

# Ukrainian Envoy Says Rada Tweet On Karabakh ‘Not Reflecting Kyiv’s Position’

By Marine Khachatrian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A post on the official Twitter account of Ukraine’s parliament regarding Nagorno-Karabakh “does not reflect the position of official Kyiv,” Ukrainian Chargé d’Affaires to Armenia Denis Autonomov said on Friday, March 25.

In its tweet on March 25 the Verkhovna Rada welcomed Azerbaijan’s latest actions in Nagorno-Karabakh in the context of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine.

“Azerbaijani armed forces have gone on the offensive in Karabakh, taking advantage of the circumstance that Russia has been sending its troops to Ukraine,” he said, echoing media reports that Moscow has been redeploying some of its troops stationed in Armenia

as well as peacekeepers stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh as reinforcements for fighting in Ukraine.

The tweet was posted amid reports of renewed fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh in which at least three Armenian soldiers were killed and over a dozen wounded on Friday.

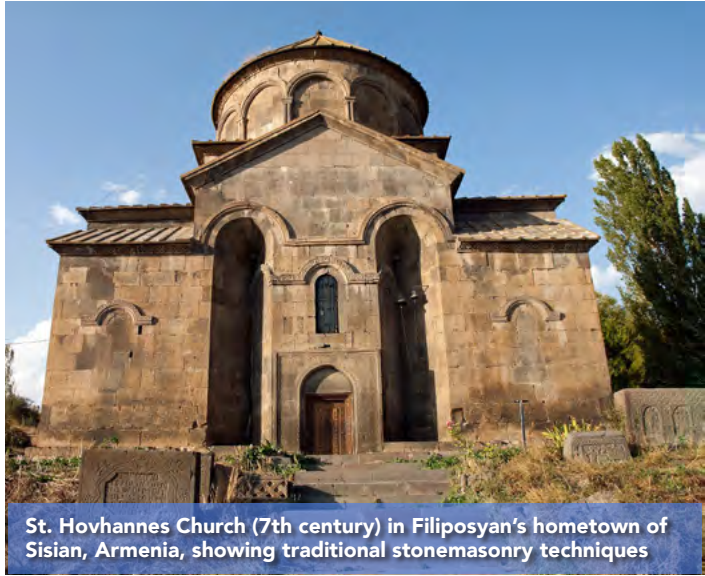
“This post does not reflect the position of official Kyiv in the context that we cannot be happy about a war. Now a war is ongoing in Ukraine as well. The issue was not discussed in the Verkhovna Rada, no decision was made. Our position on the territorial integrity of other countries is very well known. It applies to Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan,” Autonomov said.

Official Yerevan has taken a neutral position on the Russian-Ukrainian war, which was earlier hailed by the Ukrainian diplomat.

The Ukrainian parliament’s Twitter post that caused anger in Armenian social media was later removed. The Ukrainian diplomat found it difficult to say why such a post appeared on an official account. “It’s difficult for me to say who and why did such a thing. But now that tweet has been removed,” he said.

Talking to the news website Factor.am today, Armenian Ambassador to Ukraine Vladimir Karapetyan said that the Armenian embassy in Kyiv acted promptly on the tweet. “Due to our intervention immediately after the start of working hours here, it was deleted within 15 minutes,” he said.

Karapetyan said that the issue had been discussed with all relevant bodies of Ukraine and was considered “closed.”



St. Hovhannes Church (7th century) in Filiposyan’s hometown of Sisian, Armenia, showing traditional stonemasonry techniques



The group’s bringing their driver’s family bread in Martuni.

# Intensified Attacks on Karabakh Lead to New Restrictions, Deprivation

By Brandon Balayan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

STEPANAKERT — The reverberations of Azerbaijan’s attacks on Karabakh have affected the population in more ways than simply fear. Following Azerbaijan’s incursion this past week into the village of Parukh, Askeran, where intense attacks occurred with the use of Bayraktar drones, at least 3 soldiers died and 14 people were wounded. As a result, Artsakh Republic’s President Arayik Harutyunyan signed a decree on restrictions on rights and freedoms, according to the NKR Information Center.

In accordance with the decree, the following will be restricted: “the right to freedom

of assembly, strikes and other arrangements terminating or suspending the activities of organizations are prohibited and activities of organizations engaged in propaganda or other actions spearheaded against the defense capacity and security of the Artsakh Republic.”

To clarify, the Artsakh Republic has not declared martial law, according to Political Analyst Tigran Grigoryan, it was never lifted. These are essentially just new restrictions. The Central Information Department of the Office of the Artsakh Republic President ended their statement with who the restrictions were to be enforced by.

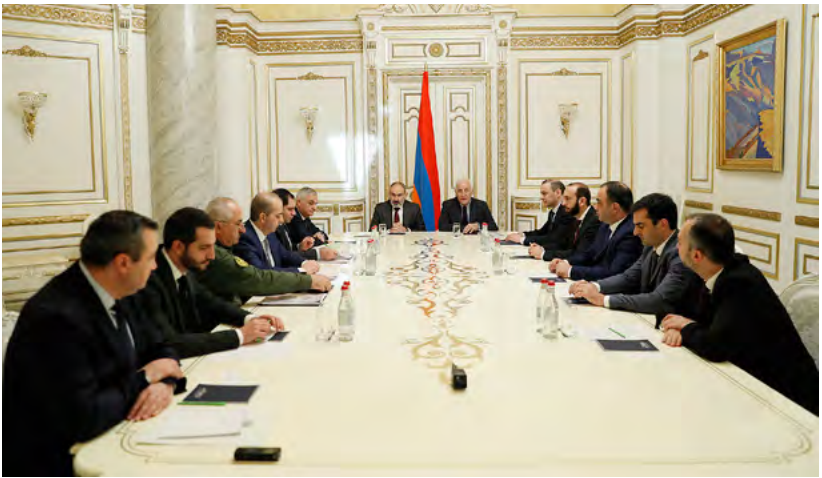
Martial law in Artsakh has been declared since 1992. see DEPRIVATION, page 3

# Armenia Offers ‘Immediate’ Peace Talks With Azerbaijan after Most Intense Attacks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia said on Monday, March 28, that it is willing to “immediately” start negotiations on a peace treaty with Azerbaijan in a bid to prevent fresh Azerbaijani attacks on Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenian Security Council also called on the international community to activate “containment mechanisms” in view of “the possibility of military clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.”

“The analysis of the situation shows that Azerbaijan preparing is preparing the ground to launch new



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan chairs a meeting of Armenia Security Council, Yerevan, March 28, 2022.

# Young Architect Details Goal to Revive Armenian Stonemasonry

By Harry Kezelian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Nare Filiposyan is a woman on a mission to save the last remnants of one of the oldest Armenian crafts from oblivion: traditional stone masonry.

The craft, which dates back to the Early Middle Ages, is best known for its use in medieval Armenian churches and monasteries. Hallmarks of Armenian architecture like St. Hripsime, Holy Echmiadzin and St. Hovhannes in Filiposyan’s hometown of Sisian, Armenia, were built using this



Nare Filiposyan

technique. But due to the vast changes of modern life, the “embodied knowledge” of traditional masons is in danger of being lost. Filiposyan is working to prevent that, and has some solutions, which were the subject of her lecture on Thursday, March 24 sponsored by the Greater Boston chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) and moderated by local architect Ted Touloukian of Touloukian Touloukian Inc.

Filiposyan recently completed her master’s in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the lecture was based on her 2021 master’s thesis, “(Re)Turn to Stone: Preserving a Culture of Stone Masonry.”

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## NEW JERSEY

AMAA Reaches out to Ukrainian Armenian Refugees



## CANADA

Junior Middleweight Artem Oganessian Stops Stephen Danyo in Five



## ARMENIA

Artsakh and Italian Masters’ Clothing Line Goes on Auction







ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Court Postpones Hearing Amid Kocharyan's Absence

YEREVAN (Panorama) — The Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction on March 29, postponed a hearing on the alleged corruption case involving President Robert Kocharyan and opposition Hayastan faction MP Armen Gevorgyan.

Kocharyan was absent from the hearing due to health issues. His lawyer Hovhannes Khudoyan presented a medical certificate to the court, saying that his treatment will last nearly 10 days. Thus, the hearing was postponed until April 12.

Kocharyan is accused of receiving bribes from businesswoman Silva Hambardzumyan while in power.

### Foreign Minister Meets With French Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan received French Ambassador Anne Louyot on March 28.

The meeting focused on the situation in Karabakh following the invasion of the Azerbaijani forces. Mirzoyan considered inadmissible the continuous provocations by Azerbaijan against the civilian population there, aggressive actions, attempts to deliberately disrupt the normal operation of vital infrastructure.

Mirzoyan highlighted the response of the international community to the situation, aimed at the withdrawal of the Azerbaijani armed forces from Karabakh and the de-escalation of the situation.

### Artsakh Foreign Ministry Thanks Int'l Community For Efforts to Make Azerbaijan Restore Gas

STEPANAKERT (Panorama) — The Artsakh Foreign Ministry issued the following statement on the restoration of gas supply: "On March 28, the gas supply to the Republic of Artsakh was restored through the only gas pipeline entering Artsakh from the Republic of Armenia. This month, Azerbaijan has twice disrupted the supply of natural gas to Artsakh for a lengthy period, causing a humanitarian crisis.

"The humanitarian terrorism carried out by Azerbaijan has been strongly condemned by the international community, numerous calls have been made for the restoration of gas supply, and adequate political and diplomatic steps have been taken. The role of the Russian peacekeeping mission in the matter is also great.

"We are grateful to all the countries and international organizations ... who, adhering to the principles of international humanitarian law and moral norms, gave an adequate assessment to Azerbaijan's actions and took relevant steps to eliminate this humanitarian crisis.

Politicization of humanitarian issues is inadmissible and immoral, and any attempt of the kind is a challenge to the entire civilized world."

# Azerbaijani Efforts to Advance Continue in Artsakh

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The actions taking place in Artsakh starting March 24 once again speak of the continuation of Azerbaijan's policy of aggression against Armenians and its undisguised aspirations to expel the latter from Artsakh. For two days now, Azerbaijan has been trying to capture tactical heights from which the Askeran region can be clearly seen, possibly preparing the ground for further, larger-scale offensive operations against Artsakh.

According to information from the individuals contacted below, the situation is still tense: the Azerbaijani side is constantly violating the ceasefire, using artillery and drones. Nevertheless, the Armenian side is able to adequately respond to the enemy, which outnumbers it in number and armament.

Artsakh National Assembly deputy Metakse Hakobyan presented the situation, stating that the Artsakh Defense Army is doing the possible and the impossible at the moment. She said, "The enemy is trying to secure its advances, capture the Karaglukh heights and fortify itself there. You no doubt know that Karaglukh has a controlling position over both the Askeran region and the occupied Akna region; that is, the enemy is preparing the ground for further aggression."

Turkologist Varuzhan Geghamyan expressed the opinion that the enemy understands only the language of force. He said, "It [intends] to solve a problem — the issue of the expulsion of Armenians from Artsakh. It will not withdraw through direct negotiations."

Armenian National Assembly deputy



Metakse Hakobyan

Tigran Abrahamyan expressed the opinion that the situation is very difficult, but it is basically up to the Armenians to act. He declared, "I do not know who expects what from Russia, but I think we must solve our problems ourselves. No one will help us if we do not try to take the first step."

Vardan Mikayelyan, the head of Parukh Village, which was occupied yesterday, also briefly commented: "Everything happened very unexpectedly. We saw how the Azeris suddenly moved forward. At first, we thought that the Russians would stop them, but it did not happen. They captured the village. As for this moment, what can I say? I have already said that the village is occupied and they are trying to advance again. You know the rest. Be well."



"I DO NOT KNOW WHO EXPECTS WHAT FROM RUSSIA, BUT I THINK WE MUST SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS OURSELVES. NO ONE WILL HELP US IF WE DO NOT TRY TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP."

– TIGRAN ABRAHAMYAN

## Armenia Offers 'Immediate' Peace Talks With Azerbaijan after Recent Attacks

TALKS, from page 1

provocations and attacks in the direction of Nagorno-Karabakh, including by accusing Armenia of unconstructive actions on the issue of a peace treaty," the council said after a late-night session chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

In a statement, it offered Baku to "immediately start negotiations on a comprehensive peace treaty" between the two South Caucasus nations.

The statement came four days after the Azerbaijani army captured a village in eastern Karabakh and surrounding territory, triggering deadly fighting with Karabakh Armenian forces. Azerbaijani troops partially withdrew from the area after the intervention of Russian peacekeepers stationed in Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov discussed the situation in Karabakh with the army's top brass earlier on Monday. He reportedly said that Azerbaijani forces must be "ready to use modern weaponry and other military equipment at any moment."

Meanwhile, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan's held separate meetings with the Russian co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, Igor Khovaev, as well as the Yerevan-based ambassadors of Russia, the United States and France. The tensions in Karabakh were high on their agenda.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan told Khovaev that Armenia is ready to start negotiating with Azerbaijan on the peace treaty "within the framework of the co-chairmanship of the Minsk Group."

Earlier this month, Yerevan asked the US,

Russian and French co-chairs of the Minsk Group to mediate such talks after receiving a five-point formal proposal from the Azerbaijani side. The proposal includes, among other things, a mutual commitment to recognize each other's territorial integrity.

### Attacks and Withdrawal

Azerbaijani forces withdrew from a village in Nagorno-Karabakh's east but continue to occupy territory outside it seized by them last week, military authorities in Stepanakert said on March 28.

The Azerbaijani army captured the village of Parukh on Thursday, March 24, before advancing towards a strategic mountain to the west of it. Three Karabakh Armenian soldiers were killed in ensuing fighting for the sprawling Karaglukh mountain. Russian peacekeeping forces stationed in Karabakh helped largely halt the fighting on Saturday evening.

In a weekend statement, Russian Defense Ministry accused Azerbaijani of violating a Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war. It urged Azerbaijani forces to leave the peacekeepers' "zone of responsibility." Baku denied violating the ceasefire regime in the area bordering the Aghdam district regained by it following the six-week war.

The Defense Ministry in Moscow announced on Sunday evening that Azerbaijani forces have pulled out of Parukh.

Karabakh's Defense Army confirmed the following morning that the small village is now "under the control of the Russian peacekeeping troops." All of its residents had fled their homes on Thursday.

The Defense Army also said that Azerbaijani soldiers continue to hold "fortified positions" at a section of Karaglukh but that

"the main part" of the sprawling mountain is controlled by the Karabakh Armenian side. The Russian contingent's command keeps trying to ensure a full Azerbaijani withdrawal from the area, it added in a statement.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said, meanwhile, that Yerevan expects from the Russians "concrete measures" to reverse the Azerbaijani "incursion" into parts of Karabakh's eastern Askeran district. It also reiterated Yerevan's calls for a "proper investigation" into the peacekeepers' failure to thwart that incursion in the first place.

The Russian military said on Sunday that peacekeepers have managed to "stabilize the situation" in the area. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday that Moscow's chief objective is now to ensure the conflicting parties' full compliance with the 2020 truce accord.

### Russia Angered by Move

The Russian Foreign Ministry said that it is "extremely concerned" about the rising tensions in Karabakh. It urged the warring sides to "show restraint" and avoid ceasefire violations.

Earlier on Saturday, the Armenian Foreign Ministry urged Moscow to "issue a clear demand" for the Azerbaijani withdrawal. It said Yerevan also expects the Russian peacekeepers to take other "concrete, visible steps to resolve the situation."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the situation in Karabakh in phone calls on Thursday and Friday.

The US State Department on Friday expressed serious concern over the Azerbaijani troop movements, calling them "irresponsible and unnecessarily provocative." Baku rejected the criticism.





## ARMENIA

# Intensified Attacks on Karabakh Lead to New Restrictions, Deprivation

DEPRIVATION, from page 1

However similar restrictions only during the 2020 war, were informally lifted and then once again imposed on March 26.

According to Article 76 of the Artsakh Republic's constitution, "basic rights and freedoms of the human being and the citizen, with the exception of some articles within the constitution, may be temporarily suspended or subjected to additional restrictions under the procedure prescribed by law."

Then according to Article 131, the President of the Republic can declare martial law and impose measures or mobilization, but the National Assembly can lift or cancel the implementation of measures with a majority vote.

The Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) has also published a statement regarding the most recent attacks by Azerbaijan.

"From March 24 to March 25, the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, violating the provisions of the tripartite statement of the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia dated November 9, 2020, entered the zone of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and set up an observation post," said the Russian MoD.

They continued to point out Azerbaijan's use of the Bayraktar-TB 2 drone on Arme-

nian Armed forces.

Azerbaijan also prevented a ruptured gas line in Shushi from being fixed, leaving the population without heat in freezing temperatures. Once the gas line was fixed through Russian mediation, Azerbaijan allowed the access of gas for a day, then shut it off once again. The Artsakh Republic has been without gas for 20 days.

The humanitarian crisis in Artsakh has caused the diaspora and civil society within Armenia to rally in support of Artsakh. For example, on March 18 Kooyrigs NGO went on a joint mission with All for Armenia. Kooyrigs delivered electric heaters, burners, and blankets, while All for Armenia delivered electric burners.

Kooyrigs' Founder and Executive Director Karine Eurdekian said a critical component of the NGO's immediate aid work is maintaining a presence within border villages.

"Providing immediate aid is important because we are able to show our border communities that we stand with them, we will not abandon them, and we will do whatever is in our power to support them," Eurdekian said.

The Kooyrigs team consisted of Marguerita and Kevork Doudaklian, siblings from Anjar, Lebanon who repatriated to Armenia about five years ago. All for Armenia



Marguerita Doudaklian speaking with beneficiaries and handing out aid at the Charles Aznavour Center, Stepanakert (Brandon Balayan photo)

was helped by their volunteer Hovhannes, a local Armenian who fought in the 2020 war.

All for Armenia has been involved in the Syunik region as well, creating the Made in Syunik initiative which employs displaced women from Hadrut.

"As an organization that was born during the last war, we Cherish the contact on the ground with our people," AFA Cofounder Mathieu Sahakian said. "We developed our mission and vision from this direct relationship we have with the refugees, and frontline communities."

The road to Artsakh was dangerous. The group's car was stuck in the snow for about 40 minutes within the mountains of Artsakh. After passing through nine Russian posts, they finally reached Stepanakert.

Their first day was focused in Stepanakert, where they distributed the aid out of the Charles Aznavour Cultural Center. The Center has also been without heat and sometimes electricity, so workers have been rarely going since Azerbaijan has refused to fix the gas line.

The next couple of days consisted of visiting the remote villages in Askeran and Martuni. The Mayor of Martuni city, Edik Avanesyan said villagers currently have no access to bread and oil because of the snow on roads.

While distributing aid, Marguerita recounts visiting the home of beneficiaries and their children being wrapped up in blankets, trying their best to stay warm. The weather was so severe that Marguerita saw

animals frozen in the middle of Stepanakert.

The village of Khramort was also in need of aid due to the lack of gas and because of the shelling they received on March 11. Marguerita said the village now consists mostly of men because the women and children have been evacuated to Stepanakert. With the situation becoming tenser by the day, it is unclear when they will return.

Delivering the aid was also difficult because of the snow, and the team had to stay in the freezing conditions of Stepanakert for longer than they expected because the roads back to Yerevan were closed.

In total, Kooyrigs delivered 160 heaters, 136 burners, and 100 blankets. All for Armenia delivered about 100 burners. To Kooyrigs' and All for Armenia's knowledge, they were the only organizations on the ground delivering immediate aid.

Kooyrigs plans on making another trip to Artsakh within the next week or so, and its team members have been in contact with the mayors of Askeran and Martuni. However, upon calling them for a needs assessment, they were unable to have a conversation because of the current attacks on Artsakh.

As the humanitarian crisis continues, civil society within Artsakh has also protested against the attacks from Azerbaijan, according to Panorama.am. However, those will be put to a halt due to the latest decree on restrictions.

As of right now, the situation on the border of Parukh is stable, according to the NKR InfoCenter.



Charles Aznavour Cultural Center, Stepanakert

## Artsakh's Matenadaran-Gandzasar Center Operates Normally, Head Says

STEPANAKERT (Panorama) — The Matenadaran-Gandzasar Scientific and Cultural Center in Artsakh is open to visitors and operates as normal, Matenadaran-Gandzasar Director Aram Torosyan told Panorama.am on March 29.

The center suspended its activity after the 44-day Artsakh war. After the Azerbaijani shelling of the Ghazanchetsots (Holy Savior) Cathedral in Shushi, all its exhibits were evacuated to Yerevan.

"Over the past few days, the Matenadaran Museum Complex was closed due to gas supply problems, but, in general, its activities continue, we have visitors. Of course, the number of visitors has sharply decreased given that there are no tourist flows. Fewer people have started visiting Artsakh from Armenia as well. I urge people to come to Artsakh more often, of course we understand that there is a need

for certain security guarantees. The current guarantees seem to be insufficient," Torosyan said.

The director of the scientific and cultural center says that they plan to host book presentations and temporary exhibitions.

"About 30 percent of our exhibits transferred earlier to the Matenadaran in Yerevan have been returned. This is the management's decision to return them in parts, taking into account some security concerns. We plan to get the rest back in the near future. There's another reason why we're not moving them back: the Matenadaran – the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan – is hosting a temporary exhibition called "Artsakh Manuscripts Art" which displays manuscripts that were brought to Armenia from the Matenadaran-Gandzasar Scientific and Cultural Center during the 44-day war. That is, the

Artsakh exhibition is temporarily hosted by Yerevan's Matenadaran," said Torosyan.

He noted that the village of Vank in the Martakert region, near which the Gandzasar Monastery Complex is located, as well as the Matenadaran are not very close to the border with Azerbaijan, thus people are free to visit the Matenadaran whenever they wish.

"Currently, our main visitors are local residents, Russian peacekeepers, and, from time to time, delegations from Armenia and Russia," he said.

The Gandzasar Monastery Complex is situated close to the village of Vank in the Martakert region. Artsakh's Matenadaran branch is located in the area adjacent to Gandzasar.

The Matenadaran-Gandzasar Scientific and Cultural Center was founded in 2015. Over the years, the number of visitors to



Gandzasar in Artsakh

the center reached 70,000-80,000. In 2019 alone, about 19,000 people visited the center.

It stored more than 100 manuscripts, including original ones, 3 dozens of old printed books, around 3 dozens of valuable archive documents, and 700 units of Armenian studies literature.





## ARMENIA



ATP Nursery and CTP staff visit The Heroes Rehabilitation City, in Proshyan Village, Kotayk Armenia

## Armenia Tree Project's Spring Planting Preparations

YEREVAN — With the planting season to start in a few weeks, the Armenia Tree Project Community Tree Planting (CTP) team has been evaluating many sites in advance. One of the organization's most visible programs, CTP distributes fruit and decorative trees each year to urban and rural communities throughout Armenia, and works with the local population to nurture those trees which bring multiple benefits in the future.

Each year, approximately 50 to 100 new sites are added to the community tree-planting program. Some locations approach ATP for trees, but most locations are from our initiative to provide trees to border villages or communities that would benefit from the environmental and economic investment of our trees. Since the beginning of this program, ATP has planted trees at 1,400 sites throughout Armenia and Artsakh. These trees are grown in ATP nurseries in

the villages of Karin, Khachpar, Chiva and Margahovit, which provide 53 varieties of indigenous fruit and decorative trees.

The CTP team evaluates six criteria before trees are distributed for planting, to ensure the trees are cared for and positioned for long-term survival. Our criteria include human factor, fencing and security, soil composition, water irrigation, community land and climate zone. The team investigates potential sites in every region of Armenia and Artsakh.

Sites are monitored regularly to ensure the highest rates of survival and to provide technical assistance to families or institutions that receive trees. More than 10,000,000 pounds of fruit have been harvested from ATP's trees to improve food security at public institutions and in rural villages.

This spring approximately 20,000 to 23,000 trees will be distributed. Among the

new sites being added are the Heroes Rehabilitation City, in Proshyan village, Kotayk region and the Great Light CEF Camp Center near Lake Sevan, Gegharkunik region.

The Heroes Rehabilitation City is currently under construction. Their mission is to provide psychological, and social care, as well as offer therapy for soldiers' families. Their objective is to rehabilitate and treat soldiers with disabilities (including PTSD) help re-integrate them into society and promote their independence.

The ATP nursery and CTP teams assessed the area and the various features of the landscape, proposing a list of varieties of trees and shrubs. The campus is still under construction, so planting will be done over three seasons; this spring trees will be distributed in containers, and additional trees distributed in the fall and next spring.

The Great Light CEF camp near Sevan Lake serves youth and teens from every

region of Armenia, including Artsakh, as well as special effort to include the displaced Artsakh children living throughout Armenia. The camp offers 8 week-long sessions, each session welcomes 45-50 youth and teens.

The camp is underwritten by the Christian Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), allowing all the children to attend without charge.

Children come from different churches, and organizations, as well as those not connected with any church are all welcome. All social groups regardless of financial situation, including children of fallen soldiers, orphans, refugees, and domestic violence survivors participate.

In addition to these two examples, many other institutions and communities will also receive trees this spring. Plus, ATP expects to plant a record-breaking 400,000 trees this spring.

## Yerevan Brandy Company Revives 'Otborny' Blend

YEREVAN — Created back in 1902, the legendary blend Ararat "Otborny" was the first Armenian vintage brandy, which became an opening chapter in the chronicle of triumph of the Armenian brandy-making.

In the year of meaningful anniversaries - the 135th anniversary of brandy-making in Armenia and the 120th anniversary of the first Armenian vintage brandy, Yerevan Brandy Company revives the collection version of the legendary Ararat "Otborny" blend.

The author of the original blend is Mkrtich Musinyants, whose creative curiosity and outstanding academic background reflected the gifts of the generous

Armenian nature along with its unique grape varieties in one single brandy. Soon after its very creation, the blend managed to leave the international jury members of one of the most influential French competition astonished.

Being an alumnus of a prestigious French winemaking school, Musinyants' "Otborny" served as a tribute to his homeland. The blend is a brilliant representation of the notion that the unity of Armenian nature and genuine craftsmanship create a gold benchmark that continues to inspire connoisseurs for generations ahead.

"Otborny" features an intense amber color with copper shine. Rounded and

long-lasting taste plays with notes of citrus, caramel, and toffee. The ending chord of the taste completes with faded bitterness of almonds.

"The rebirth of "Otborny" brandy, first and foremost, is the credential of Yerevan Brandy Company's historical succession. This is our homage for the heritage that we are a part of. This is also our pride for having a unique collection of spirits, which not only gives us an opportunity to recreate historical blends but also to produce collection reserves," says Serge Khachatryan, Chief Operating Officer of Yerevan Brandy Company.

"Being a collection reserve, the recreated blend of "Otborny" emphasizes its

organoleptic harmony more eloquently, since three additional years of post-blend aging perfectly reveals the shades of rare spirits. Working with Ararat Vintage Range is always an incredible experience and a fascinating dialogue with different generations," says Hamlet Antonyan, Head of Production of Yerevan Brandy Company.

"Otborny" will enrich ARARAT Vintage Collection and will continue the stylistic solutions of the range's packaging. The illustrations and main color design of "Otborny" glorify the unique essence of Armenian grape varieties as a symbol of irreplaceable inceptions of the bright stories.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Will Ukraine Crisis Help Turkey Dodge Western Arms Embargoes?

By Fehim Tastekin

ISTANUBUL (AI-Monitor) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems to have returned buoyed from the March 24 NATO summit in Brussels, hoping that the Russian war against Ukraine will encourage Western nations to remove bans on military sales to Turkey. While European countries are likely to be more flexible, US sanctions remain a tough row to hoe.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has revived NATO and relatively eased Erdogan's diplomatic isolation in the Western fold. Erdogan held bilateral meetings with the leaders of France, Britain, Italy, Spain and Estonia at the summit, and pressed for the removal of direct and indirect sanctions that NATO allies have slapped on Turkey's defense industry amid frequent rows in recent years.

Referring to the role of the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 armed drones in bolstering Ukraine's defenses against Russia, Erdogan said, "Given the obvious success of Turkey's defense industry, there is no reasonable justification for the obstructions we face in this field. The lifting of restrictions imposed by some allies will be in our common interest. Covert or direct embargoes should not be even mentioned between allies. I shared our expectations with the leaders."

Erdogan's message is directed at a long list of recipients.

The United States expelled Turkey from the F-35 joint strike fighter program in 2019 over its acquisition of the Russian S-400 air defense systems. Arms sales to Turkey were effectively halted in light of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. The Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, in which Turkey backed Azerbaijan against Armenia, prompted scrutiny of the Bayraktar drones. Turkey's request to upgrade its existing F-16 fleet and buy new F-16s has been snagged by Congress. The United States has refused to approve the sale of MK41 vertical launching systems and rolling airframe missiles, which Turkey planned to use respectively on its locally made ISTIF-class frigates and ADA-class corvettes. A 2018 deal for Turkey's sale of 30 T129 ATAK helicopters to Pakistan has fallen through due to US reluctance to issue export licenses for the US-British-made engine. The sale of the same helicopter to the Philippines was greenlit, however, and Turkey delivered the first two of six helicopters earlier this month.

Canada has slapped restrictions targeting the Bayraktar drones, which, for Erdogan, have become a matter of pride. Citing improper use in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, Canada halted exports of engines and optics technology used in the drones.

The Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden have imposed full arms embargoes on Turkey since 2019 over its military interventions in Syria. France has placed restrictions on an array of defense and aviation sub-systems, and Italy and Britain have barred the sale of certain products. Germany has suspended plans to upgrade Turkey's Leopard-2 tanks and raised bureaucratic hurdles to the sale of other equipment. Turkey's 2019 military incursion into northeastern Syria led also to the suspension of talks with French-Italian manufacturer Eurosam for co-production of the SAMP/T air defense system.

The Ukraine war has put the value of Turkey's role in NATO back into the spotlight, and Erdogan is trying to make the best of it. In the first tangible outcome, Italian Prime

Minister Mario Draghi, who called Erdogan "dictator" last year, announced after talks with the Turkish and French presidents in Brussels that they had agreed to revive a cooperation platform between the three countries. Erdogan expressed hope the trilateral talks would resume after the French elections in April. Asked whether he was referring to the SAMP/T talks, Erdogan responded in the affirmative. And Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Italy and France were thinking "more seriously" now on co-producing the SAMP/T systems in Turkey.

Will the thaw between Turkey and its Western partners last?

The praise heaped on Turkey has raised the prospect of turning a new page, but much depends on Turkish rapport with NATO and the European Union. Ankara's acquisition of the S-400s remains a big stumbling block, with Washington insisting that Ankara should get rid of the systems. In a bid to hit two birds with one stone, Washington has suggested that Turkey send the S-400s to Ukraine. Speaking to reporters on the flight back from Brussels, Erdogan dismissed the idea, saying the S-400 issue was not open to discussion. While Ankara's chances of returning to the F-35 program appear all but lost, Erdogan sounded hopeful on the F-16s. President Joe Biden had promised to "present a positive view to Congress and follow up on the issue," he said.

Still, Erdogan's failure to get a bilateral meeting with Biden at yet another summit, even as Black Sea states have grown all the more important for Washington, casts doubt on overly optimistic conclusions in Ankara that Turkey's value is now better recognized.

Serhat Guvenc, a professor of international relations at Istanbul's Kadir Has University, believes Turkey stands a chance of seeing arms embargoes removed, even if partially. The Biden administration could persuade Congress on the F-16 package, but bans and sanctions are likely to continue unless Ankara meets US expectations on the S-400s, Guvenc told AI-Monitor.

As for the Bayraktar drones, their role in Ukraine has largely effaced the negative impact of their use in Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the academic. "It was the Polish and Ukrainian lobbies that prevented additional sanctions on Turkey over the Bayraktars in Congress," he said, stressing that the climate has profoundly changed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Thus, flexibility on the F-16 issue is possible," Guvenc added.

Canada might review its stance as well. Turkey had sold drones to Ukraine before the invasion and "has since allegedly shipped (more) Bayraktars to Ukraine from the Turkish army's own inventory," Guvenc said. "So I don't expect much Canadian criticism against the supplier of a system that Ukraine has praised so much. Canada has firmly backed Ukraine from the very outset and risks contradicting itself."

The academic underscored also German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's landmark announcement of a special defense fund of 100 billion euros in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Germans "will now view the armament of allies from the same perspective," Guvenc said. The Ukrainian refugee wave to the EU is another important factor. The Germans "now need the Syrian migrants to stay in Turkey more than ever. This would lead them to review their reservations on the tanks," he said. "And if Tur-

key does not deviate from the NATO line and acts in unison with NATO in the Black Sea region, the de facto embargo on parts for (Turkey's) Reis-class submarine might be relaxed as well. Turkey is the only Black Sea country other than Russia that has submarine power," he noted.

During his March 14 visit to Ankara, Scholz underlined the importance of collaboration between NATO members, including Turkey. Asked about Ankara's refusal to join Western sanctions against Russia, he said Turkey deserved acknowledgement for supplying weapons to Ukraine and supporting the country's territorial integrity. As for restrictions on arms exports to Turkey, he said that Germany has a strict policy on defense exports and "has to act within a legally defined framework."

Ankara has put on a brave face against the embargoes, arguing they only reinforce its determination to further develop its defense industry. Yet engine development remains a major handicap of the local industry. Efforts to develop indigenous engines continue, and so does the quest for alternatives.

Turkey was unable to secure a German engine for the Altay, its first indigenous tank, and had to turn to South Korea's Doosan and S&T Dynamics after long delays in the development program.

Baykar, the manufacturer of the Bayraktar drones, has sealed deals with Ukrainian manufacturers to procure engines for its Akinci drone and prospective unmanned combat aircraft known as MIUS. Similarly, Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) plans to procure 14 engines from Ukraine's Motor Sich by 2025 for its ATAK-2 heavy-class combat helicopter project. In November 2021, Turkey reached an agreement on joint engine production with Ukrainian companies Ivchenko-Progress and Motor Sich. Ukrainian assistance has been considered also for Turkey's future fighter jet, the TF-X.

With the Russian siege extending to Kharkiv, the heart of Ukraine's defense industry, Turkey's partnership with Ukraine is clouded by uncertainty. "The invasion dealt a blow on Turkey's plans to procure engines for its drones from Ukraine," Guvenc said. "Yet the Ukrainians could now grow more open to know-how and technology-sharing. Producing the Ukrainian engines under license could resolve the engine issue."

Meanwhile, ambitious progress has been reported in domestic engine development projects, though often accompanied by doubts and controversy. The PD170 turbodiesel engine, developed by Tusas Engine Industries (TEI), is planned to be used in Bakyar's Akinci-C and Bayraktar TB3 series and TAI's Anka and Aksungur drones. At least 60 PD170 engines have been already produced.

There are also plans to use a turboshaft engine developed by TEI and Kale Arge on the TF-X fighter, which is expected to make its first test flight in 2026. The T625 Gokbey light transport helicopter, scheduled for mass production in 2023, is fitted with TEI's TS1400 turboshaft engine.

The Turkish defense industry's exports reached \$3.2 billion last year, up from \$634 million in 2010, while local content in the industry reportedly rose to some 80 percent. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Turkey's arms imports decreased 59 percent in the 2016-2020 period in comparison to the 2011-2015 period. An 81-percent drop in imports from the United States accounted for much of the decline.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Aliyev Thanks Pakistan for Assistance against Artsakh And Armenia

BAKU (news.am) — On March 22, Azerbaijani President thanked Pakistan for its assistance in the aggression against Artsakh and Armenia.

As APA reports, Ilham Aliyev's congratulatory letter to Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan noted that "Azerbaijani people always highly appreciate Pakistan's principled position, its political and moral support to the just cause of our country during the Patriotic War".

Aliyev also invited Pakistani companies in the construction work in the Armenian territories.

## 'Light Drops' Wins Best Drama at Alternative Film Festival in Toronto

TORONTO (Panorama) — The Armenian film "Light Drops" (Drops of Light) by filmmaker Arman Chilingaryan received the award for Best Drama at the Alternative Film Festival in Toronto, Canada.

The festival winners were revealed on March 27.

"Light Drops" is a drama set in the 1990s in Armenia.

The movie was produced with the financial support of the National Cinema Center of Armenia. It marks the last role for famous actor Vigen Stepanyan (1952-2021). Scriptwriters were Arman Chilingaryan, Garik Mashkaryan.

## Armenia Seeks to Bolster Ties with Saudi Arabia in High-Tech Sector

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia seeks to learn from Saudi Arabia's ongoing digital transformation experience and bolster ties with the Kingdom in the high-tech sector, the Armenian deputy minister of industry said in an interview with Arab News on Monday, March 28.

Talking on the sidelines of the Global Entrepreneurship Congress in Riyadh, Robert Khachatryan said his country was also undergoing digital transformation, and "it will be interesting to" learn more from the Saudi experience.

He also said Armenia was working to improve the startup ecosystem using different tools such as tax incentives. "We are now in the process of establishing a state venture fund to support small and medium enterprises in the country," the top official said.

Highlighting the importance of his country's high-tech sector, Khachatryan said Armenia was known for its electronic goods during the Soviet era.

The deputy minister said Armenia seeks to promote its high-tech sector in the region and boost cooperation with Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region in this regard.

"I think that we need to start a dialogue and strengthen our relations, it can be (done) by mutual visits," Khachatryan said.





## INTERNATIONAL

# AMAA Reaches out to Ukrainian Armenian Refugees

PARAMUS, N.J. — Another Armenian Diaspora community is in peril. This time it is the long-standing Armenian community of Ukraine. The war in Ukraine has resulted in a humanitarian disaster and urgent aid is needed to help Armenian victims of this war. Many individuals and families from Ukraine have sought refuge in safe havens established on the borders of neighboring countries, such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), after actively assessing the situation through its wide network within the Armenian Evangelical Fellowship of Europe and mission partners in Bulgaria, is reaching out to the Armenian refugees who have fled Ukraine and have sought safe havens in Bulgaria. The Armenian Evangelical Churches of Bulgaria, headed by Rev. Bedros Altunian and Pastor Nerses Ketikian, the pastors of the Varna Church, are working actively on a daily basis to provide the much needed critical assistance and humanitarian support to the displaced people as quickly as possible. Most of the refugees in Bulgaria are settled in a boarding house in Varna where they are provided with food, medical assistance and other needs. Special arrangements and assistance is offered to those moving to Armenia and settling in the Homeland. Pastor Nerses Ketikian is also in touch with the Armenian Embassies and Consulates in the region, spiritual leaders of the Mother Church in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, as



A refugee receives a medical visit through the AMAA.

well as with the Holy See of Echmiadzin to coordinate the relief efforts and help those refugees who desire to move to Armenia.

Ukrainian Armenian refugees in Bulgaria and in nearby countries may contact Pastor Nerses Ketikian at [nketikian@gmail.com](mailto:nketikian@gmail.com).

To support AMAA's efforts providing humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian Armenian refugees, you may send your donations to the AMAA, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652 or donate online at [www.amaa.org](http://www.amaa.org)



A child refugee receives medical treatment from a doctor arranged by the AMAA.

## Wave of Expulsions Shakes Turkey's Tiny Protestant Community

By Sibel Hurtas

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) — Nearly 200 foreign Protestant clergy and their families, including many Americans, have been forced to leave Turkey since a severe crisis between Ankara and Washington over the imprisonment of a US pastor in 2018. Members of Turkey's tiny Protestant community describe a pattern of expulsions, based on secret reports by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), with no explanation why the deported Protestants constitute a security risk for the country.

Thirty-five foreign Protestants were deported in 2019, 20 more in 2020 and another 13 in 2021, according to a report by the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey, released last week. The missionaries left the country with their spouses and children, which brings the number to 185.

Soner Tufan, the spokesman of the association, told Al-Monitor that 28 Americans were among those expelled. Eight were nationals of the United Kingdom, another eight of South Korea, five of Latin American countries and the rest of other nations.

In August 2018, then US President Donald Trump slapped sanctions on Ankara over its refusal to free pastor Andrew Brunson, a native of North Carolina, who had served a small Protestant congregation in the western Turkish city of Izmir for more than two decades. The move sent the Turkish lira into a tailspin, and Brunson was finally released in October 2018 after two years behind bars on dubious terrorism charges, including links to the perpetrators of the failed coup in July 2016. His release has been followed by what appears to be a systematic drive to purge foreign Protestant missionaries in Turkey.

Most of the expulsions have been based on MIT reports under a procedure called Code N82 that bars foreigners from enter-

ing Turkey without prior permission. The designation may not constitute an outright ban, but "in practice, all persons who became subject to this procedure had their visa applications rejected afterward," according to the report of the association. Another label, called Code G87, designates foreigners "a threat in terms of general security." The designations have been used to bar Protestant missionaries from entering Turkey or deny residence permits to those already in the country and eventually deport them.

In lawsuits appealing such moves, the authorities defend their decisions by citing MIT reports. But no concrete reasons are offered as to why the designated individuals are considered dangerous, with the MIT using the shield of secrecy, members of the Protestant community and their lawyers say.

US citizen Ken Wiest, who had lived in Turkey for 33 years, has launched a legal battle against his abrupt banishment from the country, but with little success so far. Wiest, his American wife and three children were living in Ankara when they decided to visit relatives in the United States in June 2019, as they did every year. Shortly before their plane was to take off, he was informed that he had an N82 designation and would not be allowed to enter Turkey again. "My whole life changed that day at the airport. ... I couldn't even say goodbye to my friends," Wiest told Al-Monitor from Michigan, speaking in Turkish.

Wiest's wife was able to return to Turkey to collect some of the family's belongings and sell others. "We started a new life from scratch here," he said. "I feel a big pain, a very deep sadness and a bit of anger," he added, but not without noting that his faith led him to accept his ordeal as the will of God.

A Turkish pastor who wished to remain anonymous is involved in a similar legal

battle for his foreign wife, who was denied a residence permit in 2019 on the basis of an N82 designation. After the couple lodged the residence permit request, the pastor found himself questioned by the authorities about his conversion to Christianity. "This went even beyond questioning and turned to judging, and eventually the residence permit request was rejected," he told Al-Monitor.

Soon after the rejection, the pastor's wife received a notice giving her 10 days to leave Turkey. The couple refused to separate and ignored the notice. They have continued to live in Turkey, keeping a low profile. "Many people have left," the pastor said. "We have nowhere to go."

In both cases, the local courts rejected the appeals of the plaintiffs on the grounds of the MIT reports, even though they were not presented in court. Wiest has taken his case to the European Court of Human Rights, while the pastor's wife is awaiting the judgment of Turkey's Constitutional Court, her last legal recourse in the country.

"We are in no way a threat to Turkey's security," the pastor said. "We are subjected to this treatment just because we are Christians. We argued at the Constitutional Court that this is a violation of freedom of religion."

Orhan Kemal Cengiz, the attorney of both Wiest and the pastor's wife, told Al-Monitor, "We have failed to obtain results through domestic legal recourses. The state's defense has been classic — the use of sovereignty powers. The most critical point here is that the MIT reports were not put in the court files." Cengiz has lost hope of a solution domestically. "The solution will be at the European Court of Human Rights," he said.

The deportations have put the entire Protestant community under pressure and emotional stress. "Many of those [foreign]

people have lived in our country for many years, together with their families. They have no criminal records or have not faced any investigation or conviction," Tufan said. "When a family member is barred from entering the country without prior permission, this [affects] the unity of the family and all family members face a big chaos," he added.

Another important negative impact is on the training of Protestant clergy. "Turkey's existing laws have not allowed for training Christian clergy or opening schools for the religious education of community members, even though the right to train clergy is a linchpin of the freedom of faith," Tufan said.

The Protestant community, he explained, has relied heavily on master-apprentice relationships, holding seminars at home, sending students to training abroad and getting help from foreign clergy. "Due to the deportations, many congregations have been left in a very difficult situation. The need for clergy is increasing," he added.

Are the expulsions Turkey's revenge for the Brunson affair? It is hard to say. Non-Muslim minorities have traditionally been viewed with suspicion in Turkey. Unlike Jews and Orthodox Greeks and Armenians, Protestants were not accorded formal minority status under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty that laid the foundations of modern Turkey. The Protestant community has long faced pressure, with missionaries often associated with espionage, though Turkish law does not ban proselytizing. That the pressure has now escalated to outright expulsions is an alarming sign with respect to the religious freedoms of non-Muslims in the country.

(Original source: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/wave-expulsions-shakes-turkeys-tiny-protestant-community#ixzz7OrCIF8iB>)





# Community News

## Armenian National Institute Expands Online Collection

WASHINGTON — The Armenian National Institute (ANI) has completed a massive expansion of its widely-consulted website containing extensive information on the Armenian Genocide. The 2019 resolutions adopted by the House and Senate expressly “encourage education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, including the United States role in the humanitarian relief effort, and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity.” President Joe Biden’s April 24, 2021, remembrance day statement called for a “world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security.”

The Affirmation section of the ANI website, that contains a collection of official documents pertaining to the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, was thoroughly updated. The Affirmation records are now organized in 14 distinct categories covering resolutions, laws, and declarations by federal level governments, U.S. presidential statements, statements by heads of states, international organizations, religious organizations, official reports, public petitions, and other relevant documents.

Eighty-six new records were added to the Affirmation page, especially updating the sections on ‘Resolutions, Laws, and Declarations,’ ‘State and Provincial Governments,’ and ‘Municipal Governments.’ With strong community support promoting instruction in human rights and genocide prevention, state educational curricula are now mandated in some 10 states across the United States, including Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, Connecticut, Michigan, Rhode Island, Illinois, California, New York, and New Jersey. The relevant pieces of legislation are all accessible under ‘Curriculum Mandates.’ As for the 31 countries that formally acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, they include: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Vatican City, Venezuela, United States, and Uruguay.

In all, the ANI website presently holds 795 affirmation records from around the world. The ANI collection of affirmation records was developed with the collaborative support of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) in Yerevan. A new co-operation agreement reached between AGMI and ANI allowed for extensive research in the AGMI holdings in order to reverify and update the records posted on the ANI website. The agreement was signed in Yerevan by AGMI Director Dr. Harutyun Marutyan and ANI Chairman Van Z. Krikorian on August 5, 2021. AGMI in Armenia see ANI, page 9



Glendale City Councilmember Ardashes Kassakhian

## Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro LA Presents Tekeyan Poetry Book, Marks 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Organization

ALTADENA, Calif. — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Tekeyan Cultural Association with a book presentation and cultural event celebrating the writings of the eponymous poet Vahan Tekeyan on Friday, March 11.

Master of ceremonies Mihran Toumajan introduced the special guests in attendance including Glendale City Councilmember Ardashes Kassakhian, whose grandfather was friends with Tekeyan in Jerusalem; Edmond Y. Azadian, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada; and Aram Arkun, Executive Director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and managing editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.



Mihran Toumajan

gave an overview of the life and achievement of Vahan Tekeyan.

“Tekeyan was a significant figure in Armenian literature having experienced the significant events in the life of his people,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian. “He was uniquely positioned to be an eyewitness and participant in the major events of his time, as he lived in Constantinople, traveled to Armenia, lived in Europe, and finally settled in Cairo.”

Der Mugrdechian then presented the book *Vahan Tekeyan: Selected Poems*, which was published as part of the Armenian Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno. Translated by John Papisian and Gerald Papisian and co-edited by Edmond Y. Azadian and Gerald Papisian, *Vahan Tekeyan: Selected Poems* includes twenty-three of Tekeyan’s poems, in Armenian and English. The poems in the book are organized by themes such as “Love,” “Songs of Armenia,” and “Universal.”

see TCA, page 11

## Turkish-Armenian Attorneys Will Describe Restitution Of Minority Property in Turkey

BOSTON — The confiscation of assets belonging to minority communities in Turkey over the past century has long been the subject of countless claims — most of them unsuccessful. However, recent developments in international human rights legislation have facilitated the ability of non-Muslim institutions disposed of property at the end of the Ottoman Empire to prosecute their claims.

Turkish-Armenian counsel Omer Kantik of Istanbul, along with his attorney daughters Destina Kantik and Arda Kantik, is currently involved in over 100 such cases involving the restitution of minority property in Turkey. Some properties have already been recovered.

Kantik, accompanied by his daughters, will share their experiences in representing various Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant foundations in prosecuting their claims at a program on Sunday, April 3, at 1:30 p.m., at the St. James Armenian Church Hall in Watertown.

The Kantiks will explain the process whereby Turkey’s status as a signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights has led to changes in Turkish law and consequently to the strategic use of litigation to pursue property claims by minorities.

Discussed during the program will be the background to these property claims in the socially, legally, and religiously diverse Ottoman Empire and Turkey, the little-known story of the processes involved in securing internal legal reform in Turkey, the ways in which the claims process has affected Armenian, Greek, Chaldean, and other communities, and the consonance of the process with basic principles of Islamic law.

Destina Kantik, a 2020 graduate of Harvard Law School with degrees also from Robert College and Istanbul University Law Faculty *summa cum laude*, has been instrumental in the planning of the program has been; she works on minority issues and matters of commercial law and arbitration. Her sister Arda Kantik, a graduate of Lycée du Saint-Joseph and Bilgi University Law Faculty, joined the law firm in 2020 and works on minority issues.

The Kantiks are in Boston to present a program at Harvard Law School describing their work in prosecuting minority claims in Turkey at a session entitled “The European Court of Human rights and Turkey: A New Era for Minorities.” They are also scheduled to make a presentation on “Restitution of Property in Turkey after 100 Years” at St Leon Church in Fair Lawn NJ and on Zoom on April 7 at 7:45 p.m.

The Boston program at St. James Church is sponsored by the Society of Istanbul Armenians-Boston with the cooperation of several other Armenian-American organizations.



## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Bishop Findikyan Presents Deacon Krikorian With St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — By the encyclical and blessing of His Holiness Karekin II Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, on Sunday, March 20, 2022, Dn. Gregory Krikorian received the St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal for his exemplary dedication and service to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Diocesan Primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, accompanied by Diocesan Vicar, Hayr Simeon Odabashian visited Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston to present Deacon Gregory Krikorian with this most honorable medal.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan arrived on Friday and began his visit by sharing a meal with Holy Trinity's deacons, altar servers, pastor Father Vasken Kouzouian, and other church leaders. On Saturday morning the First Wednesdays Bible study group met for a "Breakfast with the Bishop," enjoying an informal and interactive discussion and fellowship. Saturday evening began with an Evening Worship Service, followed by a small reception of over sixty parishioners to formally begin a weekend



Bishop Daniel Findikyan presents Deacon Gregory Krikorian with the medal as Rev. Vasken Kouzouian looks on.

high honor to Dn. Gregory was read by the Diocesan Vicar. Dn. Gregory Krikorian was then presented the St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal. In 1983, Gregory was ordained by Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, then Primate, to the rank of deacon. Since that day, Krikorian has served with reverence and devotion, mindful of those who taught him along the way, and instilling a passion and love into the young adults who join him in serving at Holy Trinity's altar.

Following church services, a reception was held in Krikorian's honor. Past recipients of pontifical medals from the Holy Trinity parish were represented by their descendants holding medals and Encyclicals awarded to their parents or grandparents over the years. Those remembered were: Ann Hintlian, Gregory Archie Kolligian, John Soursourian, Daniel Dorian, Sr., Dr. Michael Kolligian, George Kevearian, former Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and George Hagopian. It was further a thrilling moment to witness Nevart Talanian, George Haroutunian, and Kevork and Jacqueline Atinjian enter the reception as past recipients wearing their individual pontifical medals. "Seeing firsthand the sea of Encyclicals and medals enter the reception was particularly impressive for us all, as it bore witness to the leadership the parishioners of this community have always provided to the diocese at large, and locally to our home parish. It was a powerful moment to see all former recipients, and the descendants of former recipients, usher in Dn. Gregory and the honored guests into the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall," commented Fr. Vasken. "That moment created a visual tapestry of past and present parish leadership in the minds of all."



Bishop Daniel Findikyan and the members of Holy Trinity Armenian Church

of celebrating Holy Trinity's senior deacon. The reception was a wonderful opportunity to come together, allowing parish representatives from the Parish Council, Diocesan Delegates, Sunday School and Armenian School staff, Choir, the Youth Leadership Team, ACYOA Seniors, and Altar Servers to interact and welcome Bishop Daniel to the parish.

On Sunday, more than 250 people filled the Holy Trinity sanctuary to witness the very special medal presentation. At the conclusion of services celebrated by Fr. Vasken, and presided over by His Eminence, the Primate, who preached a Lenten themed sermon on the Parable of the Steward, the Pontifical Encyclical awarding this

## 20-Year-Old Pasadena UCLA Student Killed in Horrific Freeway Crash

PASADENA, Calif. (PasadenaNow.com) — A 20-year-old Pasadena woman died in a freeway collision about 2 a.m. Thursday, March 24 on the 101 eastbound transition to the southbound 101 Freeway near Tujunga Avenue in North Hollywood. She was identified as Sera Aintablian by the L.A. County coroner's office.

Aintablian was a UCLA student who had graduated from the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian High School in Pasadena.

California Highway Patrol said it received a report of a solo-vehicle crash in which the car was cut in half and the front half of the car was then struck by a second vehicle. Aintablian was pronounced dead at

the scene.

The condition of the driver of the second car was not known.

Media reports indicated Aintablian was driving on the 101 Freeway when she may have realized she needed to merge into the eastbound lanes to continue onto the 134 Freeway. She may have been attempting to cross lanes when she lost control of her vehicle and smashed into the center divider near the Tujunga Avenue exit, according to reports attributed to CHP detectives.

According to KCBS-TV, Aintablian was a gifted only child who earned many accolades. She was on spring break and was returning home from visiting a friend in the San Fernando Valley. She was reportedly valedictorian of her high school class and was studying microbiology at UCLA. She hoped to go to medical school.

In a scholarship video, Aintablian said



Sera Aintablian, 20, of Pasadena

she wanted to inspire Armenian-American students to pursue their dreams.

Aintablian had selected UCLA for college after being accepted by UCI, UCSB, UC Davis and being waitlisted at UC Berkeley.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Marguerite Barankitse to Headline ANC Event Dedicated to Genocide Education

WATERTOWN — The Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts is hosting a commemorative event, entitled “Genocide Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Empowering the Next Generation to Lead from Boston to Burundi.” The event will be held at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown), on Sunday, April 10 at 3 p.m. The event is open and accessible to the public.

As we approach the 107<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> anniversaries of the Armenian Genocide and Yom HaShoah, respectively, it is incumbent upon us to educate, empower and inspire the next generation to work towards the eradication of hate crimes. Marguerite Barankitse, the founder of the Maison Shalom and a 2016 Laureate of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, will deliver the keynote address, entitled *We are the Builders of*

*Hope*. Barankitse is a Human Rights activist, educator and eye witness to atrocities during the Burundian Civil War (1993-2005), the ongoing Burundi crisis, and the Rwandan Genocide.

A panel discussion on the S 2557 bill, *An Act Concerning Genocide Education*, will follow the keynote address. The panel will consist of Eric Cohen, Act for Sudan & Investors Against Genocide; Lerna Ekmekcioglu, PhD, Department of History, MIT; Dikran Khaligian, PhD, Armenian National Committee of America; and Herman Putrutan, Armenian Assembly of America. Together, they will discuss the challenges associated with the passing of the bill and provide resources to teachers to help integrate human rights into their curricula and educate our youth on the need for their continued vigilance.



Marguerite Barankitse

## ANCA-WR Education Committee to Honor 11 Educators and Supporters During a Virtual Awards Ceremony

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region's (ANCA-WR) Education Committee announced that it will be recognizing eleven educators and champions from various public schools and universities who have uniquely provided instruction, support, and education about the Armenian Genocide on Saturday April 9, at 11 a.m. during a virtual awards ceremony, which will be streamed on its Website and Facebook page.

“The Armenian Genocide Education Awards Ceremony continuously reminds us of the important value that history has in our everyday lives,” remarked Taline Arsenian, Chair of the Virtual Awards Ceremony Subcommittee. “It allows for the opportunity to acknowledge educators who have gone beyond the minimum requirements to provide opportunities for students to recognize the impacts of intolerance, hate, and violence and we truly appreciate these outstanding nominations,” she continued.

This year, the committee received countless nominations for educators from around the world, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to teach about the Armenian Genocide in the context of crimes against humanity within their classrooms and selected the following educators:

Armenian Genocide Education Legacy Award: Dr. Alfred De Zayas, Professor of International Law and History, Geneva School of Diplomacy, Switzerland

Amb. Henry Morgenthau Sr. Courage Award: Kelly Gonez, School Board President, Los Angeles Unified School District

*Special Recognition:* Office of Board President Kelly Gonez, Los Angeles Unified School District; Esmeralda Marcial, Director of Community Engagement; Charity Castro, Advocacy and Policy Deputy and Michael Menjivar, Deputy Director of Community Engagement.

Richard G. Hovannisian Armenian Genocide Higher Education Award: Dr. Matthew Jendian, Professor, Fresno State University

Armenian Genocide Education Award: Michael Cunningham, Del Valle High School, Del Valle Independent School District, Texas; Dr. David Harms, Penta Career Center, Perrysburg, Ohio

Zaruhy “Sara” Chitjian Armenian Heritage Award: Armineh Alexan, Jefferson Elementary School, Glendale Unified School District; Patrick Davarhanian, Clark Magnet High School, Glendale Unified School District and Shake Jacqueline Balian, John Burroughs High School, Burbank Unified School District

## Armenian National Institute Expands Online Collection

ANI, from page 7

and ANI in the United States have become two important depositories of official affirmation records, AGMI holding an international collection, and ANI holding a considerable American collection of original documents. Robert Arzoumanian, who joined ANI as assistant to the director, conducted the research at AGMI where additional records were identified that have been mounted on the ANI website for easy access by the public. Arzoumanian, a Brown University graduate, interned at ANI and in Congressman Frank Pallone's office in 2016 and returned the following year as the Armenian Assembly's summer intern program coordinator. He also has experience working with Armenia-based media. Arzoumanian undertook the challenge of standardizing the presentation of the full scope of international records identified by ANI in order to facilitate their usage by an international audience. Since its founding in 1997, the Armenian National Institute has been working closely with AGMI, and over the years has supported several conferences and joint projects. Continuing this long-standing cooperation with AGMI, ANI sent a video message on April 16, 2021, welcoming the release by the museum of the volumes prepared by Ara Ketibian and Father Vahan Ohanian titled, “Armenian Genocide: Prelude and Aftermath as Reported in the U.S. Press, The Washington Post (1890-1922),”

to which ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian contributed an introduction. Earlier in 2021, AGMI also released the fourth edition of Dr. Adalian's essay, “Remembering and Understanding the Armenian Genocide,” which AGMI originally issued in 1995. In 2021, ANI also continued to expand its online presence by launching the Arabic version of the popular ANI website. The announcement was issued in Arabic as well. Soon after its launch on April 17, the site was being consulted in countries ranging from Lebanon to United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Qatar, Oman and Morocco. The Arabic-language site represents the third translated edition of the ANI website. The Spanish-language edition appeared in 2020 and the Turkish version in 2017. In light of U.S. President Biden's affirmation and general media coverage, interest remains high on the subject of the Armenian Genocide. Following the disruptions associated with the shutdown precipitated by the pandemic, with the reopening of educational institutions, a large number of visitors are returning to the ANI website, which registered 4 million hits in 2021. The process of international recognition remains an ongoing concern for Armenian communities around the world. Efforts are presently under way in England, Israel, and Australia. In 2021, Latvia formally adopted recognition on May 6. Dr. Adalian, along with Dr. Ronald Suny and Armenia's

Ambassador to the Baltic states Tigran Mkrtchyan, was invited on April 20, to testify in front of the Foreign Affairs Committee

of the Latvian Parliament that was considering the resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

## Richard Melik Simonian Charitable Trust Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee for the Richard M. Simonian Scholarship is pleased to announce the establishment of this scholarship, open to students of Armenian descent living in or attending school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Awards may be used towards college, graduate school, or higher educational programs.

Application deadline is April 15, 2022. Awards will be determined on or about May 23, 2022.

Requests for applications may be made to Christopher Mitchell at (508) 792-2800 or Cmtchell@chwmlaw.com.





COMMUNITY NEWS

**1915**

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## COMMUNITY NEWS



Artem Oganessian, right, vs. Stephen Danyo (photo Vincent Ethier)

## Junior Middleweight Artem Oganessian Stops Stephen Danyo in Five

By Anson Wainwright

MONTREAL(ringtv.com) — Rising junior middleweight Artem Oganessian got off the canvas to score a fifth round stoppage over Stephen Danyo on March 26 to claim the vacant North American Boxing Federation (NABF) title at Montreal Casino, Montreal.

At the very beginning of the fight, Danyo surprised Oganessian, dropping him with a two-punch combination. Oganessian appeared more embarrassed than hurt and rebounded well.

Originally from Moscow, Russia, Oganessian, who moved to Canada two months ago, hurt Danyo twice in the second round but knew he couldn't jump on his opponent and was careful about picking his shots.

The assault continued in Round 3. A combination sent Danyo stumbling and he landed on the ropes, his head slipping under the top rope. Referee Alain Villeneuve issued a count.

Oganessian continued to dominate his Dutch opponent, hurting him. Danyo appeared to be breaking down but was covering up well.

In the fifth round, Danyo lost his footing and fell to the canvas. He got back to his feet but didn't look happy, as the ringside doctor called a halt to the action at 0:30.

Oganessian (13-0, 11 knockouts) becomes the first person to stop Danyo (20-5-3, 7 KOs) and is a fighter to watch.

## TCA Metro LA Presents Tekeyan Poetry Book, Marks 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

TCA, from page 7

Nora Ipekian Azadian, the late wife of Edmond Azadian, and whose grandfather, Mihran Damadian, was a close friend of Tekeyan, added to the richness of this vol-



Barlow Der Mugerdechian

ume with her piece "Vahan Tekeyan as I Remember Him." Alexis Halejian, grandniece of the late *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* columnist Armine Dikijian, read excerpts from Ipekian Azadian's piece.



Alexis Halejian



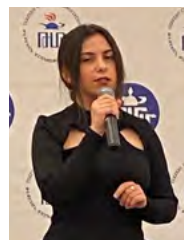
Edmond Azadian

Edmond Azadian, speaking in Armenian, gave an overview of his involvement in the publication of the bilingual anthology. Azadian's comments focused on the significant contribution that Tekeyan made to Armenian and world poetry.

The cultural part of the program included a recitation of the poem "Poshee - Azk" [Nation into Dust] from the volume by Alique Artinian, a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade student from the Armenian Mes-

robian School; a recitation of Tekeyan's "Yegeghetzeen Haygagan" [The Armenian Church] by TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Vice Chair Khachig Nahabedian; and a recitation of the poem "Papak" [Yearning] by Alique Bardakian, a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade student at the Hovsepien Armenian School.

Very Rev. Fr. Dajad Yardemian, representing the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, gave concluding remarks and a benediction. All of the special guests were invited to bless the publication *Vahan Tekeyan: Selected Poems* by pouring wine on the volume.



Alique Artinian



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Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter

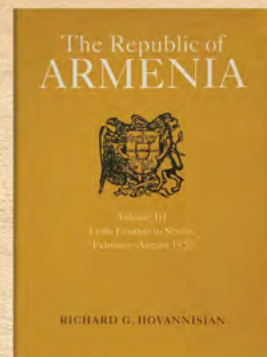
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Young Architect Details Goal to Revive Armenian Stonemasonry

MASONRY, from page 1

Born and raised in Sisian, Armenia, much of her research utilized the local 6<sup>th</sup>-7th century St. Hovhannes Church (also known as St. Gregory, Sisavank, and other local names) as an exemplar of the craft of stonemasons.

## Traditional Craftsmanship In Armenia

To begin with, Filiposyan distinguished the different types of stonemasons active in Armenia today. Decorative stone carving is done by craftsmen known as *kardash* (stonecarver), who create *khachkars* (cross stones) as well as decorative elements of architecture. *Khachkars* and similar works of stone art are still in high demand today, and thankfully, this centuries old artisan-ship is intact in Armenia. Modern buildings are constructed by those known as *shinarar* (builder), who typically utilize concrete and other modern techniques. The third type of mason is the one which is disappearing. These are the *badshar* (one who lays out walls), the stone masons who constructed the walls and domes of ancient Armenian churches; not the architects who designed the buildings necessarily, nor the stone carvers who added decorative elements, but the masons who laid out the physical building.

Filiposyan noted that most studies of medieval Armenian architecture have focused on typology (essentially, building design/appearance/floorplan) and the overall design of the structures. The actual construction of the walls, floors, arches, etc., have been ignored. How were the stones laid out, in what manner and what were the techniques used during the actual construction process? She suggests these issues were not sufficiently studied in the past and due to the reduced demand for masons to construct buildings in a medieval style, the number of masons trained in this process has dwindled to a handful; those remaining apparently are only called upon to use these skills in order to repair damage on medie-

val buildings.

The technique known as *midis* has been passed down to current Armenian masons from the 4th century. The technique consists of creating a double wall of dressed stone (a stone that has been worked to a desired shape; the faces to be exposed are smooth, usually ready for installation) (i.e. *ashlar* in Armenian) blocks. In between the two layers of the wall, a filling of rubble and lime mortar is poured which hardens (rubble wall masonry).

By contrast, modern construction projects in Armenia are predominantly based on concrete walls with thin stone tiles “clad” on top of them in order to preserve the aesthetic appearance of traditional Armenian architecture. But the difference between *midis* and modern concrete building is more than just a romantic or nostalgic hearkening to the past, as Filiposyan noted. The *midis* technique actually allowed for and was the cause of certain major developments in Armenian architecture from a stylistic standpoint; for example, since the interior of a wall and the exterior of a wall are built from separate layers of stone, they often have different shapes. This encouraged such developments as domes which are cone-shaped on the outside and half-spherical on the inside; design elements which have been attempted in modern church buildings in Armenia and the Diaspora despite not using the ancient techniques. Filiposyan mentions that this flexibility allowed the masons to “play with” the geometry of the buildings.

The developments in stonework also made medieval Armenian culture unique; the neighboring Byzantine Empire, one of the most developed cultures at the time and a major influence on Armenia, had mostly abandoned stone masonry buildings at the time in favor of brick; while Armenians continued to develop techniques of stone work. Developments in stone masonry which were later associated with France had similar parallels centuries earlier in Armenia.

## Last of Their Kind

Filiposyan has struck up a working relationship with remaining masons, one in particular, *varpet* (master) Andranik. She shared the conversations she has had with Andranik, who has more than 30 years of experience primarily in repairing damage to medieval churches.

Andranik shared a sentiment recognizable to those familiar with the “Arts and Crafts” movement in Western art and architecture from the early 20th century. That is, modern construction is boring for the builders. Doing the type of “cladding” work common in contemporary Armenia, where concrete is covered with a veneer of stone tiles, is “like eating borscht every day,” according to Andranik. The old style of stone masonry presents new challenges at every turn, as different approaches

But without any real demand for the services of the traditional *badshar* masons, how can their skills realistically be carried into the future, especially considering that much of their knowledge is contextual to specific situation in a building project?

## Old Techniques for a New Age

Filiposyan has developed a possible answer to this question; she wants to see the skills of the masons transferred to the domestic realm. Using her grandmother’s house in Sisian as a model, she has planned out various ways in which traditional stone masonry could be utilized on a miniature scale to build private homed or public and semi-public buildings.

The design elements of medieval churches, in particular the “squinch,” a straight or arched structure across an interior angle of a square tower to carry a superstructure such as a dome, is utilized heavily by Filiposyan in her schematics. Interestingly, she chose to make some of the more complex architectural elements more visible to the person living in the hypothetical house, to keep the skill of the masons visible and understandable to the user.

Outbuildings were also designed

by Filiposyan with medieval elements, however, they are made to serve some kind of purpose so that the architectural style doesn’t turn into mere aesthetics or “nostalgia” as Filiposyan puts it (perhaps another word would be “romanticism”). A sort of shelter designed in a medieval style overhanging the irrigation canal in the backyard serves also as a kind of porch or spot to sit in the shade while utilizing the water and the nearby raspberry bushes.

A major issue with using stone masonry to build homes is temperature, especially in a place with severe climate changes like Armenia, with cold winters and hot summers. In this case, Filiposyan added modern thermal science to traditional techniques and suggested that aerated stone pieces (stone with pockets of air in them) could replace the traditional mortar in the center of the walls, in order to provide a better insulation system.

The lecture, presented by Masis Parunyan of the Greater Boston TCA, ended with a lengthy question-and-answer moderated by Touloukian. Touloukian’s architectural expertise helped him to reframe and expand on questions posed by attendees, which greatly increased the exploration of Filiposyan’s fascinating research and ideas.

The lecture can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqatleCR07>.



Filiposyan’s rendering of a projected domestic outbuilding (shelter over a backyard irrigation canal) that could be constructed with traditional stonemasonry

are necessitated for different parts of the building, and masons find the solutions due to their years of experience, which keeps the brain active. Despite the Communist regime that ruled the USSR, a very “capitalist”, money-and-efficiency driven mentality for building projects set in during the Soviet era. The old ways were not efficient, so they were discarded. But like factory work, modern stonemasonry is often repetitive and does not take the ingenuity and inventiveness which characterized the old.

Filiposyan argues that the experience and hand-on knowledge possessed by Andranik and the handful of other masons, is a valuable resource that cannot be reproduced by writing books about it. Instead, the knowledge is “embodied,” that is, is it part and parcel of Andranik’s life and who he is. This type of knowledge can really only be passed down from master to student and in the context of real-life scenarios where various issues arise that have to be solved by the masons. To lose this knowledge, says Filiposyan, would be to lose something that cannot be replaced by architects trained merely from books. (One is reminded of so many other losses from oral transmitted culture that the Armenian people experienced due to Genocide, Sovietization and Modernization; for example in the realms of folklore and folk music.)

## Donation

Odette N. Bannayan has donated \$500 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator in memory of her late husband, Dr. George Bannayan.

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# Arts & Culture

## Pianist Kariné Poghosyan Makes History with 100 Free Weekly Mini-Concerts since Pandemic

NEW YORK — “It is 7:50 p.m. on a Friday night in the small New York City apartment of the Armenian-American concert pianist Kariné Poghosyan. The artist is about to play her 99th Facebook Live Mini Concert since Friday, March 20, 2020! The repertoire this week is Liszt’s *Rhapsody Espagnole*. The routine is like clockwork by now, since for 98 Fridays previously, at about this time, she prepares her tripod and her old iPhone X, all the while putting on the special outfit of that week, doing her make-up, typing up the description box that will go on Facebook, and about 5 other little things.

And then, at 8 p.m. (or just a bit after) she sits at her old 1925 Boston Chickering, presses the “Start Live Video” on her phone, and it’s Showtime! One by one, her loyal followers start tuning in from all over the world, typing up warm hellos and heart emojis in the comments. She greets them warmly, spends about 3-4 minutes sharing fascinating insights on the program of the day, and then starts the performance. And just like for that brief period of 20-25 minutes, her listeners are transferred far away from the stressful news and daily challenges, coming together with fellow music-lovers they’ve never even met, to be inspired and reenergized! Then before you know it, it comes to a sweet end, the artist waves a few warm hellos and signs off till next week.

Except, on March 25, she hit the mark of 100 concerts and she has decided to retire the series.



Pianist Kariné Poghosyan

Her series has even been singled out by broadcaster Katie Couric. They were also featured in Pianist magazine.

Poghosyan understandably has bittersweet feelings about this chapter ending. Yet, she is also grateful for what performing these series brought into her life - the gift of connecting and experiencing glorious music together with so many people from all over the world. Their comments about the impact and positive change of these series on their lives proved how, as Beethoven once had said, “music can change the world.”

To learn more about her and see her perform, visit [www.karinepoghosyan.com](http://www.karinepoghosyan.com), [www.youtube.com/luckystarpiano](https://www.youtube.com/luckystarpiano) or [www.facebook.com/KarinePoghosyanPianist](https://www.facebook.com/KarinePoghosyanPianist)

- Dale Kolarek



One of the dresses produced through the Antonia Arslan Armenian-Italian Hamalir vocational school in Stepanakert, Artsakh Republic

## Artsakh and Italian Masters’ Clothing Line Collaboration Goes on Auction

By Vic Gerami

GLENDALÉ — Building on their successful first fashion show in Stepanakert in December 2021, the Antonia Arslan Armenian-Italian Hamalir [“Complex”] vocational school in Artsakh, an initiative of the Christians In Need Foundation (CINF), launched an online auction in early March to raise funds for future programs.

The Antonia Arslan Armenian-Italian Hamalir was established in the summer of 2021 to help the Artsakh population strengthen and rebuild after the 2020 attack by Azerbaijan and Turkey. The school offers a variety of courses, programs, and educational opportunities. Last fall, two Italian master-tailors worked closely with their Artsakhtsi students in hands-on workshops. The result was a fall line and a fashion show.

The school has a very ambitious plan that has started with a bang. Among other criteria, they plan to replicate the northern Italian micro-industrial economic system in Artsakh, establish mutually beneficial professional relations between Italian micro-industries and Chambers of Commerce and Artsakh, and bolster the economic infrastructure of the Republic.

### About Christians In Need Foundation (CINF)

The Christians In Need Foundation (CINF) is a non-profit organization serving Christian communities throughout the Middle and Near East since its founding in 2014 by Siobhan Nash-Marshall and Rita Mahdessian in Glendale. Its mission is to preserve ancient Christian traditions in their diversity so that they may continue to inform those communities to which they belong and coherently inform about those actions that will help these communities, especially in the Middle East and the Caucasus, to prosper economically, socially, and culturally.

By November 2014, CINF arranged for eight Syrian Christians to study in the United States, intending to aid in the preservation of the cultures of the communities to which the students belonged through education. Yet when the program was set to launch, all eight student visas were denied.

In 2015, CINF decided to reverse course and send teachers abroad to live and work with Christian communities in the Middle East and Caucasus. That summer, in answer to a request for help, CINF sent its first volunteer teacher, a recent college graduate, to Tashir, Armenia to teach English to 150 children at the Dirmayr Hayastani Ketron summer camp. While living in Tashir, the volunteer came to know the community, its virtues, and its particular needs. She also developed important skills: leadership, communication, organization, and cooperation.

The 2015 experience became the model for CINF’s work. Through it, the Board realized that it was meant to serve both Christians of the Middle and Near East as well

see CLOTHING, page 17

## A Conversation with Arsinée Khanjian and Screening of ‘Auction Of Souls’ at UMich

ANN ARBOR, MI – On Thursday, April 7 at 7 p.m., the Center for Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan is hosting actress, performer, producer, and civil rights activist Arsinée Khanjian and Marie-Aude Baronian, Associate Professor at the University of Amsterdam to deliver the 2022 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished Lecture. The discussion will be accompanied by a screening of the “Auction of Souls,” Performing Memory by and with Arsinée Khanjian (a production of Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin).

In 1918, *Ravished Armenia*, the eyewitness account of then 18-year-old Aurora Mardiganian, which relentlessly described her ordeal through the massacre of the Armenians, triggered a wave of shock. Only a handful of scenes and the script have survived from the film version that was created in 1919 with Aurora in the leading role. The copies disappeared just like Aurora, who died penniless and forgotten in Los Angeles at 92 years old. Arsinée Khanjian reconstructs the story of a desperate attempt to relate the indescribable.

For the 2022 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished Lecture Khanjian, in conversation with scholar Marie-Aude Baronian, will discuss the genesis of “Performing Memory” and its various interpretative layers. They will also reflect upon broader issues such as the links between archives and memory, between art and political engagement, or between performance and Armenianness. This talk will stress the necessity of including artistic practices in Armenian studies.

Khanjian is a Canadian-Armenian-Lebanese actress, performer, producer and civil rights activist. Throughout her career as an artist, she has extensively worked with her partner, Canadian-Armenian filmmaker Atom Egoyan, and she collaborated with numerous international filmmakers such as, a.o., Michael Haneke, Catherine Breillat, the Taviani brothers, Olivier Assayas and Fatih Akin. Khanjian has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Zoryan Institute for International Genocide and Human Rights Studies, of Canada’s leading contemporary art gallery The Power Plant.

Marie-Aude Baronian is an Associate Professor in the Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She has extensively lectured and written about Armenian diasporic visual arts, ethics and aesthetics, film and philosophy, media and memory, fashion/textile and visual culture, and material objects. Her most recent monographs include “Screening Memory: The Prosthetic Images of Atom Egoyan” (2017), and “Image et Mémoire: Regards sur la Catastrophe arménienne” (2013).

The event is free and open to the public. No registration required. The program will take place at the State Theatre (Theater 2), 233 South State St., Ann Arbor.





ARTS & CULTURE

# Calligrapher Ruben Malayan Revives Ancient Artform

By Christopher Atamian  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

“The striped letter is not entirely a letter, it is rather something that lies between writing and music.”  
— Abdelkebir Khatibi,  
The Wounded Arabic Name

“Calligraphy is a kind of music not for the ears, but for the eyes.” — V. Lazursky  
Over the centuries, calligraphy has vari-  
ously been described as music for the eyes or  
visual poetry. Great calligraphers such as Su  
Tung-p’o (11th century), John Van de Velde  
the Elder (17th century), or more recently  
20th century practitioners such as Rosanjin  
in Japan or Peter Bailey in the United States  
have all produced work as striking as that  
of our finest artists, though their names are  
less well-known than Michelangelo, Picas-  
so or Rothko. Born in 1971, Ruben Malayan  
continues in this fine calligraphic tradition,  
creating works at once powerful for their  
artistic value as well as noteworthy for the  
renaissance that he is helping to engender in  
Armenian writing and printing.  
Malayan graduated from the Art Insti-  
tute in Yerevan and then travelled to Isra-  
el where he worked in advertising, as well  
as the Netherlands and Montreal before



Ruben Malayan

returning to Armenia in 2011. As an artist  
Malayan understands that when all is said  
and done, culture is the only thing that sus-  
tains individuals as well as nations. And  
he considers Armenia to be in a state of  
cultural as well as political crisis. Since the  
fall of the Soviet Union, he and others have  
bemoaned the relative fall in education-  
al standards and the poor knowledge that  
many students within Armenia possess of  
their own history — hence in part the deci-  
sion some have made to emigrate.  
Linguistic differences between Western  
and Eastern Armenian apart, until recently  
anyone who tried to read a book printed in  
Armenia would often come up against let-  
ters and paragraphs difficult to make out.  
Says Malayan: “Armenian typography was  
so terrible because the only standard-  
ized efforts had been made in Mkhitarist  
Venice (centuries ago). Every community  
since has done as it has seen fit. There was  
no universal typography for the Armenian  
alphabet. The Soviet legacy in typography  
was a mixed bag that went out the window  
with independence. Afrikyan was an ex-  
ception, but the educational system failed  
typographers by not picking up these new  
letterings and disseminating them.” Some  
may choose to disagree, but the old adage  
that one shouldn’t judge a book by its cov-  
er only goes so far—the attractiveness of  
both graphic design and lettering obviously  
makes a difference when reading, which is  
after all a sensual as well as an intellectual  
experience. And the more knowledgeable  
about history and culture a calligrapher is,  
the more this becomes reflected in his work  
as well: “Every work I create is a chance to  
revive ancient forms and give them a mod-

ern appeal...” notes Malayan. “Ironically,  
the work which is created on paper and  
which is unique, ends up shown on a com-  
puter screen. A digital copy never has the  
same appeal as the original work on paper.”  
Not long ago when a world encyclopedia  
of calligraphy was being put together in the  
United States, editors turned to Malayan,  
and the results were gratifying. As for cal-  
ligraphy itself, Malayan sees it as something  
one has to feel and enjoy in a very real, phys-  
ical sense: “It has to be analog. It requires  
discipline and focus.” He believes that it’s  
especially important for small countries  
like Armenia with unique alphabets, where  
it becomes an important part of a nation’s  
cultural heritage. Malayan spends much of  
his time now teaching a new generation of  
students at American University of Armenia  
(AUA), where he tries to instill in them that  
writing is more than a means to an end: “It’s  
trying to tell you something visually. It’s not  
just pretty. Calligraphy is also writing...if  
you have nothing to say, then writing makes  
no sense.”  
Among the courses that he teaches at  
AUA, a fascinating “Mythology and Visual  
Arts” stands out in part because it mirrors  
studies in other disciplines in the humanities  
such as literature and history. Malayan grew  
up reading Greek myths and is fascinated  
by the study of comparative mythology. He  
shows students paintings influenced by my-  
thology and introduces them to the work of  
great mythologists such as Robert Graves  
and Joseph Campbell, who taught many  
years at Sarah Lawrence College: “Mythol-  
ogy is important in helping students to per-  
ceive themselves,” says Malayan: “It teach-  
es them how to deal with the world and how  
to process their daily struggles. I am most  
impressed by Campbell’s take on the psy-  
chological subtext underlying the myths of  
the world. His notion that there is essentially  
“one story,” retold in many different ways  
has always felt true to me. Robert Graves’s  
ideas that myths are grounded in history  
and human experience make a whole lot of  
sense as well, even if one has to be careful  
with some of his interpretations.”  
Unfortunately, there aren’t many visu-  
al stories that Malayan can show students  
from Armenian artists, apart from a few  
classics like Sureniant’s “Shamiram” or  
making them read Toumanian, whose sto-  
ries often includes a moral element, stated  
or understated. Malayan is part of a ded-  
icated team who by reviving an ancient  
art form is creating something vibrant and  
new. In the process, he is teaching young  
Armenians not just how to create music for  
the eyes, but poetry for their souls as well.  
As part of a new aspect of this online  
column, I asked Malayan to comment on  
three works from among his portfolio in  
order to give readers a chance to evaluate  
the artist’s work themselves and then hear  
an explanation about the art straight from  
the creator himself:  
**Komitas Project:** This was designed as  
part of the visual identity of the Komitas  
Museum Institute in Yerevan. It was im-  
portant for me to create an original work,  
so I started by drawing Komitas portraits  
using archival photographs as references.  
Of course, this was also an opportunity to  
do some calligraphy, in particular the Ar-  
menian music notation or *chazer*. Komitas  
was responsible for decoding this forgotten  
ancient tradition in writing down music  
and I was interested in the visual appear-  
ance of these signs, as they are a fusion of  
Armenian letters and music notation. I also  
tried to break the stereotyped perception  
of Komitas as a tragic figure: many con-  
temporary sources mention that he was a  
cheerful and happy person, full of love and  
life. Hence the copy “Unknown Komitas.”



Mashtots Meditations

**The Vishup** or Armenian dragon is a  
fantastic beast, the protector of the water  
sources in Armenian mythology. This was  
an opportunity to design a symbol which  
would express the flow of snake-like  
movement, where one letter flows into the  
other. It works partially because the word

is composed of only five letters and I used  
the opportunity to revive a much-forgotten  
treatment of the letter “V”, which is pre-  
served in Mkhitarist studies. This shape of  
the letter allows the vertical stroke to loop  
upwards and connect to the next shape.  
**Mashtots Meditations:** In this commis-  
sioned work, the Matenadaran Institute  
of Manuscripts asked me to write the very  
first phrase translated into Armenian from  
the Bible and written with the newly creat-  
ed alphabet (405 AD). I was curious to find  
out whether I could write it in a circular  
shape, which proved to be an elegant solu-  
tion, as the client wanted to use it on dif-  
ferent products sold in the museum shop.  
Its circular shape makes it meditative and  
invites contemplation. The sentence reads  
“Ճանաչել զիմաստոյթիւն եւ զխրատ,  
իմանալ զբանս հանճարոյ: Ընաճ՝ել  
zimastut՝iwn ew zxrat, imanal zbans  
hančaroy. «To know wisdom and instruc-  
tion; to perceive the words of understand-  
ing.» — Book of Proverbs, 1:2.  
Visit more of Malayan’s works at [www.ArmenianCalligraphy.com](http://www.ArmenianCalligraphy.com)

## Knights & Daughters of Vartan Announce 2022 Armenian Genocide Essay Contest

*in Conjunction with Armenian Genocide  
Times Square Commemoration*

On April 24, 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden affirmed the Armenian Genocide after decades-long efforts by the Armenian people. Now that U.S. recognition has been achieved by both Congress and the U.S President, what next steps can be taken regarding the Armenian Genocide in terms of education, awareness, global recognition, and accountability?  
Please write a 700-1,000-word essay elaborating on the above question incorporating your original words and thoughts. Your essay will be judged on its originality, clarity, historical accuracy and understanding of the essay contest theme.  
As a resource, you’re welcome to reference the USC Shoah Foundation’s website, which offers a selection of Armenian Genocide survivor testimonials that sheds light on the first genocide of the 20th century. These stories are meant to be shared and understood, while helping us remember the past, but also focusing on our future advocacy goals as a community regarding the Armenian Genocide  
**Contest:**  
High School and college students are invited to participate in an essay contest as part of the 107th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide that will be held in  
New York City’s Times Square (43rd St & Broadway) on Sunday, April 24, 2022 from 2-4 pm. The essay contest is sponsored by Knights & Daughters of Vartan ([www.kofv.org](http://www.kofv.org)), an international Armenian fraternal organization headquartered in the U.S.  
**Deadline:**  
Sunday, April 10, 2022  
Please email submissions to [apri24nyc@gmail.com](mailto:apri24nyc@gmail.com).  
**Prize:**  
The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners chosen by the judges will be awarded \$300, \$200 and \$100 respectively and announced at Times Square and in the media.  
**About the Armenian Genocide Commemoration in Times Square:**

Founded in 1985 by the late Sam Azadian, a former Brooklyn, New York resident, who lost four siblings during the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Times Square has honored the 1.5+ million Armenian lives lost during the horrific events of the 1915 Genocide of the Armenians by the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire. This internationally-recognized annual event draws thousands of Armenians and non-Armenian participants to commemorate the solemn occasion. The event features speeches and tributes delivered by prominent political figures and civic leaders, officials of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, representatives of major Armenian-American organizations, and distinguished scholars and educators as well as high-ranking Armenian and non-Armenian clergy.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Helen Ispirian

*'I Feel Strong Connections with Armenian Culture'*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / BERLIN — Helen Ispirian is a singer, actress and filmmaker. Born in Ulm (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), she studied singing, drama and dance in the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, as well as music pedagogy at Berlin University of the Arts. She worked in theaters in Germany (Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Schweinfurt, Berlin) and took part in several projects abroad (Vienna, German Theatre Almaty, Meyerhold-Centre Moscow). It was also in Moscow, where Helen founded her chanson-folk band GASTARBAiTERKA - Helen & Guys. They have performed in clubs and festivals in Ural and Siberia as well as at the Moscow International Film Festival.

Helen also has acted in some films and worked briefly at a company making documentaries, before she directed two films.

Currently, Helen lives again in Berlin, where she performs with her female ensemble OrgaVoce (Soprano, Mezzosoprano, Organ) early and contemporary music and sings in professional choirs. She also is working as a voice teacher and is conducting two amateur choirs.

**Helen, first we met in Yerevan in 2001. At that time, you were Kurkjian, but for long time you are Ispirian, which is not your husband's surname. Why then change your last name?**

In 2008, when I learned that my father's name by birth was not Manuel Kurkjian, but Rafael Ispirian and that his birthplace Alexandrette, as written in his passport, was not the place where he was really born, I became so curious that I started to explore my father's family story and at the same time the tragic happenings in world history, which influenced that story. During that time, I decided to change my name back to the name Ispirian — first only as an artist, but in 2019 I have followed formally the procedure to change it in my passport.

**Being half Armenian, half German, how would you describe your connections with your father's country?**

Although I don't have relatives in Armenia itself, but in Lebanon, England and Canada and in the cemetery in Jerusalem, I feel strong connections to the Armenian culture. In my childhood I was not so conscious about it, but when I was invited the first time to an art project to Yerevan, I was very happy for the experience and exchange



There are not many female parts in films and even in theatres it's getting harder to find jobs. So, I was tired of asking to play roles and decided to create my own projects. It was never my plan to become a director; I just had the urgent need to tell stories. And somehow, my stories and projects always reflect a multicultural, multidisciplinary environment, no matter it's film or music.

**The second time you were in Armenia in 2011 for speaking about your documentary film project in Golden Apricot Film Festival. In what phase it is?**

My documentary film "Homeport" unfortunately has been frozen for very long. That's a pity, because it started so well and so many professionals on a high level were interested in it and supported me. But I couldn't find a reasonable budget for it and I spent so much time on that. Anyway, as time was running, in 2013 I managed with a super low private budget and some help of great people, like George Hintlian from the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem, Jordan Airlines and my camerawoman Mareike Müller to do some shooting in Israel and Lebanon. I even found some family members in Beirut. Still, I couldn't find money and time to finish the film. For my short film, I spent several months after the shooting only for editing and postproduction. I cannot afford this now for a long film, but I hope, one day, I will.

**You sing German, Russian and French songs. From time to time you ask me questions on some Armenian songs too, singing and teaching them.**

Recently we performed a Komitas song *Alagyaz* with OrgaVoce and I also taught one piece to my amateur choirs. As I don't speak and read Armenian, it takes more time and for concerts with Armenian music, and it also

ny I'm not so much seen as an Armenian, because German is my mother tongue and people don't know much about Armenia. In Russia, they do and usually Russians would appreciate my double ethnic origins. And it was also nice to meet Germans or Armenians in Russia.

**My impression is that wherever you live, in Germany or Russia, you are always in touch with Armenian art professionals.**

Yes, that's true — just right now I was so lucky to get pictures by the Armenian artist Zara Manucharyan, which we used for our poster to announce the next concerts with OrgaVoce.

**Last year you presented your first film "Hear Us Sweet Freedom!" at KIN female directors' international festival in Yerevan winning the first prize. I was impressed by the daring experimental approach to the crazy covid times you have in your kind of anti-utopic musical film.**

Thank you very much, it was a big surprise that my film won — that's such a great honor. In fact, the film is an ensemble work — the right story at the right time with lots of heart from great international artists, like Timothy Sedgwick (director of photography, Germany), Evangelia Papadopoulos (choreographer, Greece), Karolina Juodelyte (organist/actress, Lithuania) and many others. Recently, the film was presented in New York City at the Socially Relevant Film Festival and can be watched online for a limited time, too.

**In March you were part of OrgaVoce concerts, dedicated to all Ukrainian, Armenian, Russian and all the other mothers in this world who suffer unbelievably. I am sure it was thanks to you that Armenian mothers also were remembered. As we see, the civilized world almost did not care about the war in Artsakh, unlike that of in Ukraine.**

Yes, that's right. As I'm doing most of the organization and PR for OrgaVoce, I posted the dedication as you mentioned it. We are performing Stabat Mater by Pergolesi. And it seemed to me an appropriate occasion to remember apart from the holy mother all mothers, who are in horrific pain. Of course, Armenians or those, who are connected to this people, are suffering again from the ignorance of the world. The unbelievable attention and solidarity, which the world is giving exclusively to Ukraine, intensify the Armenians feelings that they are left alone and forgotten in their David and Goliath-fight. Where has the world been in 2020 and why doesn't it pay attention even now to the aggression of Aliyev and Erdogan — why they don't care about Armenians? I guess, it is not only because Ukraine is bigger, but because it is much closer to Germany than Armenia is, and this war has huge effects on our personal lives. But the main reasons are the mass media and politics. After two years of permanent covid-news, we have round the clock reports now about the war in Ukraine. It's much more comfortable to paint black and white. As about Armenia, people don't know much and it unfortunately has no geopolitical significance for Europe...



Helen Ispirian, center, with fellow OrgaVoce members

with Armenian artists and people. Since I started to learn more about my family's story, I got still more involved.

**And how does your ethnicity impact your acting?**

Well, I do not that much acting anymore, but more music, a field, where it doesn't depend so much on how you're looking. I felt that casting directors didn't know what to do with me — I don't look like a typical German, but not typical foreign either. I have played various roles, but I cannot say I have a very successful acting career.

needs a context. If I could choose, I'd like to sing more Armenian music. Last year I was invited by the Armenian community to sing *Krunk* by Komitas at the official memorial celebrations in Berlin.

**For Diaspora Armenians it is unusual to live in Russia – how was that experience?**

It was a great time. I came as a student to Moscow and started my band. Then I decided to stay longer. In Germa-





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

Lenten Recipes from St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — The St. John Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco offers these traditional Lenten-friendly recipes at its website. “The Great Lent is approaching and the Christian world is preparing for the season of fasting and self-reflection. Each recipe is modified to suit the taste of the cook and you are free to make changes based on your own preferences. A strict Lenten fast in the Armenian Church prohibits animal products, but if your health or circumstances cannot allow for it, start smaller. It shouldn’t become an obsession, but a precursor to spiritual growth,” says Fr. Mesrop Ash, Parish Priest at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church since 2012.

In the Armenian Orthodox tradition, Lent is observed by abstaining from all meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products from the day after Poon Paragentan through Easter Eve Badarak. Because it is often difficult to keep this strict tradition, most individuals and families choose to modify their diets. A good alternative many people choose is to observe this rule on Wednesdays and Fridays, while abstaining from meat only on the other days of the week.

Red Lentils with Cracked Wheat Vospov (Kheemah or Kufta)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/4 cups red lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup cracked wheat (bulgur), fine
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon red pepper, to taste

Garnish:

- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red and green pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped scallions or onions

PREPARATION:

Place lentils in a kettle, add water and bring to a full boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, removing thick foam that rises to the surface.

Add salt and continue simmering, covered, for 40 to 50 minutes, stirring occasionally. When mixture has cooked to a thick, yellow mass and water is absorbed, remove from heat.

Measure cracked wheat into a deep bowl and spoon cooked lentils over it, mixing to blend. Set bowl aside, covered for 10 minutes.

Heat olive oil in a small skillet and add onions, sautéing them just until they begin to brown. Add pepper; then add skillet contents to the bowl and knead or mix thoroughly. Adjust seasonings.

Moisten hands and shape mixture into finger-or-sausage-shaped patties: pinch off a piece, squeeze it gently in your clenched fist and release it. Arrange patties on a dish or platter. Combine garnish greens, sprinkle over patties, and serve.

Yield: 6 or more servings

Spinach Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups hot water
- 1/2 cup lentils, picked over to discard residue and rinsed
- 1/2 cup cracked wheat (bulgur), large
- 1-2 cloves garlic, mashed
- 1-2 teaspoons salt
- 1 16-ounce can whole tomatoes, broken up
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 10-oz. package whole-leaf frozen spinach (or its equivalent in fresh spinach leaves)
- 1 teaspoon crushed, dried or 2 tablespoons fresh minced basil

PREPARATION:

Bring water to a full boil, add lentils and wheat, bring to a boil again, and let simmer for 20-25 minutes.

Add garlic, salt, tomatoes and tomato paste and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes or until lentils are soft. Add the spinach and basil during last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking time. Add more water, if needed. Remove from heat and serve hot.

Yield: 6 servings

Note: Leftover soup will thicken as it cools so you may have to add some boiling water when reheating.

\*This recipe is from The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian, published March 28, 1989 by St Vartan Press.

Bean Casserole Loopyai Aghtsan (Plaki)

Ingredients:

- 1 20-oz. can white kidney beans (cannellini beans), rinsed and drained
- 1 cup water
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 medium celery ribs, diced
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons minced dill
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste, to taste
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Lemon slices

PREPARATION:

Rinse and drain beans in colander; set aside.

Add drained liquid to saucepan; add water and all remaining ingredients, except the tomato paste, tomato, olive oil, and beans. Cook over low flame for half an hour, stirring.

Add the tomato paste and tomato. Cook another 15 minutes. Add olive oil. Cook 10 minutes more or until vegetables are soft and mixture is of a thick-soup consistency.

Add beans, bring mixture just barely to a boil, stir, and check seasoning. Pour into a bowl and refrigerate overnight to permit flavors to blend.

Serve cold, garnished with lemon slices.

Yield: 6 servings; 10 or more, serve as an appetizer

\*This recipe is from The 40 Days of Lent by Alice Antreassian, published March 28, 1989 by St Vartan Press.

Stewed Celery

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 bunch celery, washed, leaves removed
- 1/2 cup water
- 3-4 garlic cloves, coarsely sliced
- 1/4 cup medium red or green pepper, seeded, coarsely chopped
- Salt and pepper
- 1 rounded teaspoon tomato paste
- Juice of 1 large lemon

PREPARATION:

Sauté onions in olive oil over moderate heat for about 10-12 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent browning.

Cut celery stalks crosswise into 1-inch pieces, there should be about 3 cups. Add to onions, with the water, and cook over low heat for 20 minutes, covered. Stir occasionally.

Add garlic, bell pepper, and seasonings. Mix tomato paste with lemon juice and add to saucepan, stirring to blend. Cook an additional 20-25 minutes or until celery is crisp yet tender. Serve warm for best flavor.

Yield: 4 servings

\*Variation: At step 3, add 2 carrots, cut into 1/4-inch rounds.

Note: Celery leaves may be added during the last 10 minutes of cooking or can be dried and used in soups or potato salad.

Vospov Prinzi Yeghintz (Rice Pilaf with Brown Lentils)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup brown lentils, rinsed
- 1 bay leaf, water to cover
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup long grain rice
- 2 cups hot water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon crushed lemon balm or minced parsley
- 1 cup chopped onions

PREPARATION:

Pick over lentils, rinse, then add to a 2 or 3-quart saucepan with just enough water to cover lentils. Add bay leaf, bring to the boil, then cook gently. Covered, for about 5 minutes or until water is absorbed. Discard bay leaf.

Add 1/4 cup olive oil and the rice to the saucepan, stir to coat, then add the hot liquid and seasonings. Bring to boil, cover, and simmer about 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed and rice and lentils are tender.

Remove saucepan from heat, add lemon balm or parsley and stir gently. Keep covered for 5 minutes before serving.

While rice is cooking, heat remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a skillet and add the onions. Gently sauté for 15 minutes or until onion just begins to brown at edges. Serve a spoon of sautéed onion mixture onto each serving of the pilaf.

Yield: 4 servings





ARTS & CULTURE

Artsakh and Italian Masters’ Clothing Line Collaboration Goes on Auction

CLOTHING,from page 13 as Western youth. By sending young, ambitious volunteers, especially from America, to live in ancient Christian communities, CINF could aid the education of both. This international exchange became a defining characteristic of CINF’s work.

Then, in the summer of 2017, CINF sent two new volunteers, again American recent college graduates, to Stepanakert, Artsakh.

For three months, they taught English and forged friendships with the local Armenian-Christians. Their results were remarkable and confirmed CINF’s path.

**CINF-Artsakh**

After that summer, the Board of CINF determined to concentrate the bulk of its international efforts in Artsakh, which promised a deep and fruitful relationship between Christians. What began as a small-scale initiative to teach local Artsakh residents English eventually grew into CINF’s Summer Language Program, which graduated more than 200 students as of 2019.

In 2019, Italian artisans and businessmen joined the American team at work in Artsakh to establish a Vocational Program. The first master-craftsmen, two tailors and one carpenter, traveled to Artsakh in the fall of 2021 to begin a series of vocational workshops. Future initiatives will include internships and a senior-year laboratory experience.

CINF-Artsakh is headed and run by Artsakh natives, who work within their community to support and improve it. The director of CINF-Artsakh actively discusses with the inhabitants of Artsakh the problems they face and then coordinates with local educational and governmental representatives to determine how CINF might help.



A student sewing at the Antonia Arslan Armenian-Italian Hamalir vocational school in Stepanakert, Artsakh Republic



Modeling at the Antonia Arslan Armenian-Italian Hamalir vocational school in Stepanakert, Artsakh Republic

CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

**JUNE 5 — Save the date.** The Armenian Assembly of America will mark its 50th anniversary with a program on Sunday, at 5.30 p.m., at the Jonathan Club. This special event will highlight five decades of the Assembly’s influential achievements in advocacy, education, and awareness on Armenian issues. For more information visit <https://www.armenian-assembly.org/>

CONNECTICUT

**APRIL 23 —** The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 107th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday, at 10:30 am. Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, 1910 Stanley Street, New Britain as an in person event but will also be livestreamed Reception to follow. Livestream link: [bit.ly/34VhGbH](https://bit.ly/34VhGbH). The program will begin with the Martyrs’ Service. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. The keynote speaker will be Lillian Avedian, journalist and poet who works as a staff writer for the Armenian Weekly. She will speak on “Narrating Genocide: Journalism without facts, Art without truth.”

MASSACHUSETTS

**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)

**APRIL 3 – RESTITUTION OF PROPERTY IN TURKEY AFTER 100 YEARS –** Turkish-Armenian Counsel Omar Kantik, with his daughters attorneys Destina and Arda Kantik, will discuss legal reforms as they affect minority property claims in Turkey, including the impact of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. 1:30 pm, Mirak Hall, St. James Armenian Church, Watertown. Info: 617-835-6686 or 781-237-6858. **APRIL 4 —** St. James Men’s Club will hold dinner and fellowship jointly with the Trinity Men’s Union on Monday. Speaker Alexandra Vacroux, PhD, will discuss the war in Ukraine. Dr. Vacroux will begin by providing historical context for the war, theories on what President Putin might be seeking, as well as the international response. She is the executive director of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard for 12 years. 6.15 p.m. social hour, 7 p.m., dinner. Losh kebab and kheyma dinner. \$20 per person. St. Hames Armenian Church, Watertown.

**MAY 7 — “We Wait for Your Return — A Love Letter to Armenia,”** evening of photography, storytelling, and music is a theatrical experience will take you on a unique journey from Watertown to Armenia through the intimate stories and evocative imagery of American photographer Winslow Martin. It also includes many photos and memories of Der Dajad Davidian, who set Winslow on his road to Armenia. Northeastern’s Blackman Auditorium, Ell Hall, 342 Huntington Ave, Boston, on Saturday, at 8 p.m. A visual and musical celebration of the beauty and soul of the Armenian people, with music by award-winning composer Astghik Martirosyan. Sponsored by the Northeastern University Department of Music, tickets are available on-line at: <http://www.wewaitforyourreturn.com>

**MAY 19 —** The Armenian Assembly of America Honor Gail Talanian O’Reilly with Distinguished Humanitarian Award at a program at 6 p.m. at Hyatt Regency/Cambridge, 575 Memorial Dr, Cambridge. For tickets, donations or more information, visit <https://www.armenian-assembly.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)

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.

RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 20 — 107th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.** Cultural committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church in cooperation with the Armenian Martyrs Memorial committee presents “Solemn Memorial Service and Concert of Armenian Patriotic Songs” on Wednesday, at 7 p.m. in Egavian Hall ( 70 Jefferson St., Providence, RI ). Featuring Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, Soloists.Free admission. Fellowship following concert. All invited!

**APRIL 24 — 107th Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Genocide** on Sunday, at the Armenian Martyrs’ Memorial site at North Burial Ground, Providence at 12:30 p.m. with the participation of the three Armenian churches and organizations. Stepan Piligian is the guest speaker. All are welcome.



ԹԵՔԵԱՆ Մշակութային Միություն  
Մեծազոյն Նիւ Եորքի Մասնաճիւղ  
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
GREATER NEW YORK CHAPTER

Save the Date

Celebrating 75 years of cultural excellence

*The Diamond  
Anniversary Gala*

Saturday, October 15, 2022

Details to follow



## COMMENTARY

# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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# EDITORIAL

## Is This the End of Karabakh as We Know It?



By Edmond Y. Azadian

When people are confronted with crises, with impossible outcomes in sight, they resort to escapism as a defense mechanism, to avoid dealing with that harsh reality. Karabakh faces just such an impossible situation and escapism is no cure.

Armenians in the homeland and around the world will have to come together and find a solution. No other party will try to solve this crisis, and even if they attempt to resolve it, they will do so for their own advantage, not to help Armenia.

Since the 44-Day War, Azerbaijan has been creating one crisis after another, on a daily basis, outside the parameters of the November 9, 2020 tripartite declaration, which brought the Azerbaijan-created conflict to a halt. It seems rules are for Armenia and Karabakh only, with Azerbaijan breaking agreed-upon rules as well as accepted conventions since then. For example, contrary to international conventions, Baku has continued to keep more than 80 prisoners of war under detention. Several have already been sentenced to lengthy prison terms after farcical trials in Baku.

Before Armenia could protest and take the issue to major world bodies, Azerbaijan captured territory on Armenia's border at Sev Lij in summer 2021. While the capture of territory was being debated, border killings took place in Yeraskh on the Armenia-Nakhichevan border. Just this month, Baku cut off the gas supply to the Armenian population in Artsakh, at a time when temperatures have plunged and snowstorms have made the need for heat vital. While Russian peacekeepers were negotiating the resumption of delivery of gas to Artsakh, to avoid a humanitarian crisis, on March 22-25 Azerbaijani forces made incursions in Karabakh proper, taking over the strategic village of Parukh, in the Askeran region, where they used Turkish-made Bayraktar drones to kill three Armenian soldiers and wound another 14.

Ever since the Karabakh war of 2020, and the adoption of the "two states, one nation" principle by Turkey and Azerbaijan, which was officially enshrined in the "Shusha Declaration," Ankara has taken over the government in Baku and in particular the Azerbaijani armed forces, which have been creating and fomenting these crises with Armenia.

In the meantime, to please President Joe Biden, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has agreed to begin negotiations with Armenia, supposedly without preconditions. So, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu greets and hugs Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, and claims that productive negotiations have begun with Armenia, while he cynically delegates troublemaking to his underlings in Baku. He then asks Armenia to sign an inadmissible "peace treaty" with Azerbaijan, before moving one step further in the talks between Ankara and Yerevan.

While making such underhanded deals to the detriment of Armenia and Karabakh, Turkey and Çavusoglu are portrayed as heroes trying to bring together Russian and Ukrainian officials for a peace breakthrough. They are able to do this even as they enjoy Russian oligarchs and their billions to take refuge in Turkey!

It is a common occurrence in international relations that when a major power is bogged down in a conflict, almost certainly an eruption takes place in another part of the globe, to take advantage of that morass. Now that Russia has waged a failing war in Ukraine and engaged its forces there, Azerbaijan has taken the initiative to create a fait accompli in the Caucasus, by forcing its five-point peace agreement on Armenia. This situation was obvious for anyone to see but it also manifested itself in a post of the official Twitter account of the Ukrainian Parliament, where Verkhovna Rada, as the parliament is known, welcomed Azerbaijan's latest actions in Karabakh, stating, "Azerbaijani armed forces have gone on the offensive in Karabakh, taking advantage of the circumstances that Russia has been sending

troops to Ukraine," from Armenia and from the contingent of Russian peacekeepers stationed in Karabakh.

The Ukrainian Chargé d'affaires in Armenia Denis Avtonomov immediately walked back the comments and assured Armenia that "this was not Ukraine's official position." The statement was deleted, but, in fact, it reflects the situation and the position of the Ukrainian government.

Azerbaijan has taken advantage of Russia's involvement there and tried to open a second front for Moscow by attacking and taking over a strategic position in Karabakh which is under the jurisdiction of Russian peacekeepers. Although Russia's Ministry of Defense has reported that Azerbaijan has evacuated the post, witnesses in Karabakh report that Azerbaijanis have left the village but not the strategic post and negotiations are still ongoing between the two parties.

As far as the position of Ukraine's government is concerned, the post actually reflected President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's actions. We may empathize with the plight of the Ukrainian people but President Zelenskyy himself is no friend of Armenia or Karabakh. We should acknowledge this, even if it is not politically correct to make that statement in the West. He sent arms to Azerbaijan during the 44-Day War and personally congratulated President Ilham Aliyev on his victory.

Armenians equally have a cause for concern in case President Putin achieves a decisive victory, because that will open up the possibility of bringing the former Soviet republics together under Moscow's rule as a "union state," as Armenia will be among them.

Let us be clear: what is happening in Ukraine is barbaric and heart-breaking and an act of war. What we are adding to that statement, however, is that the very same thing happened in Karabakh. Maternity hospitals were bombed

and children died. Houses were bombed and entire villages were wiped out. We have been victimized by a false equivalence created by Azerbaijan and Turkey, which would lead anyone unfamiliar with the issue — 99 percent of the world — to put Karabakh in the same corner as Donbas and Luhansk. Armenia is being painted as a Russia-trained force trying to violate the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan rather than take back what has been Armenian land for millennia. Unfortunately, our enemies are strong and our allies toxic.

While the international community observed a deathly silence during the war in Karabakh, with the exception perhaps of former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's cynical remarks, "I hope Armenians can defend themselves," this time around there was an uproar in the West when Azerbaijan made its moves. However, inexplicably, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres issued a generic statement admonishing both parties to exercise restraint, while the major powers made pointed remarks to Azerbaijan. Thus, French Foreign Ministry released a statement saying, "France regrets armed incidents in the area of Parukh and Khramort and calls on all Azerbaijani units to return to the positions they held on the day of the declaration of ceasefire on November 9, 2020."

On the other hand, during a briefing on March 25 by the US State Department Spokesperson Jalina Porter said, "The United States is deeply concerned about Azeri troop movement and other escalatory measures which are irresponsible and unnecessarily provocative."

Although Armenia and Russia are supposed to be strategic allies, Moscow always kept parity between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Every time, the latter broke the ceasefire protocol. This time around, since the challenge is to the Russian peacekeeping forces, the Ministry of Defense has directed its criticism to Baku.

In a weekend statement, the ministry accused Azerbaijan of violating a Russian-brokered ceasefire that ended the war in 2020. It urged Azerbaijani forces to leave the peacekeepers' "zone of responsibility." The ministry assured on Sunday night that Azerbaijanis have taken their forces from Parukh.

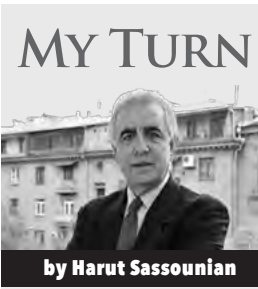
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COMMENTARY



# Turkey Can Fool Some People Some Time But not All People, All the Time

The Turkish government is continuing its duplicitous game of playing on both sides of the fence, pretending to be the friend of both Russia and Ukraine in order to draw maximum benefit from its tightrope walk.

However, Turkey cannot keep playing this game for too long before it falls flat on its face from the teetering tightrope. For decades, as a member of NATO, Turkey violated its principles, bought problematic weapons from Russia while acting as a member of the Western military camp, refused to support the collective decisions of the organization, and got sanctioned by the United States, its NATO partner.

Turkey has played a similar erratic role as a member of the Council of Europe, violating the basic rules of the organization, including repeatedly refusing to implement decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. After all this, President Erdogan has the audacity to complain that Turkey is not allowed to join the European Union. In reality, it should not even be allowed to remain in the Council of Europe. Too bad NATO does not have a provision on expelling one of its member states. Amazingly, Turkish leaders have appealed to the United Nations to have their country become the sixth permanent member of the Security Council with a veto power. Such a thing should never be allowed. It would be the end of the UN.

In the meantime, Turkey is continuing its two-faced “neutrality” between NATO and Russia in the Ukraine war. Turkey is the only NATO member that has refused to sanction Russia and has not closed its airspace to Russian aircraft. Turkey abstained while the overwhelming majority of the Council of Europe voted to suspend Russia’s membership. Turkey then turned around and voted twice in the UN General Assembly in March in favor of a resolution condemning Russia for invading Ukraine.

Furthermore, the Turkish Ambassador to the UN, Feridun Sinirlioglu, delivered a scathing attack on Russia. Sinirlioglu said the war in Ukraine is the result of the “blatant violation” of international humanitarian law by Russia, which he described as “unacceptable.” He then added, “For our part, we will not give up on our brothers and sisters in Ukraine.” These words indicate that Turkey is not neutral in this war.

While Turkey’s ambassador at the UN was sharply critical of Russia, Turkish businessman Ethem Sancak, one of President Erdogan’s closest political allies and executive board member of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), visited Moscow and told the Russian RBC TV channel that Tur-

key’s sale of drones to Ukraine was a big mistake. Sancak also said: “We will not join in the sanctions, because if Russia falls, Turkey would get divided. And if Turkey falls, the same goes for Russia.... We are allies with Russia.” Sancak described Turkey’s membership in NATO as “shameful....” He then added: “NATO is a cancerous tumor.”

In addition, “Having gained experience in sanctions busting schemes that undermined both US and UN Security Council embargoes on jihadist groups and Iran in the past, the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is now poised to implement a similar playbook for Western sanctions on Russia. Hoping to make money for his business cronies and aid his country’s embattled economy and finances, Erdogan apparently saw the opportunity to make a profit by offering Russians a lifeline to help overcome the restrictions and beat the sanctions,” wrote Abdullah Bozkurt in Nordic Monitor.

In order to appease Russia, Turkey rejected US suggestions to transfer to Ukraine the S-400 missile systems it had bought from Russia, which had resulted in the US imposing sanctions on Turkey. Furthermore, in recent days, several Russian oligarchs have brought their luxury yachts and private jets from Europe to Turkey to avoid western sanctions. Bahadir Ozgur, a Turkish commentator who specializes in exposing organized crime, says Turkey is the “gangsters’ heaven,” the Al-Monitor news website reported.

As a result of long-running sanction-busting activities by Turkey, the Biden administration is well aware of Turkish efforts to bail out Russia from US and EU imposed sanctions. Neither the White House nor Congress are too keen to side with Erdogan who is constantly plotting to glorify himself and his country by trying to mend its damaged relations with Europe, the United States, Israel, Egypt, the UAE and Armenia.

In another failed public relations stunt, President Erdogan announced prior to last week’s NATO Summit in Brussels that he would be meeting with President Joe Biden in order to create a photo-op intended to raise Turkey’s questionable standing in the world and his own poor rating at home.

Despite Erdogan’s intense diplomatic lobbying, President Biden refused to meet with him at the NATO Summit, undermining his desire to gain positive PR from such a meeting. The White House rejected a push by the US Embassy in Ankara for such a face to face encounter.

President Biden, who has had a long-lasting personal dislike of President Erdogan because of his anti-western policies, did the right thing by not providing him with further opportunities for self-aggrandizement at a time while he continues his close relations with Russia. There is also stiff resistance in Congress to any appeasement of Turkey.

Erdogan is constantly justifying his tightrope walk between East and West by claiming that he is trying to play a mediating role in the Ukrainian war. This is yet another misleading excuse for Erdogan’s self-serving attempts to give himself and his country undeserved importance.

from previous wpage

Karabakh Defense Forces have confirmed that the village is under the control of Russian peacekeepers but Azerbaijani soldiers continue to hold “fortified positions.”

Azerbaijan is defying Russia even as the latter has its hands full in Ukraine. Its Minister of Defense Zakir Hasanov has recently stated that, if necessary, “we can use most modern weapons against the Armenians,” while making another arrogant demand, asking the Armenian side to evacuate Karabakh of its “illegal military formations,” referring to the Karabakh defense forces. There is no such agreement in the November 9 ceasefire declaration. But there is another condition that Moscow and Baku have not honored: the ceasefire declaration calls for both armies to remain in the positions under their respective control on November 9. By contrast, Armenian forces were not defeated in the Kelbajar region but they were asked to evacuate, in a deal of collusion between Baku and Moscow. President Putin always tries to treat President Aliyev with kid gloves, because the latter shrewdly has refused to sign the mandate of the peacekeeping forces in Azerbaijan. Thus, Russia has its military footprint in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, under different conditions. Only its position in Azerbaijan is tenuous, because of the mandate issues.

Baku is blackmailing Moscow with a threat of opening a new front in the war in the Caucasus, knowing full well that the latter can ill afford a second front. The alternative for the war is pressure by Moscow on Armenia to accept the five point “peace plan” which represents a poison pill for Armenia.

Azerbaijan is in haste to achieve its goal, because Moscow and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are bogged down in Ukraine and Armenia is in a weak position to resist any pressure. Therefore, it is an ideal situation for Azerbaijan to create irreversible facts on the ground. Armenia has wisely referred Azerbaijan’s five-point peace plan to the OSCE Minsk Group and announced that it is ready to sit down immediately to negotiate a peace treaty under the auspices of that body.

Before the beginning of negotiations with Turkey, Armenia already made down payments, refraining from using some valuable and advantageous bargaining chips. Here again Ararat Mirzoyan has announced that Karabakh is not a territorial issue. He said that it is a matter of “rights” rather than building a case around the principal of remedial cessation, a principle which was used by East Timor, South Sudan and Kosovo in attaining independence.

A storm is gathering over Armenia and Karabakh. Let us hope that this is not the end of Karabakh as we know it.

# Nagorno-Karabakh War: Toxic Neutrality and Its Consequences

By Karolina Pawłowska  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The narrative relating to the 2020 Azerbaijani invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh has been deeply shocking and disappointing not only to Armenians, but also to many non-Armenian scholars studying the South Caucasus.

On October 8, 2020, the *Los Angeles Times* released information accompanied with the headline “Armenia Accuses Azerbaijan of Shelling Historic Cathedral in Nagorno-Karabakh.” Even though the article was complemented with the photo of a heavily damaged church, it also included a statement of Azerbaijan’s Defense Ministry which denied targeting historical, cultural and, especially, religious buildings. One might wonder: if the cathedral is obviously destroyed and Azerbaijan denies this, there is only one possible conclusion — the damage was obviously self-inflicted. What does it mean that Armenia “says” or “accuses”? Such caution creates the impression of “suspended” reality. Two sides say something; however, it seems extremely hard to determine which one is telling the truth. Uninformed readers must have found it extremely difficult to makes sense of this; informed readers might have considered this as an offense to one’s intelligence.

The abovementioned article shows only one of the disturbing tendencies present in the coverage of the invasion. The war crimes conducted by Azerbaijan — targeting the civilian population, the use of cluster bombs, destroying the cultural heritage of Armenians, and the recent humanitarian crisis due to the cutting off gas supplies to Artsakh — are taking too long to be properly recognized and still are framed as mutual accusations between engaged parties and not as direct and tangible acts of hostility. Meanwhile, the lives which have been lost along with the cultural,

psychological, and economic damage are not an issue of politically neutral headlines, but a reality. Giving it a “suspended” status is simply cynical.

Similar trends are observable on a political level. Only recently, for the “urgent de-escalation” called for by the European Union on November 17, 2021, the Hague asked both Armenia and Azerbaijan to “refrain from provocative actions” on December 21, 2021. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group called on both Armenia and Azerbaijan to “refrain from the use of force and engage in dialogue” on January 12, 2022. This year, on March 25, the US Department of State released a statement on its Europe and Eurasia Twitter account. It stated “The US is deeply concerned about gas disruptions and Azerbaijan’s troop movements. Armenia and Azerbaijan need to use direct communication channels to immediately deescalate.” Similarly, on the same day, UN Secretary Antonio Guterres called on Azerbaijan and Armenia to “exercise restraint.”

These statements were and are mirrored by press releases and are examples of what can be best described by the term “toxic neutrality,” aptly coming from an obvious confusion between equivocation and objectivity. The equivocation that we can see currently assumes a full symmetry of actors involved and ignores the deeper context of power dynamic and power imbalance, obviously failing to differentiate between defense and aggression. Though this might have been interpreted simply as cautious diplomatic language, following the Russian invasion on Ukraine, the diplomatic language on this issue is certainly much more straightforward and the only person who still calls for “both sides to deescalate,” Pope Francis, is heavily criticized. In fact, he is the only person for

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## COMMENTARY

# The Artsakh and Ukraine Conflicts Need To Be Recognized as Two Separate Battles of The Same War

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian C.M.

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The whole world has been watching with utter dismay for over a month the incredible scenes of the devastating war in Ukraine. A peaceful country, with its national identity, history, monuments, and invincible pride, has suddenly been attacked without any provocation by its overwhelmingly powerful neighbor state, Russia, which pretends to have claims on its neighbor supported by nothing more than the logic of brute force supremacy. The overwhelming majority of the civilized world, led by the powerful Western democracies, is reacting with its entire military and financial resources to come to the rescue of Ukraine, victim of this blatant and inhuman injustice. For us Armenians, the above scene is doubly painful to watch.

Indeed, while the destruction and devastation of a country and the suffering of its innocent population is unbearable for any normal human being to watch, we Armenians cannot miss the painful parallel between this tragedy and the one that was endured just about one year ago by Artsakh and Armenia. That tragedy actually still continues to this day in a barely disguised form. It remains ready to blow up again, at any moment, whenever Azerbaijanis feel sufficiently assured that the world will once more conveniently remain deaf and blind to an equally outrageous scene taking place in that faraway piece of land, lost in the mountains of the Caucasus.

Actually, as much as we find such international injustice absolutely revolting to witness, we must equally recognize that a good share of the blame for such blatant indifference and unfair treatment, falls upon us, Armenians, both in Artsakh and Armenia, as well as in the Diaspora.

It is unquestionable that the current Ukrainian tragedy is almost the carbon copy and repeat of what Artsakh has endured as the victim, 14 months back in 2020, under the unprovoked and unjustified joint criminal aggression of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

In addition to Artsakh's multimillennial history and monuments, the world ought to have been aware that Artsakh is also de jure an independent state by accepted standards of international law. Indeed, as is well documented — and therefore, there is no need to detail it here again — the internationally prescribed steps, including a properly organized and successfully held referendum of self-determination, have been followed meticulously by Artsakh, around the time of the fall of the

Soviet Union in 1990. This unquestionably establishes the independent status of Artsakh. In addition, the genocidal, state-sponsored policy of Azerbaijan, which dates from the Soviet years of its rule over Artsakh, and which is being openly applied still to those areas of Artsakh they have recently occupied, doubly qualify and reinforce Artsakh's right for independence, based also on the internationally accepted principle of a people's right of independence to secure its survival. Yet following the aggression that started in September 2020 and lasted 44 days until the disastrous Armenian capitulation of November 9, 2020, the international media has been notoriously unfavorable towards the Armenians' plight. Quite to the contrary, it has covered that conflict to our full dismay and frustration, as the battle of Azerbaijan to recover its Armenian-occupied lands in the Karabakh region of the Caucasus. The blame for allowing such an odious distortion of reality to prevail must be borne in good part by Armenians themselves.

The few desperate attempts of Armenians in the Diaspora to convey the truth in this tragedy, has remained essentially powerless against the flood of Turkish and Azerbaijani propaganda which influenced overwhelmingly the international media. On the other hand, Armenia's information-providing infrastructure has demonstrated to this date its weakness, complete unpreparedness, and inefficiency to counter this insult, that comes on top of the injury to which Artsakh and Armenia have been and continue to be subjected to this date.

Today, as Azerbaijanis are quite openly harassing Armenians again in Artsakh as well as on the borders with Armenia itself, as much by military skirmishes as by such inhuman acts as arbitrary and intentional interruptions of the gas supply in the current full winter season, Armenians would be seriously remiss in still not reacting forcefully. This could be both militarily, when provoked, as well as through an intense international media campaign to stigmatize Azerbaijani actions.

If Armenia has unquestionably failed in 2020 by its unpreparedness, even though Azerbaijanis and Turks were exhibiting openly their aggressive rhetoric and military maneuvers, preceding their full force attack, it is now unforgivable to act again based on that same irresponsible expectation that Azerbaijan will not use force again in order to complete its half-finished occupation of Artsakh. And, why not, it might go this time even further inside Armenia itself, taking advantage of the world's intense preoccupation with the Ukraine crisis.

At this point, Armenians must act preemptively, loud and clear. We must consider this an opportunity in our favor and take full advantage of the world's currently acquired super-sensitivity towards Ukraine's tragedy. Armenia and the Armenian media must now be aggressively vocal to demonstrate forcefully to the world that the current plight of Artsakh is the exact equivalent of Ukraine's and that consequently, the same outrage shown and the overwhelming help that is provided to Ukrainians must be extended to Armenians and Artsakh as well, in order to discourage and eventually eradicate for good such aggressive adventures by countries that rely on their bullying power!

For such action to be effective and secure concrete results, a two-pronged relentless campaign is necessary. On the one hand, Armenian state diplomacy must become unusually active and aggressive in its outreach to the Western world. The same must be achieved by Armenian information and media services in European languages.

Unfortunately, we must realize that our strength is lacking in both instances. Hence we need to devote without delay substantial national resources to remedy and strengthen these capabilities.

The diplomatic effort is totally incumbent on Armenia's government. They have recently shown some slight improvement in that area. A lot more — much more — is needed in order to carry intense activity in Brussels, Geneva, Washington and beyond, in Asia and Africa.

On the other hand, to win the equally important information war, the creation of a reliable, effective, high-quality, and active Armenian information-providing network is as essential as the diplomatic effort. Thus, Armenia must create without delay its own vocal and far-reaching multilanguage state information agency. The Diaspora, on the other hand, can play a crucial role because it has the advantage of being already well-embedded in the Western world. However, thus far, the Diaspora media's main strength has been in its Armenian-language publications.

It is imperative that we realize that now we need responsive, effective, and far-reaching non-Armenian language outlets online as well as printed Armenian media publications that can compete with those of the Azerbaijanis and Turks. Our press must be of a caliber to reach and impress international and domestic Western political circles. This is of course a highly demanding and very tough requirement. Presently, as we scan the current Armenian media, based on the assessment of many informed entities, the only candidate that appears presently capable to provide a promising base for one such English-language publication is the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, where you are reading this article. It is realistic to expect that sooner rather than later efforts must be directed towards supporting the *Mirror-Spectator* to make it fully equipped to start playing that role. Nothing should prevent the eventual development of competing and even outperforming other Armenian publications as well.

Armenia must become visible in the world of diplomacy and information, where wars are much more affordable to conduct, and yet as effective as on the battlefield!

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the ongoing Artsakh and Ukrainian conflicts are twin battlefields of the same war, between two brutal, mighty, and bullying aggressors trying to crush two peaceful and independent smaller nations, which are adamant to defend their rightful sovereignty and independence. Armenians must deploy all efforts to make the international community realize this equivalence and hence make the latter feel obligated to provide Armenia and Artsakh commensurate support that reflects this reality.

## Nagorno-Karabakh War: Toxic Neutrality and Its Consequences

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whom it somehow makes sense to frame it this way.

In 2020 when I tried to explain the obvious gross imbalance of power both in economic and military resources as well as in influence as evidence that Armenia was fighting a war it did not choose to fight, I faced criticism for being overly pro-Armenian. At the same time, I still believe that objectivism obliges us to use the analytical tools we have in order to understand both the historical and modern context of the conflict and to state facts. In the era of post-truth, it is the duty towards reality and truth as they are, not as we wish them to be and not as the idea of equivocation frames them.

Adequate coverage came mainly from independent journalists such as Lindsey Snell. Journalists of leading English-language press agencies consistently keep referring to Artsakh as an "occupied territory" or "disputed territory" at best. Even though these labels are technically accurate, they are also misleading. The invasion was commonly referred to as an attempt of Azerbaijan to restore its territorial integrity. At the same time, the last 30 years after the first Nagorno-Karabakh War was largely ignored. During this time, an entire generation has been raised in Azerbaijan knowing little other than the utmost

hate towards Armenians. The discriminatory and violent statements of both Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have not been mentioned in most of the press news.

Meanwhile, during the past three decades what was and is referred to as an occupied territory within Azerbaijan has become a well-functioning state governed in accordance with democratic principles. Its subjectivity as a party and victim of the conflict is being continuously ignored. People of Artsakh still lack not only legal representation, but also proper representation in international media. I haven't seen many attempts to understand what Artsakh was and is, and presenting technically true information in a deficient context can be only understood as ignorance or manipulation. It reflects a distorted view or reality which supports the continuous loss of lives. If Artsakh belongs to Azerbaijan, it seemingly is allowed to do with it whatever it pleases.

And such lack of representation is indeed harmful. It indirectly supports the view that Aliyev's dissatisfaction with the slow progress of the Minsk Group initiative can justify the aggression. It also echoes the deeply engraved prejudice of the West towards the East with the assumption that wars outside Europe erupt because the conflict is embedded in the violent nature of the East and they can only be described, but not avoided or stopped. It normalizes violence as a mean of solving a political dispute. Cautiously referring to the invasion as a problem

of politics, not a humanitarian crisis or war crime was another disappointing and damaging tendency of both the international press and leading world politicians and organizations.

Toxic neutrality is, in fact, not a tribute to objectivity, but can be blamed only on greediness, Eurocentrism, paternalism, ignorance, conformism, hypocrisy or cowardness. It's cynical in its core. As we know today, words do matter. They shape the perception of uninformed foreign public opinion and consequently prevent it from putting pressure on their representatives when there is little political or economic interest to do so. Lack of proper condemnation of Aliyev's regime is silent encouragement to continue putting the health and lives of people in Artsakh at risk. Eventually it will lead to another war in South Caucasus which will be referred to as an old-time conflict blamed on Stalin, and merely an attempt to restore territorial integrity — a conflict which obviously could not have been avoided, as we will soon learn from the Western papers.

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