

# Azerbaijan Issues Arrest Warrants for Kocharyan, Sargsyan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Azerbaijani authorities have issued international arrest warrants for Armenia’s former Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan.

An Azerbaijani military prosecutor said on Monday, February 21, that the two men born in Nagorno-Karabakh have been indicted for helping to launch in 1988 demonstrations for the Armenian-populated territory’s secession from Azerbaijan and unification with Armenia. He said they are also wanted for their role in the 1991 creation of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Kocharyan and Sargsyan, who led Karabakh during its 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan, were quick to scoff at the accusations.

“The filing of accusations against Serzh Sargsyan by the Aliyev regime is in itself a caricature,” his office said in a statement.

It said that Sargsyan, who ruled Armenia from 2008-2018, will continue to use his “extensive connections and experience” to



Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan (JAM photo)

fight for the Karabakh Armenians’ “right to a free, independent and secure life.”

The statement also stressed that Sargsyan and Kocharyan, who now lead Armenia’s two main opposition groups, are also prosecuted by the “capitulator authorities” in Yerevan which it claimed are now effectively allied to “Azerbaijan’s ruling clan.”

A spokesman for Kocharyan likewise linked the Azerbaijani arrest warrants with separate corruption charges leveled against both ex-presidents and strongly denied by them. Bagrat Mikoyan said they come amid Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s continued “flirtation” with Azerbaijani President [Ilham] Aliyev.

“The Armenian authorities, who are begging for peace from Azerbaijan at the cost of national dignity, are receiving help from their ‘educated and constructive’ friends,” he said tartly.

Baku has already issued international arrest warrants for Karabakh’s current leaders shortly after the 2020 war. Armenia’s Office of the Prosecutor-General condemned the move at the time, saying that it has

see WARRANTS, page 4



The Arseniy Kotov exhibit this February

# Moscow Armenian Museum Showcases Armenian Genocide, Culture and History

By Aram Arkun  
*Mirror-Spectator Staff*

WATERTOWN — Wherever Armenians have established communities in corners of the world distant from their homeland, they have built churches. After that, in many places come schools. Museums are another way of preserving and presenting Armenian culture to the world and to new generations of Armenians too. The Armenian Museum of Moscow and Culture of Nations has begun to play this role in Russia. Museum founder Ruben Tsovakovich Grigoryan related the complicated circumstances of its development.

Grigoryan was born and educated in Yerevan, while his father’s family originally came from a village in Moush (Western Armenia). After graduating from the Polytechnic Institute in Yerevan as a radio engineer, Grigoryan moved to Moscow in 1986 and worked in an educational institution, teaching specialties such as engineering and electronics.

After a period in Germany, he returned but the Soviet Union collapsed, so Grigoryan went into the real estate business, primarily in investment, construction and management, and soon became quite successful. He also graduated from the State University of Management in Moscow in 2002 with a doctoral dissertation on small business management and authored several books starting in 2017. He has carried out various philanthropic projects in Armenia and Karabakh.



Museum founder Ruben Grigoryan

see MUSEUM, page 14

# Artsakh Movement First Step in Restoring Our Statehood, Pashinyan Says

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Karabakh Movement that started on these days 34 years ago on February 20, was a turning point for the future history of the Armenian people, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a message on the anniversary of the Movement.

According to him, “the nationwide movement formed in Armenia and Artsakh was exceptional in its power, it was deeply national and democratic.”

“Through the people’s movement, our people once again showed their unity, the ability to unite and act resolutely as one united fist for the realization of national goals,” PM Pashinyan said, adding that it was “the first step in restoring our statehood, in which we rediscovered the determination to live freely and independently, to shape our destiny and to manage our future.”

“Today we remember and bow our heads to the memory of all our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the Motherland in the first and second wars of Karabakh, in the last three decades,” Pashinyan said.

“Though wounded, Artsakh is still standing today. Today our steps are aimed not only at solving the socio-economic problems of the Armenians of Artsakh, overcoming security challenges, but also at the protection of the rights of the Armenians of Artsakh, the international registration of those rights,” he added.

“I am convinced that the Armenian people will soon heal the wounds of the past war and will take even more decisive and firm steps towards the future for the realization of our dreams and aspirations. Only in this way will we be able to keep alive

see ARTSAKH, page 4

# All for Armenia Group Helps Victims of 44-Day War

By Serena Hajjar  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — Christmas morning, 8 a.m. I grab my backpack and scurry through the empty streets of Yerevan to the Birthright Armenia office in Republic Square.

There, I meet up with Matthieu Sahakian, a French repat and co-founder of the All for Armenia (AfA) non-profit organization. He had organized a Christmas gift-wrapping event the previous day and graciously entertained my appeal to join the AfA team on their mission to deliver these presents in Goris. Matthieu and his wife Araz founded AfA at the start of the 2020 Artsakh War to assist refugees. Since then, the organization has focused on providing the native Armenian communities of Syunik and Artsakh with the necessary resources to forge a long-term livelihood.

While we transport bags of presents to the van, Matthieu introduces me to the rest of the team: Saro Yesayan, an Australian repat who had been a fellow Birthright volunteer with Matthieu in 2017 and has hosted first-aid courses with

see AfA, page 2

GERMANY  
Armenian Artists Return Home



Page 6

CALIFORNIA  
Inaugural Armenian Caucus Fellowship Program



Page 10

ARTSAKH  
ATP is Stewarding Artsakh’s Agricultural Heritage



Page 20





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Armenian, Saudi Foreign Ministers Meet in Munich

MUNICH (PanARMENIAN.Net) — On February 19, the Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan held a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud in Munich.

Armenia and Saudi Arabia currently have no diplomatic relations.

The two exchanged views on the establishing relations and cooperation between Armenia and Saudi Arabia, expressing their readiness to undertake works for the formation of bilateral and multilateral agendas between the two countries.

Mirzoyan expressed conviction of the reciprocal potential for the development of cooperation in the fields of information and high technologies, health care, tourism, and culture. During the meeting, the foreign ministers emphasized the importance of promoting trade and economic ties, implementing investment programs, and establishing contacts between business circles.

### Artsakh War Volunteers Block Road Leading to Yerevan Airport

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Volunteer fighters of the 2020 Artsakh war on February 21 blocked the road leading to Yerevan's Zvartnots International Airport to protest against the launch of flights between Yerevan and Istanbul and Armenian-Turkish normalization process.

The protest came shortly after two Azerbaijani lawmakers arrived in Yerevan to attend the meetings of the Bureau and the Committees of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (PA) slated for February 21 and 22. "We have gathered here to announce that we are against friendship with the Turks. Our soldiers are standing guard at combat positions to prevent the enemy from advancing, whereas the Turks are allowed to come here freely and drink coffee," said one of the protesters in military uniform.

Police officers tried to force protesters out of the road, and a scuffle ensued. After several unsuccessful attempts, the police managed to restore traffic on the road.

### Azerbaijani Forces Open Indiscriminate Fire at Artsakh Army Positions

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry spread disinformation yet again, accusing the Artsakh military of opening fire at Azerbaijani combat positions deployed near the villages of Shosh and Taghavard on February 20 and 21. The Artsakh Defense Ministry denied the Azerbaijani allegations as "entirely false" in a statement on February 21, adding the Azeri troops themselves violated the ceasefire in the area. "The ceasefire was actually violated by the Azerbaijani army units that fired indiscriminately on the Defense Army positions. There are no casualties or material damages as a result of the ceasefire violation," the ministry said.

# All for Armenia Group Helps Victims of 44-Day War

AfA, from page 1

AfA in Goris; Hovhannes Verdyan, a veteran of the 44-Day War and self-taught freelance programmer; and Dr. Carlos Ketzoian, a preeminent neurologist from Uruguay who sponsored the trip. My fellow tag-along traveler is Shushan Hovhannisyann, Birthright Armenia's public relations specialist.

I observe the AfA team launch a game of real-life Tetris as they struggle to stuff Christmas gifts for 140 children into every open crevice of our small van. We finally



Santa Saro

succeed in striking a precarious balance, and off we go on the 5-hour journey to Syunik Province.

Along the way, we are treated to a crystal-clear view of Mount Ararat, its peaks rising majestically above the cliff at our feet. We drive past the village of Tigranashen, one of three former Soviet Azerbaijani enclaves, located in the Ararat region and populated entirely by Armenians. Several hours later, we reach our first stop in Goris, a city hugging Armenia's southeastern border with Azerbaijan.

The best way to experience a new locale is on foot. While half of our group enjoys a well-deserved nap, Saro and I leave the hotel to explore the Old Town, with its distinct architectural influences unique to Syunik and Artsakh: two-story houses with arched gates and cobblestone walls. Due to their proximity, the historical dynasty of Siunia (Syunik) and Kingdom of Artsakh frequently fused to repel invaders and thereby developed a characteristic architectural style.

However, the contemporary layout of the city, featuring parallel streets and street gutters, is German-inspired. During the Soviet Union, the state employed imprisoned German architects to create smart and efficient plans to transform villages like Goris into cities.

We venture past donkeys and chickens roaming around backyard farms towards the fourth-century basilica of Surb Hripsime with its modest altar and single bench. After lighting candles and saying our Christmas prayers, we continue along Goris' Rock Forest.

These towering rock formations have an



Distributing candy

almost viscous texture, as though they were made of dollops of syrup which had piled up and coagulated into these imposing structures. Dotting these rocks are caves, which housed Goris residents as late as the 1960s.

The local cemetery greets us with a sign announcing it has no more room for additional graves. We make our way to a lookout point with a breathtaking view of the valley and mountains stretching before us.

A graffiti etched on an iron fence catches my eye: #haxteluenk ("we will win"). The ubiquitous rallying cry of the 44 Day War now rings hollow in light of the battle's grievous outcome.

Back at the town center, we meander to the French Cultural Center to meet with a group of women, recent refugees from Artsakh. They work in the one-room sewing

Once the rest of the AfA team arrives, the women hasten us to a table set with walnuts, candies, and the piece-de-resistance: homemade *jingalov hats*. A specialty of Artsakh and the Syunik region, this traditional flatbread is stuffed with over 10 different finely-chopped herbs and fried over a type of griddle called *sajin*.

After the ladies fill our glasses with wine and our plates with *hats*, they entreat each of us to deliver a toast, in true Armenian fashion. Though I typically tend to avoid such invitations, the experience of breaking bread with these incredible women is so compelling that I cannot refuse their request.

I timidly raise my glass — speaking in the Eastern dialect still intimidates me — and express what an honor it is to share this meal with them and hear their candid reflections on their current situation, forced to carve a new life for themselves away from their homes in Artsakh. It is difficult to find the words — in any language — to fully articulate what a surreal experience this is for me.

All I can think about is the fall of 2020, intently following the news out of Armenia day and night, feeling guilty for the safety I enjoyed in the United States and inadequate in my efforts to contribute financially. Now, here I am, one year later and halfway across the world, surrounded by these same resilient women who have survived everything I had been reading about that entire time. As I conclude my toast, the ladies assure me that they fully understood my speech, that such sentiments are communicated nonverbally better than with any words.

The conversation drifts to the topic of security at the border. Evidently, they feel overlooked by Yerevan and frustrated by Armenians' fears of traveling along the highway to Syunik. They maintain that there is no reason for people to shy away from Syunik and that despite the periodic altercations on the border, Goris itself



Jingalov Hats, the herbaceous bread traditional to the region

atelier funded by AfA in the same building. The workshop houses the Made in Syunik online store, which provides these women with a rewarding means of supporting their families. The center also offers French language classes for children and adults and hosts a technology center.





## ARMENIA

is still perfectly safe to visit. To this, Matthieu asserts AfA's interest in helping border communities precisely for this reason: neglecting these localities is functionally no different than ceding the land directly to the enemy.

Further, they repeatedly affirm that while they appreciate all the material and financial support they have received, what they desire most are the tools to support their families. In the words of *Tikin Anahit*, the eldest of the group, "We are a hardworking people. The best way to help us is to give us a means of making an honest living."

Several helpings of *jingalov hats* later, I join the team in the atelier, where Carmen A., the director of the French Cultural Center, shows us their latest handbags and asks for our input on color coordination. When it comes time to bid the ladies farewell, *Tikin Anahit*, who had struck me with her warm yet strong-willed personality, hugs



One of the latest handbags designed by the ladies at the atelier

me and leaves me with words I will never forget. "Menk orets or aprum enk, duk taret tar aprek." We live day to day; may you live year to year. I can only muster a silent smile and nod in reply, as I feel my eyes welling up.

The AfA team and I then leave the French Cultural Center to dine at Takarik Tavern, after which Matthieu and Saro walk me to



From left, Matthieu Sahakian, Serena Hajjar, and Shushan Hovhannisyian

Carmen's house. She operates the neighboring apartment as a bed and breakfast, and after my unforgettable experience at a BnB in Tatev, I jump at the opportunity to spend the night there. On our way, we pass by the Surb Grigor Lusavorich (St. Gregory the Illuminator) Church, where Garegin



Local cemetery with Rock Forest in the background

Nzhdeh was married.

At Carmen's, Matthieu and Saro show me around the BnB, a lodging favorite of the AfA team during their trips to Goris. Carmen and her husband, Mher, beckon us into their living room and insist we enjoy a drink with them.

As soon as we sit at their dining room table, already festooned with nuts, home-made dried fruits, and various beverages, Carmen and her eldest daughter serve us tea along with bowls of jam and confectionaries. It feels like all we have done this evening is hop from one table to the next.

Though the topics of conversation are heavy, Carmen and Mher maintain a warm and jovial attitude. The laughter and antics of the younger children contrast starkly with the somber discussion of war among the adults.

Matthieu, Saro, and the couple update each other about their mutual friend Arman Komshuyan, a young French-Armenian who, growing up completely disconnected from his Armenian culture, left his life in France and moved to Armenia to reconnect with his heritage just before the 44-Day War.

At the outbreak of the conflict, he valiantly joined the fight for Artsakh in Jabrail, one of the most perilous theaters of the war, where he refused to retreat despite falling under attack from a rain of enemy rockets. Thereafter, he made the survival of Armenia his life goal.

Reflecting on the subsequent day-long border skirmish of November 2021, Mher recounts how he had instructed Carmen to prepare his uniform and was determined to go fight if the conflict continued a second day.

Back in my bedroom, I drop my belongings, cry, and pray, finally releasing the emotional overload that had been swelling inside me throughout the day. Though I feel sorrow for the hardship these people — our brethren — have experienced over the last year, I am even more so amazed and moved by their serenity in the face of catastrophe and the dignified composure with which they embrace life.

I think back to the toast one of the refugee women had delivered earlier that evening, praising us as heroes for leaving our



Paron Arayik, Saro, and Babik

comfortable homes, coming to Armenia, and involving ourselves in such projects as AfA. It had been difficult to consider myself heroic in the presence of those tenacious ladies.

The next morning, I wake up to a breathtaking view of the sun pouring over the rocky mountains of Goris from my balcony.

When Santa arrives to deliver presents to children, he doesn't typically expect to be greeted by soldiers holding AKs.

Such is our welcome to Kornidzor's local theater, which was converted to a military dormitory during the 2020 war.

On a balmy Friday afternoon, we drive up in our van bursting with gifts of all shapes and sizes. At the rope fence, a young soldier brandishing an AK-47 verifies our identities and ensures we have permission to enter. Upon receiving a stern nod of approval, we continue past a squad of soldiers milling about and stop to unload our Tetris puzzle.

While Saro furtively changes into his Santa costume in the van, the rest of us step into the auditorium, where we are greeted by a lively congregation of over 140 local children accompanied by their parents. The

room buzzes with anticipation as we call for kids to climb on stage and recite Christmas poems.

Hearing their poetic summons, Santa suddenly appears at the doorway, prompting squeals of excitement and rhapsodic chants of "Tz-mer Pa-pi, Tz-mer Pa-pi" (Santa Claus, Santa Claus). The kids rush to greet Santa and receive their presents, while I stroll about distributing candy out of a giant wooden basket.

When the supply of sweets is exhausted, I step outside for some fresh air. Inside, the children squeal with excitement, their joyful cries reverberating throughout the arena. Outside, the soldiers march in formation around the building, their voices echoing as they chant the lyrics to *Getash-en*.

The contrast serves as a blunt reminder of the dichotomy of life in these border villages: despite living with the harsh aftermath of an uneasy ceasefire, these children, like all kids around the world, impatiently await Santa's arrival every Christmas.

We then meet briefly with Mrs. Lusine, AfA's local coordinator and recently elected mayor of Kornidzor. After reviewing the event and brainstorming areas for improvement in subsequent years, we make our way to the home of Paron Arayik, the neighbor to AfA's nascent KorniTun community home.

In creating KorniTun, currently under construction, AfA aims to establish a base from which the diaspora can connect with the border and its people and understand the reality of everyday life for these communities at the doors of Artsakh. The first floor will function as an education and technology center, while the second will serve as lodging quarters.

At Mr. Arayik's house, we are invited for a traditional *khovovats* (barbecue) lunch. While we explore the family farm, the enticing smell of fresh, local pork and potatoes sizzling on the grill wafts through the air. Near the grill stand corn crop stubs and a phalanx of honey bee boxes, which we are told house 30,000 bees. In the stable, we meet *Paron Arayik's* horse, cows, and calves.

We sit down to a table so abounding with *khovovats*, meat *blinchi*, *jingalov hats*, bread, cheese and herb platters, home-grown honey, and, of course, homemade vodka. Several toasts later, filled with this hearty sustenance, we part ways with Arayik and his family.

Before returning to Yerevan, we set out on a brief hike on the dusty valley road to a rock church which would be considered positively contemporary by Armenian historical standards. Erected in 1905, it was the first architecturally independent structure in Kornidzor, the first building not carved out of the mountains.

The austere interior features artwork of Jesus and biblical scenes dating back to the last decade, presumably painted by local children. After we light candles and say our silent prayers, Hovhannes and Saro gather the bits of trash scattered around the church and burn them outside. They mention that the village of Kornidzor itself does not have a well-established public garbage disposal system.

While Shushan and I marvel at how people managed to live in the caves sprinkled among the steep inclines of the mountains surrounding us, Hovhannes notes that *Tikin Lusine* herself was born in one of them.

As the final flames lap the last of the debris, we climb back up into the van which will bring us to our homes in Yerevan. Peering at the colossal mountains enveloping the valley, I understand why so many Armenian folk songs extoll these gentle giants. They are the embodiment of the Armenian spirit: serene yet imposing, ancient yet enduring.





# Professor Safrastyan Discusses Turkish-Armenian Relations at ADL Press Meeting

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Prof. Ruben Safrastyan spoke at the Armenian Democratic Liberal (ADL) Party press online lecture on February 16 on recent developments in Turkish-Armenian relations.

Safrastyan is director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, a former counselor of the Armenian Embassy in Germany, and author or editor of 12 books. He is also founding editor of the academic periodicals *Turkic and Ottoman Studies* and *Contemporary Eurasia*, as well as editor of the academic yearbook *Peoples and Countries of the Near and Middle East*.

Organizer of the Zoom series and Beirut's *Zartok* newspaper editor Sevag Hagopian welcomed the participants and turned over the (virtual) podium to moderator Hagop Avedikian, editor of *Azg* newspaper of Yerevan. Avedikian provided a biographical sketch of Safrastyan. As background, Avedikian observed that Turkish-Armenian negotiations are not new, noting the meeting of Turkish Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çaglayangil in the late 1970s with representatives of three Armenian political parties, and the three prior attempts at establishing diplomatic relations in the post-Soviet era.

Safrastyan began by providing a background to the current attempt at “normalizing” Turkish-Armenian relations after the Armenian defeat in the 2020 Artsakh war, which upset the geopolitical status quo in the south Caucasus. Russia now has to deal with Turkey as a serious rival for influence, he pointed out. While Turkey failed in becoming a signatory to the trilateral agree-



Professor Ruben Safrastyan

ment of November 9/10, 2020 or joining the peacekeeping forces in Karabakh, it was able to participate in a joint Russian-Turkish monitoring center in Aghdam with 60-70 Turkish officers.

Safrastyan placed great importance on the Shushi agreement between Turkey and Azerbaijan of June 15, 2021, which sets the foundation for a deeper integration of political, military and economic relations between the two countries, following the model of the Russia-Belarus union. Safrastyan saw this agreement as a step on the path to realization of Pan-Turkic plans, and declared that in the future Turkey would want Central Asian Turkic nations to join the union. He found Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to be fundamentally following Pan-Turkic ideology, mixed in with some neo-Ottomanist and Pan-Islamic elements.

Safrastyan pointed to a new development which for the first time allowed Turkey to

directly influencing the Kremlin domestically. This is the development of the Moscow Azerbaijani community, with very rich oligarchs who are in contact directly with the Russian political elite.

Safrastyan saw a great danger in normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, fearing that if the borders are opened Armenia will enter into the sphere of Turkish economic and political influence. Safrastyan pointed to the positive reinterpretation of the Ottoman Turkish period in Bulgarian history as a model to what could happen to Armenia. He noted that Turkey appointed a very experienced diplomat, closely connected with Erdogan, as its representative to these negotiations, indicating their importance to it.

Turkey in the prior three attempts at negotiations with the independent Republic of Armenia had three preconditions: 1. Abandonment of the issue of Armenian Genocide recognition; abandonment of protec-

tion of the rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh; 3. Reaffirmation of the Treaty of Kars (1921). Armenia did not accept them, so the negotiations failed, he said.

One positive change compared to the past three attempts, Safrastyan remarked, was that all three states cochairing the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group negotiations on Karabakh have recognized the Armenian Genocide. He thought that no matter how hard it might be, Armenian diplomacy should try to use this situation to get Turkey to take steps towards recognizing the Genocide too.

Despite all the potential dangers of the current negotiations, Safrastyan concluded that it was correct to enter them, since many of the world powers greeted this positively. If it were rejected from the start, he said Armenia would be in greater isolation diplomatically than it was during the 2020 war. On the other hand, he stressed that Armenia should not accept any of the aforementioned three Turkish preconditions.

After his initial exposition, Safrastyan answered questions from the audience on related topics. When asked about the future of Kazakhstan, where Armenia joined Russian and other Collective Security Treaty Organization forces to intervene recently, he noted that this intervention could only temporarily halt the anti-Russian and pro-Turkish trend in that country. He declared that Kazakhstan must eventually be considered a lost country for Russia.

In response to a question about whether the Armenian government had its own clear goals and agenda for the negotiations, he responded that he wondered the same thing, but could not give a clear answer. While it was clear that some concessions or compromises would have to be made by Armenia in the process, he said that he hoped they would not concern fundamental issues.

One error that had already been made, Safrastyan said, was in the method of preparation for the negotiation. He said that Armenian diasporan representatives should have been invited to participate in these preparations since the issues at stake were pan-Armenian, on which the leaders of the Republic of Armenia do not have right to make decisions alone.

## Armenian Ombudsman: Analysis of New Evidence of Azerbaijani War Crimes Completed

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan says his office has completed the examination of new evidence and reports of Azerbaijani war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the 44-day war unleashed against Artsakh.

In a statement on Monday, February 21, the ombudsman said special reports will be sent to the foreign ministries, prosecutor's offices and police of countries with general jurisdiction.

“To demonstrate the scale of the work, I want to mention that the objective evidence analyzed refers to 245 videos and 120 pictures of torture, killings, and atrocities; in total 365 pieces of evidence. The reports are corroborated with registered facts and refer to the following main issues:

1. premeditated murder of prisoners of war and civilian captives,
2. torture, inhuman treatment of prisoners of war and civilian captives, including beheadings, cutting body parts, etc.
3. desecration of the bodies of killed servicemen and civilians,
4. destruction of civilians and civilian settlements with prohibited cluster munitions
5. the use of jihadists and terrorists in the war against Artsakh,
6. use of weapons of mass destruction containing chemical elements,
7. unleashing war during the new coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, paralyzing the healthcare systems of Artsakh and Armenia and contributing to the sharp in-

crease in deaths,

8. facts of the torture of prisoners of war and civilian captives based on religious affiliation, desecration and destruction of churches and a policy of erasing traces of their Armenian identity,

9. illegal management of social media pages of Armenian prisoners of war during the war by Azerbaijani servicemen, and the incitement and encouragement of inter-ethnic enmity between the two peoples,

10. artificially protracting the return of Armenian captives for political purposes (literally human trafficking), thus causing mental suffering to their families,” Tatoyan said.

The videos were translated from Azer-

baijani or Russian, and then English or Russian subtitles were added, he said.

“We have shown that these crimes are the result of Azerbaijan's long-running policy of Armenophobia and enmity against Armenians, the result of ethnic cleansing, while the threat is still there,” Tatoyan stated.

“We must do everything in our power to hold responsible all those who violated the rights of our compatriots, committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in an effort to prevent violations in the future. All materials will also be sent to international organizations, including the UN, Council of Europe, the European Union and others,” he noted.

## Azerbaijan Issues Arrest Warrants for Kocharyan, Sargsyan

WARRANTS, from page 1

“taken measures” to prevent them from being placed on Interpol's most wanted list. It did not immediately react to Baku's latest move.

During his nearly two-decade rule Aliyev held numerous face-to-face meetings with Kocharyan and Sargsyan aimed at ending the Karabakh conflict. Over the past year he has repeatedly lambasted his former Armenian counterparts. The verbal attacks mostly followed their harsh criticism of Pashinyan and his handling of the disastrous war.

The arrest warrants came the day after

Armenia's current and former leader issued statements marking the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the popular movement for Karabakh's unification with Armenia.

“The movement was the first step in restoring our statehood,” read a statement released by Pashinyan.

“Today Artsakh (Karabakh), though wounded, is still standing,” he said. “Today our steps are aimed not only at solving the socio-economic problems of the Armenians of Artsakh and overcoming security challenges but also at protecting their rights.”

“Artsakh will always be ours,” Kocharyan said for his part.

## Artsakh Movement First Step in Restoring Our Statehood, Pashinyan Says

ARTSAKH, from page 1

the memory of all our heroic children. The opening of an era of peaceful development for their generations, for our common Homeland, will be the greatest tribute to their memory, which will guarantee the longevity of our state, the international recognition and realization of the rights of Artsakh. Achieving these goals requires consistent, careful and honest work and we must be steadfast in this work,” Pashinyan said.

In Stepanakert, officials celebrated the day, with President Arayik Harutyunyan laying flowers at a memorial to the war dead.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Iranian FM Hails ‘Expanding’ Ties With Armenia

MUNICH (RFE/RL) — Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian praised Relations with Armenia and reaffirmed his strong opposition to any “geopolitical change” in the region when he met with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan over the weekend.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of an annual conference on international peace and security held in the German city of Munich.

“Amir-Abdollahian described bilateral relations between Tehran and Yerevan as deeply expanding,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the talks.

He said that senior Armenian and Iranian diplomats should build on this positive dynamic by negotiating a new “document on bilateral cooperation,” the statement added without elaborating.

Amir-Abdollahian was also reported to hail the planned opening of an Armenian-Iranian “transit route” for regional trade. He clearly referred to an ambitious project to create a transport corridor that would connect Iran Persian Gulf ports to the Black Sea through Armenia and Georgia.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan and Amir-Abdollahian agreed on the need to finalize an agreement on that corridor that would pass through Armenia southeastern Syunik province bordering Iran as well as Azerbaijan.

The Iranian ambassador in Yerevan, Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri, said last month that Syunik must remain “the main transit route” for cargo shipments between Armenia and Iran even after the anticipated launch of Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links. The Iranian side is therefore looking



Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan (left) and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian meet in Munich, February 19, 2022.

forward to further highway upgrades in the strategic Armenian region, he said.

The Armenian government last week announced its first step towards attracting potential contractors for the multimillion-dollar construction of a new highway in Syunik that will significantly shorten travel time between Armenia and Iran.

“We hope that by the end of the year we will have [selected] a company that will carry out that work,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said during a session of his cabinet.

Armenia lost control over a 21-kilometer stretch of an existing Syunik road leading to the Iranian border after a controversial troop withdrawal ordered by Pashinyan following

the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Last September, Azerbaijan set up checkpoints there to tax Iranian vehicles, triggering unprecedented tensions with Tehran.

An influential Iranian cleric accused Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in October of trying to “cut Iran’s access to Armenia.” More than 160 members of the Iranian parliament issued a joint statement warning against “any geopolitical change and alteration of the borders of neighboring countries.”

Meeting with Mirzoyan, Amir-Abdollahian likewise “emphasized Tehran’s opposition to any geopolitical change in the region,” according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

## Aliyev, Putin Sign Cooperation Agreement

MSOCOW (PanArmenian.net) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin Tuesday, February 22 that Russia has played an “important role in ending the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia”, and today it has a leading position in normalizing relations between the two countries.

“The Russian Federation played a very important role in ending the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia and transferring the settlement of the conflict from a hot phase to a political and diplomatic one. The trilateral statement, signed in November 2020 with your active personal participation, just allowed us to resolve this long-term conflict,” Aliyev told Putin, according to RIA Novosti.

“Today the situation is new, today the geopolitical realities in the region are

accepted by the world community, and Russia also plays a very important role, I would say a leading role in creating opportunities for normalizing relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, opening transport communications, establishing normal neighborly relations.”

Putin and his Aliyev signed a declaration on military cooperation in Moscow Tuesday, February 22.

“Today we will sign the declaration on allied cooperation. This is, quite obviously, a new stage in the development of our relations, and, of course, this became possible, including after the progress in the resolution of the Karabakh issue, which has not yet been fully resolved in general,” Putin said, according to RIA Novosti.

Putin said he and Aliyev have achieved “certain agreements” on the develop-

ment of trade and economic ties in Nagorno-Karabakh. He said disputes still remain, but Moscow will do everything so that the settlement process proceeds peacefully.

“In any event, there are already certain agreements not only in terms of ensuring the security of all the people who live there, but also in terms of developing trade and economic ties and unblocking transport communications. I know that there are still disputes, there is something to work on. But we will do everything to ensure that this process develops peacefully, and that we achieve the satisfaction of all parties involved in this process,” he added.

The Russian leader noted that economic ties between Russia and Azerbaijan are “well diversified”, with regional ties developing very actively too.



President Vladimir Putin and President Ilham Aliyev in Moscow

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Turkey Seeks to Block DW Over ‘Critical Reports’

ISTANBUL (Deutsche Welle) — Turkey’s media watchdog has started a countdown for DW to apply for a broadcast license or see its TV channels and website banned in the country. DW’s director general called the move an attempt at “censorship.”

The Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has renewed its demands that three international media outlets, including Deutsche Welle, apply for broadcasting licenses within days.

Earlier this month, RTÜK warned that it would give DW 72 hours to file the paperwork relating to a 2019 media law or “face a broadcast ban” and have its website blocked across Turkey. That deadline went into effect on February 21.

DW Director General Peter Limbourg said that “after having subjected the local media outlets in Turkey to such regulation, an attempt is now being made to restrict the reporting of international media services. This move does not relate to formal aspects of broadcasting, but to the journalistic content itself. It gives the Turkish authorities the option to block the entire service based on individual, critical reports unless these reports are deleted. This would open up the possibility of censorship. We will appeal against this decision and take legal action in the Turkish courts.”

DW, alongside other international broadcasters, is one of the few remaining news outlets from which people in Turkey can obtain independent information. In addition to DW, Voice of America and France-based Euronews were given notice to apply for a license. DW had established a liaison office in Turkey in accordance with the 2019 law and has been registered with the relevant Turkish ministry since February 2020.

The 10-member RTÜK board is dominated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s conservative AKP party and its far-right ally the MHP party.

### Deal on Karabakh’s Status ‘Key to Lasting Peace’

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh will remain unresolved as long as there is no agreement on the disputed territory’s status, according to James Warlick, a former US co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

In an interview with Infoco.am this week, Warlick said that Armenia can benefit from the opening of its borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey “once there is that kind of settlement in place.” “This can be a big change but it does require a lasting settlement,” he stressed.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly stated that transport links with Azerbaijan and Turkey will significantly benefit the Armenian economy and help to usher in an “era of peaceful development” in the region.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenian Artists Return Home

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN, Germany — After 30 years' living and working in Germany, two leading Armenian artists are packing up their canvases and brushes, their books and personal belongings, and will soon board a plane for Yerevan. Nona Gabrielyan and her husband, Van Soghomonyan, are an institution in Wiesbaden, the capital of the federal state of Hessen, located in the Rhine-Main area near Frankfurt. Since 1992, when they arrived here from Yerevan, their Atelier N&V has been a reference point for artists, students and art lovers. It is located on the Bismarckring, one of the main arteries of the city, this one named after the famous Iron Chancellor, who oversaw the unification of Germany.

On November 27 and 28, the atelier filled up with people, friends and collectors, who had received an invitation to come by, to say farewell. "It is difficult for us to leave Germany," they had written, and expressed their joy at being able "to greet so many friends at this time." They will be sorely missed.

In their workshop and gallery, they have not only painted and sculpted but, since 1995, have shared their craft and works with the community. In that year, Nona Gabrielyan began teaching master classes in painting and graphics, and has educated more than 55 aspiring artists. In addition, beginning in 2004, she began lecturing on Culture and Creativity at the local Volkshochschule, an institution for adult education, and continued for 16 years.

## Art and Universality

Gabrielyan and Soghomonyan are Armenians, but their activity and art transcend national borders. Both were born in Tbilisi, Georgia, Soghomonyan in 1937 and Gabrielyan in 1944. Van studied at the Academy of Art there from 1956 to 1958, then at the Fine Arts and Drama Institute Yerevan from 1963 to 1969. Gabrielyan moved to Yerevan in 1963, where she studied sculpture at the same academy, graduating in 1968. The two met there and married in 1965. It was a time when ceramic art was under-



Nona Gabrielyan and Van Soghomonyan

going innovative changes, and Gabrielyan explored the new possibilities in the medium to expand its expressive capacities in graphics and painting, especially using clay. In 1971 she and her husband became members of Artists' Union of Armenia. In the 1970s and 1980s, Soghomonyan was working in sculptural ceramics, which one critic categorized as "lyrical and philosophical."

In the 1990s Armenia was going through multiple crises with the earthquake, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Karabakh war, which plunged the population into



Nona Gabrielyan (front row, 3rd from left) and her students at Yerevan exhibition, 2016

chaos, hunger, poverty.

The two artists had received an invitation to travel to Wiesbaden and present their works at an exhibition, but precisely because of the political and security crises at the time, it took a while before they could arrange for visas. In 1992 they finally received their documents, and set out with their daughter, son-in-law and their young grandson. The younger family stayed for a year, then returned to Yerevan, whereas Van and Nona remained, and made Germany their home.

It could not have worked out so well, Gabrielyan told me, if they had not received the substantial support of the artistic community and the city of Wiesbaden. It was Ruth Zais, a leading patron of the arts and descended from the family of the architect associated with many historic buildings there, who extended the invitation for an exhibition at the Haus der Heimat (Homeland House), and the authorities issued visas allowing them to come to Germany, and to work as artists. Zais was enthusiastic about the couple's art and purchased several works.

"We paid our way with our works," Gabrielyan said, and, indeed, they succeeded in selling sculptures and paintings which are now housed in numerous private collections in German and other European cities. Both artists express their continuing gratitude for the backing they have received over the years, and the enduring friendships that they have formed with collectors and customers.

They were already established artists when they arrived, having taken part in exhibitions not only in the Soviet Union but also in Western European cities. Van Soghomonyan began presenting his works in group exhibitions in 1971 and solo shows in 1980. In Faenza, Italy, where they both exhibited several times, Soghomonyan won the first award in the International Competition of Contemporary Ceramic Art in 1983. They had also been present in Germany. In 1984 they displayed works at a show in the West German city of Westerwald (noted for its glazed poetry) entitled, "Contemporary Ceramics from the Soviet Union." Since 1980, Nona Gabrielyan has held solo exhibitions in Yerevan, Moscow and Paris, as well as numerous cities in Germany. She participated in the International Symposium of Ceramics, House of Creativity of Artists Dzintari, Latvia in 1974, 1976 and 1983 and presented her works in group exhibitions in Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Leningrad, Moscow, Faenza, Vallauris (France), Montreal, and of course Yerevan and numerous German cities including Berlin.

## Cultural Dialogue

The Haus der Heimat, which hosted their first Wiesbaden appearance in 1992, is an important venue for cultural dialogue and exchange. It is known as a "home away from home" for former refugees and their organizations from Eastern Europe. Numerous Germans whose ancestors migrated to Russia centuries ago have returned to their native land, and the Haus der Heimat is a meeting place for them. Vera Maier, who returned in 1988, is leading the integration program, known as "Together Wiesbaden," which has sponsored activities aimed at facilitating mutual understanding. Art and art exhibitions have played a central role in this process. As Gabrielyan has often stressed, nations have borders but culture has its

unique qualities: "Art is a universal language, especially painting and music! Everyone can understand it, without translation."

Their first event in 1992 was a success, and it paved the way for further activities. In August 1993 they presented works again in Wiesbaden, this time at the majestic Kurhaus, a historic architectural complex functioning as a center for cultural events. They would return to the Kurhaus again and again for further shows in the first decade of the new millennium, and present their artworks in the famous Christian Zais Hall. In 1993 a large number of their creations, especially sculptures in bronze and other materials, were on display, some outdoors on the spacious Bowling Green, which is flanked by colonnades and plane trees, and others in the vast exhibition hall. Gabrielyan presented sculptures, including a massive female torso entitled "Victim," as well as painted ceramics, some of which critics compared to profiles by Marc Chagall. A dialogue between the two unfolded in that show, around themes related to their personal and national past experiences. On the green outside stood the monumental structure by Soghomonyan entitled "20<sup>th</sup> Century," bearing the scars of catastrophe, inside, his "Meditation," a human figure with head on stomach; abstract geometrical forms depicting "Time and Space," and "Forest," four damaged cylinders enclosed by a metal ring. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGypxfrKIHY>)

Soghomonyan has described his works in personal terms. "I have seen so much brutality, especially against Armenia," he said, "that it is necessarily reflected in my work. Many works can be seen as requiems, as outcries...." His art deals "with the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the experiences of my generation and my people. Even what one has not personally experienced is transmitted genetically."

Tragic elements in Armenian history have impacted his wife's works as well. "There is the helplessness of the soul," she has said, "in the face of catastrophe, whereby I have in mind not so much the earthquake as man's capacity for aggression. But I believe he has an even greater capacity to protect himself from aggression, and the most effective method to achieve that is not to resist. It is a spiritual attempt to overcome aggression."

Both artists counter the threats posed by nature and man with their religiously shaped hope for reason and tolerance, wrote Dr. Renate Luckner-Bien from the Art College Burg Giebichenstein.

## Integration a Two-Way Street

Living and working in a new, foreign country is not easy for anyone; one has to learn the language, become acquainted with the political environment, adapt to the customs and culture. For Gabrielyan, art was the medium through which she could engage in this cultural exchange process. Working with her husband in their Wiesbaden atelier on their own creations, she began to offer art education in the form of classes in their studio and delivered lectures in a local institution for adult education. At the same time, she began writing, and over the years has published many literary works, including poetry and short stories with illustrations, both in Russian and Armenian, some of which have appeared in German as well.

*continued on next page*





## INTERNATIONAL

# Karabakh Leaders Hail Russian Recognition of Breakaway Ukraine Regions

By Astghik Bedevian

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian leadership on February 22 welcomed Russian recognition of two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as independent republics.

By contrast, the Armenian government was in no rush to react to the development that will likely deepen Moscow's standoff with Ukraine and the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin officially recognized the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic in a lengthy televised address aired late on Monday. He went on to order the deployment of Russian forces there to "keep the peace."

The move, which came after months of Russian military buildup along the Russia-Ukraine border, drew strong condemnation from the United States and European powers. They accused Moscow of violating international law and the 2014 Minsk agreements to end the conflict in the wider Donbass region in eastern Ukraine.

"The right of nations to self-determination and building their own state is inalienable for every people and is a fundamental principle of international law," said Arayik Harutyunyan, the president of Karabakh, who welcomed Putin's "historic" decision.

"The establishment of an independent state and its international recognition becomes imperative especially in the face of existential dangers, as it is the most effective and civilized means of preventing bloodshed and humanitarian disaster," he said.

Harutyunyan drew parallels with the long-running conflict over Karabakh, saying that the disputed territory's predominantly Armenian population deserves "international recognition of its sovereign state."

Karabakh had declared itself an independent republic in 1991. Its secession from Azerbaijan has not been formally recognized by any country, including Armenia.

Russian presence in Karabakh increased dramatically after Moscow brokered a ceasefire agreement that stopped a six-week Armenian-Azerbaijani war in November 2020. The deal led to the deployment of about 2,000 Russian peacekeeping troops in and around Karabakh. The peacekeepers have helped tens of thousands of Karabakh Armenians, who fled the fighting, to return to their homes.

Official Yerevan did not comment on

Putin's decision as of Tuesday afternoon. Lawmakers representing Armenia ruling Civil Contract party also avoided passing judgment on it.

"I will not comment on that for now because I have to wait until an [official] position is formulated," one of them, Maria Karapetian, told reporters. "I have not been able to discuss last night's geopolitical developments with my colleagues."

There was also no official reaction from the main opposition Hayastan alliance led by former President Robert Kocharyan. Still, one of its senior lawmakers, Artsvik Minasyan, said he believes Yerevan should

"at least not speak out against" the Russian move.

"It is obvious that we need to take advantage of this situation to advance the issue of Karabakh recognition," Minasian said.

Putin spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan by phone hours before announcing the recognition of the breakaway territories. Pashinyan's press office said they discussed the Karabakh conflict and "the current situation in Russian-Ukrainian relations."

The Kremlin made no mention of the Ukraine crisis in its readout of the phone call.

## Sons of Azerbaijani Strongman Received Millions From Money Laundering

GENEVA (Public Radio of Armenia) — Having opened bank accounts with Credit Suisse, Barclays, and other foreign banks, Rza and Seymour Talibov received over \$20 million in suspicious wire transfers, even as the people of the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan suffered under their father's dictatorial rule according to an investigation by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) titled *Suisse secrets* with leaked banking data from the Swiss bank Credit Suisse.

Suisse Secrets is a collaborative journalism project based on leaked bank account data from Swiss banking giant Credit Suisse.

The data was provided by an anonymous source to the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung, which shared it with the (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project) OCCRP and 46 other media part-

ners around the world.

In late 2007 19-year-old Seymour had \$40,000 transferred to his personal bank account on December 27. On the same day, his 25-year-old brother Rza got \$95,000 of his own. As an explanation, both transactions listed simply the word "textile."

Within months, Seymour and Rza both started to receive more cash, in much larger bank transfers — up to \$500,000 at a time, often in implausibly round figures. The listed reasons for the transfers expanded to include "metal," "metal parts," and "electrical equipment." By the end of 2012, they had received over \$20 million in total.

Now, through an analysis of several leaks of banking data and property records, OCCRP can show that the Talibov family enriched itself from questionable sources even as Nakhichevan's people suffered.

Leaked banking records show that the

millions Talibov's sons received came from shell companies. The data obtained by reporters doesn't show what the Talibovs did with the money they received. But soon after the transactions began, they started spending.

In 2008, the elder Talibov brother, Rza, his mother, a cousin, and several businessmen founded a bank together.

Four years later, just as the Laundromat transactions reached their peak, Rza bought two adjacent buildings in the Georgian resort town of Batumi that he converted into a five-star hotel. Rza, Seymour, and their sister Baharkhanim — who also received nearly a million dollars from Laundromat companies — have also acquired about a dozen properties in Dubai, including a luxurious villa, a 12-floor apartment hotel, and multiple individual apartments. In total, their properties are worth an estimated \$63 million.

from previous page

It was a two-way street. While she imparted her knowledge of and love for art to her students, she was learning the German language, and through it, the culture. Her teaching relationship to her students developed into friendship, cultural exchange and collaboration. Just as they were introducing her to Germany, she sought to acquaint them with other cultures. She organized artistic working trips with her students to various foreign lands, spending weeks in Tuscany, France and Armenia itself.

Many of her students visited Armenia this way for the first time. "No one gave me this task," she said. "I just wanted to let them know where I came from." Twice, in 2014 and 2016, when she had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Yerevan, she arranged for her students' works to be displayed alongside her own. Now, she told me recently, many of her students travel regularly to Armenia independently.

In late 2018, she hosted a show at the Haus der Heimat, entitled "Exhibition 1 + 9," which included the works of nine of her students as well as her own. This was the third time she was sharing the stage with her students. And, since many of them had participated in painting excursions abroad, she arranged for photo montages of those field trips to be on view.

In remarks to visitors, she said, "All the young women whose works are exhibited here are not only my students but also my friends, for me and my whole family. Formerly I knew Germany through its literature and art history. Now I love Germany through my students and friends. And they, through me, have been able to know and love my country Armenia. Some of them visited, with their husbands."

Gabrielyan has facilitated exchange programs for artists of the younger generation. In winter 2016, she had collaborated on a showing, again at the Haus der Heimat, of works by six young Armenian artists. Entitled, "Melody of Color," it presented paintings and sculptures of remarkable mastery and originality.

In addition to the fruits of their endeavors, the six young men offered instruction, on an informal basis, to



Nona Gabrielyan and students

very young children, who would come in on weekends. Some of them were no older than 4 or 5, all eager to take crayon and pencil in hand and imitate the visiting artists. Most of them were third generation Germans, whose forefathers had migrated to Russia long ago, and whose parents had now returned to Germany. The Haus der Heimat offered them the opportunity to introduce their children to their new home, through classes in the language as well as dance and art.

### Art as a Family Tradition

One of those six young artists visiting from Armenia was Guy Ghazanchyan, the grandson of Nona and Van, who had first come to Wiesbaden as a tot. Like his moth-

er, Lilit Soghomonyan, and father Gagik Ghazanchyan, Guy grew up in an artists' family. He earliest memories take him back to the atelier in Wiesbaden, where his parents and grandparents painted and sculpted. He said he grew up thinking that "everyone was an artist."

The family exhibited together in Germany at the very beginning, and in May 1995 held a show in Kreishaus, in Berghem. As local press accounts reported, there were mythological subjects and figurative subjects, rendered in painting as well as plastic arts. If Armenian motifs were at times cast in relation to the Soviet traditions they had studied, at the same time, the national character emerged clearly in themes drawn from Armenian history and religion.

Now, when Gabrielyan and Soghomonyan return to Yere-

van, they will reunite with their family, which includes two grandchildren and a great-grandchild. All of them, needless to say, have entered the art world, albeit at varying stages of development... Guy has recently attracted broad attention with an exhibition at the Yerevan Modern Art Museum entitled, "Witness." (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/12/16/pictures-at-exhibition-raise-profound-issues/>)

Armenia has gone through profound changes since they lived there decades ago, but theirs is a family and a nation of artists. As Van was once quoted saying, "My home is everywhere that I can live and work." And Nona was of the same view: "An artist belongs to the whole world and the whole world belongs to the artist."





# Community News

## Prof. Akçam Named Inaugural Director Of Promise Institute Armenian Genocide Research Program

LOS ANGELES — The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA announced last week the appointment of Taner Akçam as inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program, housed within the Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) at UCLA.

Akçam is Kaloosdian and Mugar Professor in Modern Armenian History and Genocide at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies of Clark University, in Worcester, Mass. He is widely recognized as one of the first scholars of Turkish descent to write extensively on the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of Armenians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century



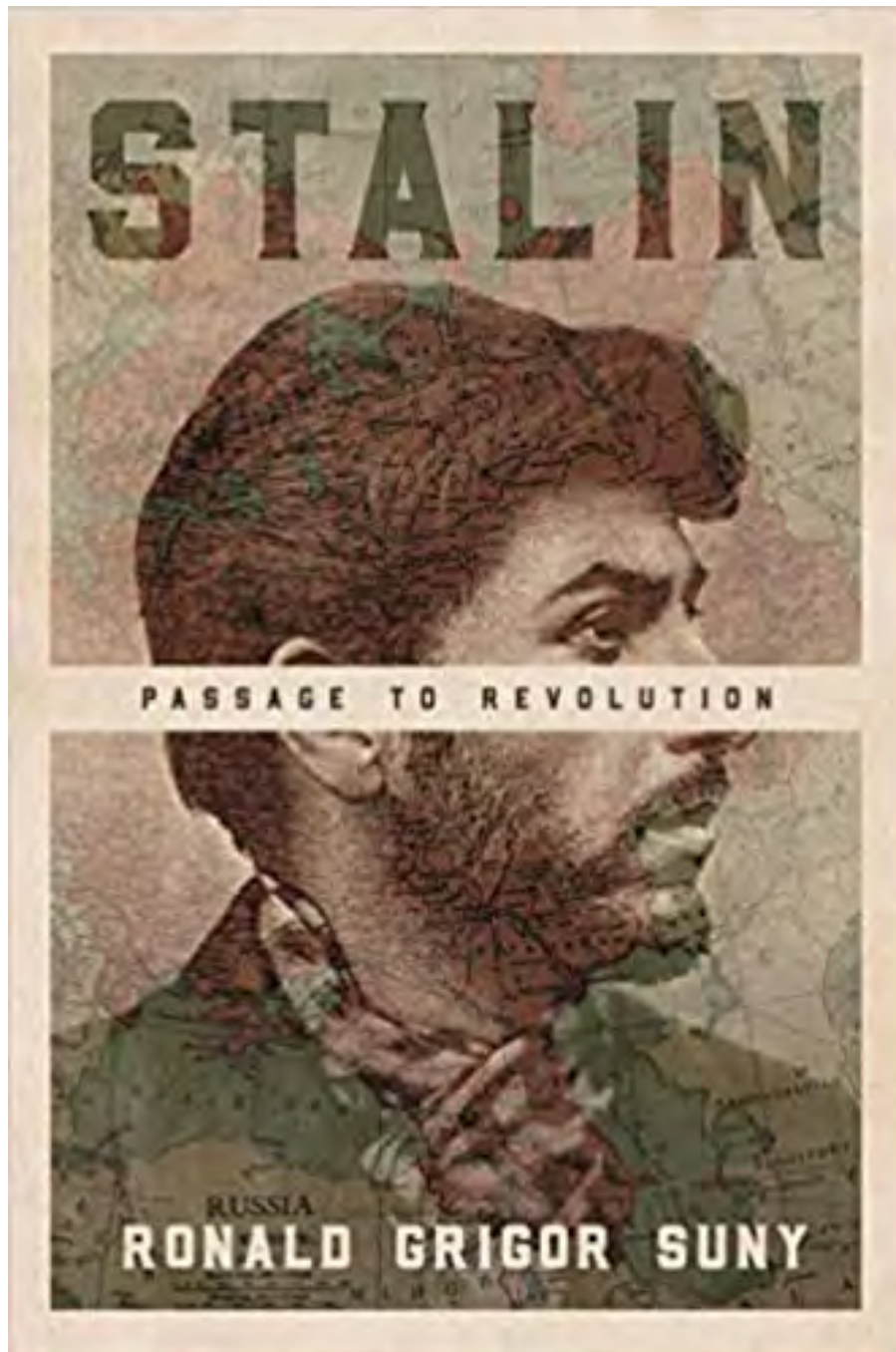
Prof. Taner Akçam

and one of the world's most prolific scholars currently pursuing research and mentoring doctoral students in this important field. Many of Akçam's publications constitute an unprecedented examination of secret documents that show the deliberate nature of the Armenian Genocide. The scholar is also the founder of the Krikor Guerguerian Online Archive.

Akçam's numerous books include *A Shameful Act: Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2006), *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 2012), *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (Palgrave, 2018) and the forthcoming co-edited volume, *The Genocide of the Christian Populations in the Ottoman Empire and its Aftermath (1908–1923)* (Routledge 2022).

The acclaimed scholar is currently working on several projects that will continue after his arrival at UCLA in spring 2022. These include investigations of the auctioning of confiscated or plundered Armenian properties during the early days of the Turkish Republic, Ottoman press coverage during the late Ottoman era (1918–1922), an oral history project on the Dersim Genocide (1938) and investigations of the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Turkish Republic's founding principles, based on an analysis of Ottoman archival materials from the period 1918–1923.

The Armenian Genocide Research Program will be housed within the see PROMISE, page 10



## Suny's Biography of The Young Stalin Wins Distinguished Prizes

By Ronald Grigor Suny

This essay, in the form of a newspaper article reviewing reviews of a recent prizewinning book, is actually — full disclosure — written by the author of that book, the recipient of some positive reviews, and the target of some others. The voice I have chosen in this essay is of an impartial journalist, though since you the reader have now been informed of the actual author of the book and current essay, will make up your own mind about the value of this account.



Professor Ronald Grigor Suny

Many people may not have heard of the Deutscher Memorial Book Prize. Granted by a jury in Great Britain, the prize honors the memories of the Marxist activists and writers Isaac and Tamara Deutscher. This year's prize was awarded to Professor Ronald Grigor Suny of the University of Michigan for his book *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2020). This prize is given for a book which "exemplifies the best and most innovative new writing in or about the Marxist tradition." Suny has been invited to London to give the keynote address at the annual Historical Materialism Conference in November 2022. Former prize winners include geographer David Harvey, journalist/scholar and activist Mike Davis, literary critic Terry Eagleton, and historians Eric Hobsbawm, Arno J. Mayer, Teodor Shanin, Robert Brenner, Maxime Rodinson, and Robin Blackburn, among others. Suny says he is humbled to be in a company of so many who have inspired him in his work.

The author or editor of more than twenty books and hundreds of published articles, Suny is the grandson of the Armenian composer and ethnomusicologist Grikor Mirzayan Suni (1876-1939) and the son of choral director Gurken (George) Suny (1910-1995). Appointed Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, Suny was the founder and first director of the see STALIN, page 11

## Matenadaran, NAASR to Hold Joint Programs

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Matenadaran / Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan will hold the first of a planned series of joint programs on Saturday, March 12, at noon (Eastern Time), "An Introduction to the Matenadaran and Its Collections," presented by Sona Baloyan, senior international relations specialist at the Matenadaran.

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

"NAASR collaborates successfully with a multitude of academic partners and Armenian community partners around the United States and, increasingly, abroad, and we are proud to work with a great institution like the Matenadaran which we hold, and which everyone should hold, in such high esteem," commented NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs, Marc A. Mamigonian.

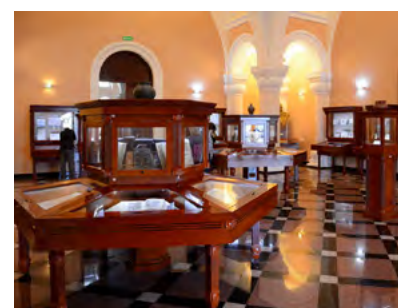
In this webinar, Baloyan will provide an illustrated introduction to the institution, showcasing not only what may be seen by visitors but also providing a look behind the scenes at this remarkable center of scholarship and preservation.

The Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, or the Matenadaran, was established in order to preserve the manuscripts of the Echmiadzin Catholicosate. The Echmiadzin Matenadaran was transferred to Yerevan's Public Library in 1939. The construction of a new building designed by architect Mark Grigoryan began in 1945 and finished in 1957. In 1959 the Matenadaran was reorganized into an institute of scientific research with special departments of scientific preservation, study, translation, and publication of manuscripts and in 1962, the institute was named after Mesrop Mashtots. A major addition, housing the scientific departments, opened in 2011.

The Matenadaran contains about 23,000 manuscripts, from almost all areas of ancient and medieval Armenian culture and sciences. The Matenadaran also holds manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Ethiopian, Syrian, Latin, Tamil, and other languages. Many originals, lost in their mother languages and known only by their Armenian translations, have been saved from loss by medieval translations.

Additional joint events and initiatives are under discussion and will be announced as they develop.

For more information contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).



Inside Matenadaran





## COMMUNITY NEWS / OBITUARY

## In Memory of Levon Chaushyan

By Konstantin Petrossian

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Sad news came from Yerevan. Prominent Armenian composer, public figure and pedagogue Levon Chaushyan died suddenly. He was an Honored Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia, endowed with the Movses Khorenatsi Gold Medals of the Yerevan Municipality, numerous awards from abroad and diplomas. Professor of the Yerevan Komitas Conservatory, head of its Composition Department, and chairman of its board of trustees, Chaushyan as a renowned composer has been repeatedly invited to lead the juries of various international music festivals. His symphonic, instrumental, and chamber works have been performed on different stages of the world, his works have been published many times, and form a golden fund of Armenian music.

Chaushyan was born in Yerevan in 1946. After graduating from the Komitas Conservatory in Yerevan as a composer and pianist, he has been teaching at the same conservatory since 1973. From 1979 to 1991, he was the secretary and vice president of the executive of the Composers Union of Armenia. In 1995 with a group of composers, he founded the Armenian Music Assembly, of which he was the undisputed president until the end of his life.



Due to his energetic activity, numerous festivals and concerts of Armenian music were organized in Armenia and other countries, where works by Armenian composers were performed, including many premieres. Through his efforts, the musical scores of Armenian composers were published and CDs in different genres were distributed all over the world.

During the first years of independence of the Republic of Armenia, he headed the Armenian Symphony Music Center, supporting the performance of works by Armenian composers. Chaushyan is the author of many symphonic, chamber, and vocal works. He always responded to the life of our people with his works. I want to mention his song *Dzon Hayrenikeen* [Ode to the Fatherland], which was performed in different countries and is fitting to be called an anthem.

It is worth recalling his symphonic poem, piano concerto, sonatas, and vocal and choral music. It is especially worth mentioning his seven string quartets, the first incomparable performer of which was the glorious Komitas Quartet. His last, seventh quartet was dedicated to the memory of his beloved wife Gohar.

Levon Chaushyan is connected to me through some 60 years of close friendship. We grew up together, entering the life's course, and we always worked together, doing our best for the development of Armenian music. Many episodes from our lives remain vivid for me and can never be erased from my memory. Chaushyan was a very smart, cultivated, kind and very modest man. He was well respected and had a wide circle of friends. He was especially loved by many of his students. He was always ready to reach out to anyone who needed help, support, or counsel.

For many years he headed a commission for supporting young musicians under the aegis of the president of the Republic of Armenia. He was really a great Armenian, always experiencing the emotions of his people.

Chaushyan's contribution to the development of Armenian music is invaluable. His monumental contributions to Armenian music eternally adorn the heights of our art. These days, we – his friends, relatives and the whole Armenian music world – mourn the tragic loss of our dear, unforgettable friend, the great Armenian composer Levon Chaushyan. He still had big plans, which remained incomplete. And it is our duty to fulfill them, keeping his immortal memory alive. Rest in peace in the light of the Divine, our dear friend.

## Gia Aivazian (1934-2022)

Armenian Librarian and Scholar

Louise Ratliff photo

LOS ANGELES — Prominent Armenian librarian and scholar Gia (Dziadzan) Aivazian passed away on February 10. Aivazian was born in Kavala, Greece on December 22, 1934.

She received her B. A. (1966) in English literature, a Master's in Library Science (1967) and a Candidate in Philosophy degree in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (1982) specializing in Armenian literature — all from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

She was the Librarian for Armenian and Greek at UCLA's Young Research Library for many years and was the primary person responsible for the development of the large internationally known Armenian collection of that library. Aivazian was awarded the Hagop Meghabard Medal for Achievement in Armenian Bibliography and Librarianship by the National Library of Armenia in 1991.

Aivazian lectured, taught, and published articles and conference papers, primarily in the areas of Armenian literature, folklore, the press and Armenian women. She strongly supported the UCLA Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies and served for some years as president of the Friends of the Narekatsi Chair, starting in 2006/7.

She was a co-founder of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Los Angeles and was a member of the board of the TCA Arshag Dickranian School. She served on the Armenian General Benevolent Union's central committee of America



from 1987 to 1990. She was a very active member of the Armenian-American community of Los Angeles.

Funeral services will be announced later. She is survived by her brother Adam and Ani Aivazian; nephews Sevag and Krikor Aivazian; great-nephews and nieces Nathan, Sevana, Atam, Christopher and Haylen; sister Arshalouis Stevenson; nephew and niece Damian and Anoush Stevenson; great-niece Poppy Stevenson; cousin Takouhi Torosian and family; Susan Apamian and family; the Apamyan family in Armenia; the Chuchian family; Sylvia and Dr. Haig Minassian; Levon and Marie Missirli; Asadour Kouyoumjian; and the entire Aivazian and Apamian families, relatives and friends.

## Melina Marilyn (Misakian) Haroian

Devoted to Family

WALTHAM, Mass. — Melina Marilyn (Misakian) Haroian of Waltham, formerly a resident of Belmont for 50 years, passed away on February 18, 2022 at Meadow Green Nursing & Rehabilitation Center with her family by her side.

She was the daughter of the late Martin and Agnes (Badagian) Misakian, wife of Dickran G. Haroian of 66 years, mother of Dr. Alan Haroian and his wife, Kristin, of

Londonderry, NH and John Haroian and his wife, Debra, of North Andover, MA, grandmother of Carl and Edward Haroian, both of Boston. She is also survived by several nieces and nephews.

Following graduation from Watertown High School, Marilyn was employed as a secretary at the Hood Rubber Company until she married her childhood sweetheart in October of 1955.

After raising her two sons, she returned to work as a part-time medical secretary for a podiatrist in Watertown for many years.

Marilyn, who was very proud of her ancestry and heritage, was a lifelong parishioner of St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church. She was an accomplished artist in the disciplines of oil and china painting and a master needlepointer and knitter. Marilyn also had a passion for cooking and baking. Her happiest days were those spent welcoming relatives and friends to her home. She will be remembered for her undying devotion to her family and the loving care, kindness and support she extended to others throughout her life.

A funeral service was held on Thursday, February 24 at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown followed by interment at the Highland Meadow Cemetery in Belmont.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Wilk Announces Inaugural Armenian Caucus Fellowship Program

SACRAMENTO — Senate Republican Leader Scott Wilk, whose 21st Senate District includes the Antelope Valley, has announced the California Armenian Legislative Caucus Fellowship program — an opportunity for college students to gain insight into California's policymaking process and help shape the future of California.

"This fellowship is a great opportunity for a student interested in California government and policy. Successful candidates will work in a lawmaker's office and get a behind-the-scenes look at the legislative process in action," Wilk said in a news release. "Fellows will walk away with first-hand knowledge of crafting policy, connections in the Capitol, stories to share, and an all-around great learning experience. Good luck to all applicants."

Fellows will be given the opportunity to develop close working relationships with legislators, advocates, and agency representatives that may result in future employment and/or educational opportunities. Fellows also will receive a \$2,500 stipend (including a \$1,000 housing stipend) and a public transportation pass.

The Caucus will select two fellows



California Armenian Caucus members including State Sen. Anthony Portantino, far left, Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left, and Senate Republican Leader Scott Wilk, 4<sup>th</sup> from left, at 2017 Armenian Genocide remembrance program

for the Summer 2022 cycle (August to September) in Sacramento, California. Pending changes to public health orders, the fellowship program will require in-person attendance in the State Capitol for up to 30 hours per week.

To apply, candidates must submit a 1,000-word personal statement explaining what interests them about public service and what they hope to learn and

achieve if selected to serve as a fellow for the California Armenian Legislative Caucus. Applicants must also submit two letters of recommendation, school transcripts (unofficial or official), and proof of full vaccination. For more information on the criteria and download an application, visit: <https://wilk.cssrc.us/educational-opportunities-california-armenian-legislative-caucus>

## Thomas Sinclair to Discuss 'Eastern Trade And the Mediterranean In the Middle Ages'

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) will present a webinar with Dr. Thomas Sinclair, "Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: Pegloti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and Its Commercial Context," on Friday, March 4, at 1 p.m. (Eastern)/10:00 am (Pacific). Sinclair's talk will draw on his book of the same name published by Routledge in 2021.

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

In this lecture Thomas Sinclair will look at the most prosperous period of east-west trade through Armenia — the period of the Il-Khans—in the second half of the Middle Ages (1100-1500), and within that period at the most important avenue of trade. It ran from Ayas in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia to the city of Sivas/Sebasteia, then through Armenia to the Il-Khanid capital of Tabriz. Tabriz was the gathering-point for goods from China and India (via Hormuz) and Iran itself. The Ayas-Tabriz route is known from an itinerary compiled probably in the 1320s which details the Il-Khanid toll stations along the way and how much the merchant had to pay at each.

In researching the exact line of the route, Sinclair has taken data from the Roman itineraries—and the medieval route helps to solve problems of location in the Roman itineraries. In addition, he will discuss the role of money and what minting patterns in the various cities and in other mints can reveal, the impact the trade had on each of the cities, their Armenian population, and their expansion, and competitor routes in the period, highlighting the value of the Ayas-Tabriz route.

Sinclair was a professor of Turkish History in the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cyprus. He is the author of *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* (4 volumes, 1987-90) and writes principally on economy and administration in Armenia during the late pre-Ottoman and early Ottoman periods.

For more information contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org) or SAS at [execsecretary.sas@gmail.com](mailto:execsecretary.sas@gmail.com).

## AGBU Houston Holding Hoedown Social Gathering in March

HOUSTON — The AGBU YP Houston Hoedown is a three-day social gathering of Armenian young professionals from across Texas, the US, and Canada. The Hoedown, which consists of nine unique events including a rodeo, a Brad Paisley concert, a honkytonk, a brunch buffet, and a tour of the oldest craft brewery in Texas, has been designed to maximize new friendships, fun, and philanthropy. Over the three-day event, you will experience the best of Houston (the fourth largest city, as well as the most diverse city in the US), along with a charm that only the great state of Texas can provide.

Proceeds from the AGBU YP Houston Hoedown will be directed to AGBU EmpowerHer in support of the AGBU Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Program in Artsakh. For tickets or more information, please visit: <https://agbuevents.org/houstonhoedown>

## Prof. Akçam Named Inaugural Director Of Promise Institute Armenian Genocide Research Program

PROMISE, from page 8

Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) and provide a home for scholarly activities relevant to the Genocide, including opportunities for PAI-affiliated postdoctoral scholars, graduate students and visiting scholars. Akçam will work closely with PAI Inaugural Director Ann Karagozian, distinguished professor of engineering, in building this new entity.

"We are thrilled to establish a new Armenian Genocide Research Program at UCLA and to welcome Taner Akçam as its inaugural director. Situated in Los Angeles, home to one of the largest Armenian diaspora communities in the world and, of course, the academic home of long-time renowned Armenian historian and Genocide scholar, Professor Richard Hovannisian, it is only fitting that UCLA establishes a program explicitly dedicated to the study of the Armenian Genocide," said Karagozian.

"Taner Akçam has a demonstrated track record of groundbreaking research and mentored some of the most remarkable young scholars in the field of Armenian Genocide studies. His dedication and passion for advancing this field make him the ideal person to establish and carry out this new research program at UCLA," she added.

PAI is a groundbreaking institute within the UCLA International Institute made possible by a \$20 million gift from the estate of Kirk Kerkorian. With this latest appointment, PAI continues to position UCLA as a hub for world-class research and teaching on Armenian studies, as well as for coordinating interdisciplinary research and public impact programs on and in Armenia with schools and centers across UCLA and the Armenian diaspora. The Promise Armenian Institute's size, scope and interdisciplinary approach make it the first of its kind in the world.



## Olympic Gold Medalist Aleksanyan Visits Grave of Tehlirian

FRESNO, Calif. — Fr. Gomidas Zohrabyan, pastor of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Fowler with Olympic Gold Medalist Greco-Roman wrestler Artur Aleksanyan, visit the grave of Soghomon Tehlirian in Fresno on February 18.

The Olympian from Armenia has been visiting the US for the past few weeks.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Suny's Biography of Stalin Wins Distinguished Prizes

STALIN, from page 8

Armenian Studies Program at the University of Michigan. Trained as a historian at Swarthmore College, he received his PhD in history from Columbia University. He has written books on the histories of the USSR, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the Ottoman Empire, most notably *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton, 2015). His works have been translated into Turkish, Russian, and Hungarian.

Each year the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) awards the prestigious Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize for the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences published in English in the United States in the previous calendar year. In 2016 Suny won the Vucinich Prize for his book on the Armenian Genocide, and this year his book on the young Stalin won honorable mention.

Suny's biography of Joseph Stalin from his birth to the October Revolution of 1917 is a panoramic and often chilling account of how an impoverished, idealistic youth from the provinces of tsarist Russia was transformed into a cunning and fearsome outlaw who would one day become one of the twentieth century's most ruthless dictators. The author worked on the book for over thirty years, waiting impatiently for the Soviet archives to open. With the fall of the USSR and the independence of the Caucasian republics, Suny was able to freely mine the archives of three republics — Russia, Armenia, and Georgia — but not of another, Azerbaijan. In this book he sheds light on the least understood years of Stalin's career, bringing to life the turbulent world in which he lived and the extraordinary historical events that shaped him. Drawing on a wealth of new archival evidence from Stalin's early years

in the Caucasus, he charts the psychological metamorphosis of the young Stalin, taking readers from his boyhood as a Georgian nationalist and romantic poet, through his harsh years of schooling, to his commitment to violent engagement in the underground movement to topple the tsarist autocracy. Stalin emerges as an ambitious climber within the Bolshevik ranks, a resourceful leader of a small terrorist band, and a writer and thinker who was deeply engaged with some of the most incendiary debates of his time. Along the way he abandoned his religious faith, instilled by his pious mother, and became a dedicated Marxist and a revolutionary outlaw, a skilled political operative within the underground Social Democratic Party, and a single-minded and ruthless rebel.

Most reviews of the book have been laudatory. Stephen Lovell wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement*, "As a distinguished historian of both the Caucasus and the labour movement in the Russian Revolution, Suny is uniquely well placed to shed new light on the first half of Stalin's life.... Many of Suny's sources — especially memoirs composed years after the fact — raise tricky questions of interpretation. But Suny aims to avoid conjecture, and for the most part he succeeds: he is a lucid writer and a perspicacious scholar. His Stalin is a personality in a continuous state of becoming, 'both a product of the successive cultures through which he passed and an actor making choices and defining himself in unprecedented and unpredictable historical circumstances.'"

Robert Service wrote in *The Washington Post*, "Suspicion and vainglory, as Ronald Grigor Suny shows, were present from the start in Stalin's approach to politics. Suny, a distinguished Soviet historian, has been working on *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* for as many years as the dictator was in power. His more than 800-page book is a

half-biography, being limited to the years up to the October 1917 revolution in Petrograd. The purpose is to trace how a working-class Georgian boy in the Russian Empire rose to the height of power in the second half of his life, when he towered over Soviet politics and became one of the most murderous autocrats in world history — and to explain 'why a revolution committed to human emancipation ended up in dictatorship and terror'."

Donald Raleigh wrote in the *American Historical Review*, "Suny has produced a classic, the definite study of the 'passage' of Soso to Koba to Stalin, one of modern history's most consequential individuals. In doing so, he invites readers to engage his crucial point that 'revolution is not pathology but a political alternative, a choice, among others.'"

Less favorable reviews have appeared that take issue with Suny's attempt to understand Stalin and the Marxist movement in tsarist Russia without condemnation and indictment, separating what had been an emancipatory movement in Caucasia and Russia long before a mature Stalin consolidated his dictatorship in the 1930s. Once he possessed despotic powers, Stalin used them to destroy his real opponents and imagined enemies. A British scholar of Georgia, Donald Rayfield, writing in *Russian Review*, was disturbed by what he takes to be "the common ground between author and subject: Suny discusses Lenin's influence at some length and with the same unreserved admiration for Lenin's principles and determination as Stalin expressed. In fact, Suny's book could have been published with very few deletions in the USSR in the period of de-Stalinisation of the early 1960s, so uncritical is he of Bolshevik ideology and activity. Furthermore, while Suny does mention the disgust and suspicion that Stalin's acts and speeches aroused in more respectable Georgians, it is Stalin's vitality, rather than remorse or empathy, which dominates."

Even more damning is Sean McMeekin's review in *Slavic Review*, the journal of the ASEEES, the same organization that rewarded the book a distinguished prize. "Suny's empathy with Stalin helps readers get inside the head of his protagonist, but it can also blind him to the obvious... Suny's decision to end his massive tome 'on the eve' of the October Revolution suggests that the author prefers to luxuriate in the years when Stalin and the Bolsheviks could dream of a Marxist utopia — rather than discuss the years they ruled Russia and murdered millions to build that utopia. While a defensible choice, the effect is at once jarring and deflating, like reading a sympathetic biography of Hitler that wraps up before the Beer Hall Putsch. Suny's study will prove a useful resource for scholars, but others may wonder, when do we get to the story?"

Suny had earlier reviewed works by both Rayfield and McMeekin unfavorably, and their reviews of *Stalin* gave them a change to get even. Years ago, Rayfield wrote a tendentious, polemical treatment of Stalin, which expressed his deep hostility toward the Soviet experiment, as well as a lumpy history of Georgia that in Suny's view lacked analysis and explanation. McMeekin has written a series of revisionist histories of Russia and the USSR, even blaming Stalin, rather than Hitler, for starting the Second World War. While teaching in Ankara, Turkey, he wrote works that fall into the camp of those denying the Armenian Genocide.

In prizes awarded and reviews written, Suny has been praised and criticized, sometimes ad hominem. The Deutscher and Vucinich prizes were rewarded for his research, writing, and scholarship, which is characterized by a serious and critical approach to Marxism and the Soviet experience. The Deutscher Prize in particular recognizes his book as one that explores a Marxist movement that aimed to create a democratic and socialist society but ultimately descended into an authoritarian and repressive state. Isaac Deutscher, who was at one time a Communist only to break with Stalinism and side with Trotsky, himself wrote in a critical Marxist tradition and was pilloried by liberal and conservative critics for his loyalty to socialism. The prize in his name celebrates what is to be learned from "the best and most innovative new writing in or about the Marxist tradition." If a historian like Suny chooses to write in that tradition, the price to be paid is to be attacked by critics on his right. He might take some comfort in the example of Isaac and Tamara Deutscher and the Prize that honors them, which, as friend told him, vindicates his choice. A good word, vindicates, which turns out to mean "clear (someone) of blame or suspicion," "show or prove to be right, reasonable, or justified."

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# Arts & Culture

## Lucy Topalian

**‘We Should Remove Suffering out of Hearts!’**

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Lucy Topalian is one of most positive and charismatic persons I have ever met. This grey-haired, tall, active Lebanese-Armenian lived in Kuwait for 40 years, where she owned a gallery, and for more than two years has resided in Armenia. Our conversation took place in her cozy apartment in Yerevan, where she lives with her dog Pasha and cats Minu and Noushig.



**Dear Lucy, where are your roots from?**

The Topalians were from Adiyaman, my mother's family - from Malatya. In 1915, they were exiled first to Aleppo, then to Lebanon. My paternal grandfather, who was a farmer in Adiyaman, was burned with others in the church by Turks before my father was born. My mother's father was a carpet trader and had a wool dye factory. He was forced to serve in Ottoman army, after he escaped and became a soldier of Andranik Pasha. Afterwards along with his three friends he entered the French Foreign Legion.

**You have done different things in life. What do you consider your profession to have been?**

I have done everything I loved or dreamed of doing. When I went to college in Beirut, I studied education and child psychology to become a teacher. I was also very good at gymnastics, I went to Denmark for a year, where I studied sports leadership. I started to work as sport teacher in Armenian and British high schools and a university in Beirut. I left the country in 1976 because of Lebanese civil war, and I was invited to Kuwait. I thought I would go there for three weeks, but I stayed 42 years. Since I know four languages, I started to work as an office manager in

see TOPALIAN, page 13



A sketch of traditional Dikranagerd costumes

## Songs and Dances from the Vilayet of Diyarbakir

BAYSIDE, N.Y. — When we think of Dikranagerd the first name that comes to mind is Tigranes the Great who ruled as King of Armenia c.95 to c.56 BCE. King Tigranes' (Dikran) empire stretched from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. He built his capital of Dikranagerd (Tigranocerta) which means built by Dikran, east of what is today the city of Diyarbakir. Prior to 1915, Armenians called this city Dikranagerd.

The Aradzani Dance Group will have a performance of songs and dances from the pre-1915 region of Dikranagerd on April 30, at 7:30 p.m. at the Armenian Church of The Holy Martyrs's Kalustyan Hall, 209-15 Horace Harding Expressway. Musical accompaniment by the Tarpinian Ensemble with vocalists Yeretsgin Karine Malkhasyan and Lisa Tarpinian with John Tarpinian on Ud, Jerry Tarpinian on Dumbeg, Souren Baronian on clarinet and John Malool on Def and Dumbeg. Most of the songs and dances that will be presented are endangered.

In 1915 the Villayet of Diyarbakir or the region of Dikranagerd as Armenians call it was comprised of the following Sanjaks or districts and their subregions or Kazas:

- 1) Sanjak of Diyarbakir: Diarbekir (Amid), Severeke (Sev Averag), Direk, Beshiri (Chernig), Slivan (Nprgerd), Lije, Veran-Shehir
- 2) Sanjak of Arghana-Maden: Palu (Palahovid), Chermik (Chermoug), Arghana-Maden (Arghni)
- 3) Sanjak of Mardin: Nisibin (Mtspin), Mardin (Mardepert), Jezire (Mezabde), Midyat, Savur.

In the Villayet of Diyarbakir on the eve of the Genocide there were 106,867 Armenians who lived in 249 localities with 148 churches and 10 monasteries.

The districts of Palu and Chermoug were incorporated in the Diyarbakir Villayet after 1884.

Aradzani will present songs and dances from towns and villages of Palu, Chnkoush, Dikranagerd and Lijeh. At the end of the program there will be a reenactment of a Dikranagerd wedding.

To support this rare presentation of songs and dances by attending. Donation is \$20. You can also give your support with a memorial donation in memory of a loved one. For a donation of a \$100 or more the name of your loved one will be included in the program under memorial donations you will receive an Aradzani dance DVD and you will receive a complimentary ticket to the event.

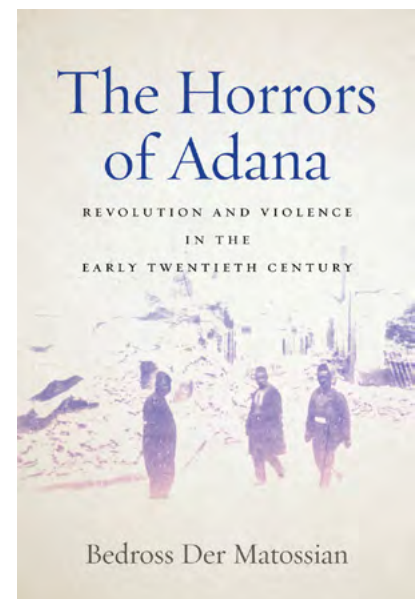
If you have family heirlooms such as pictures, embroidery etc. and would like these items presented that day contact Robert at [rharrout@msn.com](mailto:rharrout@msn.com)

The Aradzani Dance Group of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs has a repertoire of 120 dances of pre-1915 Historic Armenia. Most of these dances are endangered. To preserve these dances in 2011 and 2013 Aradzani produced two instructional/performance dance DVDs. The DVDs can be found in various book stores and libraries included in this list are the Library of Congress in Washington DC, the National Library of Armenia and the Gulbenkian Library in Jerusalem etc.

## Books

### Der Matossian Unveils The Horrors of Adana In a New Book

After a decade of meticulous research in more than 15 archives, Prof. Bedross Der Matossian's book on the Adana Massacres of 1909 has recently been published in paperback, hardcover, and kindle editions by Stanford University Press (SUP). Titled *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century*, the book examines the 1909 twin massacres that shook the province of Adana, located in the southern Anatolia region of modern-day Turkey, killing more than 20,000 Armenians and 2,000 Muslims. Images of Adana after the massacres show unprecedented physical destruction of a once prosperous city. Local Armenian businesses, churches, residences, and living quarters were totally destroyed. The violence that began in the city of Adana soon spread across the province and poured beyond its borders eastward into the province of Aleppo. In terms of the number of



victims, this was the third-largest act of violence perpetrated at the beginning of the twentieth century, following only the Boxer rebellion (1899–1901) and the genocide of the Herero and Nama between 1904 and 1907 in the German colony of southwest Africa. The central Ottoman government immediately sent investigation commissions and established courts-martial to try the perpetrators of the massacres. However, these courts failed to prosecute the main culprits of the massacres—a miscarriage of justice that would have repercussions in the years to come.

*The Horrors of Adana* offers one of the first close examinations of these events, analyzing sociopolitical and economic transformations that culminated in a cataclysm of violence. Drawing on primary sources in a dozen languages, the book provides an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the rumors and emotions, public spheres and humanitarian interventions that together informed this complex event. Ultimately, through consideration of the Adana Massacres in micro-historical detail, *The Horrors of Adana* presents an important macrocosmic understand-





ARTS & CULTURE

Lucy Topalian: ‘We Should Remove the Suffering out of the Hearts!’

TOPALIAN, from page 12

a financial company. From then on, I worked in a computer company, starting from a junior sales woman and ending to a deputy managing director. Finally, the Internet came, my employees, who were barely 22-30 years old, every day came to me for consultation, so I started to learn about the Internet. But as I had no training, everything was self-taught, I was unable to keep up with them, so I decided to finish with this job. On the other hand, I loved art, I followed the artists, so I started to run a gallery. And because in Kuwait there were hardly any galleries or anything, I used to do exhibitions in my own house or in my courtyard. They were taking place once every month or later. Finally, the art consultants heard about me, so they would come with their artists or suggest me to co-operate in their projects, letting me follow them up or finish them. I developed the idea of business behind the art. So it was a very nice combination, in the last 20 years in Kuwait I made something that I dreamt of and I made money with it, so what else do you want better than this? (*laughing*). I have an eye for contemporary art, so I developed that, because all the rest was much more classical. When the contemporary art exhibitions started, it really interested lots of people, and I met very good collectors. I was started contacted from the British Museum, Los Angeles County Museum and from private collectors from Dubai, London, Iran.

My own gallery, named “Dar al Founoun,” which means “The House of Art,” has hosted exhibitions from all around the world. I hosted four or five exhibitions from Armenia, as well as many artists from South Korea, Japan, Europe, USA and South America. Thanks to the support of “Ejee Art Consultancy” of London, I had the most recognized Arab artists in my small gallery.

**What was your most ambitious project?**

In 2001 Kuwait City was declared the cultural capital of Arab world. On this occasion I wanted to do something big. The National Council has asked galleries to come up with the ideas. My idea was to bring Christo, famous Bulgarian wrapping artist, to Kuwait and make him wrap one of the monuments we have over there. I spent six-seven months to have everything organized, Christo agreed to come, but afterwards they told me that this would be too much for Kuwait. So my ambitious project never happened. I have had major projects, doing art work in public sections, in hotels, ministries and also providing work for the major collection of Arab Art Found. I also had artists from Iran, which were extremely successful. They were good years, very active and inspiring and reviving to me. Every time there was an exhibition, I lived another life - the life, the vision, the art of another person.

**With which Armenian artists have you cooperated?**

Of course Paul Guiragossian; I knew him and his family very well. Hrair Darbekirian, also from Lebanon. And then also artists from Armenia like Alexander Grigoryan, Ruben Grigoryan, Gagik Ghazanchyan, Ararat Sarkisyan, Seda Bekaryan, Arcady Petrosyan. Armenian exhibitions were extremely successful, and people loved them very much.

**And after such successful endeavors did you decide to stop?**

I wanted to find a place to retire. I was looking between Lebanon and Los Angeles, where all my family lives. And one day I said: why not Armenia? Let me go and find out about Armenia, where I have been visiting periodically since 1990. So as soon as I came, I got my passport, I found my house, I loved everything I saw: the hope and enthusiasm among population to increase their life. I loved also to see, that all the expats I talked to in Armenia, from Germany, the US or elsewhere, were all so happy to be here, they loved the country, the culture, the churches, etc.

**But the situation has changed after the last war.**

When I came, I was thinking I might be

able to do something on a voluntary basis. But first COVID came, then the war came. It was extremely sad to see people passing away because of it. Thus, I get into this very calm life, but on the other hand life is going on, I attend concerts, festivals: very good artists from Russia, Italy, Germany, France, etc., come and perform in Yerevan. So I feel elevated. I see there is a whole nourishment to the soul. If nothing else, just 20 minutes away of Yerevan you are in a beautiful natural environment.

**So as a new repatriate what would you like to pass on to Diaspora Armenians about living in Armenia?**

The closest friends that I have in Diaspora, they know that I am happy and content over here and I tell them: I would never change Armenia to any other place I could go and live. On the other hand, I wish that the people of Armenia and Diaspora will come together in order to get the country going further much faster and much better than it is going on. I am so proud when I look at the innovations happening in Armenia and being marketed outside, whether it is technology or simple items. I am always kind of proud to see that “Made in Armenia” is going to be all around the world.

**But now most of the local population is in such a hopeless state: what would you like to say them?**

I will tell them to wake up every morning, to kiss this land and say: Thank you God, that I am in Armenia! I wish they could listen and see the news on what is going on around them. I will tell you something: during the covid and during the war there were no single shelves empty in Armenia. I never thinking of getting more than one kilo of rice. If you watch the news at that time, in the USA, in that superpower, people had to wait seven hours to get a box

of food. And see the difference in Armenia. I have not seen hunger over here. In Yerevan I have seen only one person lying on the ground, a homeless, whereas in New York City, Los Angeles or next to the White House or behind the White House you are unable to walk without seeing so many homeless people on the parks or in the streets. Armenians help each other, they will never let anybody be on the road, which is also a nice side of our country.

**I agree with you, but still because of political situation is so messy, how you see the future of Armenia?**

Perhaps I am a very positive person, but I look at the situation with objectivity as well. It is true, we have enemies at the border, but unfortunately many other countries have this problem too.

Sometimes I think that in the competition of who has suffered more, the Armenians will take the first place with pleasure! But with a little bit positivity we should overcome this wrong mentality. Look at the nature you have, clean air and water we have, look at the wonderful vegetables and fruits we have! I have communication with many young people, students, that I have met outside Armenia and met them here again. I am very hopeful that the youth will see the future much clearer than those who suffered the last thirty, fifty, seventy years. I really have a great confidence on young people, their minds, their working habits. I have met quite a number of them and I hope that it will be the pathway towards good Armenian living, amelioration of their lives. In Armenia we should remove the misery out of the hearts and say: we are not measurable, we are good people and we are fine. I am very optimistic about Armenia and I do hope my optimism will be real rather than just a dream.

Der Matossian Unveils the Horrors of Adana

ing of ethnic violence, illuminating how and why ordinary people can become perpetrators.

Despite the significance of these events and the extent of violence and destruction, the Adana Massacres are often left out of historical narratives especially in the historiographies of Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies. Denialists of the Armenian Genocide continue to propagate the provocation thesis regarding these massacres. They view the “events” or the “disturbances” of Adana as a failed uprising by Armenians to bring in European intervention with the aim of erecting the Kingdom of Cilicia. Furthermore, they normalize the resulting violence as a natural byproduct of Armenian “provocations”. Der Matossian offers a necessary corrective to these narratives by arguing that outbreaks like the Adana massacres do not occur sui generis; they are caused by a range of complex, intersecting factors that are deeply rooted in the shifting local and national ground of political and socioeconomic life. The book also addresses the question of how better to understand the Adana massacres in relation to the Armenian Genocide, while bearing in mind their individual trajectories rather than simply viewing the first event as foreshadowing the second.

Ussama Makdisi, Rice University, author of *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumen-*

*ical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* wrote, “*The Horrors of Adana* is a truly groundbreaking and highly nuanced exploration of intercommunal, sectarian, and nationalist violence in the late Ottoman Empire. A must-read for scholars of the modern Middle East.”

“*The Horrors of Adana* is an outstanding analysis of a massacre never before deeply studied. Bedross Der Matossian offers a thorough inquiry into the perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and social-political context, useful to all those interested in understanding processes of mass violence,” said Jacques Semelin, Sciences Po Paris, author of *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*.

Copies of the book can be purchases through amazon by visiting [https://www.amazon.com/Horrors-Adana-Revolution-Violence-Twentieth-dp-1503631028/dp/1503631028/ref=mt\\_other?encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=](https://www.amazon.com/Horrors-Adana-Revolution-Violence-Twentieth-dp-1503631028/dp/1503631028/ref=mt_other?encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=)

or by visiting the Stanford University Press website: <https://www.sup.org/books/title?id=26239>

Der Matossian is the vice-chair, associate professor of modern Middle East history, and Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the Department of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is also the president of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS).

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NEW YORK

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

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 7 — St. James Men’s Club presents speaker Elsa Ronningstam, PhD, who will discuss diagnosis and treatment of narcissistic personality. Dr. Ronningstam, a St. James parishioner, is a clinical psychologist in the Gunderson Outpatient Program and the Adult Outpatient Services at McLean Hospital and is an associate professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School. Social hour starts at 6.15 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Losh kebab and Kheyma dinner, 20 per person. St. James Armenian Church, Watertown.

10TH ANNIVERSARY Celebration Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Join us for events during the year at the Park. Watch this space for details.

APRIL 3 — ANNUAL RECONFIGURATION OF THE ABSTRACT SCULPTURE (Rain Date: April 10) A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of Abstract Sculpture, rhomboid dodecahedron made of steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape. 7.30 a.m. The Park’s Endowed Fund for the Annual Reconfiguration, the generous gift of Charles and Doreen Bilezikian, supports the annual reconfiguration. A&A Industries, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, manufacturer of the Abstract Sculpture, their generous gift in kind, oversees the annual reconfiguration. Coffee, hosted by Starbucks & Conversation is from 8:00am—9:00am. RSVP appreciated, [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

SEPTEMBER 21 — GALA BENEFIT CELEBRATING CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR NATION’S IMMIGRANTS! InterContinental Hotel, Boston. 6 p.m. Honoring STEPHEN KURKJIAN, Distinguished Citizen, Leader, Pulitzer Prize Journalist and Author, and Recognizing Organizations Serving Immigrants and Refugees. Funds raised support the Legacy Fund, endowed fund to care for and maintain the Park year-round. Advance Reservations only. To receive the invitation, please send name and address to [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Moscow Armenian Museum Showcases Armenian Genocide, Culture and History

MUSEUM, from page 1

## The Construction of the Cathedral Complex and Museum

In the Soviet period, only one Armenian church was permitted to operate in Moscow. After the Soviet collapse, as the Moscow Armenian community continued to grow, it decided to build a cathedral and a surrounding complex of buildings, in which eventually a museum was to be established. Grigoryan said that thanks to the initiative of several prominent Armenian businessmen, the Russian authorities had provided a wonderful plot of land in the center of Moscow for this purpose in 1998. It is located in the Meshchanskiy District.

There are probably over one million Armenians now in the Moscow area, Grigoryan estimated, but they live all over and there are no special Armenian neighborhoods. For this reason, the location of the church complex in a central location is important because it can be easily accessed via metro and other public transport, as well as driving.

The construction began under the direction of Murad Sargsyan, who was well known for constructing the Ararat Park Hyatt Hotel in Moscow, but by 2009 only the basement of the cathedral complex had been built. The reason, said Grigoryan, “was connected to the lack of cooperation and disunity of the Armenian community.” The dismissal of Archbishop Tiran Kyureghyan as Primate of the Russia and New Nakhichevan Diocese of the Armenian Church in 2000 and the appointment of a new Primate, then Bishop Ezras Nersisyan, brother of the current catholicos, also impeded the construction process.

Meanwhile, Murad Sargsyan fell deathly ill from cancer. In 2009, Grigoryan explained that with the agreement of Sargsyan and the new Primate, and taking into consideration his experience in the real estate field, he and his company Rutsog-Invest were asked to take on the project for the church complex, including all the construction planning and management. The work he carried out from this point cost approximately 10 million dollars. The construction plan was completely changed, Grigoryan said,



Ruben Grigoryan, left, with Archbishop Ezras Nersisyan at the opening of the Armenian Museum of Moscow and Culture of Nations on April 22, 2015

and he obtained the approval of the government for this. Several dozen Armenian builders joined the work. In addition, as the construction progressed, many more Armenian benefactors joined the project. The cathedral was completely finished and consecrated in 2014, six months prior to the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

In five years, they succeeded in completing the entire complex, which at 25,000 square meters was a very large one, including the Holy Transfiguration Cathedral, the Holy Cross chapel, conference hall, library, and a large parking facility, as well as a museum, which was to be opened on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

A centennial committee was planning ceremonies, academic lectures, studies and other activities, but Grigoryan said that he felt this was not sufficient. He said that if you only say something in words and do not show it, people are not able to picture it. The concept of the museum was to show what the *Yeghern*, or Armenian Genocide, meant for mankind. He said, “If you can easily annihilate so many innocent people – including children, women and elderly, then humanity is destroying itself through that



A view of some of the interactive exhibits at the original site of the Armenian Museum

logic.” Hitler, he pointed out, was able to say that no one remembers how the Turks killed the Armenians and proceeded to boldly destroy the Jews. Grigoryan exclaimed, “There is the moral and human side. We must show that if we go this way, not only Jews but many others can be killed and destroyed. In other words, humans must be sane, not living like animals, so that they understand they cannot do this.”

Grigoryan said that he carried out the construction of the museum in an intensive fashion from September-October 2014 until April 22, 2015. Its construction cost 1.5 million dollars. The Armenian Museum of Moscow and Culture of Nations opened on April 22, 2015 with a 2,000 square meter high-tech museum with a 3-D movie theater and interactive exhibitions. Armenian dignitaries, Russian academics and Russian government officials such as Stanislav Govorukhin, chair of the culture committee of the Russian State Duma, were present.

Grigoryan said that over the next six months or so, as many as 100,000 people, including many Russians, visited the museum, and nearly all left with tears in their eyes. The Armenian Genocide exposition has several screens on which different episodes are simultaneously shown for 40-45 minutes. Three walls and the ceiling of the room are used so everywhere there are pictures. It explains what

happened in three languages, Russian, Armenian and English. It is called “The Armenian Dantesque” after the Armenian-language poem by Hovhannes Shiraz of the same name. Survivors, scholars, and children of survivors speak. The images of Armenians who were killed along with the creative works that person did, are shown, Grigoryan said, so that people understand what culture was lost.

The Armenian Museum was able to get what was necessary to prepare its genocide exhibits from the museums of the Armenian State Pedagogical University, the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, and several other Yerevan museums or institutes.

When all the work had been completed for the church complex, Grigoryan said that the Armenian clergy,

led by Archbishop Ezras Nersisyan, the local Primate, declared that the complex must be owned and controlled by the clergy. This forced Grigoryan and his collaborators to move the museum in December 2015 to another location in the same area, while another museum, which became called Tapan [“Ark”] remained in the complex.

## Collections

The museum in its new location, Grigoryan said, hosts a library with rare books and publications. It has a number of Armenian medieval manuscripts, and a collection of Armenian costumes. It has ancient artifacts such as a vessel from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C., found during excavations in Syunik, Armenia.

However, the physical artifacts in its collections primarily date from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among these is the medal “Capture of the Erivan Fortress,” which was issued to commemorate the conclusion of the Russo-Persian War of 1826-28, which led to the annexation of Eastern Armenia to the Russian Empire. The charter of the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages (1855) and the illustrated magazine *Mayak of Armenia* (1881) are part of exhibits on the Moscow Armenian community.

A number of publications and artifacts displayed concern the massacres of Ottoman Armenians under Sultan Abdulhamid II and the Genocide, including an issue of the magazine *Le Rire* [The Laughter], published in Paris in 1897 with a caricature of Abdulhamid, the “Bloody Sultan,” and the Russian-language anthology entitled *Fraternal Assistance to Armenians Injured in Turkey* including the writings of various writers, scholars and historians published in Moscow in 1897 by Grigory Dzhanshiev [Krikor Janshian].



The entrance to the original site of the Armenian Museum of Moscow





ARTS & CULTURE

Postage stamps “Petrograd to Armenians” and “Help to the Middle East” are in the same section along with the medal “Armenians and Russians in the Year of Trials” (1915).

Interactive Displays

The emphasis of the museum is on virtual interactive displays. In addition to the Armenian Genocide exhibition mentioned above, there are several other important sections. For example, there is an online interactive globe which provides information on Armenian communities throughout the world. When the globe is turned, on the screen the location of local Armenian communities appear. Zooming in, information on the numbers of Armenians living there, and their institutions, including schools, churches and festivals, appears.

Another similar virtual exhibit showcases contemporary Armenian painters, with their works, biographies and explanations. Grigoryan said that the museum is working to turn this into a 3D exhibit.



Interactive globe with information on world Armenian communities at the original Armenian Museum site

Grigoryan noted that the latter part of the name of the museum includes “And Other Nations” because of the importance of world cultures. He said, “We must place our Armenian culture in the context of all world culture. That is possible when you have expositions comparing it with other cultures and human values.” Furthermore, he added, “If you only show yourself you are merely praising yourself.”

Special Exhibitions and Lectures

Over the past six months, according to the staff of the museum, 20 lectures and temporary exhibitions were held in the museum’s lecture hall and exhibition space. Among them is the exhibition of the People’s Artist of Russia Valery Polotnov “Armenia. Russia. With love...”.



(left) The book Fraternal Assistance to Armenians Injured in Turkey, 1897. (right) The medal “Capture of the Erivan Fortress,” which was issued to commemorate the conclusion of the Russo-Persian War of 1826-28

There were several events dedicated to the anniversary of the Second Artsakh War — a photo exhibition by war correspondent Rostislav Zhuravlev called “Black Gardens of War,” screenings of the documentaries by war correspondents Timofey Ermakov and Mikhail Axel *Unbroken Artsakh* and *Armenia after the War*, and an art exhibition by Samvel Hakobyan.

On the 33rd anniversary of the Spitak earthquake, the museum hosted a photo exhibition by Alexander Shchemlyaev, “December-88. Earthquake in Armenia,” pre-



A room dedicated to the Armenian Genocide victims at the original site of the Armenian Museum

sending previously unpublished photos from Spitak and Gyumri.

Among past lectures, we can highlight the lectures of Natalia Tigranovna Pakhsaryan, Doctor of Philology and Professor of Lomonosov Moscow State University, about two French writers of Armenian origin – playwright Arthur Adamov and novelist Henri Troyes. Architect Tigran Harutyunyan on different occasions spoke on the national



3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. vase from Syunik, Armenia



symbols and urban space of Armenia after the collapse of the USSR, while cinema expert Georgy Nersesov’s presentation was on Sergei Parajanov’s classic film *The Color of Pomegranates*.

In February, the museum inaugurated a photo exhibition of Russian photographer and traveler Arseniy Kotov called “Architecture of Armenia: Soviet Heritage,” dedicated to the monuments of Armenian architectural modernism of the Soviet era. Immediate plans also include an exhibition by artist Marie Gevorgyan and an art exhibition dedicated

to the 107th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Lectures and events are generally held in Russian. If there are talks in Armenian, as in the case of lecturers from Armenia, simultaneous translation is provided into Russian. Videos are also in Russian, and sometimes subtitles in Armenian or English are provided.

Staff and Cooperation with Other Museums and Institutions

The staff of the Armenian Museum includes a director, a curator of exhibition spaces, and editors. They supervise the work of the museum’s website, lecture hall and exhibition space, as well as dissemination of information on social networks, along with visual design. It also includes a photographer, videographer, editor and technical specialist. In all, according to Grigoryan, there are some 15 people.

Many freelance correspondents who study Armenian history and culture also contribute to the museum’s work. They are from different parts of Armenia, Norway, Italy, France, Lebanon and the US. The museum frequently publishes articles on cultural topics.

Furthermore, according to Grigoryan and the museum staff, the museum interacts with a large number of cultural institutions in Russia and Armenia. It has worked in Armenia with the National Gallery of Armenia, the Russian Museum, the Saryan Museum and the Parajanov House Museum. It has carried out a variety of joint exhibition projects with the Ministry of Culture of Russia, the A[leksandr]. S[ergeyevich]. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Avetik Burnazyan Federal Medical Biophysical Center Museum, Moscow Museum, Moscow Union of Artists, Greek Cultural Center in Moscow, the Culture Fund “Actual Art,” the project “Mania Cinema,” the Russian State Library, the Museum of Russian-Armenian Friendship in Rostov-on-Don and the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow.

The museum also cooperates with various institutions in other countries in Europe, including France.

Grigoryan said that it has as many as 200,000 followers on social media. The number of physical visitors per month will depend on the types of events and presentations at that time, but on average it is 250-300 people, mostly Russians and Armenians. There are periodically also groups of Georgian, Greek, Iranian or Yezidi visitors.

Turkish and Azerbaijani Relations

Grigoryan said that Turks or Azerbaijanis never tried to halt the creation of the museum or exert direct pressure. However, on social media, like Facebook, they protest its posts and attempt to close its sites, while in exchange the museum registers its own protests. If there are constructive discussions, however, the museum staff replies to the substance of comments.

Recently, when the museum screened a film about Garegin Nzhdeh made by Armenians in the Russian language, Azerbaijanis made a lot of noise because they said Nzhdeh was a fascist who worked with the German Nazis, but Grigoryan said that the museum responded with its own articles showing that this was false.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## Fig and Honey Cream Cheese Breakfast Pastries

Recipe and photos by Katie Olsen. Courtesy: Valley Fig Growers

FRESNO — Sumerian stone tablets dating back to 2500 B.C. record culinary use of figs, and remains of fig trees were found during excavations of Neolithic sites from 5000 B.C. Some historians consider it the first of the domesticated crops. Figs hold a position of symbolism in many world religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism, representing fertility, peace, and prosperity.

Valley Fig Growers, producer of Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice Figs, is the largest handler of figs in North America. Established in 1959, the cooperative has more than 50 grower members and is headquartered in the fig capital of the United States -- Fresno, California. The fertile San Joaquin Valley is perfectly suited to grow figs. Resilient and hardy fig trees thrive in the hot, dry summers and rainy winters. Figs have been growing in California since the early 1500s and are now a sizable participant in the world of California agriculture. Figs sweetened all types of desserts before the widespread use of sugar, and still appear as the main ingredient in many popular holiday dishes and the commercially venerable Fig Newtons cookie since 1891.

The fig-grower-owned cooperative is one of the largest handlers of figs in North America. Whether you're using their dried figs or fig products in a commercial kitchen or enjoying their dried figs at home, the benefits of dried figs are countless. You can find them in your favorite store or online, under the brands: Sun-Maid, Orchard Choice, and Blue Ribbon.

Figs are a whole food source of important nutrients and have no fat, cholesterol, or sodium, and they help you meet today's Dietary Guidelines established by the US Department of Agriculture. A daily lifestyle that focuses on balancing calories, making informed food choices, and being physically active can help you attain



This photo, taken sometime in the 1890s, appeared in the April 28, 1968 issue of the Fresno Bee. The newspaper's caption read: "FIG PACKING — Gas lights illuminated the Seropian Packing Company plant during the fig packing season in the 1890s. The plant was on G Street (near Tulare Street). It employed mostly women. Mrs. Nartooi Isakoolian of 3525 Ventura Avenue is among the women shown in the picture submitted by Dorothy Sergius of 3205 Balch Ave. Seth Davidian was the plant foreman." (Photo Courtesy of the Armenian Studies Program, Fresno State).

and maintain a healthy weight, reduce your risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health. Figs, especially dried ones, are rich in antioxidants thanks to their high polyphenol content. Research shows figs' polyphenol content is higher than both red wine and green tea.

California figs are GMO-Free, vegan friendly, and packed with nutrition. Whether you enjoy figs for their nutritional powerhouse reputation, their wonderful taste, or their reputed aphrodisiac qualities, California figs are an excellent food source and smart addition to any diet. Figs grow from June to late August and are allowed to fully ripen on the tree from August through September. The figs then fall to the carefully prepared ground where further drying and then harvesting occurs. The figs will be harvested several times during the season.

Once harvested, the figs are size graded, washed, processed, and sorted for use in various package types and product forms. During each step of processing, Valley Fig Growers ensure Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice Figs meet or exceed the rigorous standards of the independent Dried Fruit Association inspectors, as well as our own exacting criterion. Customers can be assured that figs purchased from Valley Fig Growers are of the highest possible quality.

Orchard Choice: Valley Fig Growers' Blue Ribbon and Orchard Choice California Figs are part of California's rich history of agriculture in the fertile San Joaquin Valley. Their grower-owned cooperative has been packing delicious, nutritious California Figs since 1959.

Sun-Maid: Sun-Maid, America's Favorite Raisin, is also known for its full line of dried fruit products. They are proud of their Sun-Maid Mission and Golden California Figs, part of the line of high-quality products that makes "Sun-Maid The Brand You Can Trust."

Fig and Honey Cream Cheese Breakfast Pastries

Go to: <https://valleyfig.com/dried-fig-recipes/fig-and-honey-cream-cheese-breakfast-pastries/>

What Kind of Dried Figs Should I Use in the Fig and Honey Cream Cheese Filling?

This is a matter of personal preference, as any Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Dried Figs will work in this recipe. The sweet, intense flavor of Mission figs, however, is a favorite as it pairs perfectly with the tangy cream cheese and delicate honey. The color contrast with the golden puff pastry and dark mission figs is also a selling point. If your figs are particularly dry and not able to be sliced, just soak in hot water for 10 minutes before slicing to rehydrate.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed but still cold
- 4 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon honey (plus extra for drizzling)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 9 Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid California Mission Figs (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream, half and half, or coconut cream
- 1 tablespoon coarse sugar, turbinado sugar, or granulated sugar

### PREPARATION:

Preheat your oven to 400F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and set it aside.

Cut thawed puff pastry (it should be cold to the touch, but workable) into 9 equal squares using a knife or pizza cutter. Arrange the squares evenly on the parchment-lined baking sheet.

In each square, cut an L shape 1/2-inch from the edge on the top right and bottom left corners (opposite corners). Fold the top right corner down to the inner L of the bottom left, then fold the bottom left corner over it and up to the top right corner. You are creating a diamond shape. NOTE: You can shape the pastry however you'd like; this is just a suggestion.

In a medium bowl, stir together cream cheese, honey, vanilla extract, and salt until evenly combined. Dollop 1-2 teaspoons of cream cheese mixture in the center of each pastry.

Slice each of the figs thinly, not quite slicing through the top so it's still connected, then fan out the slices and arrange on top of cream cheese mixture (one fig per pastry). Brush exposed edges of the pastry with the heavy cream, half and half, or coconut cream. Sprinkle sugar evenly over the pastries, making sure it adheres to the edges.

Bake for 15-20 minutes or until pastry is golden brown and puffed. Drizzle with additional honey if desired, and serve warm. Makes 9 pastries.

Note: Pastries are best the day they're made, but will last in the fridge for up to 5 days. To reheat, gently warm in a 300F oven for 5-10 minutes.

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## COMMENTARY

# EDITORIAL

## ‘Shusha Declaration’ Is Virtual Declaration Of War against Armenia



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

While the West views, sometimes with sarcasm and at other times with apprehension, the Kremlin’s efforts to revive the former Soviet Union in a different shape or form, it allows Turkey to continue its global plan to bring Turkic nations under its sway.

Thus far, Turkey has used the West’s generosity and military might to become the second most powerful entity in the NATO structure, only to use that status to serve its immediate agenda, exercise independent policy and even at times defy the West, as it did when it purchased S-400 missiles from Russia, forbade the use of Incirlik air base during NATO operations and slaughtered the Kurdish forces allied with the US in Syria.

Therefore, it is not difficult to forecast that Turkey may become more independent or even hostile to the West in the long run. Many polls already indicate that there is no love lost between the Turkish public and the West.

Thus, the belief in the West that Turkey’s self-serving course can be restrained at any point is not realistic.

It is true that Turkey suffered a setback in Kazakhstan, which fell under Moscow’s control after Nursultan Nazarbayev was ousted from the political stage, but Ankara has been regrouping its forces to move ahead with its imperial plan.

Incidentally, the Central Asian republics — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — with their huge reserves of oil, gas and uranium, are in the sights of the three powers now embarked on empire building: Turkey, Russia and China.

Turkey had begun the process of absorbing Azerbaijan a long time ago, and it began that process with the motto of “One Nation, Two Countries.” The process culminated with the 44-day war against Armenia in 2020, when Turkey offered the glory of victory to Azerbaijan, for the price of taking over that country economically and militarily. At this time, Turkey has consolidated its grip over Azerbaijan so much so that the motto can be rephrased as “One Nation, One State.”

In addition to being offered military victory, President Ilham Aliyev has been given the license to rob the country, as it was revealed through the Panama Papers and the \$700 million real estate deal in London.

The Shusha Declaration formalizes that union and lays the foundation of pan-Turanist empire. (The Azerbaijani victors lost little time in reverting the name of the city to its Turkic form.)

The Shusha Declaration was proclaimed on June 15, 2021, but was ratified later by the parliaments of the two countries only recently.

The military component of the Shusha Declaration is a game-changing development in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. When Armenia and Azerbaijan fought each other in the past, their military strength was almost on par; that is how Armenia won the Karabakh war in 1994 and forced a ceasefire on Azerbaijan. Today, however, when Azerbaijan’s army is integrated with that of Turkey, the hopes of recovering Karabakh are dashed to the level of recovering Armenian lands in historic Armenia from Turkey.

In addition to presenting a threat to Armenia, the declaration is directed, in the long term, against President Vladimir Putin’s plans to bring Central Asian republics under Moscow’s rule as part of “Union States.”

Additionally, the declaration is directed against Iran, the perennial competitor of Turkey in the region, with an ethnic

Turkic minority in the north. The Azerbaijan Province in Iran has already been a target for Baku, since the rule of President Abulfaz Elchibey. That plan is also in sync with Turkey’s aspirations on its way to building a Turanic empire.

The Kremlin, rather than anticipating Turkey’s growing influence through its expansion through Central Asia as a threat to its own plans, may use the fear factor it generates to entice Armenia into the “Union State.”

It is not idle speculation to state that the Shusha Declaration is the cornerstone of the future Turkic empire, as the declaration itself states: “Combining efforts in promoting joint activities on the regional and international plane aimed at the stable development of the Turkic world.”

Although the declaration states that it is not aimed at any third party, it refers to Armenia and attacks it directly regarding the issue of the Genocide, the Zangezur Corridor, the Kars Treaty and the Armenian identity of Karabakh.

Thus: “Thus the parties, stressing that Armenia’s unfounded claims against Turkey, attempts to distort history and politicize historical facts through their distortion, harm peace and stability in the region, strongly support the efforts of Turkey in this context, which has opened its archives in connection with the events of 1915 in order to encourage the opening of archives in

Armenia and other countries and enable research to be conducted on this topic by historians.”

Turkey, and by association, Azerbaijan, believe that their distorted logic may validate their claim on the issue of the Genocide. Since they know that Armenia’s “claims are unfounded,” then what will be left for the historians to discover from scouring the Turkish archives that they purport are open to scholars?

Since the majority of Genocide scholars have expressed their verdict on the Armenian Genocide, as have major countries, who cares any more about Turkey’s sanitized archives? The louder the condemnation of the international community is, the more laughable Turkey’s denialist efforts become.

The Shusha Declaration also lays plans for the region in complete contempt

of Armenia’s sovereignty, where it states, “The parties note that the opening of the corridor connecting Azerbaijan and Turkey between Western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Zangezur Corridor) and, as a continuation of the corridor, the construction of the Nakhichevan-Kars railway will make an important contribution to the development of transport and communication links between the two countries.”

This statement assumes already that Turkey and Azerbaijan own the territory of Zangezur, that they can go ahead confidently to lay their plans. This tramples on Armenia’s sovereignty and deserves to receive public outcry as well as legal action to stop the incursion into Armenia’s territory.

The declaration also makes reference to the Treaty of Kars of 1921 between Bolshevik Russia and Mustafa Kemal’s Grand National Assembly. Neither entity was recognized by the international community at that time. The treaty, however, was imposed on Armenia.

The Treaty of Kars placed the Armenian region of Nakhichevan under Azerbaijani control. On the other hand, it drew the current border between Armenia and Turkey. Since its independence, Armenia has not recognized the treaty because that could sound the death knell on any future claims on historic

see DECLARATION, page 18







COMMENTARY

# TCA Issues Appeal to Catholicoi on Azerbaijani Monument Destruction

His Holiness Karekin II Catholicos of All Armenians  
His Holiness Aram I Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia



Our homeland and entire nation emerged wounded from the disastrous 44-day war and while with the forces of the entire nation we prepared to recover from the consequences of the existential war, Azerbaijan’s authorities unfurled a new challenge before our people, transferring the war of genocide to the realm of genocide of spiritual culture.

Throughout the years of Soviet rule, Azerbaijan waged an indirect campaign to destroy the Armenian churches and monuments in Nakhichevan, leading to the 2005 mass destruction of Armenian *khachkars* [cross stones] in Julfa.

Today, however, the genocide of cultural heritage is elevated to an official level. Last year’s ruling in the court of The Hague, warning the Azerbaijani authorities to spare the monuments of Armenian spiritual culture in the territories under their control, has led the latter to more cunning measures. From President Ilham Aliyev to Minister of Culture Anar Karimov, they have launched a campaign to re-label the monuments of Armenian spiritual culture, and concealing their true identities, attribute them to the Udi and Caucasian Albanian minorities.

This act is a classic distortion of history and reveals a new challenge for our nation to commence not only a pan-Armenian but a global battle urgently, as time is working against us.

Taking into consideration that the Armenian spiritual heritage is the target of today’s challenge, the responsibility of initiating the campaign necessarily falls on the shoulders of our spiritual leaders. Just as we welcomed the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Pope in the Vatican in 2015 with the spirit of national unity, it is expected that you initiate the current struggle for survival with the same exemplary unity.

You, as wise spiritual leaders of the Armenians, can naturally come up with a special road map. Below, we humbly present our suggestions that can be implemented in support of your decisions:

- 1) Release a joint declaration, creating a pressing atmosphere on the issue among Armenians around the world, as well as within the international community, including in your campaign the leaders of the Catholic Armenians as well as the Armenian Evangelical Church.
  - 2) Armed with serious historical information, personally appear before UNESCO, giving a warning to the international press and revealing the reality and the scope of the danger.
  - 3) Simultaneously, apply to the World Council of Churches, the Pope in Rome, and other world religious authorities, providing them with scholarly documentation, maps, and historical evidence.
  - 4) Instruct all the dioceses under your jurisdiction to alert their own communities first and then turn to sister communities to obtain support. It is clear that not every diocese and parish has the opportunity to prepare documents and reasoning at the scholarly level. Therefore, as initiating patriarchs, the scholarly bodies of your sees can provide the above data.
- The Tekeyan Cultural Association, as a pan-national organization dedicated to Armenian culture, is extremely concerned about the current situation and humbly appeals to you with its pan-national bodies, hoping to see a mass mobilization to halt the threat of catastrophe.

Respectfully bringing the aforementioned to your attention, we remain,

Tekeyan Cultural Association Founders Body, Beirut, Lebanon  
Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada  
Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia  
Tekeyan Cultural Association London Trust  
Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of South America, Buenos Aires

February 12, 2022

## Would Turkey’s President Have Leverage over ‘Senator Doctor Oz’?

By Josh Rogin

Members of the U.S. Senate often have conflicts of interest, both business and personal. But never before has our country experienced a senator who has dual citizenship, served in a foreign military and maintains deep ties to the other nation where he holds citizenship — one where the leader is notorious for punishing those who cross him. Mehmet Oz — more commonly known by his television name of “Dr. Oz” — has myriad connections to Turkey and the world of its autocratic president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that are causing concern

in Washington and beyond.

Oz’s young candidacy for Pennsylvania’s seat has been portrayed in the press as quirky or stumbling or controversial, mostly because of Oz’s various comments over the years as television’s most famous doctor. But Oz’s bid to win the GOP primary in May is serious. His campaign is spending millions on television ads. He has near 100 percent name recognition and a huge social media following. The latest polls show him as the front-runner, 11 points above former Treasury Department official and hedge-fund executive David McCormick and 12 points above President Donald Trump’s

ambassador to Denmark and former actress Carla Sands.

As the prospect of “Senator Doctor Oz” becomes plausible, several reports have questioned Oz’s national allegiances and detailed his ties to elite business and political circles in Turkey. Experts on Turkey say that while Oz’s Turkish and Muslim heritage would be a positive contribution to the diversity of the Senate, it’s legitimate to worry about the extent to which his assets and family members in Turkey would provide Erdogan with leverage over the future senator.

“Oz’s dual citizenship — and his reluctance to renounce Turkish citizenship — will keep the FBI and security managers up at night,” said Michael Rubin, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. “And it is fair game to question Oz’s judgment embracing the most reactionary elements in Turkish society.”

Oz has said he keeps his Turkish citizenship to facilitate his ability to oversee care for his mother in Turkey, who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. He once served in the Turkish army to maintain dual citizenship. For U.S. government employees and contractors, giving up dual citizenship has often (but not always) been a requirement to obtain top security clearances — but those restrictions don’t apply to members of Congress.

On the question of Oz’s business ties, *National Review* laid out a detailed list of instances in which he interacted with individuals and organizations closely linked to Erdogan or doing the Turkish leader’s bidding in the United States. For example, Oz spoke onstage at the 2019 New York conference of the World Turkish Business Council (DEIK) — a group from which many Western companies have distanced themselves since Erdogan’s government took control of it in 2014.

Also in 2019, Oz was the “special guest” at a fundraiser for the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC), whose co-chair is Turkish-American attorney Gunay Evinch, a registered agent of the Turkish government. Evinch’s law firm allegedly worked with Turkey’s Washington embassy to compile dossiers on Erdogan’s

critics inside the United States, including those associated with exiled religious leader Fethullah Gulen, who resides in Pennsylvania.

Late last year, TASC’s Twitter account was temporarily suspended for allegedly organizing an online smear campaign against the other Turkish-born celebrity in the news these days, NBA player Enes Kanter Freedom. (TASC argued that the suspension was a violation of its free speech.) Freedom, whose father was jailed by Erdogan for his association with Gulen, has been an outspoken critic of the Erdogan regime. Last year, after many years of being pursued by the Erdogan government, Freedom became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

“People need to understand that Dr. Oz is in Erdogan’s pocket. And whatever Erdogan wants, that’s what Dr. Oz is going to do,” Freedom told me. “So, if Dr. Oz gets into the Senate, it’s like Erdogan’s arm will be in the Senate.”

In an interview, Oz rejected that assertion and insisted he isn’t concerned whether Erdogan likes his positions or not. To be sure, Erdogan likely doesn’t like some of the stands Oz is taking during this campaign, including his defense of Gulen and his opposition to Turkey’s purchases of advanced missile systems from Russia.

“Gulen cannot be touched,” Oz told me. “There are no credible allegations that he was involved in the coup. He will stay in Pennsylvania.”

Oz explains his interactions with top Turkish businessmen and political figures over several years as totally normal for a Turkish-American celebrity of his stature. He was participating as a member of the Turkish American community, not as a politician, he told me. Oz said he does not know Evinch and has had no contact with him other than onstage at the 2019 DEIK event.

“I hadn’t even really gotten engaged in any of this until I decided to run for the Senate, and I’d never been politically involved in Turkey in any capacity. I didn’t even donate money to these organizations,” Oz told me.

It’s not exactly a satisfying answer. Oz is not unaware of international politics. He see *LEVERAGE*, page 20

### ‘Shusha Declaration’ Is Virtual Declaration of War

DECLARATION, from page 17

Armenian lands. Turkey has been conniving to force Armenia to recognize the treaty and the forthcoming negotiations between the two countries will offer yet another opportunity for Turkey to corner Armenia into ratifying it.

Keen observers at the Kremlin have certainly not missed the fact that the declaration is directed against their future expansionist plans. And embroiled in the current Ukraine crisis, they consider it better to ignore it. The rulers at the Kremlin have not even reacted to President Aliyev’s recent provocative actions; indeed, right during the face-off between Russia and Ukraine, Aliyev visited Kyiv to sign an agreement which has a military component.

In another action, when President Biden threatened Russia to shut down the Nord Stream 2, which supplies gas to Europe, Aliyev offered Azerbaijani gas instead. For that, he received public thanks not just from the European leaders, but from the Secretary of NATO Jens Stoltenberg, which underlines the political nature of Aliyev’s actions.

President Putin, instead of reacting angrily to Aliyev’s actions, invited him to Moscow to sign a treaty of alliance with Azerbaijan. In the maze of the Caucasian politics, it is difficult to pinpoint the factor of tolerance that President Putin has demonstrated with regard to President Aliyev.

If Moscow has some reasons to ignore the Shusha Declaration, Armenia has none, because the declaration not only jeopardizes its current sovereignty, but is also challenges its future aspirations and legitimate claims.

The issue was brought up in parliament by the opposition there. A special sub-committee was formed and the topic was discussed. The ruling majority refused to come up with a statement, in order not to hamper the forthcoming negotiations with Turkey. It was argued that future peace prospects could be impacted. Unfortunately, the issue was reduced to the level of domestic squabbling and the members of the ruling party believed that they carried a victory against the opposition, whereas the issue is much bigger than that — it’s the very existence of Armenia.

If Armenia will conduct negotiations with its hands tied, the outcome does not auger well for the future.





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Don't Let Turks Buy Land in Armenia; Impose Tariffs on Turkish Imports

The Armenian government must take two important steps prior to opening the border with Turkey: 1) Forbid Turkish citizens from buying real estate in Armenia; and 2) Place tariffs on the import of products from Turkey.

Obviously, Turkish citizens do not have to cross the Armenian border to be able to buy real estate in Armenia. But, with the opening of the mutual land border, more Turkish citizens will be able to come to Armenia, thus increasing the flow of people and products from Turkey.

Allowing the citizens of a hostile country like Turkey to purchase real estate in Armenia is a serious national security threat, particularly if these properties are located near sensitive border areas.

There is a big contradiction between what the Constitution and laws of Armenia stipulate regarding the purchase of real estate by foreigners and what is actually practiced. Now that a Constitutional Committee has been set up to reform the existing Constitution, last amended in 2015, this is the right time to reconsider the existing provisions as to who can buy real estate in Armenia. There should be a ban on foreigners' purchase of properties near Armenia's border. In addition, citizens of Azerbaijan and Turkey should not be allowed to purchase any kind of property anywhere in Armenia.

This problem is particularly urgent because several years ago the Turkish government adopted a law that forbade the purchase of property in Turkey by citizens of four countries: Armenia, Cuba, North Korea and Syria. Citizens of another 35 countries are restricted to purchase property in Turkey based on the nature and location of the land. One would think that since the Turkish government has forbidden Armenian citizens from buying land in Turkey, Armenia should have reciprocated by banning the purchase of land in Armenia by Turkish citizens.

I wrote an article in 2012, informing Armenian officials of the Turkish law that banned the citizens of Armenia from buying land in Turkey and urged "the Armenian Parliament to consider adopting retaliatory measures against citizens of Turkey interested in purchasing Armenian properties." Regrettably, my suggestion was ignored.

The 1995 Constitution prohibited foreigners from purchasing land in Ar-

menia. However, this was contradicted by the Armenian government's subsequent report to the World Trade Organization: "foreigners have the right to own real estate properties built on Armenian land." The report also stated that "the [Armenian] legislation grants the Government the power to limit and prohibit foreign investment for national security concerns."

In line with the Constitution of 1995, the subsequent Armenian Constitutions of 2005 and 2015 also stated that "Foreign citizens and stateless persons shall not enjoy ownership right over land, except for cases provided for by law."

If foreigners are not allowed to purchase land or real estate in Armenia, then how were they able to buy them? In 2019 alone, foreigners, contrary to the Armenian Constitution, purchased 186 apartments, 72 houses, two factories, nine public properties and even 121 plots of land. How was this possible?

Much more concerning is that citizens of the enemy states of Azerbaijan and Turkey have been buying properties in Armenia without any objection. According to the figures released last week by the Armenian government's cadastre or official registry of real estate, from 2010 to 2021 citizens of Azerbaijan purchased six properties in Armenia, which included five apartments and one public property. During the same period, citizens of Turkey bought 71 pieces of real estate, including 55 apartments, five houses, one garage, seven public properties and three plots of land in Armenia.

I assume that many of the Turkish citizens who purchased real estate in Armenia are of Armenian origin. I suggest that the Armenian government make an exception for those who are of Armenian origin, if and when the purchase of real estate by Turkish citizens is banned.

Finally, turning to the import of products from Turkey and other countries, the Armenian government must impose tariffs to protect the viability of domestic production. Since Turkey has a very large population, it is able to produce items much cheaper due to mass scale. Armenian producers, unable to compete with them, will go out of business. Already the Armenian market is flooded with Turkish products. After opening the border, Turkish products will no longer have to go through the expense of importing them via Georgia, which means that they will be even cheaper creating a bigger problem for domestic producers. Making matters worse, the collapsing value of the Turkish Lira has made the prices of imported products from Turkey cheaper.

Before several sectors of Armenia's economy are completely devastated, the Armenian government must place tariffs on imported Turkish products to protect Armenia's vulnerable producers.

# Peace-Loving Armenians

By Areni Gomidas Hartounian

**W**HAT DOES IT MEAN TO FORGIVE? When one chooses to forgive, should they brush aside all feelings of sorrow, pain, regret, and mourning?

The Armenian people's ancient history is riddled with centuries of pain and sorrow, most recently inflicted by the Turks and Azeris. When Armenians choose to forgive them, they should take heed not to belittle the loss of millions of innocent lives who wanted nothing more than to enjoy the fruits of life on this green earth. Armenians must come to a point where they make peace with their tragic past in order to finally achieve a content existence where they are not constantly haunted by the ghosts of their past; but they must also not allow the loss of millions of Armenians at the hands of the Turks to go in vain.

The Turks' contemptuous and unapologetic actions give way to many Armenians showing complacency by freely forgiving them without realizing that certain steps must be taken to make the Turks and Azerbaijanis answer for their crimes; horrific atrocities that have been prematurely forgiven may obstruct truth and justice. To prematurely forgive the Turks may cause many Armenians to ineffectively process their grieving and sorrow. You may risk the prospect of the innocent Armenian victims' lives not having conveyed either a meaningful message to one's mind nor sympathy to one's heart.

In order to fully move on, Armenians must properly grieve the destruction of their cultural wealth and innocent lives while ensuring in the best way they can that the Turks answer for what they've done by way of reparations for war crimes and cultural decimation committed against an ancient and peace loving race like the Armenians.

Furthermore, when Turks and Azerbaijanis fail to express an apology after all this time and continue to slaughter Armenians, they not only fail to give Arme-

nians meaningful closure but also double down on their past monstrous actions.

Christians are urged to love and pray for their enemies. However, every Armenian must realize that the author of the Genocide and their blood-hungry brothers — the Azerbaijanis — will seize any opportunity they can to spill Armenian blood. They will continue to murder and pillage with reckless abandon while Armenian families weep in sorrow. This is precisely why Armenians must take every action they can to try and make the blood-thirsty Turks and Azeris accountable for their actions in the past.

Lately, overly eager Armenian-Turkish reconciliation has been a cause of concern. There has been a pervading movement to conduct meetings between Armenian and Turkish intellectuals and students to revive the non-existing friendship between Armenians and Turks. For this purpose, there have been attempts to produce films and to issue joint publications that strive toward peaceful settlement. Both sides should, in theory, forgive each other and open a new page of relations. The last thing any Armenian would want, however, is to return to their homeland only to find it invaded and overrun by Turks and Azerbaijanis.

Additionally, genocide denial may serve a bigger political agenda for some world powers. Certain nations at times fear getting on the "bad side" of Turkey by recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Turkey conducts a lot of trade with many nations in the world. In order to appease the Turkish regime, some governments have been very slow to recognize the genocide as a historical fact. These notions of appeasement can give way to the erasure of Armenian rights from the minds of future generations. We should emphasize the fact that there are certain unpatriotic Armenian Christians who have already penetrated into the borders of the Armenian Republic and the various communities of the Armenian Diaspora as well. These unpatriotic Armenians are trying to pursue dark political purposes by expending large amounts of money in order to essentially make people forget about the horrors of the past as part of a campaign for personal gain. By agreeing to label the genocide not as genocide but just as the "Armenian Question" or "Armenian Issue," they push towards premature forgiveness of the Turks so they can receive payouts from Turkish politicians and rich nationalists.

Ultimately, the international recognition of the Ar-

menian Genocide is presented to the Armenian public as the first step for the solution of Armenia's problems as they are related to receiving reparations from Turkey. World powers have extended their reach into matters concerning the liberation of the Armenian-occupied lands. What do Armenians understand by the term "Armenian Cause"? For many Armenians, the term is understood as the international and Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide only. For many Armenians, this recognition alone isn't enough. An important matter needs to be clarified. When the Turkish higher authorities present an apology and reparations for cultural and geographical destruction to the Armenians, only then is it worth thinking of any possibility of true forgiveness. It would also be ideal to have former Western Armenian lands of Old Armenia returned to the Armenians, but there is little chance of this actually happening.

It is premature to speak about forgiving the Turks. The terrible crimes that their forefathers have committed against the Armenians cannot be shrugged off. The Turks are denying in an ugly manner what they have done to the Armenians. Moreover, they are forging narratives and perverting historical facts by trying to present to the world the opposite of reality. The Turks are displaying Armenians to the international public as conspirators/aggressors. The Turks tried to play victim, exactly as their kinsmen, the Azerbaijanis, are doing presently. Why hasten the process of unjustly forgiving criminals? Without the repentance of the guilty and without proper compensation to the Armenians, truth is lost. In a perfect world, the Turks would base their apology upon justice and common sense; they would base their apology upon the principle that might doesn't always make right...

As peace-loving Armenians we must not only understand our world but also know how to live in it. We need to draw closer to God than ever before. Let's establish ourselves in His world. The most important issue in the Armenian Cause is compensation for the victims of the Armenian genocide and the more recent wars over Karabakh. Without compensation in the form of reparations, there will be no justice. Today most of the world, except Turkey, recognizes the Armenian Genocide.

(Areni Gomidas Hartounian is a high school senior in New Jersey.)



# ATP Is Stewarding Artsakh’s Agricultural Heritage

YEREVAN — A team from Armenia Tree Project (ATP) traveled to Artsakh on February 3-5 to strengthen accords for a nursery in Stepanakert, and 50 backyard greenhouses in villages throughout Martuni and Askeran provinces.

Much of the land that was lost in the 2020 war was agricultural. Without the local source of food, the people of Artsakh have been forced to rely on imports, at significant cost. The ATP nursery and backyard greenhouse program is a long-term response to the dire situation.

The nursery will produce 20,000-30,000 seedlings each year for planting throughout Artsakh helping restore the post-war effect on Artsakh’s wildlife and nature, and providing fruit trees to local residents.

ATP discussed the strong need for locally trained agricultural experts with the leadership of the newly situated Shushi Technology University, now in Stepanakert. The ATP nursery will be available for the student’s training and the partnership will create local opportunities for employment, reducing the need to go abroad in search of work.

The GreenLane NGO joined ATP at mul-



Meeting with villagers in Karmir Shuka

tiple villages in Martuni and Askeran provinces, for meetings to discuss the backyard greenhouse project.

Following the presentation at the newly built community center of Karmir Shuka Village in Martuni Region, ATP repre-

sentatives spoke with Mardi Harutyunyan. During the war, while civilians were being evacuated from the border village, he chose to remain. “I simply couldn’t leave. My 20 year old younger son was serving in the army in Stepanakert. He was one of the soldiers of Artsakh Tsor Artillery Regiment whose remains were returned after a year and three months... What can I say, I don’t have anything else to lose or be afraid of,” said Mardi.

In his village, there is hardly a family who hasn’t been affected by the war. “We live always in fear that there will be war again. There has been constant tension,” he said.

Mardi received a small house from the government where he plans to grow an orchard as well as keep the greenhouse.

He says the work will occupy his mind and help gradually move on to normal life.

The backyard greenhouse’s small size (30 sq. meters) is suitable for entire families. Children can learn the skills alongside their parents and continue Artsakh’s strong agricultural legacy. GreenLane NGO encouraged the villagers to consider planting high yielding crops that can have multiple harvests in a year, plants that are in demand and valuable like the greens used in jingalov hats, or medicinal plants to address the community’s high rates of diabetes and blood pressure issues.

The spirit of the Artsakh people is strong. There is eagerness by all who we met to work continually for a bright future.

## Would Turkey’s President Have Leverage over ‘Senator Doctor Oz’?

LEVERAGE, from page 18

traveled to Israel in 2013 at the height of Turkey-Israel tensions. In 2018, he visited Syrian refugee camps as part of a humanitarian aid mission, commendably. The Oz campaign now says he was “unaware” that these Turkish organizations had become so politicized when he associated with them. That, if true, is its own problem.

This primary campaign will likely be ugly, and it will be difficult to separate the good-faith concerns from the bad-faith attacks on Oz. In the coming months, Oz will be required to disclose more information that will show whether he has fully disentangled himself from whatever business ties Erdogan might see as leverage against a U.S. senator — and voters will make their own judgments.

“Is he really an agent of the government? There’s not really any evidence of that,” said Steven Cook, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. “But if Oz has business connections that rely on being in the good graces of the government, there are legitimate questions about his views on these issues.”

(Josh Rogin is a columnist for the Global Opinions section of the *Washington Post*. He writes about foreign policy and national security. Rogin is also a political analyst for CNN. He previously worked for Bloomberg View, the Daily Beast, *Foreign Policy*, *Congressional Quarterly*, *Federal Computer Week* and Japan’s *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper.

(This column originally appeared in the *Washington Post*.)


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