteering experience for four weeks only.

Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC) offers volunteering opportunities to non-Arme-

## Artsakh Ombudsman Sends Letter To Google to Stop Azerbaijan from Deleting Armenian Place Names

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — The Human Rights Defender of the Artsakh Republic Gegham Stepanyan sent a letter to Google, urging the company not to give in to Azerbaijani provocations, to ignore baseless demands presented by Azerbaijan and to refrain from removing the Armenian toponyms and geographical names of Artsakh from the digital maps.

The Ombudsman particularly noted that these efforts of Azerbaijan are another manifestation of Azerbaijan's long-standing policy of depriving the people of Artsakh of their homeland and denying the Armenian identity of Artsakh. He reminded that the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh in the Fall of 2020, aimed at the seizure of the entire territory of Artsakh and destruction of its people, became the culmination of Azerbaijan's criminal policy.

To support its alleged rightfulness of claims over Artsakh, Azerbaijan has been deliberately erasing, destroying, and eradicating any traces of Armenians and Armenian culture and history from every centimeter of the territory under its control.

The motives behind the request of Azerbaijan to remove Armenian toponyms from maps can be easily defined: Nagorno Karabakh is not just a place name, but a totality of Armenian culture and history. The Armenian toponyms of Artsakh are memories of places, as well as living memories of the people who gave these names to such places. It is well-known that toponyms serve as symbols of regional culture and thus reflect the history, habitat, and environment of a place. Azerbaijan's request to remove Armenian toponyms from the maps is nothing more than an attempt to create desired reality on the maps.

In the letter, the Ombudsman presented the regulations of international law, which enshrine the right of peoples to freely use and preserve their place names, to inherit from generations. He stressed that international law does not consider toponyms and geographical names to be the property of states, but considers them to be the intangible heritage of peoples.

Stepanyan noted that the removal of Armenian toponyms will only condone Azerbaijan's gross violations of human rights of the people of Artsakh and support its efforts aimed at legitimization of the results of illegal use of force.

Ombudsman expressed the hope that Google will reject Azerbaijan's continuing attempt to alter maps and engage in ethnic cleansing.





A throng gathered at Yerevan's St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral despite COVID

## Catholicos Celebrates Divine Liturgy for Feast of Nativity

NATIVITY, from page 1

With fatherly directness, the Catholicos addressed the realities that threaten Armenian society, as it bears the burdens of the pandemic and the 2020 Artsakh war. But he went on to encourage all the faithful to seek a pathway forward, through a mutual embrace of faith and unity.

"We must approach the current difficult situation soberly, rejecting the paths that would draw us away from God, and firmly anchoring our lives in the national and spiritual values that have been passed down through the centuries, as the guarantors for the survival of our people," he said. "We all have a sacred duty to the memory of our kinsmen who received the crown of martyrdom for the homeland, to fight altruistically and uncompromisingly, for the sake of our homeland, for the sake of the free life of Artsakh, for the sake of a stable Armenian statehood and the unbroken preservation of our national identity."

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His Holiness Karekin II offered the "Blessing of Water" ceremony. Serving as Godfather of the Cross this year was the distinguished composer and musician David Amalyan.



The faithful try to touch the cross held by the Catholicos.



Musician David Amalyan, left, with the Catholicos



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II during the liturgy





## INTERNATIONAL

# A Venice Armenian Tradition

By Inesa Tumasyants

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VENICE — The Padus-Araxes Cultural Association of Venice, founded by eminent academician and religious figure Mgr Levon Zekyan, the head of the Mekhitarist Catholic congregation, has been organizing a summer course every year since 1986.

This year, because of the pandemic, the number of students was smaller, however there were 25 participants from 10 countries (Armenia, Italy, Romania, France, Ukraine, Switzerland, Syria, Jordan, the US and Mexico), both of Armenian origin and non-Armenians. The school has four levels; after a week the students from the first level will have already learned the alphabet, to write and read. I was pleasantly surprised to know that at the fourth level students also study grabar (classical Armenian), which Mgr Levon teaches. I was surprised, as even in the curriculum of state schools in Armenia it is missing.

“I learned the language of the Armenians to understand what language the gods spoke, because Armenian is the language to speak the God,” Lord Byron wrote after his visit to the San Lazzaro Monastery in 1816.

By participating in the course, I understood what a huge job the teachers do. This permanent staff is from Armenia, France, Italy, the US and Hungary. Mr. Tork Dalalyan’s classes were interesting, full of grammar, spelling, sometimes with references to the grabar. In his classes, our third group learned the poem “Dzon” (Ode) by Daniel Varujan as well, which we presented during one of the evening parties. With Mr. Avedis Hadjian, we grasped how the media, the press, works, what things are hidden behind the mass media materials. We also tried to gather information, edit and compile an article ourselves. Mr. Artsvi Bakhchinyan’s classes was helping us after these all; we sang, read poems, talked about movies and Armenian art. We were singing those songs at evening parties as well. To everyone’s amazement, Mr. Artsvi himself also sang in Japanese and Romani. It was very astonishing and pleasant when

the wonderful voice of Mrs. Rosine Tachdjian was heard, when she was singing with the first grade students. At that very moment, the corridors and classrooms filled with her charming voice. In Raffi Setian’s classes, the students of the first three levels gathered in a classroom. He was telling the millennial history of Armenia’s in English. Mr. Raffi was always choosing words that were easy for everyone to understand. In just two weeks, he was able to present the whole history of the Armenian nation



Students at the Padus-Araxes Cultural Association

with amazing mastery. Among the teachers I cannot fail to mention Mrs. Sossi (Sossi Sousanian), a wonderful woman: I did not attend her classes, but have had many pleasant conversations with her.

In addition to the morning classes, there were also evening lectures, movie screenings and talent-show parties. Everyone liked the movies that Bakhchinyan presented. We watched the animation film “Msho geghen” (From the village of Mush) by Armine Harutyunyan and the short film “Tsoriani dzover” (Cornfields) by Bogdan Atanesyan, both from Armenia. During his lecture, he presented us his book Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey. It was from there that Tigran, one of the Romanian group’s students, bought the book from the small store on the Armenian island of Venice – San Lazzaro, and Bakhchinyan signed it with pleasure. The president of the Union of Armenians in Romania, Varujan Vosganian, who had been

visiting Venice for a few days, also gave a lecture about the Armenians in Romania.

Other lectures on different topics for the course teachers and participants were held also by Mgr. Zekyan, Benedetta Contin, an Armenologist from Austria, and Prof. Gevorg Stepanyan, historian from Armenia.

On August 8, Zekyan officiated a liturgy in the Armenian Holy Cross Church, located in the heart of Venice, not far from San Marco Square. On August 15, the Feast of

Our Lady’s Assumption was celebrated in the Armenian church at the Monastery of San Lazzaro, with the rite of blessing the grapes. The Solemn Divine Liturgy of the Holy Mass was celebrated by Zekyan. The same church was later the site of the baptism of Azad-Dikran-Arthur from Switzerland. The little boy’s parents were attending the course for the third time. Of course, we also visited the Museum of the Mekhitarists, rich in manuscripts, books, canvases by Ivan (Hovhannes) Aivazovski and eminent Armenian painters, as well as various gifts from different seniors. It seemed that even the stones of the island were speaking Armenian, and nature in was breathing Armenian.

The Romanian-Armenian group expresses a deep gratitude to the organizers, in the person of Mgr Levon Zekyan and the Armenian Union of Romania, headed by Varuzhan Vosganian, for providing such an opportunity.

## Sevan Nisanyan Lauds Armenian Embassy for Getting Him out of Greek Jail

ATHENS (PanARMENIAN.Net, Agos) — Turkish-Armenian writer Sevan Nisanyan has hailed the efforts of the Armenian Embassy in Athens in having him released from a prison in Greece.

Nisanyan was jailed in Turkey in 2014 on charges of illegal construction, a case he claims was instead punishment for his outspoken views about restrictions on freedom of expression in the country. He escaped from a low-security prison in 2017 and pursued asylum in Greece. The 66-year-old linguist was detained on the island of Samos after Greek authorities refused to renew his residence permit. Before a court decision to release him on Friday, January 7, Nisanyan was facing deportation to Turkey.

“The Embassy of Armenia and especially ambassador Tigran Mkrtchyan made an incredible effort to save me, worked day

and night, and did not leave me alone for a moment,” Nisanyan said in a Facebook post.

“For the first time in my life, I felt that a state was standing behind my back unconditionally and without hesitation. It’s a very different feeling. I didn’t know.”

Nisanyan was released on the condition of leaving the country within 15 days.

Nisanyan, who was released after being detained in Greece for 9 days, was also the guest of Alin Ozinan in the “Limitless” program broadcast on +GERÇEK TV.

Nisanyan said, “There has been a very bad development in Samos [the island where he had been living] and all Aegean Islands in recent years. An incredible xenophobia and racism, which is very contrary to Greek tradition and Greek culture, has taken over the world like a storm. First of all, the police force is among the instigators

of this business. It seems that as a result of a chain of paranoia and gossip, they entered a mood like ‘This man is Turkish, he came from Turkey, let him go back.’”

“I have been instructed to leave the country voluntarily. If we can get a result in this process, I will not go, but otherwise I will have the opportunity to rest in other countries for a while,” he said.

He said, “There is an organization behind it, obviously there is an organization. We have not yet understood what the attitude of Athens is. In other words, we met with many political, legal and administrative people in Athens, including very high-level officials. I came to this country four and a half years ago and then applied for asylum. It was a one-and-a-half year process. I finally withdrew my asylum, or rather, waited for the time to run out.

“I am no longer a refugee, I am not seeking asylum because the Armenian state gave me citizenship and a passport at that time,” he said. He added that his wife was a Greek citizen and at this point he cannot apply to live in Greece as a refugee.

“They were shocked to buy my Armenian passport. When he saw it. All the fiction they had built fell apart,” he told Ozinan.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Airlines Receive Permission To Fly Between Yerevan, Istanbul

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — FlyOne Armenia and Pegasus Airlines have received permission from the Civil Aviation Committee to operate Yerevan-Istanbul-Yerevan charter flights, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure announced on January 10.

Earlier, the Armenian aviation authorities issued a permit to FlyOne Armenia airline to operate charter flights in the Yerevan-Istanbul-Yerevan route. FlyOne Armenia had applied to the aviation authorities of both Armenia and Turkey with the request to operate charter roundtrip flights from Yerevan to Istanbul. Asked when the flights will be launched, FlyOne Armenia President of the Board Aram Ananyan said they are awaiting the permit from the Turkish aviation authorities. On December 16, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Ankara is considering bids from both Turkish and Armenian airlines for operating flights between Istanbul and Yerevan. Turkish authorities said that the Turkish Pegasus airline will operate the flights.

### Threats Issued Against Armenia, Belarus Embassies in Moscow

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Unknown persons issued threats to explode the embassies of Armenia and Belarus in Moscow, demanding the withdrawal of troops from the territory of Kazakhstan, TASS reported on January 8, citing a law enforcement source.

“It was revealed yesterday that a letter with threats of explosions was sent to the e-mail addressed of the embassies of Armenia and Belarus. Unknown persons demanded that the troops of the countries be withdrawn from the territory of Kazakhstan,” the source reportedly said. According to the source, the buildings were searched, no explosive devices or bombs were found.

### Turkey Defense Minister Receives Envoy for Normalization with Armenia

ANKARA (Public Radio of Armenia) — Turkish Minister of National Defense Hulusi Akar on January 10 received Serdar Kilic, special representative of Turkey for the normalization of relations with Armenia, the Turkish Defense Ministry announced.

No further details were provided. The meeting took place on the eve of the talks between the special representatives of Turkey and Armenia, scheduled for January 14 in Moscow.

Former Ambassador to Washington Kilic was appointed on December 15.

Armenia will be represented by Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly Ruben Rubinyan.

## Azerbaijanis Shoot in Direction of Verin Shorzha

SHOOTING, from page 1

One of the residents of the community declared that they did not expect the Azerbaijanis to behave normally in the new year. He said, “They are enemies. They are carrying out their enmity. Whatever they do, we must either endure or be broken.”





## INTERNATIONAL

# PM Pashinyan Praises CSTO Intervention in Kazakhstan

KAZAKHSTAN, from page 1

doubling in the price of subsidized liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev asked the CSTO for urgent intervention on January 5 as mobs stormed government buildings and looted businesses in his country's largest city, Almaty.

The military bloc responded by sending more than 2,000 mostly Russian peacekeeping troops. They are understood to have been deployed in and around Almaty.

Speaking at the CSTO summit, Toqaev said calmly has returned to Kazakhstan after days of violence described by him as “terrorist aggression” and “attempted a coup d’etat.”

Putin likewise claimed that “terrorists” are using social media networks to bring people out into the streets of Kazakhstan as a cover for their attacks. CSTO troops will stymie any attempts by external forces to topple governments within the alliance, he said.

Pashinyan also spoke of the “involvement of international terrorist groups” in the events in Kazakhstan. But like Toqaev, he did not produce any evidence to back up the claim.

In a televised interview on Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced Toqaev’s “shoot to kill” order issued to security forces. Blinken also said Washington is seeking clarification on why the Central Asian nation needed to call in the Russian-led security force.

Pashinyan’s decision to send 100 Armenian troops to Kazakhstan was criticized by Armenian opposition groups as well as civil society members. The latter are concerned about the violent suppression of what they see as legitimate protests against Kazakhstan’s authoritarian government.

Critics also argued that Kazakhstan and other CSTO member states failed to provide Armenia with military assistance requested by Pashinyan after Azerbaijani troops crossed into Armenian territory in May. Kazakh leaders openly congratulated Azerbaijan on its victory in the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The main opposition Hayastan alliance said on Saturday that Yerevan should have



The multinational CSTO forces in Kazakhstan

supported the Russian-led intervention in Kazakhstan without committing any troops.

A Hayastan lawmaker, Gegham Nazaryan, said the Armenian soldiers were flown to the Almaty area “at a time when we ourselves have problems with border security and have not yet overcome the post-war shock.”

“And most importantly, we must not forget that Kazakhstan was among those countries that openly voiced support for Azerbaijan during the [2020] war,” Nazaryan told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service. “It also congratulated Azerbaijan on its so-called victory.”

Hayastan, which has the second largest group in the National Assembly, demanded on Monday that the parliament committees on defense and foreign relations hold a joint meeting on the Armenian deployment to Kazakhstan. Pro-government lawmakers heading the committees did not immediately respond to the demand.



Armenian forces heading to Kazakhstan

## Armenians Take Dim View of Deployment to Kazakhstan

DEPLOYMENT, from page 1

For one, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan — who, as the current chair of the CSTO’s Security Council, formally announced that the organization had agreed to Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s request for military aid to defend him from street protesters — had himself come to power in 2018 as the result of popular street protests.

In those protests, the then-ruling authorities chose not to use force to suppress the protests. As part of the campaign to pressure the government to step down, Pashinyan urged supporters to surround government buildings. Armenia’s service members in Kazakhstan will now be “protecting important state and military facilities,” the ministry said in its statement.

Pashinyan initially gained prominence as one of the leaders of the 2008 protests against fraudulent elections, which the then-government violently suppressed in what eventually became known as the “March 1” events.

On top of that, the CSTO famously declined to come to Armenia’s aid in 2021

as Azerbaijan carried out incursions into Armenian territory, which Armenians argued should have triggered the CSTO’s mutual defense provision.

And many Armenians perceive Kazakhstan, which shares Turkic roots with Azerbaijan, to be more sympathetic to their enemy.

“The people of any country must choose their own government; no other country has the right to interfere in its internal affairs. Today, the Armenian armed forces have a mission to protect the borders of our country,” a coalition of pro-Western NGOs said in a statement. “We condemn the short-sighted and irresponsible actions of the Armenian government.”

Armenian officials have tried to push back against the criticism.

“The public has raised concern about why Armenia appealed for help [to the CSTO] and didn’t receive it, and is now providing it,” Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, told public television. “First of all, it’s a matter of responsibility, if Armenia has an interest in the CSTO mechanisms

functioning, and the answer is a clear yes,” he said.

He also disputed the notion that what was happening in Kazakhstan was a legitimate protest. “It is not a revolutionary process but a terrorist one, you have seen the videos of armed men,” he said.

While officials in Kazakhstan (and Russia, which dominates the CSTO) have claimed that the unrest there is the result of external terrorist forces, that should not be taken seriously, said human rights advocate Artur Sakunts.

“In 2008, during the March 1 protests, people were robbing stores and they never found out who was doing it,” he told RFE/RL, suggesting that provocateurs could have been operating then as now in Kazakhstan. “Here we are dealing with a similar thing. There is a component of sabotage, and we can’t just call everything ‘terrorism.’”

“Pashinyan should have just voiced concern over a situation, but he tried to be more Catholic than the Kremlin and fulfilled the Kremlin’s command,” said Sakunts, referring to Pashinyan’s claim that the protests in Kazakhstan were the

result of “external interference.” As for Grigoryan’s argument about the functioning of the CSTO, Sakunts responded: “Who are you to make it function, did you look at our resources? If you could make it function, you should have made it function for us.”

Some also wondered if Pashinyan could try to invoke the CSTO in case of protests against his government. Grigoryan, in his explanation, “openly confessed why Nikol was sending troops to Kazakhstan,” said military analyst Karen Vrtanesyan in a Facebook post. “If something threatens Nikol’s government tomorrow or the next day, Kazakhstan will send its troops to Armenia.”

But Armenia, as a member of the CSTO and reliant on Russian help, has few choices, argued Maria Karapetyan, a member of parliament from the ruling Civil Contract party. She argued that critics want Armenia to leave the CSTO and “make a different geopolitical choice.”

“If we leave the CSTO, what [other bloc] should we join? They should propose the next step,” Karapetyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.





# Community News

## AGBU Observes UN Genocide Prevention Day with Two International Webinars

NEW YORK — In 2017, AGBU joined the global conversation about genocide prevention, each year organizing international panels on various themes related to the United Nations International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of Genocide and the Prevention of This Crime, which is observed every December 9th.

This past year, two such webinars were spearheaded by AGBU Lebanon and AGBU Europe and their respective co-sponsors and partners. In Europe, a four-part presentation was delivered on the legacy of 1922 Nobel Peace Prize winner and longtime advocate of Armenian causes Fridtjof Nansen. From Lebanon, the topic focused on genocide in the context of cultural rights.

On December 7, 2021, AGBU Lebanon hosted a webinar “Genocide Through the Lens of Cultural Rights” in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (IFI-AUB), a long-term partner that collaborates with AGBU every year, and the Lepsius Haus for Genocide Studies – Potsdam, which has cooperated with AGBU Europe throughout 2021. The organization has cooperated with AGBU on other projects for Armenia and the Diaspora since 2016.

The webinar featured two 90-minute panels, moderated by Yeghia Tashjian, an Associate Fellow at IFI. Opening remarks were made by AGBU Lebanon Executive Director Arine Ghazarian and Dr. Joseph Bahout, the director of IFI. According to Dr. Bahout, “Contrary to what many could think, culture, heritage, issues of memory, collective identity, are not a side-show...they really are at the core of any sustainable policy construction.”

Dr. Roy Knocke, deputy director of Lepsius Haus Potsdam, also remarked on the relation between moral evil and the loss of cultural heritage from a cultural studies and philosophical perspective. He observed how, even though cultural aspects of genocide are not explicitly mentioned in the 1948 UN Convention, there is an historical and contemporary understanding of the concept. He posited that the memories, words, deeds, joys, and sorrows of the past find a permanent place in the world simply because people are able to remember, citing that victims of genocide themselves embody the memory.

### Cultural Interventions as Prevention

Dr. Heghnar Watenpugh, a professor of art and architecture at UC Davis, explored the links between cultural heritage, religious heritage, and see AGBU, page 8



Ani Vardanyan

## A Group of Dreamers Helps Revitalize Gyumri with Technology

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — It was 33 years ago that a devastating earthquake shattered Armenia’s second largest city, Gyumri. Since then, the city has been recovering, albeit very slowly. And one of its great advantages has been the creation of the Gyumri IT Center (GITC) in 2005, initiated and financed by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR). The goal of GITC was to develop and support a qualified labor force for the IT industry in Armenia which would encourage businesses already functioning in Yerevan to gradually open branches in Gyumri.

“This program would empower young talented people from Gyumri with technological abilities” so that this skilled labor force would attract businesses to follow. And most of all, these young skilled people would have a decent job and stop looking to other countries for employment benefits. They would stay in their homeland and work for its brighter future.

Now 16 years later, Gyumri has become the second hub of IT in Armenia with more than 30 high-tech companies headquartered there. GITC is not only helping Gyumri today, but it is also providing high quality training to talented youth all across the homeland. In 2021, it also opened a branch in Yerevan. And the GITC graduates are almost 100 percent employed, with some getting jobs even before they graduate.

“As members of the FAR Board of Directors one of the most critical roles we serve is to nurture and guide promising programs to advance and build a better life for the next generation of Armenians. From a pioneering idea 16 years ago GITC has already impacted the lives of thousands of young Armenians who have acquired high level technological skills and good paying jobs in Armenia as a result of advanced training at GITC,” said Dennis Tarzian, FAR Board member and one of the founders of GITC.

Interestingly, the majority of GITC’s decision-making managers are women, including the executive director, Amalya Yeghoyan, who revealed in a telephone interview that GITC “is becoming a partner of the biggest technological companies like DISQO, SmartClick, etc...in scaling high quality training in the most advanced sectors of IT across all of Armenia and thus, securing employment.”

“We are very proud of Amalya and her growth as a leader who continually seeks new ways to partner with other tech companies and leading universities to ensure that GITC’s curriculum is evolving alongside the rapid changes in the technology sector,” said Tarzian.

The next vision for GITC leaders is to make Armenia “a regional hub” for high quality IT training. A program has already begun to train a group of high schoolers in engineering disciplines, with amazing results.

Yeghoyan’s goal has always been to teach young people “how to fish, not receive fish for eating.” A graduate of Gyumri’s Pedagogical University majoring in English, her goal in the tech sphere was not to be proficient in the technical aspects of the industry, but instead “to be a good manager.”

Becoming GITC Executive Director in Gyumri in 2010, she was mentoring 50 percent male students, and 50 percent female. She proudly said that in the world Armenia has the highest percentage of females in tech, more than 35 percent.

In 2018, Yeghoyan joined the Ministry of Transport, Telecommunications and Information Technology in Armenia as deputy minister. “I made a decision as a see DREAMERS, page 10

## Season For Home Blessing

NEW YORK — In a typical season, clergy visit their parishioners to perform the “Home Blessing” in the period following the Feast of the Lord’s Nativity. With lingering concerns over the pandemic, this is hardly a “typical” season. But Home Blessings can still be part of spiritual life.

Our individual homes have held a special importance for us throughout the past two years — and clergy have become creative in adapting the traditional Home Blessing to the prevailing circumstances, often performing the ceremony out of doors and at a distance from the visited family. Contact your local pastor to find out what kind of Home Blessing service would be available in your local community.

Throughout history, Armenian Christians have considered the home to be a sacred place: the tranquil sanctuary of the family, where habits of virtue, pious traditions, and life-affirming customs are passed from one generation to another. Under one roof, members of a household achieve a unity of spirit and assume responsibility for the larger life of the community. They break bread and share life’s joys and sorrows.

Above all, the home is where one’s faith is first kindled, and where that faith finds some of the most profound occasions for action.

Through a special ceremony of the Armenian Church, on occasions like the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ, as well as on the joyous occasion of moving into a new home, members of the clergy visit the home. It’s called the Dounohrnek, or Home Blessing service.

During a Home Blessing, the priest takes with him wafer and incense. He blesses bread, water, and salt: three fundamental elements essential for human life. The priest asks God not to lessen these three gifts, without which life becomes impossible or imperfect.

The bread, water, and salt are symbols of God’s infinite goodness and care. Bread, which symbolically represents the Word of God, grants life to all those who taste it.

Salt seasons our food, making it delicious and edible. Metaphorically, salt represents man in this world with his words and deeds; Christ said, “You are the salt of the earth.” Man’s life should be seasoned with wisdom, moderation, or a sense of sufficiency.

Finally, Water, the essential element of life, represents cleanliness. Through the water of baptism we are cleansed, renewed in Christ, and united with our God.

Alongside the bread, salt, and water offered on a tray by the home-dwellers, the priest places the wafer stamped with a crucifix and designs of grapes and wheat. The wafer signifies the presence of Christ in the home. The members of the family see BLESSINGS, page 9





COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Observes UN Genocide Prevention Day with Two International Webinars

AGBU, from page 7

human rights from the perspective of art history. She argued that there are close links between the destruction of cultural heritage on one hand, and discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide on the other. “One of the great human rights challenges of the last century has been to bring justice on behalf of communities who have had their cultures destroyed and stolen from them, and to prevent assaults on culture from happening in the first place,” she stated.

She also spoke about the ideal of ‘World Heritage’ that emerged from the horrors of World War II, implying that the significant markers of culture belong to all of humanity. This ideal, advocated by the UN-ESCO, has been criticized for its failure of preventing and deterring the destruction of heritage, underscoring the primacy of states when it comes to decisions regarding the preservation and protection of heritage. To illustrate this, Dr. Watenpaugh provided the examples of the second Nagorno-Karabakh War. There is a clear and intentional cultural destruction by Azerbaijan, which does not allow UNESCO or cultural activists to visit the Armenian cultural and religious sites located in Karabakh.

Dr. Ahmad Rashid Salim from the University of California, Berkeley stressed the importance and the destruction of language and poetry in Afghanistan, especially in light of the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan. Though it is a nation of minorities, its official and administrative language had been Farsi until recently, when the Taliban began the process of replacing it with the Pashto language. Dr. Salim described this as “weaponizing language as a tool of erasure, oppression, denial, and prevention to ensure individuals in communities do not succeed in preserving and memorializing history and culture.”

Simon Maghakyan, a researcher and investigator, presented the 15-year cultural destruction in Nakhichevan at the hands of the Azerbaijani government. Nakhichevan

is rich in its indigenous Armenian heritage and contains 28,000 cultural properties. Maghakyan used four types of evidence to prove the destruction: satellite images; eye-witness testimony; public decrees or state archives; and crowd-sourced photography showing important monuments and sites such as the largest Armenian cemetery in Nakhichevan called Dulfu. While most of these properties have been annihilated, Maghakyan warned that those remaining are at risk.

Dr. Marcus Papadopoulos, the publisher and editor of Politics First magazine and an expert on Russia, highlighted the global indifference and great injustice against the Armenian people during World War I, saying, “The Armenian Genocide is one of the most overlooked acts of mass murder in human history.” He also noted the limited international reaction back then, but also the fervent denial of the genocide by powerful states such as Britain and Israel, due to political and economic interests.

Dr. Papadopoulos also highlighted various pogroms and mass atrocities perpetrated by the Azerbaijani against the Armenians mainly during the fall of the Soviet Union, and the first Artsakh War, fomented by the anti-Armenian hate speech, a key strategy of the Azerbaijani state, referring to Armenians as ‘infidels’ and ‘animals.’

Legal implications of the cultural destruction in Iraq and Syria

Dr. Ali al Nashmi, an Iraqi researcher and historian, described how “original communities” contributed to the creation of extant cultures, which take hundreds and thousands of years to be established. Therefore, when a small aspect of a culture is targeted, the whole culture is subject to modification or destruction. He also claimed that Christians, Shias, Yazidis, Kurds and Armenians had and still have an important role in shaping the Iraqi culture. As a result, when ISIS targets one of these communities, they are targeting the entire Iraqi culture.

The final speaker Alaa Al Sayed, a Syrian lawyer and activist, showed how various cultural sites in Aleppo such as 400-year old schools, ancient libraries and temples, buildings, statues, churches, and mosques were purposefully destroyed during the Syrian conflict. This cultural genocide did not necessarily target people in particular, but it targeted their deep heritage and physical presence. Al Sayed has initiated a preservation project in Aleppo to digitize information related to its culture, religion, and history. The webinar concluded with questions from the international audience.

Lessons and Takeaways from Europe

On December 9, AGBU Europe, in partnership with the House of European History in Brussels (HEH), hosted a webinar on the life and legacy of Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian explorer, diplomat, humanitarian and winner of the 1922 Peace Prize. He is also distinguished as a champion of the Armenian people.

Moderated by Olaf Glöckner, Senior Researcher at the Moses Mendelssohn Centre for European-Jewish Studies at Potsdam University, the lecture was presented by Roy Knocke, historian and newly appointed director of the Lepsiushaus in Potsdam.

Fridtjof Nansen, was a central figure in tackling the refugee crisis after WWI and the collapse of the vast multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires, during which an estimated 3 million people were left stateless. Quoting political philosopher Hannah Arendt, Knocke noted that the calamity of the stateless refugees, saying, “...it was not they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion [...] but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them.”

A portion of Knocke’s lecture highlighted Nansen’s activities for the League of Nations in the 1920s, including the repa-

triation of nearly 430,000 prisoners of war, the creation of the Nansen passport issued to about 450,000 stateless refugees, his contribution to the population exchange policy after the Greco-Turkish war, and finally, his efforts in planning the resettlement of 200,000 Armenian refugees after the genocide.

Though Nansen was convinced that “charity is Realpolitik,” his plan for the resettlement of Armenian refugees in the Caucasus could not find any funding and was eventually abandoned. Yet he did manage to settle 10,000 Armenians in Yerevan and 40,000 in Lebanon.

Noting Nansen’s disillusion in the last years of his life, Knocke quoted a passage of Nansen’s book Armenia and the Near East published in 1928, in which he described the full force of Realpolitik regarding the Armenians. “We have seen that the Western Powers of Europe and the United States of America have given words, and nothing else, by way of fulfilling the promises to the Armenian people which they had made with such solemnity when they needed support in war”. [...] But the Armenian people have never abandoned hope; they have gone on bravely working and waiting... year after year. They are waiting still.”

The concluding question-and-answer session included an audience of scholars, university students, members of NGOs, representatives of the European Commission and institutions as well as members of the Armenian, Jewish and Roma communities in Europe.

This was the final webinar in a series under the European Remembrance project, led by AGBU Europe since 2020, under the umbrella theme “Ideas & Their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919.” The project was carried out in partnership with the Lepsiushaus in Potsdam, EUJS and Phiren Amencia, with the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union.

OBITUARY

Anna Bedirian

Legal Secretary, Dedicated Gardener and Volunteer

WATERTOWN — Anna Bedirian of Watertown passed away on December 21, 2021, at 88.

She was the daughter of the late Levon H. and Zarouhy (Kelesian) Bedirian. She is survived by her siblings, Lucy Bedirian of Watertown and George Bedirian and his wife Nancy of Pullman, Wash. She was the aunt of Byron Bedirian and his wife Victoria Prokhorova of Nelson, British Columbia and Jesse Bedirian and her husband Timothy D’Antonio of Boulder, Colo. and their son Cyrus D’Antonio.

She worked for 30 years as a legal secretary at Goodwin, Procter & Hoar in Boston.

Throughout her life she devoted her time to volunteer work at National Association for Armenian Studies and Research

(NAASR) and the Women’s Guild at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown.

She learned and enjoyed woodworking but her greatest passion was gardening both at a local community garden and at home.



She cared greatly for many Armenian charitable endeavors and sponsored children displaced by the 1988 Spitak earthquake. She also supported a variety of animal welfare, conservation and environmental causes.

Services were at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown on January 5. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery in Watertown.

Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home.

Donations

Harry Mazadoorian of Kensington, Conn. donated \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Ralph Meyer and Knarig Khatchadurian Meyer of Ridgewood, NJ, donated \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Giragosian

F UNERAL

H OME

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC  
Mark J. Giragosian

Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606  
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS  
Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in  
Armenian Designs and Lettering

701 Moody St. Waltham, MA 02543  
(781) 891-9876 www.NEMonuments.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian  
Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN  
PAUL BEDROSIAN  
LARRY BEDROSIAN





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Daughters of Vartan Hope to Reestablish Merrimack Valley Otyag

NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. — On Sunday, November 7, 2021, a group of Armenian women from Merrimack Valley gathered at Cochichewick Masonic Lodge to learn about the Daughters of Vartan.

Daughters of Vartan National Chairwoman Gloria Korkoian had traveled from Michigan and gave insights into the organization including its history, projects and charitable giving. New England Grand District Representative Patricia Buttero also attended and participated in the open house. The attendees were engaged and participated in the question and answer period.

The Daughters of Vartan was established in 1933 by the Knights of Vartan to work with them on their mission to serve the Armenian people. Its mission is to promote intellectual growth and leadership among Armenian women and to preserve Armenian heritage, culture, faith, language and values.

Merrimack Valley had a chapter, established in 1972 by Sylvia Tavitian and other dedicated women. When the chapter

dissolved in 2004, some members transferred to other chapters in the area. Today there are 18 Daughters of Vartan chapters in United States. The organization hopes a new chapter will start here again. To do so it needs 20 new members, the minimum to start a new chapter.

To join or for more information contact Susan Hazarvartian (hazarvartian@teppllc.com).

The Daughters of Vartan is an Armenian Sisterhood associated with the Knights of Vartan. It was organized in 1933 in Philadelphia. The Daughters of Vartan is an organization of women whose members are committed to the intellectual, personal and leadership development of Armenian women and families around the world, while also promoting Armenian heritage and Christian values through its 18 chapters across the US.

For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>



Attendees of the Merrimack Valley meeting

## Ararat Association of Rhode Island Makes More than \$500,000 in Donations

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — This past August, the Ararat Association of Rhode Island hosted its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Armenian Invitation Tournament, which proved to be the most successful in the organization's history.

From its beginning in 1983, the Ararat Association's purpose was primarily social and fraternal when six native Rhode Island Armenian professionals came together to form what is now known as the Ararat Association of Rhode Island. These individuals set out to participate in their community on a non-sectarian basis by forming a not-for-profit entity. Its main purpose

was to cultivate professional, social and cultural interaction amongst its founding members and the Rhode Island Armenian community at large.

The Ararat Association members are Charles J. Ajootian, K. Kenneth Bogosian, Stepan P. Kanarian, Kenneth R. Minasian, H. David Papazian, Richard K. Papazian and its Chairman- Alan G. Zartarian

In early spring of 1988, the group would sponsor its inaugural golf tournament to promote sportsmanship, fellowship and social interaction within the Armenian community. These initial goals were exceeded beyond all expectations and resulted in an extremely successful community and financial event for the Association. With this financial success, the Association found its real mission: to return all its event profits to various local Armenian organizations. Now thirty-eight years from its founding, the Ararat Association of RI is proud to report it has provided over \$500,000 of donations to more than 50 Rhode Island Armenian organizations and causes.

A partial list of recipients of The Ararat Association donations are the following:

Charles Yaghobian Scholarship Fund, Armenian Students Association, Armenian Martyrs Committee, Martyrs Youth Day, Husenig Foundation, Armenian Chorale, Hamazkayin, Homenetmen, Knights of Vartan, Armenian Saints Softball Team, Nazali and Siroun Dance Groups, ACYOA Juniors and Seniors, AYF Juniors and



Center: Alan Zartarian, Golf Chairman; From left, Ken Minasian, Ken Bogosian, Charlie Ajootian, Stephan Kanarian, David Papazian and Richard Papazian

Seniors, White Cross Project, Armenian Radio Hour, Armenian Historical Association of RI, Youth Soccer and Basketball, Mourad School Dance Costumes, ARS Ani Chapter, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Genocide, Women of 1915 Event, and Armenian Library and Museum.

In addition, the organizations of the Armenian Evangelical, Sts. Sahag and Mesrob

and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Churches include: Sunday Schools, Armenian Schools, Senior Citizens Bible Camp, Bible Camp Scholarships, Christian Education Committee, Church Cultural Committees, Bazaars, Picnics, Christmas and Easter Donations, Christmas Altar Flowers and multiple Thanksgiving and Christmas food certificates for individual parishioners.

## Season for Home Blessing

BLESSINGS, from page 7

can either distribute the wafer among themselves or keep it in a jar along with flour, salt, or rice.

During a Home Blessing, it is customary to burn incense, symbolizing the burning of our souls with our Lord's love. In his prayer the Psalmist said: "Let my prayer be counted as incense before Thee."

In the prayer of the Home Blessing the priest first asks for purity and abundance of the three gifts. Then he blesses the home and all its inhabitants, asks God to keep them away from visible and invisible enemies, and prays that God will protect them and grant them health of soul and body.

Reviving a Meaningful Practice

The Home Blessing is a meaningful religious service that can bring the entire family together in holiness. Through this ceremony faith is replenished and strengthened, and the presence of our Lord is felt.

The beautiful tradition of the Home Blessing was once an annual routine for every Armenian Christian family. In modern times it had fallen into disuse, but has regained momentum in recent years, as more than ever before, families feel a need to acknowledge the presence Christ in their homes and lives.

You can contact your local pastor to schedule the service in your own home.

Prepare for the service by placing a glass of water, a small dish of salt, and a slice of bread on a tray. The priest will bring incense, charcoal, and incense burner and whatever else he needs with him.

## What's in a Name?: Language, Politics of the Armenian Genocide, and Medz Yeghern by Dr. Vartan Matiossian

FRESNO — Dr. Vartan Matiossian, executive director of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church, will speak on "What's in a Name: Language, the Politics of the Armenian Genocide, and Medz Yeghern" at 7 p.m. (Pacific time) on Friday, January 28. The presentation is part of the Spring 2022 Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Matiossian's new book, *The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide: Language, History, and "Medz Yeghern"*, explores the genealogy of the concept of Medz Yeghern ("Great Crime"), the Armenian term widely used for the genocide

of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The subject has been both omitted and misinterpreted in historiography.

The presentation will make reference to the etymology and the history of the word yeghern, its use parallel to "genocide" after 1945, and its political and historical implications, drawing from a vast array of instances of its use and misuse by politicians, journalists and others, particularly Pope John Paul II, the 2008 apology campaign by a group of Turkish intellectuals, and the last four presidents of the United States.

Matiossian obtained his PhD in history from the Institute of History of the Na-

tional Academy of Sciences of Armenia in 2006. He lives in New Jersey.

He has published extensively in Armenian, Spanish and English, including the translation of almost two dozen books and the editing of 25 volumes, as well as five books of his authorship in Armenian, one in Spanish, and two in English. His next book in English, co-authored with Artsvi Bakhchinyan, is forthcoming from the Press at California State University, Fresno: *An Armenian Woman of the World: The Life and Work of Armen Ohanian, the "Dancer of Shamakha."*

Zoom Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesmatiossian>





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# A Group of Dreamers Helps Revitalize Gyumri with Technology

DREAMERS, from page 7

female,” she said with understandable pride. “Women can be better leaders, but the most important factor is to be professional. Women should perform as professionals,” she stressed, clarifying her position.

Since the pandemic began two years ago, GITC courses have been online. Since 2005 GITC supported more than 5000 young people to enter the burgeoning IT industry of Armenia. Many found positions, including senior ones with the most famous tech companies. There are more than 200 students in its various technical education program annually.

“GITC is unique,” she declared, “because it offers low fee technical education that is in high demand by employers. Though technical education is not cheap, it can develop and empower young people,” she added. “Thanks to the Fund for Armenian Relief, which subsidizes our trainings, it became affordable for young people, especially those coming from poor families. It is one of the few industries in Armenia where there are more jobs available.”

She stressed, it “is the only important

ed young Armenians GITC is partnering with international and local organizations to support specific groups of populations in Armenia. “After Artsakh war we have been providing tech skills to the veterans and family members of martyred soldiers through the funding from Armenian Bold Women Association, UMCOR Armenia, and Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America. Up to 100 beneficiaries have already graduated this year and are ready to enter the IT labor market.

Another valuable partner is Armenian Educational Foundation based in California, as Yeghoyan mentioned. AEF supported the establishment of Deep Engineering Laboratory and the program for high school students in Gyumri Polytechnic high school.

Twenty-two year old student Ani Vardanyan was born in Russia and came to Armenia with her family in 2007. A graduate of the Polytechnic University in Yerevan, she understood at age 17 that technology, as a growing sector, is her field. Though a student at GITC, she applied for a job and was admitted to Solicy Company in Yere-



Shoghik Grigoryan

the job interview in order to be a good employee.”

Armenia, she said, “is top in high technical innovation and research creativity.” There are up to 800 IT companies in Armenia that have hired 20,000 IT workers, and GITC graduates enter the field, with 90 percent employment.

For Ani, GITC “was so inspiring” with its advantages of “huge teamwork.” She readily shares her knowledge with other students and even trains others with them. “I owe all this to GITC.”

Shoghik Grigoryan, born in 1989 in Gyumri, graduated from Yerevan State University, and then completed the full GITC program. Later she got married and moved to Stepanakert.

“I received general theoretical knowledge at the university, but GITC allowed me to choose a specific programming profession.” This led to a job offer upon graduation in her favorite field. “I attach great importance to the period of study there. It gave me professional knowledge, but also the experience that I later applied to my teaching methods at Artsakh State University.” She also taught at Shushi Technological College.

During the start of the 44-day tragic war, she was in Artsakh, and moved to shelters, then to Armenia with the women and children. Her husband stayed to defend the

homeland. “The war changed almost everything in our lives. Thousands of Armenians, including my students, relatives and friends gave the ultimate sacrifice,” she said. Luckily, her husband survived.

She added, “The pain, anger and fear are still lingering. But Artsakh needs us more now. Of course, I will continue to live here, when my people need all of us more now.” Artsakh is in “great need of the GITC program, because as we became convinced during the war, it is critical to have qualified specialists the field of IT.”

GITC, she continued, “was the only established institution during my studies that provided practical knowledge for requirements of the labor market. The important role of the Gyumri center is great because it is constantly evolving, innovating, and basing its teachings on the demand of the IT market. It was number one when I studied, and it is number one today.”

“There are always new challenges but as we look out into the future we hope to scale GITC with new approaches such as distance learning and self-paced online instruction to reach even more students .Armenia is blessed with a vast resource of talented STEM students, our job is to prepare them to compete for those jobs anywhere in the world and help young people become more optimistic about their future in Armenia,” concluded Dennis Tarzian.



Amalya Yeghoyan

program to prevent young talented people from leaving Armenia, and this is true for all developing countries. Technology is the answer.”

Apart from providing tech education and employment opportunities to talent-

van as a software developer.

She related that IT development in Armenia is the key to making her country wealthy. Enthusiastically, she praised the GITC program which she said gave her “the technical skills, as well as training for

## February Deadline for Armenian Assembly Summer Internships

Washington, D.C. - The Armenian Assembly of America’s application deadline for its 2022 Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Summer Internship Program in Washington, D.C., and the Assembly’s Yerevan Internship Program in Yerevan, Armenia, is on Tuesday, February 1, 2022. Barring COVID-19 restrictions, both programs are on track to resume in June 2022.

The influential internship programs in Washington, D.C. and Yerevan provide college students of Armenian descent an opportunity to experience two vibrant capitals, and participate in a full slate of educational, cultural, networking, and social activities throughout the eight-week

duration, including a “Lecture Series” program that features leading entrepreneurs, academics, civic leaders, and public policy makers.

Participants also regularly intern and meet with Members of Congress through the “Capitol Ideas” program. Past meetings with U.S. elected officials have included former Senator Bob Dole (R-KS), former House Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA), Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), along with the leadership of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, and among other noted politicians.

Internship placements in D.C. include congressional, think tanks, media, and

governmental agencies, whereas students admitted into the Yerevan Internship Program may intern with Armenian governmental offices, NGOs, think tanks, museums, media outlets, medical centers, and more. Throughout the course of two months, participants in the Yerevan Internship Program will experience life in their ancestral homeland, tour historical sites around Armenia, and meet Armenian officials, while forming friendships with fellow Armenians in the homeland and from around the globe.

For details or assistance with the application process, contact Intern Program Director Joseph Piatt at [jpiatt@aaainc.org](mailto:jpiatt@aaainc.org).



Lucine Beylerian, Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), 2019





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# JSAS Releases Volume 28.1 on the Theme of Performance

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies announced recently the release of Volume 28, Issue 1 (Spring 2021) of the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (JSAS), edited by Tamar M. Boyadjian (Michigan State University) and Rachel Goshgarian (Lafayette College). This volume of the JSAS includes four articles, one film review, one museum review, the newly created Matenadaran Review of Books, seven book reviews, and one article in the newly created On Graduate Studies section.

The articles are centered around the theme of performance by examining the cultural and social engagements of Armenians, the positionalities of these performers, and how they produce change through the arts and humanities. Topics found within this issue include theater, film noir, music in the Armenian diaspora, liturgy and ritual, and the individual's inner world.

The volume begins with a study by Ayse Kadioglu of the departure of Eliza Binemeciyan, a prominent Armenian star of the theater, from Istanbul. Kadioglu's article, "Leaving a Life Behind: Eliza Binemeciyan's Encounter with 'the Banality of Evil,'" details the decline of cosmopolitanism and the rise of nationalism and Turkification policies in Istanbul. By shifting the attention from Binemeciyan's absence to her presence, Kadioglu highlights the impact that the actress had in creating and sustaining Istanbul's theaters at the turn of the 20th century.

Sylvia Angelique Alajaji explores making music in the Armenian diaspora in "The Soundscapes of Our Elsewheres," a conversation with ethnomusicologist Lara Sarkissian. As a music composer, filmmaker, sound artist, and producer, Sarkissian delved into her Armenian experience and examined the ways in which it came to shape her art. Sarkissian discussed music and identity, "I don't see this as visible or put out there, so why don't I put this out there for my Iranian Armenian family and stories and see who that connects me to or who finds that also familiar to them."

Kaveh Askari provided an in-depth study of crime films directed by Samuel Khachikian in "Samuel Khachikian and the Crime Thriller in Iran." Askari discussed the mixed feelings brought on by the crime film genre in Tehran, Iran in the late 1950s and early '60s by dissecting Khachikian's work. The small film community of midcentury Iran took part in constituting the global vernacular of film noir where one could according to Askari, "engage the promise of cinema, sometimes with playful enthusiasm about its possibilities and sometimes with a cynicism or anxiety about broken promises."

In following a deep dive into an artist's work, Greg Levonian explores the many forms of home, which permeate William Saroyan's works. In "William Saroyan's Dream of Home," Levonian looks through Saroyan's works to showcase hope for the hopeless and adrift. By analyzing



Eliza Binemeciyan

Saroyan's depictions of home in his works, Levonian depicts hope to symbolize fresh beginnings and possibility — factors which make our existence worthwhile.

Arto Vaun recounts visiting the Parajanov Museum in Yerevan in, "A Museum, a World, a Poem: The Parajanov Museum as an Answer to Disorientation," where Vaun embraces the artwork of Parajanov and draws deeper connections to his personal experiences and current affairs in Armenia. Sergei Parajanov's inner world could be seen through his collages displayed in the museum — where his



Filmmaker Samuel Khachikian

mind was free to roam past his immediate imprisonment and the rules of social realism dictated by the Soviet Union. The Parajanov Museum is one that is the most "soulful and sublime space" for Vaun, who depicts his countless visits to the colorful and full-of-life museum as a comforting space during difficult times.

The final full-length article is "Performing Ritual, Ritualizing Performance: Objects that Act" by graduate students Elena Gittleman (Bryn Mawr College) and Erin Piñon (Princeton University). Gittleman and Piñon comment on the role of performance in their work and provide a theoretical framework for understanding objects in ritual. In one-part Gittleman and Piñon examine Lenore Torgler Hughes's *A Pictorial Guide to the Badarak or Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church*, which serves to inform and guide children by providing clear liturgical cues. In continuing their discussion, Piñon and Gittleman show, "the necessity, but also the difficulties, of bridging art history with theology, linguistics, anthropology, and performance studies — fields once considered tangential, or even well beyond it."

Additionally Hayk Hambardzumyan, head of Publishing of the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts shared an article on books published in 2020 by the Institute. Books included in the summary and those from prior years could be read on the digital library section of the Matenadaran website: [www.matenadaran.am](http://www.matenadaran.am).

In addition to these articles, Volume 28, Issue 1 also contains a film review and several book reviews.

The journal concludes with final words from Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln) in the passage, *In Memoriam*, Dr. George Bournoutian (1943–2021). Der Matossian shared the loss of Bournoutian, one of the most prominent figures in the Society for Armenian Studies who had been a member since its inception.

Commenting on this issue Der Matossian, the president of the SAS said: "The richness of this volume on performance is just breathtaking. It shows how JSAS has become one of the most important mediums for publishing first class articles in the field of Armenian Studies. This would not have taken place without the visionary approach of Tamar M. Boyadjian and Rachel Goshgarian. Their dedication and commitment to advancing the field of Armenian Studies is astounding."

Boyadjian continues as the Editor-in-chief. The Reviews and Reconsiderations Editor was Goshgarian. The Advisory Board consists of: Bedross Der Matossian, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Barlow Der Mugrdchian, California State University, Fresno; Sergio La Porta, California State University Fresno; Sharon Kinoshita, University of California, Santa Cruz; Jyotsna Singh, Michigan State University; and Alison Vacca, Columbia University. The Editorial Board consists of: Sebouh Aslanian, University of Califor-



A self-portrait by Sergei Parajanov

nia; Stephan Astourian, University of California, Berkeley; Marie-Aude Baronian, Universiteit van Amsterdam; Hourii Berberian, University of California, Irvine; Talar Chahinian, University of California, Irvine; Hratch Tchilingirian, University of Oxford; Myrna Douzjian, University of California, Berkeley; Shushan Karapetian, University of Southern California; David Kazanjian, University of Pennsylvania; Lilit Keshishyan, University of Southern California; Tsolin Nalbantian, Universiteit Leiden; Christina Maranci, Tufts University; Elyse Semerdjian, Whitman College; and Heghnar Watenpaugh, University of California, Davis.

The journal can be accessed at <https://brill.com/view/journals/jsas/jsas-overview.xml>. If you are an SAS member please contact the SAS Executive Secretary, Katarina Terzyan by email at [execsecretary.sas@gmail.com](mailto:execsecretary.sas@gmail.com) for either a print copy or online access to the volume.





# Arts & Culture

## Women Unveiled

### The Promise Of a Woman’s Difference

By Arpi Sarafian  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

LOS ANGELES — On a recent visit to ABRIL bookstore in Glendale, I picked up copies of Zabel Yessayan’s *Captive Nights* and of Shushanik Kurghinian’s *I Want To Live*. While I was familiar with Yessayan, and had read some of her oeuvre, I was on an adventure to discover Kurghinian. As I read on, I was struck by the daring of the two women, both writing in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in demanding the fair treatment of all oppressed groups.

“Every trace of servitude must be/uprooted, demolished, undone!” vows the speaker in Kurghinian’s “A Curse.” Likewise, seated next to her little one’s cradle, the narrator in Yessayan’s *Enough!*, one of the three novellas in *Captive Nights*, summons her little one “to struggle, so that your head is never bowed in servility.”

Kurghinian’s is a passionate plea for a woman’s right to live fully. The boldness of:

Do not love me gently as if  
I were a blooming flower in spring,

.....  
Let me taste the poison of anguish courageously, with you;  
Let me relish freedom, and speak my mind,  
Striving for the light of deliverance.

.....  
I want to live a worthy life—  
is shocking for her time, and stunning even today.

Both Kurghinian and Yessayan defy the cultural expectations of submission for a woman. In *The Veil—Scenes from Harem Life*, Yessayan depicts the horror of Ali Hasan’s dominion over his wife Adileh. Adileh owes “obedience and absolute acquiescence . . . to her lord and master,” even if he should return home late at night inebriated, and violently throw his wife to the ground, or spend long hours joking and giggling with the maid in Adileh’s intimate quarters. In Adileh’s mother-in-law’s words, “It makes no difference what it was or what he does. He’s a man.”

The persona in Kurghinian’s “My Mind Is An Eagle,” rages against her oppression and wants to rekindle the fire of “My mind . . . accustomed to servitude/and tattered by loss, forcefully smothered/ . . . with a spark of vengeance.” Kurghinian curses all those who enslave and hold in bondage. The poet speaks of “a poor worker’s pain without a salve;” of the seamstress who “will surely sink into her grave,/the vain cross of suffering on her shoulder,” and of the

see UNVEILED, page 15



Clara Barton’s birthplace, now a museum, in North Oxford, Massachusetts, is featured in the film

## ‘The American Good Samaritans’

*New Film Relates Story of American Help to Armenians during Genocide*

Haykaram Nahapetyan  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

An Armenian actor acting as Ambassador Henry Morgenthau reads cables from various American sources that relate the realities of the Armenian massacres. Another man, acting as American diplomat Leslie Davis, photographs the violent scenes with an old-fashioned camera. Then a woman, dressed as Clara Barton, is looking into a vintage mirror, preparing for a trip to the Ottoman Empire to help the suffering Armenians. These featured scenes based on historical realities are from a new Armenian film that showcases the story of the American people who supported the Armenians during the 1915 Genocide and Hamidian massacres.

“The American Good Samaritans” by producer Manvel Saribekyan combines documentary and historical fiction approaches. Saribekyan declared: “Documentaries about the Armenian Genocide are often hard to watch — I mean emotionally. Therefore, I chose to add some fictional scenes that visualize the deeds of historical characters. This was the second film in which I applied such tactics.” His first film was the “Map of Salvation,” which showcased the story of European missionaries that assisted Armenian people during the most tragic period of Armenian history.

While working on his first film in 2015, Saribekyan understood that the geography of good Samaritans was vast. Therefore, while his second film focused on American missionaries, the third one will tell about people from Australia and New Zealand.

For “The American Good Samaritans,” Saribekyan’s crew conducted interviews in the US as well as Lebanon, Greece, Turkey and Iran. Among the interviewees were Dr. Rouben Adalian (Armenian-American historian), Dr. Sargon Donabed (Assyrian-American author), Dr. Levon Avdoyan (a former specialist at the Library of Congress), Dr. Antranik Dakessian (associate professor at Haigazian University in Lebanon), Garo Mardirossian (lawyer), Shant Mardirossian (director of the Near East Foundation), Karen Mkrdchyan (researcher from Iran), Dominica Macios (researcher from Poland) and Dr. Konstantinos Fotiadis (historian from Greece).

The author of this article was honored to be part of the working team in the United States. To the best of my knowledge this is the first documentary on Genocide (perhaps on any subject) produced in Armenia that was recorded in so many different geographic locations.

“When pursuing the project, I discovered many interesting stories about American missionaries and doctors, as well as about the history of the Armenian communities,” said Saribekyan, adding that the crew worked in six countries in total. In America alone, recordings took place at the Library of Congress, Harvard and Princeton Universities, Rockefeller Archive Center, the birthplace of Clara Barton, and several other

see SAMARITANS, page 13



Dr. Paul Levine, left, with Dr. Rouben Adalian

## A Variety of Styles on View At 2021 AGBU Film Screenings

By Christopher Atamian  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

NEW YORK — The 2021 AGBU Fifth Annual Short Film Screenings highlighted a new generation of filmmakers. Each year, the AGBU screens five or six promising shorts. This year’s films, screened in October at Lincoln Center, showcased emerging filmmakers at ease behind the camera, taking on themes that reflect a wide range of interests— all were technically superb. Themes included social media abuse, caring for the aged, a mysterious landscape where a painting comes to life, and more traditionally Armenian themes such as the Medz Yeghern. Kudos to AGBU



Nora Ananyan

Performing Arts Director Hayk Arsenyan and his Selection Committee, who yearly have the challenging job of selecting from a variety of cinematic styles.

•“An Armenian Triptych: Retracing Our Steps,” marks the second collaboration between a talented trio of artists: musician Aram Bajakian, fine artist Kevork Mourad, and poet Alan Semerdjian. As a team they make elegant, poetic work that incorporates history, memory and the longing for



Ara Bajakian

a partly unknown and unknowable past. The present work is an ode to their grandfathers, all three of whom were both artists and genocide survivors. As Semerdjian reads a lovingly crafted poem, Mourad draws a world of Armenian things past: a door with Armenian carvings, an interior redolent of the orient. The work is touching and an interesting experiment in taking video and moving it to the big screen.

•Bryan Firks’ “Older Posts” takes us into the dark world of an aging social media influencer who wishes to be young again — but when her wish is granted, her posts decay into gruesome disfigurements. Like Dorian Grey, she too learns that inordinate love of self is ultimately destructive. This modern primer on hubris shows much promise and a definite cinematic point of view.

•Nora Ananyan’s “What We Can

see SCREENING, page 13





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Variety of Styles on View at 2021 AGBU Film Screenings

SCREENING, from page 12

Still Do” takes the viewer into a hospice center where a daughter cares for her aging mother. It’s a touching film that uses static shots and close ups to show a loving mother-daughter bond. It’s particularly pertinent given the aging population in most Western countries — a problem that all must face sooner or later.

•Painter Carl Milton is haunted by recurring nightmares in Nina Kotyantz’s “Phantom Valley.” A black wolf materializes from one of his sketches and leads him to an abandoned farmhouse and a mysterious old medicine woman. The woman and her farmhouse resemble his nightmares so much that he accepts to stay with her. It’s a land caught between life and death. The film is beautifully shot, with an open-ended resolution that leaves the viewer wondering how to interpret what he has just seen.

•Chanel Tossounian’s documentary short “Look Up” quite correctly diagnoses social media obsession as a current societal ailment — among both young and old. We follow two young women and listen to them self-diagnose: we’d love to see Chanel follow up on this theme in the future.

•Gary Gananian’s “No Thanks” is a beautifully shot piece about three friends partaking in a lighthearted drug-induced romp. Gananian certainly has a future mak-



Post screening Q&A, moderated by Nana Shakhnazaryan (photo Yu Jian)

ing fashion videos if that is what he is aiming for: with a scripted version of this film, he might have something truly dazzling on his hands.

Arsenyan noted: “It’s such a gratifying

feeling to host an in-person event again, and especially returning to the Film Society of Lincoln Center. The films encompass an entire spectrum of styles, themes, and languages. The idea is to showcase Armenian

talent within the larger scope of the global arts.” Part of fun in attending this type of screening is trying to imagine which filmmakers will break through and become tomorrow’s new cinematic stars.



Opening Remarks, AGBU Performing Arts Director Hayk Arsenyan (photo Yu Jian)



Filmmaker Gananian from Brazil during the post screening Q&A (photo Yu Jian)

## New Film Relates Story of American Help to Armenians during Genocide

SAMARITANS, from page 12

locations related to the subject. The crew visited the grave of Ambassador Morgenthau in New York.

Although the National Cinema Center of Armenia was the main sponsor of the film,



Manvel Saribekyan

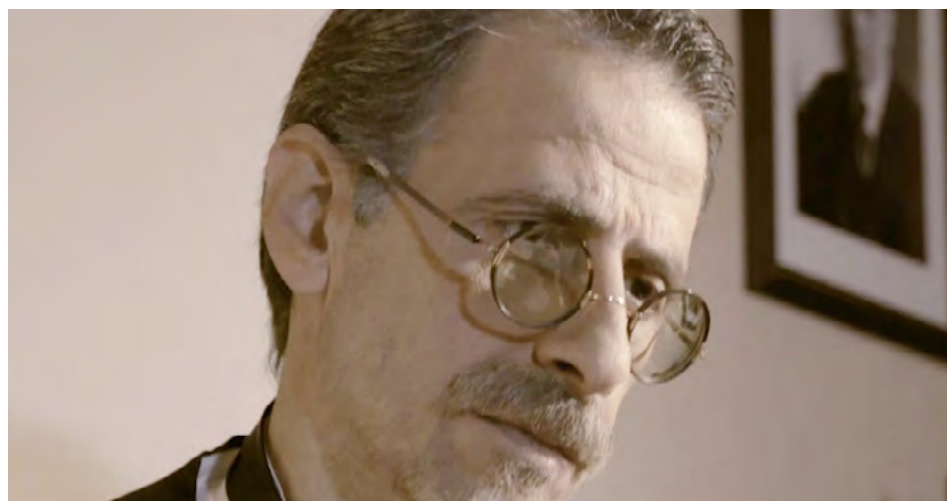
the project wouldn’t have been carried out if not for the never-ending support of the Armenian-American community and organizations, said Saribekyan. The assistance of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, the Knights of Vartan, Mardiros-

sian-Agaragian LCC, and the Hamazkayin and Armenian Relief Society chapters of Thessaloniki was instrumental.

One of the central characters of the American Good Samaritans was ethnic American-Swedish historian of Jewish origin Dr. Paul Levine, who traveled with the crew, visiting historical sites and archives. “Both lucky coincidences and misfortunes happened during the working process,” said Saribekyan, specifying that the saddest event was Paul’s unexpected



An Armenian actor portraying American diplomat Leslie Davis



An Armenian actor portraying US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau

passing away. “We were in Turkey when we learned about Paul Levine’s demise. We had to make a difficult choice: terminate the project or continue by adjusting the structure of the film to the new circumstances. Thank God, the director of the film and the cameraman were able to make the necessary changes to finish the project,” Saribekyan added.

The premiere screening of “The Good American Samaritans” took place in Los Angeles at the Arpa Armenian Film Festival in November 2021.

The video segment represents the feedback from the audience and segments from the American Good Samaritans film.





ARTS & CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

## The Silkiest Soup

### Andrew Janjigian’s Tanabour (Armenian Yogurt And Barley Soup)

These two recipes are contributed by writer, recipe developer, and baking instructor Andrew Janjigian, and were originally featured in *Cook’s Illustrated* (August 3, 2021). Permission was received from America’s Test Kitchen to reprint these recipes. (<https://www.cooksillustrated.com/articles/3513-the-silkiest-soup>).

First, soften chopped onion in butter along with pinches of dried mint, salt, and pepper. Add korkot (dried or roasted cracked wheat; the traditional choice, though other grains can be used), pour in water or broth (I like the savoriness of chicken broth), and simmer until the korkot is tender and the liquid is velvety with its starch.

Next, whisk in lots of whole-milk yogurt (store-bought is fine), taking care to prevent the acidic dairy from curdling. Bolster it with a little flour and/or an egg or yolk and gently warm it through. Ladle out steaming portions, and then perk up the neutral tones with green (fresh herbs) and amber (spiced melted butter). Yogurt brings milky tang — and an exceptional satiny texture — to the soothing Armenian soup known as tanabour.

Dried mint is widely used in Middle Eastern cooking; its flavor is quite different from that of fresh mint, so if you can’t find it, it’s better to omit it than to substitute fresh. Chicken broth gives the soup added depth, but it can be replaced with water or vegetable broth. We prefer the richness of whole-milk Greek yogurt here, but low-fat can be used; avoid nonfat. If Aleppo pepper is unavailable, substitute 1 teaspoon of paprika and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Fresh parsley or mint, or a combination of the two, can be substituted for the cilantro.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- Pinch of baking soda
- 3/4 cup pearl barley
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups water
- 11/2 cups plain Greek yogurt
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground dried Aleppo pepper
- Serves 6
- Total Time: 1 1/2 hours

PREPARATION:

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, mint, salt, pepper, and baking soda. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onion has broken down into soft paste and is just starting to stick to saucepan, 6 to 8 minutes.

Stir in barley. Cook, stirring frequently, until grains are translucent around edges, about 3 minutes. Add broth and water. Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Adjust heat to maintain gentle simmer; cook, partially covered, until barley is very tender, 50 minutes to 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, whisk yogurt and egg yolk together in large bowl.

Remove saucepan from heat. Whisking vigorously, gradually add 2 cups barley mixture to yogurt mixture. Stirring constantly, add yogurt-barley mixture back to saucepan. Cover and let sit for 10 minutes to thicken.

Heat soup over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until temperature registers between 180 and 185 degrees (do not allow soup to boil or yogurt will curdle). Remove from heat. Soup should have consistency of buttermilk; if thicker, adjust by adding hot water, 2 tablespoons at a time. Stir in 2 tablespoons cilantro and season with salt to taste.

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in small skillet over medium-high heat. Off heat, stir in Aleppo pepper. Ladle soup into bowls, drizzle each portion with 1 teaspoon spiced butter, sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons cilantro, and serve. (Leftovers can be refrigerated for up to 3 days; reheat gently, being careful not to allow temperature to exceed 180 degrees. If necessary, thin by adding water, 2 tablespoons at a time.)

Note from Andrew: Barley has the ideal soft, plump, distinct texture, and it releases the right amount of starch into the surrounding soup. Greek yogurt provides good thickness and body without too much acidity. A ratio of 1 1/2 cups of yogurt to 6 cups of liquid strikes the right balance.

Temperature is more important than a stabilizer; keeping the soup between 180 and 185 degrees is key. The starch from the barley also helps prevent the yogurt from curdling.

### Madzoon ov Kofte (Armenian Yogurt and Meatball Soup)

*Madzoon ov kofte* is a nourishing, filling, and thoroughly satisfying Armenian meatball-and-yogurt soup. We made ours into a one-dish meal by including pasta and chickpeas. We used Greek yogurt, since it gave the soup the requisite thickness and dairy richness without leaving it overly tart. We added an egg yolk to give the soup further richness and a silky consistency. Unlike the time-consuming stuffed, spiced meatballs that are more traditional here, we opted for easy-to-make meatballs from ground beef and bulgur. Finally, we garnished the soup with cilantro and Aleppo pepper–infused melted butter.

If Aleppo pepper is unavailable, substitute 2 teaspoons of paprika and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Dried mint is widely used in Middle Eastern cooking; its flavor is quite different from that of fresh mint, so if you can’t find it, it’s better to omit it than to substitute fresh. You can substitute small elbow macaroni for the pasta shells. We prefer the richness of whole-milk Greek yogurt here, but low-fat can be used; avoid nonfat. Fresh parsley or mint, or a combination of the two, can be substituted for the cilantro.

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 ounces 85 percent lean ground beef
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 3/4 teaspoons table salt, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda, divided
- 1/2 cup medium-grind bulgur, rinsed
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, divided
- 2 teaspoons ground dried Aleppo pepper, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper, divided
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, undrained
- 4 ounces (1 cup) small pasta shells
- 1 1/2 cups plain Greek yogurt
- 1 large egg yolk
- Serves 6
- Total Time: 1 1/4 hours

PREPARATION:

Toss beef with water, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon baking soda in bowl until thoroughly combined. Add bulgur, 1 tablespoon cilantro, 1 teaspoon Aleppo pepper, coriander, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and mix by hand until uniform. Transfer meat mixture to cutting board and press into 6-inch square. Using bench scraper or sharp knife, divide mixture into 36 squares (6 rows by 6 rows). Using your lightly moistened hands, roll each square into smooth ball and leave on cutting board.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, mint, remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt, remaining 1/8 teaspoon baking soda, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onion has broken down into soft paste and is just starting to stick to saucepan, 6 to 8 minutes.

Add broth, chickpeas and their liquid, and meatballs to saucepan. Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Adjust heat to maintain simmer and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add pasta and continue to cook until pasta is tender. While pasta cooks, whisk yogurt and egg yolk together in large bowl.

Remove saucepan from heat. Using ladle, transfer 11/2 cups broth to liquid measuring cup (try to avoid meatballs, pasta, and chickpeas). Whisking vigorously, gradually add broth to yogurt mixture. Add half of yogurt-broth mixture back to saucepan and stir to combine. Stir in remaining yogurt-broth mixture. Cover and let sit for 10 minutes to thicken.

Heat soup over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until temperature registers between 180 and 185 degrees (do not allow soup to boil or yogurt will curdle). Remove from heat. Broth should have consistency of buttermilk; if thicker, adjust by adding hot water, 2 tablespoons at a time. Stir in 1 tablespoon cilantro and season with salt to taste.

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in small skillet over medium-high heat. Off heat, stir in remaining 1 teaspoon Aleppo pepper. Ladle soup into bowls, drizzle each portion with 1 teaspoon spiced butter, sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons cilantro, and serve. (Leftovers can be refrigerated for up to 3 days; reheat gently, being careful not to allow temperature to exceed 180 degrees. If necessary, thin by adding water, 2 tablespoons at a time.)

References:

- <https://wordloaf.substack.com/p/subscriber-preview-recipe-sourdough>
- <https://www.instagram.com/wordloaf/?hl=en>
- <https://www.serious-eats.com/andrew-janjigian-5118549>
- <https://www.hisour.com/armenian-cuisine-36579/>
- <https://www.masshist.org/object-of-the-month/objects/colombo-yogurt-a-massachusetts-success-story-2004-06-01>
- <https://armenianweekly.com/2018/12/06/meet-the-family-making-yogurt-with-a-healthy-serving-of-armenian-culture/>
- <http://thegutsgourmet.net/yogurt.html>
- <http://thegutsgourmet.net/yog.html>
- <https://www.tasteatlas.com/most-popular-soups-in-armenia>
- <https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/author/andrew-janjigian>
- <https://armenianweekly.com/2018/05/04/bob-colombosian/>





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Women Unveiled: The Promise of a Woman's Difference

UNVEILED, from page 12

refugee woman, “exiled from life, wounded in heart.” The “ugly past” Kurghinian depicts is the even uglier present, for we continue to hate, to oppress and to kill, except we do it on a larger scale.

kan peoples’ fight against oppression, and further highlights the evil of war and of all repressions.

In his *Memoirs* (Yerevan, 1978), commenting on Zabel Yessayan’s words to her students on the first day of class at the uni-

est legacy of these revolutionary women, who aim to reform the world through compassion, kindness and understanding, attributes historically regarded as feminine. (The fight against tyrannies is of course not limited to women).

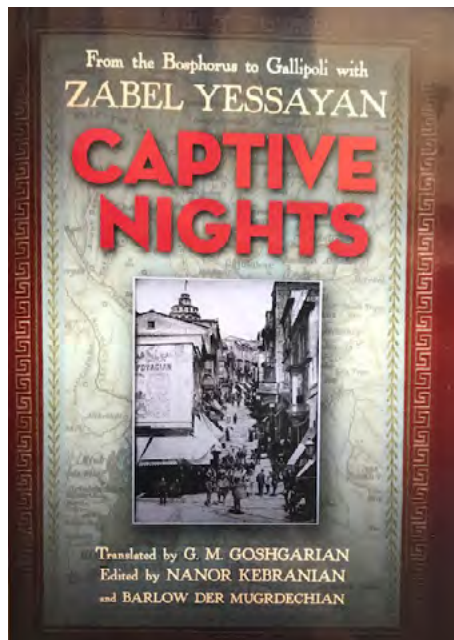
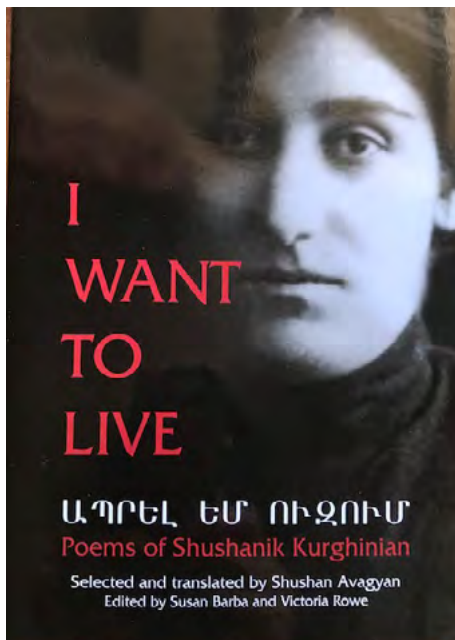
The more things change, the more they stay the same is a cliché many would refute today, given the visibility of women in all spheres of life. Yet, the fact that women’s writing is sought after and read eagerly, receiving both critical and popular acclaim, evidences that women have much to offer the world. The numerous books by female authors displayed on the shelves of ABRIL bookstore is telling. Besides fiction and poetry, these books include titles about the recent war in Artsakh, about Armenian women’s fight for the homeland, and other cultural and social issues. They evidence that women are deeply involved in the fight for justice, and that they can indeed write beyond romance and domesticity.

This surge in interest in women’s voices is a move in the right direction. It is, in fact, an uncanny affirmation of the need for compassion and tenderness to ring in a new hopefulness. The surge indicates belief in the possibility of bringing light in the

midst of darkness, of greeting “the brand-new dawn with assurance [with] no dread or fear.” Kurghinian’s gift to her daughter “when I depart,” of a “Me” that has “the strength to shatter the chains of ignorance/cast from these/dark black days,” attests that the voice of her “rebel soul” will sing with the “selfless and proud workers, who . . . struggle stoically for existence.”

Let our voices from an awakened life greet the brand-new dawn with assurance, and let our hearts not feel dread or fear for the degenerate glory of a decayed rule.

While it is true that in *The Veil*—Scenes from Harem Life, Adileh dons the “veil” in death — her father “completely veiled his daughter’s face with the shroud” when her husband tried to pull it back to see her one last time — it is also true that, rather than “reinforce her husband’s dominion over her” by “drowning her grief in silence and resignation,” Adileh “unveils” herself and, defying the “chains of established custom,” chooses “to flee her pain, to flee her hellish torments.” Recovery remains a possibility.



“It is enough, this diseased ugly past,” writes Kurghinian in “A Curse.” “Enough! Enough!” reiterates Yessayan in *Enough!* It is highly ironic that we should need voices singing over a hundred years ago to find it in ourselves to exclaim, “Enough!”

Indeed, through the rhythm of, “war was declared,” “blood is being spilled,” and “the ominous cry of . . . We want war,” Yessayan makes us aware of the full horror of war, of the “the terror and dread” of Rumelia steadily approaching the capital and the Ottoman army retreating in defeat.

“It was as if a whole world were sobbing,” muses the narrator as the caravans of settlers from Rumelia, “squeezed together like animals,” migrate into inner Asia. Yessayan’s use of nature imagery, “the oppressive, humid air,” “the gloomy autumn evening,” the “thick, disquieting darkness,” confirms Nature’s empathy with the Bal-

versity in Yerevan, “If you are bored you may feel free not to come. I have always believed that one should avoid the use of coercion in these matters, because coercion offends the soul,” Rouben Zarian, one of Armenia’s eminent literary figures, writes: “This gift of freedom bound us to her more effectively than any authoritarian regulation . . . and we grew very fond of her. We just loved her.” Of her last lecture, “more of an informal talk actually,” Zarian writes: “These were self-evident, simple truths, but she expressed them in such a way that they acquired a new poignancy, depth, and brilliance.”

It is the immediacy of the two women’s appeal that ushers in the possibility of change. Kurghinian and Yessayan awaken us to the realization that hatred and tyranny are not a solution to the misery of the world. This awakening must be the great-

## New Novel Explores Strain of Caring for Elderly Parent

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — Full Court Press announce this month the release of M. B. Yakoubian’s *There’s Nothing Wrong With Her: A Memoir* (ISBN 978-0-578-88647-3, 292 pp., \$19.95), now available for purchase on Amazon and Barnes&Noble.com.

This intimate portrait of an intergenerational Armenian-American family explores in detail how managing the care of an aging mother explodes into deepening conflict between her daughter and son.

“Thrust into the Syrian desert by the Ottoman Turks,” writes Yakoubian, “young Elise and her mother survived the 1915 Armenian death march. Twenty years later, her new life in America is more than she could ever have dreamed possible. The dream ends when her husband Leon dies and she is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. . . . Leon saved enough for her to get by after his death. But he didn’t think their lawyer son would turn his eye to those meager savings. Elise’s advancing dementia dimmed her awareness of the family strife swirling around her that would mark the last five years of her life.” Readers will not easily forget this searing, close-up view of helping a dependent mother from a thousand miles away—or its warning.



**FRESNO STATE**

Armenian Studies Program



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

**“VAHAN TEKEYAN: SELECTED POEMS”**

**ԳԻՆԵՏՁՈՒ-BOOK LAUNCH**

DEDICATED TO THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF THE TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

ԱՅՍ ԶԱՏԱԳԻՐԸ ՆՈՒՒՐՈՒՄ Է  
ԹԷԿԵԱՆ ՄԵԱՎՈՐԱՅԻՆ ՄԻՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՀԻՄՆԱԴՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ 75 ԱՄԵԱԿԻՆ

WITH PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN  
ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM, FRESNO STATE



**Friday, March 11, 2022 • 7:30PM**

**Tekeyan Center-1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena, CA**

**Յայտագիրը Անգլերենով և Հայերենով**

For more information: Armenian Studies Program  
<http://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies> or  
[info@TekeyanLA.org](mailto:info@TekeyanLA.org) • [facebook.com/TekeyanLA](https://www.facebook.com/TekeyanLA) • [@TekeyanLA](https://www.instagram.com/TekeyanLA)

## CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NEW YORK

**OCTOBER 15 — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York Chapter is celebrating its diamond anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.**



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Patrick Malakian

## ‘If We Face Our Problems, We Will Solve Them’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — French-Armenian director Patrick Malakian has been a frequent visitor to Armenia during last years. He was born in 1963 in Boulogne-Billancourt; he is the son of renowned filmmaker Henri Verneuil (Ashot Malakian, 1920-2002) and editor and actress Françoise Bonnot (1939-2018). After his studies at the University of Hartford in the US and military service, Patrick Malakian became an assistant of director and directed his first short film in 1991. He directed his single feature film, “Why Is Mum in My Bed?,” released in 1994, as well as episodes in 10 TV series. Malakian has served as producer, writer and actor in several TV series.

My conversation with Patrick took place on November 1 of the last year in Yerevan, after the international conference on cinema issues dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henri Verneuil, which was held on October 29-31 in Yerevan.

**Patrick, what is your opinion, as a filmmaker, on you own films?**

My movies are made for television. When you do TV movies, you have certain requirements, that you should understand. Then it means that they are not totally your movies. Each network works differently, each network accepts different things, so you have to get into those slots to direct for television. The good thing is that allowed me to explore different styles. I did some thrillers, some comedies, some science-fiction; once I directed ten episodes for a TV serial that was broadcast in Canada and the good thing is that I was free enough to decide I want to shoot them. And because I was the director with the most episodes, I could put into place some rules. I directed each of those 10 episodes in different ways. There is one episode when the camera never moves, then in another episode the camera moves. I was experimenting to challenge my creativity. And I think that as an artist, specifically when you work for television, you have to challenge your creativity. I always thought that constraints are incredibly good creativity power sources.

**Absolutely! We can see it in the example of Soviet cinema, Iranian cinema...**

Every cinema, because there is always a moment the director or screenwriter will face the producer and no matter what, no matter how much rich the producer is, they will say: no, it is too expensive. This sentence challenges your creativity as you start to think: ok, what I have to do, I will take this out, but it is important, I still will do it, yet with less money — it is all about that.

**Did your father ever give you advice for your films?**

Never. It was always an understanding between him and me. He would never help me. When I was an assistant director, I did without him. And the fact that I took the Malakian name, when I met people for the first time, they did hire me not for my surname, but just thought that I am good. Then they would learn that my father is Henri Verneuil, but it will be too late. The first impression was already made, and they hired me for what I am capable of. When I made my first movie, my father did not help me.

**I assume that another reason for changing your surname from Verneuil back to Malakian was that you did not want to spend your life in the shadow of a famous father.**

No, because when I did this, I was 18 years old, so too young to think about the career. I was going for a bachelor's degree. I did it because I just needed to be me, to find out who I am, and whether the people who were around

me were there because of my father or not.

**And your siblings also changed from Verneuil?**

My sister Sophie took the surname Malakian back at the same time as me. It is hard for the two others siblings, they tried everything, they tried to call themselves Verneuil, because, I believe, it was a way for them probably to tell people they are proud. Sevan was 13 and Gayane eight, when my father died, so they really did not know him very well, and it was a time when he was not that famous anymore, so it did not work. So Sevan took lots of different names: right now, I believe, he is under Malakian.

**We see your connections in French-Armenian community and also your involvement in cultural projects in Armenia. Do your siblings also have Armenian interests?**

Not as much as I do. We all have our own path, our own personality; I decided to go to the Armenian path. My siblings do other things. Sophie is a veterinarian; she helps people by helping their animals, Sevan is in music and Gayane is an actress.

As film historian I would like to check some facts from Verneuil's biography. It was written that before “Mayrig” he intended to shoot “The Armenians” by Clément Lépidis and “The Forty Days of Musa Dagh” by Franz Werfel. Is it true that it was Henri Troyat, the eminent French novelist and historian of Armenian descent, gave him the idea



of screening Werfel's novel?

There is a script of “Musa Dagh” written by Troyat and Verneuil. As a matter of fact, I read it two weeks ago.

**Do you think this script might be turned into a movie?**

No, and I will tell why. I always thought that if you do a movie about a country from the history of another country than your own, the hero has to be from your country to interest your people. And I became sure about it after reading “The Forty Days of Musa Dagh.”

**But the main heroine of “Musa Dagh,” Juliette, is French.**

She is, and her husband lives in France. It will need lots of work and the problem is as soon as you touch specific historical facts, it becomes very hard to romanticize it, get out of the line of what really happened. The hero can be the captain of the ship, who rescued the survivors. I was thinking that is a way to bring a French hero into the story, but his life is not really interesting. And because he really existed, I cannot invent things about that. I always take as an example “The Last Samurai” with Tom Cruise, because that film takes place in the real history of Japan, but entirely invents the story. And I think if you do “The Forty Days of Musa Dagh,” it is hard to invent something. If I do invent something, I know every Armenian will come to me and say: I know, it did not happen like this, etc. Right now I don't know, but the way it was written, it cannot be a movie.

**I know that in his early career Henri Verneuil met Louis Lumière, one of the founders of cinema and took an interview for Haratch Armenian newspaper of Paris. Do you know if there is some photo of Henri Verneuil with Louis Lumière?**

I have no idea.

**We know Henri Verneuil's first film was shooting Armenian writer and politician Avetis Aharonyan's**

**funeral. Is there a digital copy of it?**

No. Right now there is a man in France, who is interested in publishing all 34 films of my father in remastered digital condition, including all his short films. I hope maybe one day we will find that very first film too.

**Have you thought about collecting all his writings in a volume, including his first about the Armenian cause?**

No. I am perpetuating his memory. I am trying to show his movies, but my life is not about him. It cannot be like that. I have all the posters of his films, which I buy, every time I see an original poster, I buy them, I restore them, but none of them is at my home. I appreciate when people do that, finding the early articles he wrote, but I never did myself a research. Right now there are a couple of people who approached me, when we did a concert at UNESCO, they want to do a big book on my father, so I will help them of course; I will do lots of things, but I don't want to be the instigator.

**After Verneuil's death a French newspaper wrote: “His films will be watched by our grandchildren.” Do you think that this happens now?**

Yes. Not all 34 films, but at least five of them will always screened and seen by younger people. I do believe, the fact that we restore and remaster all his movies, some other movies will be discovered by the people too. His career was made of such eclectic movies, that some others will be rediscovered.

**Especially if some black and white movies will be turned into color ones.**

Yes, it is the only way today. I don't want my father's career to end up in the festivals, when you have ten people, only specialists, in the room.

**One of squares in Marseille is named after Henri Verneuil. Is there a statue of him there?**

No. Actually there was a statue in the square, made by Armenian sculptor Toros Rastklenian, of red color, symbolizing the blood of Armenians, but unfortunately it was damaged on April 23. I wonder who did it! And as it was damaged twice, the Marseille town council decided to take it away, and Toros's wife took it back to her husband's workshop. Now it is standing in Toros's workshop.

**As a person of Armenian origin, how much can you transfer your heritage to your daughters?**

I never push it. It is a personal path you have to do. On top of that, they are not my daughters, but my wife's, although they live with us. Of course they know my father, for the past five years they have been with me in lots of Armenian events in Marseille, one of them, the youngest, already came to Armenia with me, so I just need them to understand, know and maybe one day have more interest, which they should pursue by them own. But because of that (it is interesting, because they are Jews) they have the consciousness of the Armenian genocide, which for young people is unusual, and, I know, they pass it to their friends.

**The last time we met you were here with a totally different project in the theater.**

I have someone I really like here — director, choreographer Arman Julhakyan. I have been working with him for the past seven years, and every time he does a new project, I give my input and I try to help and promote him. Last time I was here for Arman's choreographic performance “#44” about the last war, a very emotional ballet, that's for sure. After a while Arman said he does not want to deal with it anymore, but I told him to proceed, only changing the perspective. Because now this ballet is not just about Armenia's 44 days of war, but about a mother, having children going to the war. It is obviously terrible, when it happens to you, but you have to take one step away to look that it happens everywhere in the world, and you created a piece that will talk to everybody. So you can change your point of view and still do it without affecting yourself. Now Arman is starting to think on this way. So yes, I am very much into the art here, I love the school Arman works in, Hayordyats Toun cultural center in Nork. I fell in love with that school seven years ago and I will do my best to help them.

**And during your conference you said Armenian culture is so strong that it can be one of our tools.**

That is who we are — something we can share with the world, where the world can come and take people from here to work with them. Our issue is that we want to exist. We want to be still be here. Of course we talk that a lot of people are leaving Armenia, some say that Armenia is dying. No, no, no, Armenia is not dying, Armenia is facing a very huge problem, but we have to face it. Something that I have noticed in Armenia is that we have a tendency to put the existing problem under the carpet so as not to see it. But if we face our problems, we will solve them: hiding them will make them worse. And our art, tourism, crafts, also this newly developed wine production are huge things we are good at. We should take an advantage of this: the government has to realize that and assist those fields by all possible means.





# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

## EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

## MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

## ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

## SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

## STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

## CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Florence Avakian,  
Taleen Babayan, Artsvi Bakhchinyan,  
Raffi Bedrosyan, Christine Vartanian  
Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe  
Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald  
Papasian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop  
Vartivarian

## REGIONAL CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-  
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,  
Michelle Mkhlian  
YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott  
BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
PARIS: Jean Eckian  
SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian  
CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

## VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA  
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

## EDITORIAL

# Armenia's Adventure in Kazakhstan



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new world order has been shaping up for the past 30 years. During every after-shock, world powers position themselves to earn dividends. And, of course, there are losers and winners.

Recently Armenia turned out to become one of the losers. Had the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued another year, perhaps the catastrophic war of 2020 could have been averted, because as we can observe from the recent game-changing events in Central Asia, Turkey's expansionist ambitions are being put to the test. Ankara was the main sponsor of the war unleashed against Armenia and Artsakh by Azerbaijan and one can wonder whether it would be in the same power position in 2022.

Now Armenia has to deal with the situation arising from the crisis in Kazakhstan, where Yerevan has become an involuntary participant.

At this point, it would be very risky to assess which party is the winner and which the loser there, before the dust settles in that beleaguered country.

After the breakup of the Soviet empire, Kazakhstan was considered one of the most stable of the emerging republics and its leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the longest-ruling dinosaur of the post-Soviet politics, as the most solid statesman.

Kazakhstan's territory is four times the size of Texas with a population of about 19 million.

It was and continues to remain one of the most Russified Central Asian republics, counting 20 percent of its population as ethnic Russians. In addition, 40 percent of the citizens are believed to be Christians. By official count, there are 25,000 Armenians living in the country, while unofficially the number is put at 60,000, as some are migrant workers.

The country is rich with natural resources, including oil, gas and minerals. Forty percent of the world's uranium is produced there; with the recent disturbances, the price of uranium shot up 35 percent. That price increase may also help Armenia as a uranium processing country. However, much like the Aliyev clan in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan's natural wealth enriched Nazarbayev's family and cronies, leaving the rest of the population to languish in poverty.

Nazarbayev was revered not only in Kazakhstan but also on the world political stage. After ruling with an iron fist for almost 30 years, he transferred the reins of power to one of his trusted allies, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. However, in fact, he still retained the real power as the head of the national security apparatus and the president of the country's main party, which controlled the parliament.

Many analysts in Armenia, sympathetic to Serzh Sargsyan, blamed him for insisting to be elected for a new term rather than emulating Nazarbayev, by retaining power through remaining the head of his party. In retrospect, perhaps Sargsyan knew something, because as of now, the whereabouts of Nazarbayev are anyone's guess.

One important factor which has to be stressed is that Nazarbayev was steering his country towards the West imperceptibly, as he changed the country's alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, and under his guidance Kazakhstan became the only member country of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to sign a military agreement with the US.

Another significant approach the Kazakh leader embraced was Recep Tayyip Erdogan's pan-Turanic plans. While Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan had anointed himself as "Turkmenbashi" or head of the Turkmens, Nazarbayev was considered by his followers to be "Turanbashi," or head of Turan.

He was an unapologetic supporter of Azerbaijan and one of the first political leaders to congratulate Azerbaijan after the 44-day war with Armenia. He even had the audacity to come to Yerevan to participate in the CSTO conference, where Armenia took over the rotating presidency, to advocate in favor of Azerbaijan to be admitted as an observer member to that group.

Certainly there was no love lost between Mr. Nazarbayev and Armenia. That is why questions were raised in Armenia with regard to the dispatching of a 100-strong contingent to help Kazakhstan.

There is scant news in the media about Nazarbayev's fate in this recent turmoil. Some news outlets in Armenia reported that he had sought refuge with his protégé, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. Other sources indicate that he was sent back to Kazakhstan.

Russia has huge stakes in Kazakhstan; to begin with, it has leased 120,000 square kilometers of land there, including the site of the Russian Baikonur Cosmodrome.

On January 2, the demonstrations began over a 100-percent increase in the price of liquid gas in the city of Zhanaozen and quickly spread all through the country, including the main city of Almaty. Tokayev himself confessed that within hours, 11 regions out of 19 in the country had fallen under the control of rebels, before he gave orders to shoot the demonstrators to kill. The latter had also occupied the airport at the nation's capital, renamed Nur Sultan in honor of the longtime former leader.

The US denounced the deployment of CSTO troops and claimed that the local forces were capable of restoring order, whereas in some places, law enforcement had joined the demonstrators.

Hundreds of protestors were killed and more than 7,000 detained. The president informed the media that 22,000 armed "bandits" had joined the demonstrators and the insurrection was planned over the last several years.

The official numbers given are that about 3,500 OSCE



forces from member countries were sent to quell the unrest. Many believe that the number of the deployed forces was much higher and that they were equipped with more than just defensive armaments.

After President Tokayev's appeal, it took only two hours to take the decision and to move the troops from the CSTO countries, which include Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. During the entire crisis, President Erdogan placed frantic calls to the leaders of the Turkic nations to discourage the deployment of their forces. Therein lies Kyrgyzstan's reluctance to participate in this endeavor. Erdogan's failure to convince fellow leaders was immediately picked up on by domestic political opponents; indeed, opposition leader and former foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed the Turkish leadership indicating that Kazakhstan chose to appeal to the CSTO, headed by Armenia, rather than the Turkic Council, headed by Ankara.

However, under the circumstances, Erdogan succeeded in convening a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Turkic States (formerly Turkic Council) in Kazakhstan on January 11. The rivalry between Ankara and Moscow throughout Central Asia is having a domino effect.

In Armenia, the parliamentary discussion and decision to send troops lasted one day, while in Kyrgyzstan, the debate lasted longer because there was strong opposition. The abiding question in Armenia is, why did the CSTO remain silent when last May Azerbaijan's forces crossed into Armenian territory? The same questions were asked in Kyrgyzstan, where the collective defense system did not react when there was a clash between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2010. (Incidentally, Uzbekistan dropped out of the CSTO in 2012.)

see ADVENTURE, page 19





## COMMENTARY

# Frenetic Diplomatic Pace Creates Challenges for Armenia, Artsakh



**By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan**

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

This article is being written during a constantly-evolving diplomatic time, making the prospective analysis difficult. International politics has deteriorated considerably over the past 10 years; it is marked by the deepening economic and military competition between the great powers at the expense of multilateralism. This reality translates into rearmament strategies, the increasing lack of restraint shown by certain regional powers and a growing number of hot-spots, as the French Chief of Defense staff wrote in a report in October 2021.

The cynical calculations of global or regional powers are limitless. International law counts for very little compared to other strategic instruments of power: military, information, economics, technology. The analysis below does not focus on Armenia's current domestic political problems, or on the possible clash between the homeland and its diaspora. The four leaders of the country since its independence in 1991 have all failed to build a doctrinal and coherent foreign policy, especially in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh's right to self-determination as well as Armenia's relations with Turkey.

The radically new directions observed under the current haphazard and ultimately useless frenetic diplomatic activity in Armenia, while the country is weaker than ever, may in such circumstances expose the entire nation to danger. Faced with increasingly emboldened neighbors, and noting that the law is not an effective remedy, Armenia needs to elaborate and implement a new legal-diplomatic paradigm.

The four leaders of the country since its independence in 1991 have all failed to build a doctrinal and coherent foreign policy, especially in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh's right to self-determination as well as Armenia's relations with Turkey.

## I – Artsakh's Self-Determination: An Uncontrolled Process?

The self-determination process of the Autonomous Region (or Oblast) of Nagorno-Karabakh, which later became the Republic of Artsakh (NKR), has remained unachieved. Instead, now the very existence of Karabakh is threatened, a situation that is the outcome of Armenia's mistakes, compounded by the NKR leadership, which has failed to create a sovereign state since 1991.

Armenia's primary errors are its refusal to legally recognize Karabakh, the substitution of Armenian diplomacy for NKR in negotiations and stagnating in a diplomatic process (i.e. the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] Minsk Group) which has been deadlocked since 1996.

Armenian diplomacy has followed rather than taken charge, either through a deep-seated sense of vassalage or through the conviction that it could turn the situation in its favor at the appropriate time if it plays the game. The mental complex that characterizes the Armenians and their leaders vis-à-vis foreign powers, which sometimes turns into naivety, has resulted in behaviors aimed at not displeasing any of the diplomatic partners (United States, France, European Union, and Russia), hence, an absence of clear objectives and doctrine.

Maintaining ambiguity in negotiations has its limits, as Armenia has learned. If this ambiguity destabilizes the opposing party and the mediators in the first row, ultimately it may backfire against the ones sustaining these ambiguities. Such is the problem for Armenia, for example, when it refused to recognize the independence of Artsakh, in order to play by the OSCE rules. (The latter did not allow for the annexation of Artsakh by Armenia.) Russia used that refusal to slap back at Armenia in 2020 when Vladimir Putin openly criticized the Armenian side for never recognizing NKR.

### *Missed Chances for NKR Self-Determination*

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has given ambiguous speeches on the question of Karabakh's self-determination and his actions have been similarly confusing. His comments on December 24, 2021 give the impression that Armenia is abandoning NKR to its own fate. The NKR leadership pretends to discover that their independence efforts have been called into question, while the discrepancies in diplomacy between Yerevan and Stepanakert are not new. Armenia stuck to the agreed principles of the OSCE, while NKR claimed its independence. Besides, the European Court ruled that the NKR is an entity under the effective control of Armenia (Chiragov v. Armenia). A substantiated legal opinion attached to Azerbaijan's letter to the UN Secretary General in 2017 qualified NKR as a "puppet state."

A few days later (December 29), the Prime Minister held that his government aims to build "the Armenia of our dreams." Hence he now reintroduced some ambiguous romanticism. It should also be noted that Armenia continues to invest in the remaining NKR territory. How consistent are these investments, admittedly humanitarian, in relation to the half-hearted political plan to abandon Artsakh?

If the current Armenian government maintains the vagueness of its intentions, its policy basically does not differ from the previous administrations. The negotiations are conducted without the participation of NKR Armenians — a blatant and continuous denial of their rights.

In behaving so, Armenia has locked itself in a trap. It had two opportunities to legally recognize Artsakh. The first and ideal occasion would have been before the ceasefire in 1994. Recognition then would have totally changed the nature of the subsequent diplomatic and security strategy. The second occasion missed was at the start of the Azerbaijani armed aggression against NKR at the end of September 2020.

The arguments for not doing it were twofold. The first one was that a recognition would stop the diplomatic process and lead to war. The second argument was a political aberration: let other states recognize NKR and then we will do it. President Levon Ter-Petrosian held that position during his presidency and maintained it even during the 2020 war. Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serge Sargsyan did not deviate from this policy. Prime Minister Pashinyan, however, took a radically different yet equally ridiculous stance: "Artsakh is Armenia. Period!" This was a provocation whose consequences we all know and which made no sense as Armenia's official diplomacy was still supporting the Madrid Principles of the OSCE.

As a result of this series of strategic errors as well as a lack of political courage, the OSCE-driven negotiation process stopped short. Russia effectively holds the reins of the diplomatic process. However, Turkey is trying to challenge this control directly (normalization of relations with Armenia) and indirectly (acting on behalf of its principals, the West and NATO). Russia is facing serious geopolitical challenges (Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan). Hence, there is some exasperation in Moscow about the Armenians' permanent solicitation and irredentism.

### *Is Artsakh Abandoned to Its Own Fate?*

It is worth noting that Armenia took the initiative to bring Azerbaijan to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on the basis of the violation of the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. This legal move is a major shift in Armenia's foreign policy and deserves praise.

Like any court case, especially in interstate proceedings with a diplomatic high profile, one should not expect victory or failure in the substantive examination of the claim, as there are counterclaims from Azerbaijan. This is quite common. The procedures could take many years and will be costly (several million US dollars). Meanwhile the advantages, which are mainly strategic in nature, outweigh the disadvantages. It provides an international forum for raising awareness about the serious violations of international law committed by Azerbaijan, in particular the crimes of torture and summary executions. It mainly offers a preventive effect: Azerbaijan cannot take the risk of repeating new serious violations, while the ICJ ordered interim protective measures. Its behavior had changed even before the court hearing. The merits of the action were confirmed by the quick release of prisoners of war taken in November without inflicting the usual arbitrary violence against them. Azerbaijan knows well the risks involved. In case it repeats past serious crimes, then Armenia would be in a position to seize the United Nations Security Council to report on the continued racial hatred and discrimination policy against Armenians, opening the road to external self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh, hence its independence.

Strikingly, Armenia opened a second diplomatic front, dialogue with Turkey, which is a risk by its own. This second front may reduce the room to maneuver on NKR since Turkey demands the recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

## II - The Armenian-Turkish Dialogue: An Untimely Initiative

The idea of establishing a dialogue is in itself a good thing. However, several factors bode ill for the content and merits of the dialogue.

First, Armenia presents itself in the weaker position, as

always, and offers up as their emissary someone with little experience who will face a seasoned Turkish diplomat, long practiced in the radical denialism of the Armenian Genocide.

Second, Armenia is moving down this path as the rift over these issues will further divide the Armenian Nation.

Thirdly, the opening of the borders and the development of land and air communications with Azerbaijan and Turkey will primarily benefit this latter. The economic and financial strength of Turkey and Azerbaijan combined is such that Armenia will be colonized economically and demographically. This can only accelerate the already alarming emigration of Armenia's citizens.

Fourth, Armenia does not require any preconditions for the talks, while Turkey has its long set of requirements: any bilateral agreement will be subject to Azerbaijan's approval; the recognition of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by the Armenians; the abandonment of any irredentist national policy (NKR returns under Azerbaijani administration, confirmation of 1921 Kars and Moscow Treaties), and cessation of the policy aimed at the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Fifth, Armenia is not taking advantage of Turkey's actual weaknesses. The latter is diplomatically isolated because of its geopolitical aims and its all-out military adventures. It is facing a quite unpredictable economic and monetary crisis domestically: the devaluation of its currency has triggered an uncontrolled inflationary spiral, which could lead to social unrest. Hence, its rapprochement with Armenia is part of a more comprehensive and temporary tactic, which aims to mend its relations with Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt. It looks very much like a veiled maneuver of seduction towards the United States, which holds the keys to the restoration of the Turkish currency. It also corresponds to a refocusing of alliances: the return to the US and NATO fold to thwart its Caucasian alliance with Russia. The two movements converge geopolitically. Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu's recent participation in NATO talks on the potential attack of Ukraine by Russia is a clear message. It should always be remembered that Turkey is and remains hostile to Russia's regional hegemony.

In this context, the acceptance of a half-hearted renunciation of pan-Armenian ideals seems to be dictated by a return to the first president's doctrine. Former diplomatic adviser Dr. Gerard Libaridian's presence and interviews in Armenia speaks volumes in this regard. It is a defeatist approach that pushes Armenia to negotiate with Turkey. It is not a realistic one, since he recognizes himself that Armenia has nothing to negotiate in return. What is the point of doing it then?

### *What Can Save both NKR and Turkish-Armenian Dialogue from Disaster?*

## III Diplomatic Fundamentals and Roadmap

First, Armenia's strategic alliance with Russia is an inescapable reality. Its necessity is absolute, both for the protection of Artsakh and for that of Armenia. Changes need to be made, however, within that relationship. Armenia must stop behaving like a vassal and an eternal victim because of its economic and military dependence on Russia. It must stop being a burden for Russia, and instead prove that it can offer assets and has value.

The main asset of Armenia is the existence of a global Armenian diaspora across all continents. Numerous analyses and proposals illustrate the capacity of Armenians in the diaspora to provide know-how, to imagine models, including strategic financing, to contribute to the influence of Armenia. The scientific and technological skills of the Armenian Nation, which could be deployed in Armenia, would be an interesting asset. The second contribution would be diplomatic in nature. The diaspora and its members represent a useful bridge for Russia: a force of rapprochement between Westerners and Russia. It has become evident that United States, France and the European Union support Russia's constructive role in the management of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This solidarity is unique and in contrast to other points of tension between these same countries and Russia. This Western acceptance of Russia's role in the South Caucasus is directly influenced by the presence of an active Armenian diaspora in those countries.

Second, Armenia should refuse to sign any agreement with Azerbaijan, including on the lines of communication in southern Armenia, until all Armenian prisoners of war

see CHALLENGES, page 20





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Pitfalls of Armenia's Unnecessary Negotiations with Turkey

I will attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the upcoming “Armenia-Turkey normalization talks” on January 14, 2022 in Moscow. Armenia may be bungling these negotiations once again!

- To begin with, Armenia does not need to negotiate with Turkey to have the border opened. Such negotiations took place shortly after Armenia's independence in 1991, when Armenia and Turkey opened their mutual border, until Turkey shut down its side of the border in 1993. Since Turkey is the one that closed its border with Armenia unilaterally, it can now open it also unilaterally. I fear that Turkey's intent to hold such unnecessary negotiations is aimed at extorting concessions from Armenia.

- After its overwhelming loss during the 2020 war, Armenia's defeated leader will be negotiating from a position of weakness. A devastated leader cannot have the mental and moral fortitude to negotiate properly with such a problematic and cunning enemy. New leaders must first come to power in Armenia so they can start the discussions, if necessary, from a non-defeatist attitude.

- There is a fundamental problem with Armenia normalizing its relations with Turkey, a nation that committed genocide, killing 1.5 million Armenians in 1915. A century later, Turkey still lies about its mass crimes and denies their occurrence. An unrepentant genocidaire cannot be a trusted party with which one can negotiate in good faith.

- In addition to its past crimes, Turkey outrageously participated in a new massacre of Armenians, killing and wounding thousands of young Armenian soldiers in the 2020 Artsakh war. To make matters worse, Turkey recruited Jihadist terrorists from Syria and arranged for their transportation to Azerbaijan during the war. How can Armenia's Prime Minister engage in discussions with an enemy with such recurring hostility? Just imagine if Germany, a country that committed genocide against six million Jews, would attack today's Israel and kill thousands of Israelis. Do you think Israeli leaders would then sit down with today's German leaders and negotiate with them as if nothing happened? Every Jew in the world would be up in arms over such a prospect. Armenia's leaders seem to be oblivious about Turkey's past and present crimes. They are more than happy to negotiate with the criminals in Ankara with a callous attitude. If the Armenian leaders won't defend their nation's rights, how can they expect outsiders to care about Armenia more than them?

- Prime Minister Pashinyan came to power rejecting the rule of former President Serzh Sargsyan with the slogan “Merjir Serzhin” (Reject Serzh). Why is Pashinyan then copying Sargsyan's flawed policies with Turkey? Armenians in and out of Armenia were up in arms over the previous president's ill-fated 2009 Armenian-Turkish Protocols. It does not look like Pashinyan has learned anything from that failed experiment.

- “Negotiations without preconditions” is another mantra repeated by Armenian's previous and current leaders. But the fact is that, rather than Armenia placing preconditions on Turkey, it is Turkey that is advancing preconditions. During the 2009 Protocols negotiations, Turkey said it did not have any preconditions, nevertheless, several Turkish preconditions ended up in the agreement. President Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, confirmed such Armenian concerns when he said at the end of December while visiting Chicago: “we want the border to be opened and diplomatic relations to begin. For this, certain conditions must be met and certain issues must be negotiated.”

- The Protocols failed in 2009 because Azerbaijan objected to Turkey opening its border with Armenia. That helped save Armenia's interests that were supposed to be protected not by Azerbaijan, but by the President of Armenia! The current negotiations may fail also, unless Pashinyan is ready to concede

whatever Erdogan asks for. Turkey is now demanding that Armenia accept the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan by signing a peace treaty, thus giving up Artsakh and Nakhichevan for good, and allowing the so-called “Zangezur Corridor,” not just a road, linking Azerbaijan East with Nakhichevan. Finally, if Turkey comes to the table with preconditions, Armenia should be prepared to walk away or counter with its own preconditions: Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, restitution for consequent Armenian losses, and return of occupied Western Armenia.

- Before signing the 2009 Armenia-Turkey Protocols, President Sargsyan made a half-hearted attempt to visit several Diaspora communities ostensibly to hear their views. Pashinyan has made no such attempt. He has not consulted with anyone from the Diaspora. Pashinyan should realize that relations with Turkey are a pan-Armenian issue, not solely a domestic matter of the Republic of Armenia. He should take into consideration Diaspora's views, even if he is the one who makes the final decision. Moreover, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu recently stated that “extremist groups” in the Armenian Diaspora “should not put pressure on Yerevan,” to disrupt the Armenia-Turkey relations. In addition, Erdogan's spokesman Kalin said in Chicago recently: “the current Armenia-Turkey normalization process will destroy the Armenian community of the United States.” Such a statement is an unwelcome interference in intra-Armenian affairs. Turkish officials' unwarranted statements should galvanize all Armenians to reject their unacceptable intervention.

- The qualifications of the person conducting the negotiations on behalf of Armenia are extremely important. Erdogan appointed as Turkey's negotiator the seasoned diplomat, former Turkish Ambassador to the United States, and notorious genocide denialist Serdar Kilic. Pashinyan, on the other hand, in line with his many other unqualified appointments, named Ruben Rubinyan, a young neophyte with zero diplomatic experience. His only claim to fame is that he is a member of Pashinyan's political party and Deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament. Amazingly, when questioned about Rubinyan's qualifications, Pashinyan and his political colleagues claimed that Rubinyan's party affiliation is much more important than his inexperience, thereby putting their party's interests ahead of that of the nation. Thus, the outcome of the upcoming negotiations is crystal clear since the wolf will be facing the lamb! There must be more competent and experienced Armenian diplomats who can conduct such sensitive negotiations.

- Pashinyan keeps repeating proudly that the leaders of Russia, the United States, and France support his plans to negotiate with Turkey. Let's not forget that Azerbaijan and Turkey also support this initiative. All of these countries are simply advancing their own interests, not that of Armenia.

- Finally, Pashinyan's much touted claim of economic benefits to Armenia as a result of opening the Armenian-Turkish border is a dubious expectation. Already, without the border being open, Turkish products have flooded the Armenian market. The opening of the border would mean that the cheaper Turkish products will destroy Armenia's domestic production. A tiny country with a small population cannot compete with Turkish products which enjoy the advantage of “economies of scale” (higher volume at lower cost). To make matters worse, Pashinyan just threw away the only bargaining chip Armenia had by lifting the temporary ban on the import of Turkish goods, thus depriving Armenia of its trump card in these negotiations.

Turkey, a destitute country with a failing economy, collapsed Lira, 12% unemployment, 36% inflation, and raging coronavirus (7th highest number of infections in the world), is desperate to ameliorate its domestic dismal conditions and mend its damaged ties with the United States, Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. An astute Armenian negotiator, realizing the Turkish eagerness to impress the world, would attempt to extract more favorable terms for normalizing relations with Turkey.

No one opposes negotiations with Turkey as long as the negotiator representing Armenia is a competent person who is able to bring benefits to Armenia's interests.

## Armenia's Adventure In Kazakhstan

ADVENTURE, from page 17

The explanation given by the CSTO is that the situation warranted the activation of Article Four of the treaty, indicating that the country was under attack by outside forces. However, those “outside forces” have yet to be identified in Kazakhstan.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has indicated that when Russia enters your house, it takes too long to disinvite it.

At this time, many speculations abound regarding the causes and the outcome of the situation in Kazakhstan. Therefore, any analysis with the current information has to be conducted with extreme caution.

One theory holds that this episode was a power play between the Nazarbayev and Tokayev clans and that tensions had long been simmering. One thing is certain: a coup was in the offing and the former prime minister and current chief of security apparatus Karim Massimov, now under arrest, was involved.

Another theory suggests that this was a rivalry between

Turkey and Russia, which have come to an accommodation in Syria and the Caucasus. According to this theory, Russia acted to head off a similar compromise in Central Asia.

However, by all accounts, Turkey's Pan-Turanic plans suffered a setback, with Nazarbayev out of the political stage.

Yet another idea proposed by and promoted by the Tokayev regime and Russian media is that the West was behind the uprising. And indeed, when the US declares its policy of Russian containment and there is a chain of flareups along the Russian borders — Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus and now Kazakhstan — there is an undeniable pattern indicating that the US may have played a hand in that picture, particularly with Victoria Nuland of the US State Department visibly orchestrating a Color Revolution in Maidan, Kyiv. Was it coincidental that Kazakhstan's crisis broke out just a few days before Russian and US delegates were going to meet in Geneva to discuss President Putin's ultimatum against NATO expansion?

Armenia's participation in this adventure raises a series of questions across the board:

- Kazakhstan and its leaders have proven time and again to harbor hostile sentiments against Armenia. Is it Armenia's responsibility to abide by treaty obligations and rush to support the regime in that country?

- When Armenia needs its every last soldier to protect its borders, how could the government afford to send troops to a foreign country?

- How could Nikol Pashinyan rush to quell a popular movement when he himself had come to power through just such a popular movement?

- Armenia participated in Washington's Democracy Conference on December 10. Would its actions in Kazakhstan tarnish its democratic credentials? And consequently, will the EU's pledge to help Armenia with massive financial support suffer as a consequence of this action?

- Last but not least, will this action antagonize Kazakhstan's population against Armenians living there?

The opposing argument is, could Armenia abdicate its responsibility as the president of CSTO? How would Moscow treat that abrogation of responsibility?

Also, if Armenia's leadership could think far enough, they would realize that hampering Russia's plans in Kazakhstan would be playing into the hands of the Turks, who would become the alternate beneficiary.

These questions have been raging in Armenia's political circles and the media and will continue to do so for a while.

In the meantime, President Tokayev has called Prime Minister Pashinyan to thank him for his actions. That is little consolation and even lesser compensation at this time.





## ANCA Urges Biden and Congress to Hold Azerbaijan and Turkey Accountable for War Crimes

WASHINGTON — The Armenian National Committee of America's (ANCA) is calling on President Biden and Congressional leaders to fundamentally reset US policy toward the South Caucasus, taking concrete steps to: protect Artsakh's security; defend Armenia's sovereignty, hold Baku and Ankara responsible for their war crimes and ongoing hostility; strengthen the US-Armenia strategic partnership, and; lock-in permanent US government-wide remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

The ANCA-led online campaign – anca.org/priorities – has been used by tens of thousands to share community outrage that US leaders have “failed to openly condemn and materially confront the aggression, war crimes, and human rights abuses committed by dictatorial Azerbaijan and its Turkish/ISIS allies against democratic Artsakh and Armenia. Our government – against all evidence – refuses to condemn the very violence that Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev proudly boasts of having visited upon Armenians living peacefully in their indigenous homeland.” The ANCA outlines seven ways President Biden and Congressional leaders can end US complicity in Azerbaijan’s ongoing aggression against Armenia and Artsakh, including:

— Ending the Presidential waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, fully enforcing this statute, and ceasing any and all US military or security assistance to Azerbaijan, including Section 333 (Capacity Building), Foreign Military Financing,

and International Military Education and Training – on the basis of Section 502B(a) (1) of the Foreign Assistance Act, the Leahy Laws, Section 907, and other provisions of US law.

— Providing at least \$100,000,000 in immediate, direct US humanitarian aid to the more than 100,000 Armenians ethnically cleansed by Azerbaijan from their Artsakh homeland, helping these families rebuild their lives and resettle in safety upon their indigenous Armenian homeland.

— Directing the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control to enforce Global Magnitsky sanctions against senior Azerbaijani officials guilty of committing war crimes against Artsakh and Armenia, among them President Ilham Aliyev, Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov, and former Chief of the General Staff Sadirov Najmeddin Huseynoglu.

— Condemning Azerbaijan's illegal detention and documented abuse of Armenian prisoners of war, demanding their immediate and unconditional release, under the Third Geneva Convention and other instruments of international law. This call should be unilateral, publicly and prominently highlighting the fact that Azerbaijan is the only party to the conflict to hold prisoners of war.

— Conducting a comprehensive investigation – consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 – regarding Turkey’s recruitment of Syrian terrorist mercenaries, Azerbaijan’s

use of illegal cluster bombs and white phosphorous, and potential violations of US arms export and other laws related to the discovery of US parts in the Turkish drones deployed by Azerbaijan against Artsakh.

— Denouncing Turkey’s material military backing of Azerbaijan’s ethnic-cleansing of Artsakh and ongoing aggression against Armenia, and actively countering Ankara’s attempts to arm-twist Armenia into “normalizing” bilateral ties at the expense of Artsakh’s independence and justice for the Armenian Genocide.

— Censuring Azerbaijan's destruction of Christian Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other holy sites, and providing the full range of US satellite and other monitoring resources to academic and civil society organizations tracking this cultural and religious desecration.

“Azerbaijan’s aggression and ongoing anti-Armenian actions are clearly consistent with President Ilham Aliyev’s public threats to conquer Armenia, including its capital Yerevan and its Sevan and Sunik regions as “historic Azerbaijani territory.” The intentions of Azerbaijan – and its enabler Turkey – are manifestly evident: To continue their aggression against Armenia and Artsakh with the ultimate goal of the genocidal destruction of the first Christian nation,” states the letter to US leaders.

# Frenetic Diplomatic Pace Creates Challenges For Armenia, Artsakh

CHALLENGES, from page 18

currently held in Azerbaijan are released. It is a question of honor for Armenia and for the whole nation. It is also crucial for restoring the trust of the citizens in its homeland. They must be ensured that in any circumstance they may rely upon the state to protect them (as is the case in United States or France). And perhaps it should go without saying that those same prisoners, once released, should not be arrested in Armenia, as they are now!

Third, any negotiation with Azerbaijan cannot and must not erase with the stroke of a pen the serious crimes committed by Azerbaijan. A hasty and unbalanced negotiation could jeopardize Azerbaijan's liability and resulting fines. Azerbaijan will undoubtedly demand Armenia's renunciation of all interstate claims. It must become a bargaining chip.

Fourth, Armenian-Turkish dialogue is not taboo. On the contrary, the "liquidation of the past" will necessarily require a political agreement; it just needs to be prepared seriously and responsibly. The current process is too hasty and inopportune.

As former Minister of Foreign Affairs Vartan Oskanian recalled, one cannot enter this dialogue without setting conditions, particularly when the other party, Turkey, sets its conditions. To reach a compromise, one has to set the bar at the right level. This is a basic principle of successful negotiation. Armenia is therefore within its rights to lay down its pre-conditions; otherwise it would be condemned to give in more than what Turkey initially requests.

Fifth, the future of Karabakh cannot be resolved by a simple application of the principle of territorial integrity (inclusive of internal democratic self-determination), or by external self-determination (secession). Neither case complies with the legal conditions. Due to the ambiguity of Armenia's policy and Azerbaijan's military aggressiveness, the immediate priority is to guarantee the safety of the remaining population of Karabakh. The security of the territory and its Armenian population is currently ensured by Russian peacekeepers. This interim solution shall be consolidated by placing the entire region of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast under a Russian protectorate, based on a clear and well-defined mandate from the United Nations Security Council. This solution would have the advantages of easing the immediate tensions, delaying the negotiation process, bringing some stability to allow the return of both Armenian and Azerbaijani displaced families to their homes, and observing the behavior of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities to each other.

The next step is to find a compromise solution that satisfies both parties. Artsakh will have to use this respite to rebuild all the bases of its autonomy, including toward Armenia. Azerbaijan, too, will have to use this time to end its policy of institutionalized hatred and racial discrimination. If they fail in their respective goals, the two entities will have to bear the consequences.

This solution depends above all on the will of Russia. It is up to Russia to properly assess the risks and benefits of such an option. Their presence in this region in the medium to long term is at stake.

[Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, based in Paris, is a lawyer, lecturer in international law and a former secretary general of FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights). He is a regular columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.]

Tekeyan Cultural Association

# 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary



*Sponsor a Teacher*  
in Armenia and Five Artsakh Villages



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001,  
THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER  
PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$793,560  
AND REACHED OUT TO 7,163  
TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF  
IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH.



☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

☐ \$200    ☐ \$400    ☐ \$600    ☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Make check payable to:*

Tekeyan Cultural Association—Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

*Mail your check to:*

**TCA Sponsor a Teacher**

5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

*Your donation is Tax Deductable*