

Armenian Ambassador to Germany Yengibaryan:

*‘Time to Set a New, More ambitious Agenda’*

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The following interview was conducted with Viktor Yengibaryan, the new ambassador of Armenia to Germany, after his appointment was announced.

**Ambassador Yengibaryan, welcome to Germany! Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say “welcome back,” since you are no stranger here. You have followed courses at the Open University in Hagen and Ruhr University in Bochum. Now you are here as a diplomat; what priorities have you defined for your work?**

Germany is a country of utmost importance for Armenia. Bilaterally and on the European level Armenia and Germany cooperate in all spheres of political and socio-economic life. We share common values and our people have a great sense of mutual sympathy. This year we also celebrate the 30th anniversary of the see AMBASSADOR, page 6



Armenian Ambassador to Germany Viktor Yengibaryan, left, with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Armenian Officials Rule Out CSTO Deployment To Ukraine

By Naira Nalbandian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Senior Armenian lawmakers expressed confidence on March 7 that troops from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will not be sent to Ukraine to reinforce the invading Russian forces.

“It is important to point out that CSTO mechanisms are activated when a CSTO member states is attacked,” said Vahagn Aleksanyan of the ruling Civil Contract party. “I do not think that the hostilities [in Ukraine] are likely to move to the territory of the Russian Federation, at least at this point.”

Eduard Aghajanyan, another Civil Contract figure heading the Armenian parliament committee on foreign relations, dismissed speculation about possible CSTO involvement in the war in Ukraine.

Moscow has so far given no indications that it might seek a CSTO operation in Ukraine.

Only one non-Russian member of the military alliance, Belarus, is involved in the war, having served as a launch pad for Russian troops advancing towards Kyiv.

Armenian FM to Attend Forum in Turkey

YEREVAN — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has accepted his Turkish counterpart’s invitation to take part in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum organized by the Turkish government and slated for March 11-13, which will bring together politicians, diplomats and experts from around the world for three-day discussions on international security.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced in January that Mirzoyan is among foreign dignitaries invited to the forum. He revealed the invitation just days after special envoys of Armenia and Turkey held the first round of negotiations on normalizing relations between the two neighboring states. They described the talks held

in Moscow as “positive and constructive.”

The envoys met again in Vienna on February 24. Mirzoyan seemed satisfied with their second meeting when he spoke in the Armenian parliament last week.

“We inform that Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan of Armenia will participate in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum,” Vahan Hunanyan, the spokesman for the Armenian Foreign Ministry, said in a short statement issued on Monday.

Hunanyan did not say whether Mirzoyan will meet with Cavusoglu on the sidelines of the forum.

It was confirmed, meanwhile, that Russia see FORUM, page 3



Armenia - Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan speaks in the parliament, Yerevan, March 2, 2022.

The other CSTO member states — Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan — have refrained from publicly backing the Russian invasion. They all abstained last week from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate Russian withdrawal from Ukraine.

In early January, Russia and its CSTO allies sent more than 2,000 troops to Kazakhstan after being called in to help stabilize the Central Asian nation rocked by deadly unrest. It was their first ever joint military operation.

While agreeing to dispatch some 100 Armenian soldiers to Kazakhstan, Armenian leaders chided the bloc for not responding similarly to their request for military aid made after last year’s Azerbaijani incursions into Armenian territory.

Armenian Soldier Killed On Azeri Border in Yeraskh

By Susan Badalian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL, Public Radio of Armenia) — One Armenian soldier was killed and another wounded on March 7 in a ceasefire violation reported from Armenia border with Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said Sergeant Hrach Manasarian died on his way to hospital after his army unit deployed outside the village of Yeraskh bordering Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave came under Azerbaijani fire.

Azerbaijan’s Defense Ministry did not immediately report any fighting from the area about 70 kilometers south of Yerevan, which saw deadly fighting last summer.

Earlier in the day, it accused Armenian forces of opening fire over the weekend at its Azerbaijani troops stationed east and west of Nagorno-Karabakh. Defense Zakir see YERASKH, page 2



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New Exhibits Unveiled on Armenian Cartography and the Art of the Khachkar



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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

## Dollar Price Goes Up in Armenia

YEREVAN (news.am) — The American dollar's (USD) exchange rate against the Armenian dram (AMD) is now 510.18 drams to one dollar in Armenia on March 7; this is up by 7 drams two days earlier, according to the official website of the Central Bank of Armenia.

The exchange rate for one euro was 552.83 drams (up by 0.66), that of one UK pound totaled 671.04 (up by 1.39), and the rate of one Russian ruble made up 3.74 (up by 0.83) in the country.

## Artsakh Sends 14 Tons of Aid to Ukraine

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — At the initiative of the Government of the Artsakh Republic, 14 tons of humanitarian aid, in the form of locally produced basic necessity goods, were sent to the residents of the Kyiv and Zaporozhye regions of Ukraine through the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Artsakh, Artsakh InfoCenter reports.

## Ombudsman: Azerbaijan Wants to Subject Artsakh to Ethnic Cleansing

STEPANAKERT (news.am) — With its provocative actions Azerbaijan wants to justify criminal encroachments on the civilian population and at the same time prepare the ground for further actions and provocations, Artsakh Human Rights Defender Gegham Stepanyan said in a statement on March 7.

"Recently Azerbaijani military information sources have been spreading false rumors about violation of ceasefire by the Armenian side in different segments of the Armenian-Azerbaijani line of contact. Thus, Azerbaijan wants to justify the criminal attacks on the civilian population and at the same time prepare the ground for further actions and provocations.

"On March 6, the Azerbaijani side shelled the Khramurt community of Askeran with fire-weapons of various calibers. Today, on March 7, at about 5 p.m. a grenade launcher was used in the same region, the shells exploded near the village cemetery.

"In parallel with the operations, the Azerbaijani propaganda machine has been engaged in slandering and discrediting the Russian peacekeeping forces, especially the commanding officers who ensure the security of the civilian population in Artsakh.

"The criminal actions of Azerbaijan against the physical and psychological integrity of the people of Artsakh and the defamation of the peacekeepers have been systematic and deliberate.

"All the registered cases once again prove the direct and indisputable intention of the Azerbaijani side to disrupt the normal life of the peaceful population of the Republic of Artsakh and subject Artsakh to ethnic cleansing," the statement reads.

## Russians Flock to Armenia Amid Ukraine War, Western Sanctions

By Robert Zargarian and Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Thousands of Russians, many of them tech professionals, have migrated to Armenia since the start of Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing tightening of Western sanctions against Moscow.

The unprecedented influx is particularly visible in the center of Yerevan where mostly young Russians can now be seen not only walking the streets and dining at restaurants but also queuing up in local banks or outside ATMs.

Virtually all migrants randomly interviewed were information technology (IT) or finance specialists. Most of them gave economic reasons for their decision to leave Russia. Some said they decided to get out in protest against the Russian military assault ordered by President Vladimir Putin.

"I have come here to avoid problems with work and to make sure I'm in a calm state of mind," said Ilya Kornienko, an eth-



A Russian family in Yerevan

States and the European Union include measures aimed at restricting Russian access to high technology and complicating Russian companies' financial transactions abroad.

"I have heard that many companies will be moving abroad in the near future, because doing business in Russia in spheres connected with import, export, finances is no longer possible," said another arriving Russian, who chose not to disclose his identity.

Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan claimed

on March 1 that Russian tech companies are already moving operations to Armenia to evade the Western sanctions. But he did not disclose their names or give other details.

The Armenian government appears to welcome the arrival of IT engineers and other skilled workers from Russia. The Ministry of Economy set up last week a working group tasked with helping them settle in the country.

The government has not yet ascertained the total number of Russians who have entered Armenia since Moscow launched its "special military operation" in Ukraine on February 24.

"We will be able to talk about figures in about a week when things get calmer, but as of now we can say that some professionals from Russia have already got jobs in Armenia," said Hayk Chobanyan, executive director of the Armenian Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises.

Armenia has a vibrant IT industry that has grown rapidly for nearly two decades. According to expert estimates, there were at least 2,000 vacancies in the sector before the pandemic coronavirus.

Not all of the arriving Russian nationals plan to stay in Armenia. As one of them put it, "Most likely I will stay here for a couple of months. "After that I'll get a job in Europe."



Russian visitors in Yerevan

nic Ukrainian from Moscow who arrived in Yerevan on Monday morning.

"Of course I'm upset," he said when asked about the conflict in Ukraine. "It's sad. I have relatives on both sides."

Kornienko, who is currently staying in a local hotel, will be joined by his girlfriend later this month. He is already looking for an apartment.

Andranik Harutiunyan, a real estate agent, estimated that apartment rents in Yerevan have risen by 20 to 30 percent over the past week. "Demand [for housing] is very strong," he said.

As 33 countries — including all 27 European Union member states — closed their airspace to Russian carriers late last month, Armenia became one of the few destinations still accessible for Russians keen to travel abroad. The South Caucasus state is Russia main regional ally and the majority of its citizens speak Russian.

On Monday alone, there were over two dozen commercial flights to Yerevan from Moscow and other Russian cities.

"My choice was between Armenia and Georgia, because those were the easiest destinations to reach as some airports had already been closed," explained Alexei, another Muscovite. "Logistically, the easiest way for me was to get to Yerevan."

Dmitry Kuzmin, a resident of Rostov-on-Don, a city in southern Russia close to the Ukrainian border, arrived in Armenia with his wife and children.

"One of the reasons for coming here is this troubled situation," he said. "But we had long wanted to visit Yerevan."

The sanctions imposed by the United

## Soldier Killed on Azeri Border in Yeraskh

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Hasanov reportedly ordered the Azerbaijani army to vigorously respond to Armenian "provocations."

The Ministry of Defense in Yerevan swiftly dismissed the "disinformation." In particular, it denied Baku's claims that Armenian soldiers deployed outside a border village in Gegharkunik province on Sunday targeted nearby Azerbaijani army positions in the Kelbajar district west of Karabakh.

Armenia called on the international community to properly assess the provocative actions and statements of Azerbaijan.

"Although the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan has denied that a serviceman of the RA Armed Forces was killed as a result of the actions of their units, the official statement on the March 7 meeting at the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan goes in line with the logic of increasing aggression of Azerbaijani units," the MFA said.

"Condemning the murder of a serviceman of the RA Armed Forces, we consider it necessary to emphasize that such incidents and regular violations of the ceasefire further substantiate the need for a mirror withdrawal of troops from the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and the deployment of an observation mission in the border area," the statement continued.

"We also consider it necessary that the provocative actions and statements of Azerbaijan be properly assessed by the international community," the Ministry said.

There had been no major shooting incidents on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border for nearly two months. Russia and Western powers pressed Yerevan and Baku to de-escalate tensions along the long frontier.

Ceasefire violations were also reported in recent days from "the line of contact" along Karabakh's east. Each side accused the other of starting the skirmishes that apparently did not result in any casualties.

Russian peacekeeping forces reportedly intervened at the weekend to stop exchanges of automatic gunfire outside the Karabakh villages of Khramort and Nor-





## ARMENIA

# Birthright Volunteer Finds Love

By Lilian Galstanian

YEREVAN — Armenia is a place of opportunity; a place to call home. Here, you can settle down and create a life surrounded by the Armenian community and culture. If you open your heart and mind to the idea of exploring the endless possibilities in Armenia, you will without a doubt fall in love with everything the beautiful country has to offer. This is the story of how a Birthright Armenia volunteer, Narine Poladian from Lebanon, and a local Armenian, Jora Abgaryan, found love in beautiful Armenia.

Narine's journey in the country began with Birthright Armenia, an organization that offers diaspora from around the world a chance to connect to their roots. Birthright creates opportunities for Armenian volunteers from around the world by carving out a path that allows for self-discovery. Throughout this journey, volunteers are given the chance to explore different paths that they may not have been able to pursue in their home countries. All volunteers enter the program with a different mindset and ideal on what it is that they wish to pursue and achieve during their time in Armenia.

Narine is an alumna now and has repatriated to Armenia to begin the next chapter of her life, along with her now husband, Jora, whom she met in Armenia.

Born and raised in Beirut, Narine came to Armenia in 2018 with little knowledge on the Birthright program and what it would entail. She had been to Armenia once before in 2014 for camp, and while during this trip she was able to explore the country, she did not get the chance to connect with many people. Therefore, with encouragement from her friend, she applied and started her Birthright journey in order to fully immerse herself in the Armenian community and get to know the people.

Narine started off as a volunteer in Gyumri for three months, before transitioning to Yerevan for the next three. In Gyumri, she volunteered for the TUMO and GTC Center teaching AutoCAD and drawing classes for kids. In Yerevan, she volunteered at an architecture office during the weekdays and at a cross stone making studio on weekends. The cross stone studio had caught her eye when she visited Yerevan one weekend and while she had no previous experience with cross stone work, she was eager to learn. Her persistence landed her an opportunity at the studio, which allowed her to take part as a student and learn the craft of cross stone making. Eventually, as she developed her skills and was already keen on staying in Armenia permanently, she was able to land a job at the studio and then work her way up to making unique souvenir cross stones in Gyumri. Getting involved with cross stone work is actually how she met Jora.

Jora was born and raised in Armenia, and has spent more than six years volunteering for the Ministry of Defence and helping the Artsakh protection organization to equip the borders. He assists with engineering related work and has a large team of volunteers working with him. Narine caught Jora's eye in a video made at the cross stone studio in Yerevan, as he recognized her from her time at the TUMO Center in Gyumri. He decided to find the studio she worked at, so he could visit her.

One night when Jora was in Yerevan visiting a friend, they stumbled upon the cross stone studio while on a late night walk. He recognized the studio from the video



Narine and Jora getting married

through its pomegranate symbol. Jora took a photo of the studio and sent it to Narine to spark up a conversation, but it was sadly short-lived. He reached out to her again, but this time about the Sevan Summit start up volunteer opportunity, inviting her to it. Sometime after that, he stopped by the studio one evening to see her. This was their first official meeting, but for Jora, from the first time he saw her, he knew that Narine was the one. They met in July 2019 and spent 2 months dating and getting to know each other.

Narine never thought she would get married, but meeting Jora changed all that. She is someone who thinks with her head and not her heart, yet with Jora, it happened suddenly. When her parents came to Armenia for the first time to visit, she mentioned that there was a guy she wanted them to meet, but they did not know anything about him yet. While on a family excursion in Gyumri, Jora acted as a tour guide and through this, bonded with Narine's dad. It did not take long for Narine's parents to put the pieces together and figure out that something was going on between the two. While exploring Gyumri, Narine and her family ran out of time and did not get a chance to stop by the popular Ponchik Monchik café for some sweet treats. As a result, Jora had ponchiks delivered from Gyumri to Yerevan for her parents, which yet again, showed his strong affections for their daughter. He very much wanted his parents to meet Narine as well, as he had told them that he had met a girl and fallen in love. Days later, it happened. Narine met Jora's parents and the

rest is history.

The couple planned to hold their engagement in Beirut, Lebanon in April 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they were forced to postpone it till July, and changed the location of the ceremony to Dadivank in Artsakh instead. However, on the day of the engagement, the war in Artsakh broke out and they were forced to postpone it again. They decided to finally hold their engagement in Beirut as originally planned, however it was postponed again, due to the explosion that occurred in the city. The final try for the engagement was set to happen in October in Dadivank, but war broke out again. Everyday until mid-November, both Narine and Jora were busy, until one day there was an announcement that the cross stones had to be retrieved from Dadivank and brought to Echmiadzin. They ended up going there and upon arrival, one of their friends wanted to get baptized there, but it was dark, so using the flashlight from their phones, their friend got baptized. However, the other twist was that Jora and Narine were finally able to get engaged as well. It all came together very unexpectedly, adding yet another unique chapter to their love story. Finally, on October 23, 2021, the couple was able to get married at Saint Gayane Church in Echmiadzin.

Jora and Narine now live in Gyumri.

Visit Birthright Armenia (<https://www.birthrightarmenia.org/>) or its sister organization, Armenia Volunteer Corps (<https://armenianvolunteer.org/>) for more information.

## Ambassador to Ukraine Presents Details About Situation, Work of Embassy

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Ambassador of Armenia to Ukraine Vladimir Karapetyan on March 5 in an interview spoke about the ongoing developments in Ukraine, the actions taken and being taken by the Embassy.

He said that the Embassy staff is in constant, daily touch with the Armenian citizens, provides consulting support about the departure ways and possibilities from Ukraine to Armenia, prepares and provides necessary documents for that purpose.

### What are the developments in Ukraine now?

At the moment the battles continue in different – northern, eastern and southern, parts of Ukraine, including in the outskirts of the capital Kyiv. The second round of the Russian-Ukrainian talks was held in Belarus on March 3, as a result of which some promising agreements were reached, particularly relating to the humanitarian corridors for the exit of the civilian population and the temporary ceasefire in that sites. Armenia has expressed its position over this matter and has great hopes that it would be possible to settle issues around a negotiation table.

We know that before the start of the military op-

erations some embassies in Kyiv evacuated firstly the families of their diplomats, and then the diplomats. What policy has Armenia adopted in this regard?

The diplomatic representation of Armenia in Ukraine has been one of the unique embassies (there are 100 embassies in Kyiv), which has been in Kyiv with its whole staff from the very start of the military operations and fulfilled its functions. The Embassy has also been in constant touch with the Armenian citizens, ethnic Armenians and local authorities.

Due to the deterioration of the situation around Kyiv, according to the decision of the Foreign Minister of Armenia, the Ambassador and the Embassy staff moved to the city of Lviv on March 4 and will temporarily work there for security purposes. A consular point has already opened in Lviv for providing support to the Armenian citizens. Tomorrow another such consular point will open in Uzhhorod.

What does the embassy do to assist Armenian citizens?

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## Armenian FM To Attend Forum In Turkey

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sian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will also fly to the Turkish resort city for the gathering. Russia has welcomed the Turkish-Armenian dialogue as have the United States and the European Union.

Lavrov and Mirzoyan spoke by phone on Friday. The Russian Foreign Ministry said they discussed “coordination of Russia and Armenia approaches in the international arena.”





ARMENIA

# You Can Produce It in Armenia

By Joseph Dagdigian

YEREVAN — On Bagrevand Street, 21/1 in the Nor Nork section of Yerevan is the Science and Technology Museum, part of the Engineering City complex. While there are science exhibits of trail-blazing Armenian scientists from Armenia and the Diaspora, the focus of the museum is on products which were engineered and manufactured in Armenia during the Soviet era. Products range from machine tools to electronic equipment, computers, household appliances, etc. These products were distributed to all the Soviet republics. The message conveyed is “Armenians had a talent for engineering and manufacturing a few decades ago. We still have that talent.”

Armenia and the Diaspora need to and can resurrect engineering and manufacturing in Armenia.

Engineering City started with a few high-tech companies getting together with individuals to promote high tech in Armenia. In 2016-2017 the Engineering City campus was established as part of a public-private partnership funded by the Armenian government, the World Bank, investors, and the private business sector. Currently 14 companies have facilities there including companies from Armenia, Canada, and the U.S. Industries that are particularly sought include advanced automotive electronics, wireless communication, radio frequency electronics, industrial electronics, manufacturing technology, aerospace, education technologies, etc.

Services offered include precision, numerically controlled machine tools with experienced operators; sheet metal fabrication; RoHS compliant surface mount printed circuit assembly and test; and mold making as well as other services. Companies meeting certain criteria will have



Numerically Controlled (NC) Machining

Engineering City offers tuition-free business, management, and technology courses at an on-site branch of the State Engineering University (Polytechnic Institute).

Facilities include a library, a very attractive cafeteria, as well as a technical high school. High school graduates, if they wish, can continue their engineering or scientific education at the Polytechnic Institute or at another university of their choice.

The intent is to create an environment where companies can efficiently develop marketable products and go into production. Any company, whether a startup or a branch of an established company that wants to take advantage of the facilities is welcome. The goal is to facilitate rapid development of products which can be exported, the establishment of a manufacturing city to mass produce products, and the creation of 10,000 good paying jobs.

Marina Saguinian, one of the principals of Engineering City, addressed R&D and manufacturing issues. She indicated that a key to success is rapid development and



ISB Company, established 2019, manufacturer of industrial safety equipment

an opportunity to receive donations of land to establish an office with access to Engineering City's lab and manufacturing facilities.

Besides the museum and production facilities, Engi-



Science and Engineering Museum

transition to manufacturing. Armenia can produce products with quality equaling or exceeding those produced elsewhere, and at a lower cost due to low wages in Armenia. Armenians, she emphasized, have the talent to do so.

Recent news from Engineering City indicated that engineers there have completed development of a system to automatically evaluate electronic control systems used in electric vehicles. This equipment, developed in Armenia, is ready for deployment to markets in Europe and Asia.

Saguinian addressed the issue of exporting manufactured goods and was confident that Armenia can effectively compete in the global market. She invites companies to check out Engineering City and open a facility there.

More details on Engineering City, as well as contact information, is available at <https://engineeringcity.am/>. Details of the vehicle test system are available, in Armenian, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBYe1GMZPuU>.



Automated RoHS compliant printed circuit fabrication



Overview of Engineering City complex





## INTERNATIONAL



## Armenian Embassy in Ukraine Evacuated

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia announced the evacuation of its embassy in Kyiv on Friday, March 4, as Russian forces continued to approach Ukraine's capital on the ninth day of their invasion.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said that the embassy staff was relocated to the western Ukrainian cities of Lviv and Uzhgorod for safety reasons. It said the diplomats "will continue to work and serve Armenian citizens" from there.

"Let us emphasize that the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Ukraine is one of the few embassies that have worked with all their staff and served compatriots during all this time, and it will continue to

do so from the new locations," the ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan, wrote on Facebook.

Hunanyan said nothing about the Armenian consulate in the Black Sea city of Odessa which military observers believe could be captured by Russian troops in the coming days. He again posted emergency phone numbers for Armenian nationals who want to leave or have already left Ukraine and need assistance.

The United States, most European Union member states and other Western nations fully or partly pulled their diplomatic staff out of Kyiv ahead of the Russian assault that began on February 24.

Estimates of the number of ethnic Armenians who lived in Ukraine before the war vary from 100,000 to 400,000. Many of them are said to hold Armenian passports. The European Union has allowed them to enter Ukraine's EU members without Schengen visas.

Several Armenians said that they fled Kyiv on their own after receiving no help from the Armenian Embassy.

"Apart from giving us advice, they should have organized evacuations on time," complained one of them.

"Right now no roads are safe enough for moving out [of Armenian citizens,]" said an embassy official.

## Secretary of State Blinken Visits Lithuania, Discusses Minsk Standoff

VILNIUS, Lithuania (State Department) — On March 7, Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Vilnius as part of the US's efforts to halt the catastrophic Russian war against Ukraine. Currently, the US embassy in Lithuania also serves as the Belarusian embassy for the US.

Ambassador to Belarus Julie Fisher welcomed the ambassador.

"Mr. Secretary, this team exemplifies your concept of a modern, agile, forward-deployed diplomatic presence, designed to advance the administration's goals. Think of us as your forward operating base, advancing democracy and confronting autocracy. Standing up the Belarus Affairs unit last year was essential to this effort. When Lukashenko kicked out many of our diplomats and the forced the termination of our local staff colonies, the Belarus Affairs unit served as the vehicle to continue our diplomatic efforts: reinforcing our coordination with the democratic forces led by step by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya; standing the AID's Office of Transition Initiatives; and supporting the work of the independent media.

"And while we've been advancing priorities on this side of the border, our colleagues at Embassy Minsk, under Deputy Chief of Mission Ruben Harutunian's leadership, continued advocacy on the ground by attending trials for political prisoners, even when they knew they'd be turned away at the doors. They welcomed families of political prisoners into their own homes to reassure them of American support, and they coordinated with likeminded diplomatic missions. They and their families

did this in the face of incredible hostility from the host government and its propagandists."

She added, "Unfortunately, the regime has been tirelessly writing new chapters of the authoritarian's playbook: bringing down a civilian airliner, instrumentalizing migrants against its neighbors, and now its active support for and involvement in Russia's war in Ukraine. I am so very proud of our team that, against this backdrop, provides evidence of our values of work — evidence to Congress, evidence to our partners in the region, and evidence to those working towards a more democratic future for Belarus. We and our families cannot do this work without the amazing support of Ambassador Gilchrist, DCM Waser, and the entire Vilnius family. They have been incredible to us, all of them"

The US ambassador to Lithuania Robert Gilchrist spoke next.

"As Ambassador Fisher said, the establishment of the Belarus Affairs unit — and the suspension of operations in Minsk — has brought together two missions, but we operate as one team. Our team has worked incredibly hard over the past year as actions by Belarus, Russia, and the PRC have increased the urgency and the importance of what we do. This increased workload has been tough, but especially on families — and I am glad we have family members here today."

Blinken spoke next. "We focus a lot on the challenges that we're facing right now in this part of the world, in this part of Europe — and I've just come from Belgium

and Poland and Moldova. And there's some very, very big principles at stake as a result of Russia's aggression on Ukraine, a war of choice — unprovoked, premeditated.

"And we talk a lot about them. It's important to talk about them because it's important that people understand what's actually at stake, and it goes beyond even Ukraine, beyond even the Baltic countries, beyond even Europe. Basic principles of the international order came into being after two world wars as a means of trying to keep peace and security after the world had been torn apart, not once but twice. Principles like: it's not okay for one country to invade another country, to change its borders by force; it's not okay for one country to try to dictate to another its choices, its future, its policies, with whom it can associate. Principles like: it's not okay for one country to say it has a sphere of influence over another, to try to subjugate that country to its will — all of that is at stake here by Russia's aggression."

He thanked the embassy in Vilnius.

"I'm grateful to the team here in Vilnius for some extraordinary work here at this extraordinary time. We've had increased military presence, and the support that you've given to our military personnel coming in, the resources coming in as a result of our efforts to strengthen NATO's eastern flank, that's making a big difference," he said.

He added, "I know that over the last couple years, this has been incredibly challenging — on a professional level, but also on a personal level."

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Yerevan to Host 67th Meeting of UNWTO Commission for Europe

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The 67th Meeting of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Commission for Europe will be held in Yerevan from June 1 to 3, the country's Tourism Committee reports.

During the previous edition of the Commission's annual meeting in Athens, it was decided to hold the next one in the Armenian capital.

According to the Committee, the organization of the meeting in Armenia will "significantly contribute to the expansion of cooperation with the UNWTO, active participation in the activities of the organization in the coming years and the creation of new opportunities, which will contribute to improving Armenia's position in Europe, raising awareness and strengthening cooperation with other UNDP member states."

### More Armenian POWs Sentenced in Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Two more Armenian prisoners of war held by Azerbaijan received long prison sentences over the weekend in trials strongly condemned by Armenia.

A court in Baku sentenced Ishkhan Sargsyan and Vladimir Rafayelyan to 19 and 18 years in prison respectively on a string of charges, including terrorism and illegal entry into Azerbaijan.

They were among six servicemen captured last May while fortifying an Armenian army post on the border with Azerbaijan. The incident occurred days after Azerbaijani forces advanced a few kilometers into Armenian territory at several sections of the long border.

Baku freed four of those soldiers in June but pressed charges against Sargsyan and Rafayelyan.

Yerevan rejects the charges as illegal and baseless, saying that the soldiers were taken prisoner on the Armenian side of the frontier in Armenia's Gegharkunik province.

A spokesperson for the Armenian Office representative to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Armenian Service on March 7 that it will file more appeals with the Strasbourg-based tribunal in connection with the sentencing of the soldiers.

Siranush Sahakyan, a lawyer representing the Armenian POWs, said the ECHR could order their immediate release if it concludes that they did not receive a fair trial. She said the Azerbaijani authorities fabricated grave accusations against these and other prisoners in order to "cover up their war crimes" committed during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Baku has admitted holding 35 Armenian POWs and three civilian captives. Most of them have also been given lengthy jail terms in trial condemned by Yerevan as a travesty of justice.

The Armenian authorities and human rights lawyers estimate the real number of Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan at more than 80.





## INTERNATIONAL

# EU Sanctions Putin's Spokesman, Oligarchs, Journalists

By Georgi Gotev

BRUSSELS (Euractiv.com) — Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov is among 26 prominent people sanctioned by the European Union for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to the decision published on February 28 on the EU's official journal.

The listings include oligarchs and businessmen active in the oil, banking and finance sectors, as well as government members, high-level military people, and "propagandists who contributed to spread anti-Ukrainian propaganda," the EU said in a statement.

Among the listed persons are Igor Sechin, the boss of Russia's state oil company Rosneft, and the chief executive of energy giant Transneft, Nikolay Tokarev.

Oligarchs Alisher Usmanov, Petr Aven and Alexander Ponomarenko and the banker Mikhail Fridman are also included in the sanction list.

The list includes Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko, other members of the Russian government and top journalists.

Th journalists on the sanction list are Tigran Keosayan, Actor and director, host of the propagandist TV show on political affairs on NTV channel, called "International Sawmill with Tigran Keosayan," and Զ, Journalist, host of the "Own Truth" TV show on NTV channel and "Right of Voice" on TV Cent.

The restrictive measures include travel bans, an asset freeze and a prohibition from making funds available to the listed individuals.



Tigran Keosayan



Roman Babayan

## Armenian Ambassador to Germany Yengibaryan: 'Time to Set a New, More ambitious Agenda'

AMBASSADOR, from page 1

establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries, which is an important milestone to evaluate the dynamism, achievements, developments and to address the unused potential; this is a moment to set a new and more ambitious agenda for the future. As the Ambassador of Armenia, my priority is to deepen the political dialogue, mutual support in international issues, to strengthen development cooperation, to intensify economic exchange and increase trade volumes, to promote decentralized cooperation, exchanges between scientists, artists and civil society.

**During your recent visit to Saxony-Anhalt you met with Prof. Dr. Christian Tietje, the rector of the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, which hosts the Mesrop Center for Armenian Studies, and discussed collaboration between Armenian and German universities. Are there plans for student exchanges or other concrete programs? How do you envision enhanced cooperation?**

Even though dynamic relations have developed, and positive results have been achieved in a number of spheres, including in the field of education between our countries, I think the existing potential has not yet been fully tapped.

Indeed, the Mesrop Center at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg plays a unique role in Armenology studies here in Germany, it is a unique institution of knowledge transfer and research. The center is funded by the university and together with Prof. Tietje we discussed the possibility of expanding our ties. On the other hand, the Martin Luther University has been a center of excellence since the beginning of the 16th century and I must affirm I was personally excited to pay a visit and make a tour through its museum.

The aim of the Embassy is to connect scientists, students and even schoolchildren. Our motto is "the more you know, the more you love," so by connecting people we also strive for achievement of our basic goal; it is to enhance the relations between Armenia and Germany.

**I was intrigued to learn that while visiting historic Naumburg, you delivered a lecture on Komitas. Can you tell me more about it?**

In my view, Komitas is a symbol of Armenian-German cultural ties. At the end of the 19th century Komitas Vardapet travelled

to Europe and studied Western European compositions in Berlin for three years.

The influence of the German school of composition is noticeable in his personal style, already during his stay in Berlin his knowledge of Armenian music ensured him high recognition, and he became one of the founders of the "International Musical Society," for which he gave musical-historical lectures on various forms of expression of Armenian music from its pre-Christian roots.

**Armenia's IT sector is well-known in Germany and highly respected. On February 9, you delivered the opening remarks to a video conference organized by the "Tech Bridge" project, which focused on the German-Armenian technology partnership. I believe that was the first of four such planned events for 2022. The announcement noted that Armenia's IT sector "offers German businesses a chance to accelerate their digitalization plans and address the lack of IT specialists in the home market." Can you elaborate a bit?**

I can happily state that cooperation in the field of IT also evolves quite dynamically, still, there is a lot of unused potential here too. In this context, one of the highlights of this cooperation was the opening of the TUMO Center in Berlin, the idea of which originally comes from Armenia. During her visit to Armenia in 2018, the then Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel visited the TUMO Center, which offers IT learning programs, workshops and project labs for teens. The idea appealed to the Chancellor so much, that with her support a similar center was opened in Berlin, in November 2020.

Besides, in 2019 the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan paid a visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, during which he visited the Cologne Technical University. It is noteworthy that there is a memorandum of cooperation between the National Polytechnic University of Armenia and the Technical University of Cologne, which also still has to be implemented.

**What role do you see for the Minsk Group of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) in helping to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Artsakh, following the 2020 war? And could Germany be a contributing factor?**

Azerbaijan's years-long military rhetoric and stance reached its peak in 2020, with the aggression unleashed on September 27 against Nagorno-Karabakh. In the midst of an unprecedented global health crisis, with the full support of Turkey and involvement of terrorist mercenaries, Azerbaijan launched a full-scale war against Nagorno-Karabakh. Due to the complete disproportion of forces and the lack of sufficient resources to fight against several forces at once, Nagorno-Karabakh was unable to hold, which resulted in loss of territories, including those formerly part of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.

Consequently, a trilateral statement was signed on November 9, 2020, with the active mediation of Russia. This statement, of course, played an important role in terms of the cessation of hostilities, but the key issue, namely the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, remains unresolved. The tripartite statement is an important, but only an intermediate tool on the way to a final solution to the problem.

Unfortunately, Azerbaijan, ignoring the key principle of the non-use of force or the threat of force of the OSCE Helsinki Final Act, a key document of European security architecture, chose the path of a military solution. It must be borne in mind that the use of force in the 21st century cannot effectively resolve any conflict, it can at best only

be the beginning of a new phase. Local, lasting peace in the region can be achieved not by the victory or defeat of one side, but by agreement between all parties without any coercion.

The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship format, therefore, will continue to play the central role in finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict and we expect the international community, including Germany, to continue their support for this format.

**How do you evaluate progress in the ongoing talks between Armenia and Turkey on normalizing relations? The talks have taken place in Moscow and have been welcomed by the US as well as Europe. Do you think Germany might have a role to play?**

Armenia attaches high importance to the process of normalization of relations with Turkey without preconditions. For this purpose, special representatives from Armenia and Turkey have been assigned. Thus far, there have been two meetings between the representatives, first on January 14 in Moscow and second on February 24 in Vienna. Logically, this process should lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Of course, we highly value the support of the international community, including Germany, for this process.

**Thank you, Ambassador Yengibaryan.**

## ECHR Grand Chamber Will Not Consider Armenia And Azerbaijan Appeals Against Judgement

STRASBOURG (News.am) — The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will not consider the complaints of Armenia and Azerbaijan against the decision of 2021 on the cases of Tavush residents Mamikon Khojoyan and Karen Petrosyan tortured in Azerbaijani captivity in 2014, Ilurur reported on March 8.

The complaints have not been admitted into the proceedings and judgments in these cases can be executed. Earlier the ECHR obliged Azerbaijan to reimburse 40 thousand euros to each of the relatives of the victims, as well as to conduct a preliminary investigation involving the legal successors of the victims.

According to the ruling, the perpetrators must be identified and brought to justice. On November 4, the court ruled against Azerbaijan, satisfying the Armenian side's complaint, finding violations of Khojoyan and Petrosyan's right to life, to freedom from torture. The Armenian side filed a complaint to the Grand Chamber to challenge the violation of the right to freedom from discrimination.

Mamikon Khojoyan, 77, died a few days after his return from captivity. In captivity, he was subjected to violence.

Karen Petrosyan died in an Azerbaijani prison. The Azerbaijani authorities' version is that he died of heart failure. However, the evidence showed the cause of death was violence.





# Community News

## Senate Foreign Relations Chair Menendez Asks For Increased Oversight in Wake Of US Assistance to Azerbaijan

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on March 2 released a statement following the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) publication of a new report that found that the State Department failed to comply with reporting requirements for reviewing U.S. assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan.

Menendez requested the report in June 2020 to review U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan and specifically whether any assistance had been used for offensive purposes against Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh. For years, the U.S. has continued to make exceptions to bypass a 1992 law banning most U.S. military assistance to the Government of Azerbaijan. Using a waiver under Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, the exemption requires the State Department to certify the purposes of the assistance and report on the impact of that assistance to Congress.

The new GAO report found that over several years, the Department of State and Department of Defense failed to meet statutory reporting requirements to Congress on the impact of U.S. assistance on the military balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"The human consequences of the terrible war in Nagorno-Karabakh underscore the deep concerns that I have long had about providing U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan," Chairman Menendez said. "This report finds that, for several years, the State Department consistently failed to provide sufficient details about the quantity of assistance to Azerbaijan, the status of the military balance, and the impact of the assistance on peace negotiations. These findings are further proof that the status quo is unacceptable, and we must exercise additional scrutiny over the U.S. government's ongoing provision of assistance to Azerbaijan. In the coming weeks, I will be renewing my efforts for the State Department to reconsider any future planned assistance to Azerbaijan, respect Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and improve its reporting to Congress in the future."

Three months after Senator Menendez requested the report, Azerbaijan launched an egregious attack on Nagorno-Karabakh that led to the deaths of 6,500 people. Today, Armenians continue to grapple with the human costs of that war on a daily basis. Baku continues to hold scores of Armenian prisoners of war in their jails—an open wound for their families who are unsure of their relatives' fate or condition. The war has uprooted nearly 100,000 ethnic Armenians

see OVERSIGHT, page 12



Dr. Thomas Sinclair, University of Cyprus

## Sinclair Lecture Reveals Interconnectedness of Medieval Armenia

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — On Friday, March 4, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) sponsored a lecture by Dr. Thomas Sinclair, formerly of the University of Cyprus.

Sinclair was a professor of Turkish history in the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies at the university. His most prominent achievement was the 4-volume work, *Eastern Turkey: an Architectural and Archaeological Survey*.

This monumental work, though not the subject of Friday's lecture, is of enormous importance to Armenians, and deserves a brief explanation. This magnum opus details practically every historical and archaeological site in Eastern Turkey, including Roman/Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman, Syriac, Georgian and Armenian sites. The region surveyed includes Van, Mush, Kars, Ani, Tayk, Erzurum, Trebizond/Pontus, Yezinga, Divrig, Sepastia, Tokat, Agn, Arabkir, Kharpert, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Tur Abdin, Urfā, Hromkla, Marash, Aintab, Kilis, Antioch, Iskenderun, and the surrounding areas.

Sinclair's unbiased approach unsurprisingly reveals the deep Armenian roots of most of the regions he covers. The books, published in 1989-1990, are very dry and scholarly, but are invaluable for scholars and would probably be of great use as a reference work for any Armenian wishing to travel to the land of their ancestors and specifically locate important sites; for instance the tomb of St. Gregory the Illuminator, which is on a mountainside near the city of Erzincan (Yezinga to Armenians); Sinclair having visited all these sites gives a sort of guide for backpackers down to the details of what footpath to take to get from one site to another. E-book editions seem to be available for more affordable prices.

### Armenia: Crossroads of Trade Routes

On Friday, March 4, Sinclair took a related topic as the subject of his lecture, namely the interconnectedness of the cities of Medieval Armenia on East-West trade routes. Specifically, he covered the subject matter of his latest book, *Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context*. The book analyzes the itinerary (an ancient and medieval type of travel guide which led you on specific route, giving you all the important stops on the way) written in the 14th century about the route from Ayas in Cilician Armenia to Tabriz in Persia, by one Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, a merchant from Florence who worked for the Compagnia dei Bardi, a Florentine bank.

It would seem that Armenia's position at the "crossroads" of East and West is something that many Armenians don't truly understand. For one thing, it is a part of Armenian history that involves merchants and businessmen, not brave heroes. For another, Armenia's status as a trade nexus no longer exists in large part; Armenia's location in today's geopolitical world causes the country to struggle, not thrive. On the

see LECTURE, page 12

## Richard Melik Simonian Charitable Trust Scholarship

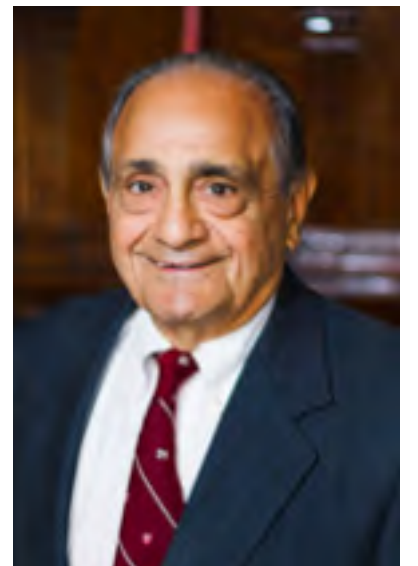
BOSTON — The Scholarship Committee for the Richard M. Simonian Scholarship announces the establishment of this scholarship, open to students of Armenian descent living in or attending school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Awards may be used towards college, graduate school, or higher educational programs. Application deadline is April 15, 2022. Awards will be determined by May 23, 2022.

Requests for applications may be made to Christopher Mitchell at [Cmitchell@chwmlaw.com](mailto:Cmitchell@chwmlaw.com).

Richard "Dick" Simonian, a prominent Worcester attorney and founder of the law firm Simonian and Murray, lived most of his adult life in Worcester, while maintaining a residence in Watertown, MA. Born in New York City to Rose and Avedis Simonian (a Genocide Survivor), he graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard College in 1954 and Columbia Law School in 1958.

A proud Armenian, Simonian was involved in the Armenian communities of Worcester, Watertown, Washington, D.C., and Armenia. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Museum of America and the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief.



Richard Melik Simonian

It was through the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) that he became committed to supporting individual orphans and their pursuit of higher education. He also worked tirelessly to have the United States recognize and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Apart from his serious endeavors, Dick's love of life, sense of humor and great storytelling brought joy to those around him, both young and old.

With education being of utmost importance to Dick, in his lifetime he laid the groundwork for the Richard Melik Simonian Charitable Trust to benefit students in the Armenian communities of Massachusetts by providing scholarships to those most in need. This Trust is currently managed by Michael Murray and Christopher Mitchell, as co-Trustees.





## OBITUARY

## Jeanette Sarkisian Wagner

*Former Estée Lauder Executive Was Instrumental in Internationalizing Company*

By Jenny B. Fine

NEW YORK (wwd.com) — Jeanette Sarkisian Wagner, vice chairman emerita of the Estée Lauder Cos., has died. She was 92.

The cause of death could not be immediately learned.

The first vice chairman of the company, Wagner was instrumental in spearheading Lauder's international expansion as president and chief executive officer of the International Division.

She was named to that role in 1986, and transformed the division from the smallest and least profitable to the largest and most profitable, a position it continues to hold today.

Prior to joining Lauder in 1975, Wagner was editor in chief of all international editions and director of new ventures at the Hearst Corp. She was the first female senior editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* and editor of the *Chicago Daily News*.

At Lauder, she started as vice president, director of marketing for the Estée Lauder brand in the international division, and was named corporate senior vice president in 1982, reporting directly to Leonard A. Lauder, then the chairman and CEO.

Four years later, she assumed oversight of the International Division, where she spearheaded strategy for 11 brands in 100 countries. During her tenure, new concepts were developed, including the first free-standing stores for both the Lauder and Clinique brands, as well as flagship environments in five cities in China and in every major Asia Pacific country.

She was named vice chairman in 1998, where she directed new business developments, including management oversight for acquisitions like MAC, Aveda and Bobbi Brown, and represented the compa-



(JOHN AQUINO PHOTO)

ny in key global associations.

"Jeanette Wagner was not only one of our all-time best hires, she was also one of my all-time favorites," said Lauder, who recalled how he came to hire the executive.

"I remember being in a marketing meeting in Paris to plan the international launch of an important Estée Lauder product. The senior vice president of marketing at the time said, 'And now, So-and-So will give you his opinion.' A wave of horror broke over me as I realized there were no women at the table to share their opinions. I realized we needed to change that immediately," he said.

Lauder returned to New York, and asked Carol Phillips, who was running Clinique, and June Leaman, the head of

creative services, "Who is the smartest woman you know?"

"Each one said, 'Jeanette Wagner,' who at the time was running *Cosmopolitan's* international publications," Lauder said. "The fact that they both came up with the exact same name spoke volumes!"

Lauder called her impact on the company "incredible."

"Her international perspective was truly impressive," he said. "Literally everyone who has ever worked with her or for her came away in awe. She was smart, she was

dedicated, and she was a fantastic leader. I am so grateful for her friendship. I will miss her."

"Jeanette led the way for so many great women in our company and in our industry," said Jane Hertzmark Hudis, executive group president of the Estée Lauder Cos. "A brilliant mind, one of a kind."

"Jeanette was a groundbreaking global business leader," said Sally Susman, who was the chief communication officer at the company from 2000-2008, before moving to Pfizer, where today she is executive vice president, chief corporate affairs officer. "Her passion was opening new markets for the Estée Lauder Companies. I traveled with her to China and saw the respect in which she was held by employees, retailers, government officials and thought leaders there. When I travel, I channel Jeanette with her curiosity and intrepid spirit. 'Jet lag is boring,' she said."

After retiring in 2002, Wagner turned her considerable energies to improving public school education in New York City, serving as secretary of the Board of the Fund for Public Schools during Mayor Michael Bloomberg's term in office. She served on a number of boards, including the New York City Center and the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Library of America Advisory Board and the Harvard Business School Club Board Emerita.

Wagner, who was a champion of women in the workplace throughout her career, also received numerous awards, including the Harvard Business School Alumni Achievement Award in 1999, a CEW Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 and the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2016.

She is survived by a step-daughter, Paula Wagner; cousin Zabelle Vartanian; niece Nicole Vartanian and nephew Garen Vartanian.

## Shakeh Caroline Karamian

*Excellent Cook, Gardener and Dedicated to Family and Church*

WATERTOWN — Shakeh Caroline Karamian passed away on February 26, after a long battle with cancer, at home with her family by her side.

She was born on July 4th 1951 in Tehran, Iran. She was the daughter of the late Arek and Anahid Shahinian. She leaves her husband, Varoujan Karamian, whom she met and fell in love with in Manchester, England, and then married on July 18, 1976, in Tehran, Iran.

She was a loving wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, sister, and friend. All who knew her felt the warmth of her positivity, happy soul, and bright beautiful smile. She had a big heart filled with unconditional love and respect for her family and friends.

Shakeh was a voracious reader of mystery and fantasy novels, and was possibly the world's biggest fan of "Doctor Who" and "Star Trek."

She was an amazing cook, whose famous Napoleon and other pastries delighted friends, family, and her husband's coworkers. Her gardening prowess filled her backyard and deck with tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, and cucumbers throughout the summer.

She was a history buff and sports fan, especially of her favorite Patriots.

Shakeh was a devout Christian, praying



for all of her loved ones daily, and an active member of the Armenian community. She is survived by her husband Varoujan Karamian, son Artin Karamian and his wife Anna, son Oshin Karamian and his wife El-lie, grandsons Aden and Armen Karamian, sister Armineh Papazian and her sons Armen and Aram, and many cousins.

Funeral services were at Saint Stephen's Armenian Church, Watertown, on March 4.

### Donation

Dr. Carolann Najarian and George Najarian donated \$300 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

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OBITUARY

# Tamar Anoush Bucci

## State Trooper Killed While Helping Motorist

BOSTON (Combined Sources) — The state has suspended the license of the truck driver involved in the crash that killed Massachusetts State Police Trooper Tamar Bucci on March 4, WBZ reported.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles on March 5 suspended both the driver's license and commercial license of the gasoline tanker truck driver, a Methuen man, involved in the crash on Interstate 93 in Stoneham that killed Bucci, according to WBZ.

The investigation into the crash is ongoing to determine if criminal charges are warranted, state police spokesperson Dave Procopio told MassLive on Saturday.

The truck driver was also cited for a marked lane violation in New Hampshire in 2018 and was found responsible for a collision in 2019, WBZ reported.

Bucci was killed shortly before midnight Thursday when her cruiser was struck by the gasoline tanker as she tried to pull over to help the driver of a dis-

abled vehicle in the northbound lanes of I-93. She was 34, according to a statement from state police.

The tanker, which is owned by PJ Murphy Transportation, was carrying a full load of 10,000 gallons of gasoline. The force of the impact pushed Bucci's cruiser off the road, authorities said.

Two good Samaritans pulled Bucci from her heavily damaged cruiser, and a Stoneham police officer who came upon the crash scene gave her emergency first aid, including CPR, until EMS arrived and took her to Massachusetts General Hospital, where she was pronounced dead, according to officials.

The driver of the truck was not injured. He has been cooperative and was interviewed by troopers Friday morning, state police said.

The woman who was in the disabled vehicle that Bucci was trying to help was taken to a nearby hospital for evaluation.

Bucci is the 22nd member of state police to die in the line of duty. Her death,

State Police Col. Christopher Mason noted, is a reminder of the dangers that police officers face on a daily basis to protect society.

"The Department is devastated by her loss," Mason said in a statement "We are eternally grateful for the attempts of everyone involved to assist Trooper Bucci and to save her life."



Bucci had been assigned to the Medford state police barracks since last month. Before then, she worked at the Brookfield barracks after graduating from trooper recruit training in May 2020, au-



thorities said.

Tamar Anoush Bucci gave her life in the line of duty while helping a disabled vehicle. Tamar was pronounced deceased at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston where family and thousands of members of Law Enforcement gathered to support their fallen sister.

Tamar was born on March 2, 1988 in Melrose, Mass. and was raised in Andover.

Tamar was strong minded and would march to the beat of her own drum. She lived her life unapologetically with an unwavering commitment to her beliefs and values. Although Tamar aspired to be a State Trooper from a young age, she explored many different careers but never felt fulfilled until she was accepted into the State Police Academy. When Tamar first entered the academy, she knew it was going to be extremely challenging, especially as a female. The 85th RTT was the first class where women were not required to cut their hair. Nevertheless, Tamar was so committed to succeeding, that she cut off 15 inches of her hair after the first week, and anyone that knew Tamar knew this was a huge sacrifice. It was at this point that her family knew nothing was going to stop her from becoming a Massachusetts State Trooper.

On May 6, 2020 at Gillette Stadium, Tamar graduated as a member of the 85th RTT. She began her career at Leominster Barracks then transferred to Brookfield Barracks and most recently Medford Barracks.

Tamar Bucci was the 22nd trooper to fall in the line of duty in Massachusetts.

She is beloved by her mother and stepfather, Maral and Jim Burditt; her father Anthony Bucci; her sister and brother-in-law, Talena and Andrew Lange; her sister, brother-in-law, nephew and niece, Karissa, Brian, Landon and Lenna Holmes; half-brother Dante Bucci and step-siblings Laney and Troy Burditt; grandmothers Rosemarie Keefe and Aroussiak Dakessian; aunt and uncle Mary and Dave Geaslen; aunt and uncle Susan and Toros Vosbigian; aunt Silva Dakessian. She is also survived by many close and loving cousins, friends and thousands of men and women of the Massachusetts State Police.

A Celebration of Trooper Tamar Bucci's life took place on Wednesday, March 9, in Saint Anthony of Padua Church, Revere.

(Mass Live and an obituary were used to compile this report.)



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# An Inspiring Vartanantz Day Commemorated at St. Vartan Cathedral

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — With world attention currently focused on the eruption of yet another war, the Armenian Church's remembrance of the Vartanantz saints on February 24, held a special urgency.

In one of history's earliest conflicts for the defense of Christianity and the preservation of national identity, war was waged between pagan Persia and Christian Armenia in A.D. 451.

Though massively outnumbered, Vartan Mamigonian, the leader of the Armenian forces during the Battle of Avarayr, put up a fierce and courageous resistance, with his 66,000 Armenians facing 300,000 Persian soldiers. While Vartan and more than a thousand Armenian Christian warriors lost their lives, the battle confirmed Christianity as the unshakeable foundation of the Armenian identity.

On Thursday, February 24, this profound chapter of history was remembered at New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral. Presiding over the observance was Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

The Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral, Fr. Davit Karamyan, played a crucial role in planning and organizing the activities of the event, with the participation of the Mid-Atlantic Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

The name day of St. Vartan Cathedral began with a glorious Divine Liturgy, celebrated by the most recently-ordained clergyman in the Eastern Diocese: Fr. Nigoghos Aznavourian, pastor of St. Mark Church, in Springfield, Mass. Fr. Nigoghos is the first American-born deacon ordained to the priesthood by the hand of the Diocese's first American-born Primate, Bishop Daniel. He was also the first priest to be ordained in the Springfield church.

Several Diocesan priests were present, including the Eastern Diocese's Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian, its Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, its Sacred Music Instructor Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian, and distinguished emeritus pastor Fr. Karekin Kasparian.

Deacons from St. Nersess Armenian Seminary also participated. The sacred chants of the badarak were sung by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, directed by Maestro Khoren Mekanejian, with organ accompaniment by Florence Avakian.

Fr. Nigoghos later expressed his deep emotional feelings while performing his badarak at the mother church of the Armenian Diocese, St. Vartan Cathedral, named for the warrior saint. "Holding the Creator of the Universe in your hands as a priest is amazing every time you do it," he said with obvious emotion, in a reference to the sacrament of Holy Communion.

"The cathedral is a special place for the Eastern Diocese, and doing the badarak on the name day of the cathedral is even more special," he added. He thanked Bishop Daniel and the attending priests and deacons who joined in the service.

## A Festive Dinner

Following the service, more than 100 guests attended a festive dinner and program in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium — the first such in-person dinner gathering since the start of the pandemic some two years ago. Bishop Daniel opened the presentation with a meditative prayer.

The dinner's guest of honor was former World champion boxer from Armenia Vic Darchinyan. The keynote speaker was director of the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, Dr. Jesse Ar-

len. A cultural program was presented by young singers and dancers of the "Astghikner" ensemble.

Longtime Knights of Vartan official Edward Barsamian warmly welcomed the attendees, and emphasized the importance of Vartan Mamigonian's preservation of Christianity and "our national identity." He highlighted the role of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan organization in

si. Focusing on Christ's words that, "Whoever loves his wife and children more than me is not worthy of me," Dr. Arlen concentrated on Vartan's message before the Battle of Avarayr to his kinsmen and fighters who were worried about saving the lives of those they loved.

But before that inspiring declaration, Vartan "had chosen the way of deception, feigning abandonment of Christ and

All this, he continued, "means to take off your armor, and grip the cross at the center of yourself."

"Vartan overcame the deceptive inner desires urging him toward self-preservation and self-protection at the expense of the highest good." The result, said Dr. Arlen, was Vartan's victory. "The halo glows again behind his head" — as seen in that powerful sculpture etched on the front wall of St. Vartan Cathedral.

We all fight a similar battle every day, Arlen reflected. "But this is the way to pick up your cross and follow the way of Christ. May each of us become the warrior saint who wins the inner battle," he said in conclusion to loud applause.

In the cultural presentation, gifted and accomplished violinist Diana Vasilyan delighted the audience with several musical selections. And the vocal ensemble of the Brooklyn Mission parish, soloists of the "Astghikner" group, Viktorya Astvatsatryan and Ilona Dianna Sargsyan, sang emotional songs, and danced gracefully to songs dedicated to St. Vartan. Lina Panfilova accompanied the performers, and Maria Sahakyan, the artistic director of the "Astghikner" Ensemble planned and directed the artistic program.

## Inspiring Remarks

Closing the impressive evening, Bishop Daniel paid tribute to Fr. Davit and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan for organizing the special event after more than two years of absence due to the pandemic. "Today," he stated, "was an evening of reflection on the meaning of Vartanantz."

He expressed special appreciation to Vic Darchinyan and Hayk Ghukasyan for their presence. "Armenia is and will always be our Hayrenik," he said with emphasis to applause and cheering. "Every moment of life is not planned in advance. God gives us insight to see that we are all connected."

The Primate said emphasized that Vartanantz is primarily a Christian celebration, and that the only two historians to have



At New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, Fr. Nigoghos Aznavourian celebrated the liturgy on the Feast of St. Vartan, on Feb. 24, 2022. (Photo Credit Diran Jebejian)

building churches, schools and cultural centers in America, and its central role in the founding and construction of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral.

Barsamian also announced that the April 24 commemoration of the Genocide at Times Square in New York will take place this year on Sunday, April 24. He urged all to be present to honor the saints whose lives were sacrificed—and to again inform Americans of this fateful occurrence.

## Guest of Honor

For everyone present, it was a delight to share the occasion with nine-time world boxing champion Vic Darchinyan. In his remarks, Darchinyan, the first Armenian to achieve this honor, confessed that he had, in fact, once lost a boxing match. "But I never gave up," he added with pride; and shortly thereafter he won five consecutive victories. Currently, he has signed a contract in the United States to further his boxing passion.

"Our country recently lost the war, but we will win again!" he loudly proclaimed to a long standing ovation.

Hayk Ghukasyan, president of Armenia's Professional Arm Fighting Federation, who had accompanied famed boxer Vic Darchinyan to the United States, asked the crowd to stand for a moment of silence to honor the war dead in the fighting in Artsakh.

He spoke about the importance of sports, and stressed the significance of the Armenian diaspora to the people in Armenia and Artsakh, "who bravely defended our country. It is through you, the diaspora, that we were able to keep our Armenians safe in the homeland," he stated with appreciation.

"We will never lose Armenia," he strongly declared to another standing ovation.

## A Profound Reflection

In a reflective keynote address, Dr. Jesse Arlen, director of the Zohrab Information Center at the Diocese, concentrated on Vartan Mamigonian's agony as revealed in the lesser known "History" by Ghazar Parbet-

accepting Zoroastrianism." Called to the Persian court to face the pagan King Yazgerd in the time before the Persian-Armenian conflict erupted into war, Vartan has sided with his fellow nakharars (Armenian nobles), whose first instinct was to protect the families and those they loved, and who therefore pretended conversion to the Persian religion.

However, Vartan soon discovered that the road he had chosen was almost total-



Speakers during St. Vartan Cathedral's Vartanantz Day celebration on Feb. 24, 2022, included (l-r) Dr. Jesse Arlen, director of the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center; former world champion boxer from Armenia Vic Darchinyan; Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel; and Hayk Ghukasyan, president of Armenia's Professional Fighting Federation. (Photo Credit Diran Jebejian)

ly rejected by his family, servants and all around him.

"It's this inner battle that was the most difficult one that Vartan fought: the war he waged within himself," Arlen said. "And after the initial defeat at the Persian court, it's from this inner battle that he emerged victorious, when he decided that no matter the cost or outcome, he would follow the way that he knew deep down within him to be right, which meant accepting his own mortality, and facing death in battle."

preserved this history (Ghazar Parbetsi and Yeghishe Vartabed) were devout Christians. He said St. Vartan's struggles show that the "hard route will be chosen for the ultimate truth. And we Armenian Christians will seek the truth as Vartan did! We pray for all those who pray and seek the truth."

The Primate then asked St. Nersess Seminary Deacon Yervant Kutchukian to join him in the final prayer, as the crowd stood and together sang the "Hayr Mer."





COMMUNITY NEWS



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# Sinclair Lecture Reveals Interconnectedness of Medieval Armenia

LECTURE, from page 7

other hand, as Sinclair’s lecture teaches us, political events can also drastically change the flow of trade, and the current war in Ukraine is already having some interesting effects, the outcome of which remain to be seen.

Sinclair began his lecture by discussing the history of the East-West trade route. Most Western schoolchildren at some point are taught that there was once something known as the “overland route” to China and “the Indies;” they learn this route was difficult, and that’s why Columbus tried sailing west to get to the East. Few of us, including those of Armenian descent, seem to know the details of such a route. We might know that Marco Polo travelled that route. But do we know that Marco Polo went through Armenia? And do we know that not only Marco Polo, but multitudes of merchants and travelers went through Armenia?

Sinclair, using the “Pegolotti Itinerary” as a starting point, focused on trade in the region during the period of the Il-Khanate. The Il-Khanate was an empire that originated when Hulagu, grandson of Genghis Khan, inherited the Middle Eastern portion of the Mongol Empire upon the death of his brother, Möngke Khan, in 1259. The Empire’s capital was at Tabriz, and the Mongol rulers, who eventually converted to Islam, presented themselves as the heirs to the monarchy of ancient Persia, ruling over a vast region that also included Historic Armenia.

Northwestern Armenia had still been under the rule of the Seljuks in Western Asia Minor during the early 1200s, Sinclair related. Then the Mongol Empire took over, immediately succeeded in the region by the Il-Khanate. Before the Mongol conquest, the primary route from Europe to East Asia was a southerly one that passed through Syria and northern Mesopotamia. When the Mongols raided Upper Mesopotamia, and today’s Syrian-Iraqi region was further destabilized by continuous warfare between the Mongols and the Mamluks (a caste of Turkish speaking former slave warriors who ruled Egypt and Syria), the southerly route became unusable and East-West trade had to proceed elsewhere.

The new route passed through Cilicia and Historic Armenia. In broad terms, the Med-

iterranean port of Ayas (adjacent to Adana in Cilician Armenia) was the embarkation point for ships from Europe; merchants then went overland through Sivas (Sepastia), Erzurum (Garin), and reached Tabriz, the primary commercial center and capital of the Il-Khanate.

The Pegolotti Itinerary is a guide for merchants describing the route taken from Ayas in Cilician Armenia to Tabriz in Persia. Various tolls had to be paid by the merchants along the way. Although the Pegolotti Itinerary was written in Florentine Italian and apparently intended for the information of European traders, most of the merchants on the route would have been locals, mainly Armenians, says Sinclair. This route was in use throughout the Il-Khanate period, which

Seljuks had made a tremendous investment in building projects such as *madrassas* and mosques, which are still standing; the Armenian churches, of which there were over five by the late Ottoman period, are no more.

The route passed east through the valley of the Kizilirmak (Armenian: Alis, Classical Greek: Halys) mentioning a place called “Dudriaga” (the Armenian village of Todorag), and then up into the “yayla” (upland plain) where the Alis River begins, from whence the route goes north through the mountains into the valley of the Kelkit Çay (a Turkish name derived from the Armenian “Kayl Ked” or Wolf River). The next stop was a town in that valley known to the Greeks and Romans as Nicopolis, but which Pegolotti called “Greboco”. Sinclair

upland plain, which seems to be a detour. Again, this was done because the more “direct route” (as the crow flies) went through mountains that were more difficult to pass. In this small, sparsely populated area there were two toll stations mentioned by Pegolotti.

Continuing through that region the route returns from its “detour” to the regular line described in the Roman itineraries, which takes the traveler to the Plain of Alashkert. The route stops at a place Pegolotti called “Calacresti” (Karakilise, the modern Agri, which is the market town of the area), and passes through the plains on the southwest side of Mt. Ararat, which Pegolotti calls “Sotto l’Arcanoe” (“Beneath the Ark of Noah”). The route then progresses easily through a series of plains to Khoy and then Tabriz.

The city of Tabriz had witnessed an extraordinary expansion in this period. A new city wall was built under the Il-Khanids to accommodate the expansion. There were five main gates, and inside each there was a caravanserai, a shopping complex and a *hamam* (public bath). Tabriz had relatively large communities of Genoese and Venetians merchants as well as those of four other Italian cities. There was an Armenian element, and also a Nestorian element.

### Conclusion

Sinclair drew various conclusions from his analysis. The route was chosen not for directness but for ease of travel, although it does go through commercial centers. The impact on cities was immense, particularly Sivas and Ayas which were boom towns in this period. Finally, he mentions that the “Ayas Road” was actually one of the most important, if not the most important of its time.

There were other East-West routes such as the one through Trebizond, which was not as popular. There were two major ports on the Black Sea, Caffa (in Crimea) and Tana, which led to a northerly route through the Eurasian Steppe to China. That route sustained some large cities, and was important because of the slave trade of the time. Slaves were captured in today’s Ukraine and sold in the Mamluk Kingdom of Egypt (whose ruling class were also composed of former slaves). There was also the route going from Egypt through the Red Sea to India and the East, which was commonly used for the spice trade, but it didn’t have as high of a volume. Therefore, the Ayas route stands out among the others.

Sinclair also mentioned that the use of silver currency increased at this time, because the items being sent from Asia, though lighter and easier to carry, were of higher value (i.e. spices, silk) than what was exported from Europe (i.e. iron, soap). Silver currency was needed to make up the monetary difference, which required a flow of silver to Ayas.

There were various changes in the trade routes that took place thanks to political fluctuations and warfare. For instance, prior to the Cilician period, trade went from Sivas north to the Black Sea at Sinop. Although the Trebizond connection was important at the time of Pegolotti, later it was superseded by Bursa, which is closer to Istanbul. The route through Aleppo from Upper Mesopotamia was almost forgotten until the city revived in the late 1400s, and so on.

Sinclair stated that the study of these trade routes and medieval geography is also the study of society at that time. The nature of money was different, and the nature of travel was different, he stated, and by understanding cities and roads, one can understand its society.

To purchase a copy of *Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: Pegolotti’s Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context* by Sinclair visit amazon or routledge.com.



Map of the Ilkhanate, showing Armenian Cilicia as part of the empire, as well as Sivas, Erzinjan, Erzurum, and Tabriz

lasted until the Black Plague of the 1330s, and apparently ended when the Mamluks conquered Ayas from the Armenians in 1337, which was incidentally around the time that Pegolotti wrote his book.

### Deciphering a Medieval Text

According to Sinclair, the major difficulty with using this itinerary to establish the trade route is that the names are extremely distorted. Sometimes they are even based on place names given in earlier Roman-era travel guides, and in all cases, they have been Italianized. Another problem is that there are no distances given in the guide. Nevertheless, Sinclair has tried to reconstruct Pegolotti’s route.

Sinclair took the listeners on a journey through the route. The trip starts in Ayas, a port city on the Mediterranean which was built up during the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

The next stop was the present-day town of Kadirli, referred to as “Colidara” by Pegolotti. This was a walled city that dated back to the Roman era. The toll to paid there was four times as much as normal, because one was leaving Armenian Cilicia and entering Mongol-ruled territory.

The route passed through the Taurus mountains in the northern part of Cilicia (rather than the “Cilician Gates” to the west) and arrived at Gandon (Roman-era Comana and modern day Şar.) From there the route stopped at several Seljuk-era *caravanserais* in the area between Kayseri (Armenian Gesaria, which the route bypassed) and the next major destination of Sivas.

Sivas, known to Armenians as Sepastia, was referred to by Pegolotti as “Salvastro.” According to Sinclair, though there was a large Armenian community there, at the time they only had one church in the city, and the Monastery of the Holy Sign (Soorp Nshan) to the south of the city center. The

explained that the Armenians called this place “Aghpiurk” (springs) which is where “Greboco” comes from, and that the modern Turkish name of the village, “Pürk” is derived from the Armenian.

The road continued through relatively easy country in the Sushehri Valley, but while the modern road continues due east from there, in Pegolotti’s time this was difficult and “savage” country, and so he diverged, travelling south through the mountains to Kemakh, which he referred to as “Mughisar.” This was a fortress built on the cliffs high above the valley of the Upper Euphrates.

The next stage of the journey took the path of an old Roman road, built, according to Sinclair, when Rome first acquired Armenia (in the late 4th century AD). The Romans later pulled out of the region, and the road was forgotten, but the obvious traces of a paved road still exist. The road leads from Kemakh to Erzincan (Yerzinga in Armenian), which Pegolotti called “Eriza.” This was the “most Armenian” of the cities thus far, according to Sinclair. Its layout was originally a grid in the Roman style; it had markets, churches, monasteries, and was full of Armenian merchants, according to a Spanish source.

After Erzincan, the path follows the Upper Euphrates. The path crosses a bridge and passes through the village of Pagarich before getting to the Plain of Erzurum.

Despite the fact that Erzurum was a thriving city and was at the intersection of the Ayas-Tabriz trade route and was even visited by Marco Polo, there is some mystery surrounding it in the available texts. Sinclair attributes Erzurum’s unclear status to the fact that the Il-Khans did not always have control over the city.

The route then goes eastward through the plains and south through mountains to an

## Menendez Asks for Increased Oversight in Wake of US Assistance To Azerbaijan

OVERSIGHT, from page 7

who lost their homes and livelihoods.

Specifically, the GAO found that:

- State’s reporting to Congress from FY 2014-FY 2021 did not address required elements, including the impact on proposed assistance on the military balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

- State’s Memorandums of Justification contained limited or no details regarding quantity of assistance, status of the military balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the impact of U.S. assistance on the military balance, or the impact of the assistance on peace negotiations.

- State’s 2021 guidance did not provide detailed instructions to agencies about reporting requirements to Congress.

- State and DOD did not document their consideration of waiver requirements from FY 2014-FY 2020, including how they determined assistance would not be used for offensive purposes against Armenia.





# Arts & Culture

## Martha Argerich And Sergei Babayan, Wigmore Hall, Review: Unshakeable Virtuosity

By Jessica Duchen

LONDON (Inews.co.uk) There are some sounds that normally come out of a piano. There are others that don't. For those you need a pianist of the caliber of Martha Argerich.

She is a one-off, regarded by many as today's greatest pianist – but she rarely performs alone, so the opportunity to hear her in a two-pianos concert with her distinguished Armenian-American colleague Sergei Babayan brought pianophiles scurrying from far and wide. (One page-turner came in specially from Cleveland, Ohio.)

Argerich, who is 80, looks slightly frail on stage, but her playing is quite the reverse, the virtuosity unshakeable and the phrasing youthfully fresh.

On the program on February 27, three quarters was devoted to Prokofiev in arrangements by Babayan: opening with extracts from the *Romeo and Juliet* ballet score, closing



Sergei Babayan

with rarely heard music he composed for theatrical productions of *Hamlet*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, and *War and Peace*. Sandwiched in between was Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos, which here got the performance of its long life, playful, affectionate and adorable.

Argerich and Babayan sat side by side in the centre of the platform, facing opposite directions, a reversal of the usual two-pianos concert placement. The upside was probably their ease of communication; the downside was that for most of the performance, Argerich was only partly visible behind her partner.

The theatre music itself contained stunning moments: dance numbers steeped in Prokofiev's acidic flavors were framed by two pieces – *The Ghost of Hamlet's Father* and *Idée Fixe*, a portrait of the hero's terrifying obsession with “three cards” in Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* – which proved that nobody does cold, terrifying and inexorable as well as Russian composers (Prokofiev was born in Ukraine, but ended his days a broken man in the USSR).

The heat had been on, though, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the commission which had tempted Prokofiev see VIRTUOSITY, page 17



Rev. Torkom Chorbajian of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Worcester blessed the khachkar in a ceremony attended by Museum President Michele Kolligian (pictured) and Trustee Steve Migridichian.

## New Exhibits Unveiled on Armenian Cartography And the Art of the *Khachkar*

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America recently announced the opening of two new exhibitions in its galleries. The first, “The Art of the Armenian Khachkar,” was curated by Helen C. Evans, an academic advisor to the museum who is the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator of Byzantine Art Emerita at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The second exhibition, “Merchants and Maps,” highlights 17 original maps from the museum's collection that illustrate Armenian cartography from the 1600s to the 1900s.

The *khachkar*, which means “cross stone,” is recognized worldwide as a symbol of the Armenian people. In 2010, UNESCO placed *khachkars* on the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since the 9th century, Armenians have used *khachkars* as memorials to people and events. Over the centuries, their designs became increasingly elaborate and some even became venerated as miracle-working objects, notes Dr. Evans in the exhibit text.

The *khachkar* on display has a unique history. It was carved from tuff by Vanadzor-based sculptor Bogdan Hovhannisyan. The 630-pound slab of volcanic stone was shipped from Armenia to Washington, DC, where it was carved during the Smithsonian Folklife Festival held on the National Mall. The 2018 event, “Armenia: Creating Home,” presented traditional crafts and foods integral to the identity of the Armenian people.

“The Armenian Museum was excited to acquire this piece from the Smithsonian Institution because we wanted to highlight the artistry of the *khachkar*. We wanted an authentic piece,” noted Executive Director Jason Sohigian, “but we did not want to remove a *khachkar* from its historical location in Armenia. This work has everything going for it because it is intricately carved, and Bogdan is a master carver continuing a tradition of Armenian artisans who have been making *khachkars* for more than 1,000 years.”

This exhibition is sponsored by Garabed and Aghavny Tovmassian-Kasparian of Worcester, who provided a leadership gift in honor of their ancestors who were survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Mrs. Tovmassian sadly passed away this week, and the *khachkar* was blessed in a ceremony at the Museum by her pastor, Rev. Fr. Torkom Chorbajian.

Turning to the cartography exhibition, Curator Gary Lind-Sinianian explains that the art of map-making combines the disciplines of science, history, geography, and artistic calligraphy to depict a three-dimensional world in a two-dimensional form. In recent centuries, people rarely traveled further than 50 miles from their birthplace, so maps provided a glimpse of a vast unknown world of mystery and imagination.

Half of the maps in this new exhibition were produced in Venice by the Mekhitarist Order on the Island of San Lazzaro and were donated by Paul and Vicki Bedoukian. Extensive family networks and a gift for languages allowed Armenian merchants to dominate trade to Southeast Asia for centuries, adds Lind-Sinianian. This trade network understood the value of detailed maps, and many of the world maps on display are in the Armenian language. One large map is from the collection of Arakel Almasian, who is a long-time trustee of the museum.

This exhibition is supported by a donation made in memory of Alice and John Alabilikian.

## Books

## Born in Exile:

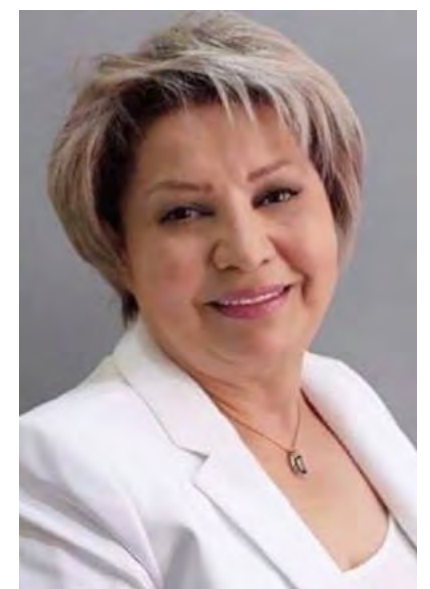
Sona Karakhanyan  
Tells Her Story in a  
New Book

By Ani Duzdabanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — For more than 50 years, Sona Karakhanyan couldn't remember anything about her own life as an exile in Siberia. She thinks that it was a trick that her brain played in order to protect her from the horror of the past. When her father, Abraham Karakhanyan was speaking about his experience, his recollections of her family's life, she would listen and memorize them: but, somehow, these memories weren't hers.

In 2007 Sona was watching a television show where a woman was familiarly wrapped in a shawl made of wool. That scene instantly took her back to her childhood when she was 4 or 5 years old, didn't have warm



Sona Karakhanyan

clothes and her grandmother would wrap her in a similar shawl while taking her outside to the village inhabited by exiled families in the blue frost of Siberia.

She said, “I remembered everything, the house, people, their faces...I remember how they would give me raspberries gathered in the woods and placed in a folded paper bowl. I remember my cousin, who was in exile with us. Those were unpleasant memories. How can you remember that you didn't have a shoe...”

Sona pauses for a second. I can see her eyes filling with tears and drifting far away from Los Angeles, from me, from our conversation. Then she is back. She remembers her grandmother who would squeeze her grandchildren to her chest and tell them tales from her past life filled with glory, and ardor, hope for salvation and better days ahead.

see EXILE, page 16





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## From Feast in the Middle East: Blanche Shaheen's Egyptian Balela Salad

Blanche Shaheen is a successful Arab-American network television host and reporter in both entertainment and news. She reported live daily on the ABC entertainment program "View from the Bay," hosted the independent film show "Video I" for PBS for 10 years, reported news for Tech TV's "Tech Live," and hosted numerous news and political programs for Link Media.

Blanche made the transition to writing and hosting her own cooking show in 2010, and decided to share hundreds of treasured family recipes that had been preserved by her mother and grandmother for years. These were her family's heirloom recipes handed down, from one generation to the next, recipes that many cookbooks and culinary schools lacked – however, there were no written measurements. With her journalism background, she decided to document these recipes in an ongoing cookbook, and Feast in the Middle East was born (<https://feastinthemiddleeast.com/>).

*Balela* (pronounced *bah-lay-la*) is the Arabic term for cooked chickpeas. "This means the chickpeas are cooked, but the other ingredients are raw. It creates a colorful salad with a good mix of textures and flavors," says Blanche. "There are other variations of this recipe according to family and regional traditions. It is a country salad that exists in some form or another in many cultures worldwide."

"In my video, I explored how this salad takes a dramatic turn in North Africa, particularly in Egypt. The unique additions to this salad include: cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, and basil, as well as protein-packed chickpeas. Olives add a dose of healthy fats, the way apple cider vinegar adds a tangy addition to the olive oil-based vinaigrette. I adore sweet cherry tomatoes, especially this time of year. The addition of basil is unique as well, as generally Arab cuisine focuses more on mint or parsley rather than basil. Olives, olive oil, black beans, and chickpeas add a hearty texture and good healthy fats, rendering this a simple weeknight meal for vegans," she adds.

A final dusting of sumac adds a lemony flavor and beautiful color to this salad. Sumac comes from dried and coarsely-ground berries which have a sour, citrusy flavor. The berries are widely used throughout Middle Eastern cuisine. (<https://www.thespruceeats.com/what-is-sumac-1763131>)

"This wholesome, nutrition-packed salad can easily be turned into a meal. Serve it in warm pita pockets with a drizzle of tahini or yogurt. Or add it to an impressive vegetarian mezze platter with baba ghanoush and roasted red pepper hummus. And you can put this salad in a pita or sandwich wrap for a heartier meal," adds Blanche.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced in half  
1 medium bell pepper, (red, orange, or yellow), seeded and chopped  
3/4 cup canned black beans (rinsed)  
3/4 cup canned chickpeas (rinsed)  
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

### DRESSING:

1 teaspoon sumac  
1 garlic clove, finely minced  
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, to taste  
1/4 cup good quality olive oil, to taste  
6-8 basil leaves, finely sliced

Serves 4.

### PREPARATION:

In a bowl, combine the tomatoes, pepper, black beans, chickpeas, parsley, salt to taste, and basil. When ready to serve, put the dressing ingredients in a jar and shake together. Pour some dressing over the salad, as desired. Sprinkle with more sumac.

Notes from Blanche: Parsley adds a clean, green, slightly peppery flavor to many dishes and it's used a lot in Middle Eastern cuisine. Once assembled, this salad will keep in a sealed container in the fridge for four to five days. Take it out an hour before you want to serve it, as it's best enjoyed at room temperature.

For this recipe, go to: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.com/tag/vegan-vegetarian/page/2/>

For this video, go to: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.com/2019/08/07/summer-salad-series-part-2-egyptian-balela-salad/>

For Blanche's outstanding Middle Eastern Kitchen Products, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/shop/blanchetv>

For more amazing how-to-videos from BlancheTV, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7ghcBe7PIrF6nh7xndilzg>

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If you have a product you think would be a good fit for the thousands of viewers of Feast in the Middle East, please feel free to email Blanche for more information. She works with brands she is passionate about, and companies she's worked with in the past include: Ziyad, Cortas, Ridha Naturals, Harvest Peace Olive Oil, Levant Blends Coffee, Sadaf, Sea of Herbs, Antler Farms, Ambrosiac Salep, MVMT, Draeger's Markets, Thrive Market, Keto Box and Wilton Armetale.

Blanche specializes in Arab cuisine of the Levant and beyond. You can check out her cooking video tutorials and cultural commentary on growing up Arab American at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/blanchetv>. Her recipes can also be found at <https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress.com/>. She has been featured on NBC's "California Live," BBC World News, KQED's "Check Please" program, NPR radio, the *Palo Alto Weekly*, the *Los Altos Crier*, the *Mountain View Voice*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and the Rumi Awards show she hosted for an international audience.

ORDER: *Feast In The Middle East – A Personal Journey of Family and Cuisine* by Blanche Araj Shaheen, go to: [https://secure.mybookorders.com/mbo\\_index.php?isbn=9781545675113](https://secure.mybookorders.com/mbo_index.php?isbn=9781545675113)

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INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/blanchetv/?hl=en>

MY BLOG: <https://feastinthemiddleeast.wordpress>

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Vartan Garabedian

## ‘Let’s Start to Help Armenia From Within!’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / VÄSTERVIK, Sweden — Vartan Garabedian is a musician, born in 1986 in Beirut. He studied at Armenian schools in Beirut — the Yeghishe Manoukian High School and Souren Khanamirian College. Later, he studied at the Polyglot Technical College of Beirut.

He lived in Romania, and from 2006 to 2010, he was the site manager at P.A.B. Romania construction company in Arad; in 2011-2015 he was the drummer with the band Grimegod in Arad, while in 2013-2016 he played with the Negură Bunget black metal band in Timisoara, also working as the basketball coach of Valbon team. Now Vartan lives in Västermik in Sweden with his Italian wife and newborn son, working as the senior site manager of Renovation of Sweden AB construction company.

**Vartan, your biography says you were first interested in drums at the age of four. How so?**

I was even younger when I started hitting on my mother’s saucepans. One day my grandmother was present when I started making noises on the pots, so on my birthday I received my first drum set as a gift from my grandmother. It all started there, and I have been playing for 30 years.

**You lived for about ten years in Romania. Why did you go there and were you part of Romanian-Armenian community life?**

I went to Romania at the end of 2005. There was a construction company I started working with. I lived in the city of Arad, which has an interesting Armenian history. Two hundred and fifty years ago, when the Turks arrived there, there were also Armenians with them. There is a river in Arad, the water of which was very abundant. There is an old man in Arad who still lives there. His name is Grig Nazarian. I learned from him that 240 years ago that the Armenians who remained in Arad named the city after the abundant (*arad* in Armenian) water of the river. It is not something he invented himself, but he read it in a Romanian book published more than 100 years ago. Today’s Romanian-Armenians are descendants of those who came after the Genocide in Ottoman Empire, most of them do not speak Armenian, but their love of Armenia is very real. Wherever you meet Romanian-Armenians, their eyes fill with joy when they know that the other person is Armenian.

**Was it difficult to exchange the lively Armenian community life of Beirut with a European country with few Armenians?**

It is a very smart and psychological question. When I was in Romania for the first time, Armenianness was like a fire in me. I would like to know where there are Armenians, where there will be Armenian events, and so on. But time passes, this fire gradually dies in you, so when you will not find many Armenians around you, you will slowly start to look at your life. And this Armenianness remains in me, in my family. But I would always like to tell those who work with me who the Armenians are. It was my wish to introduce my people to the foreigners.

**How would you describe the Romanian rock scene? Are Romanian rock songs popular or the audience prefer English songs?**

Romanian rock is very underrated. There are many rock groups, they deserved to be in mainstream, but unfortunately because Romania is not that good country economically, it is affecting even on rock scene. All agents of rock groups in Romania are independent, and they are underestimated too. Some bands sing in English, some in Romanian. I can mention Dordeduh spiritual black metal rock band from Timisoara, one of my favorite Romanian bands. Rock band Cargo also has very nice music, singing mainly in Romanian. There is another newly created band called Sur Austru, and finally I would add to this list another band from Timisoara, Ordinul Negru, also performing a very pleasant music. But as I already said, all Romanian rock bands are very underrated.

**Well, hopefully one day the world will discover Romanian rock. Please tell us about the Dzar project.**

I had planned Dzar (tree in Armenian) with my former Negura Bunget colleague Gabriel Mafa, after whose death my friend Petre Ionutescu and I decided to form the Dzar group. Our plans are very big, but time is against us. I hope that 2022 will allow me to complete some unfinished projects, the first of which is Dzar. Why did we name it a tree? The tree has three phases: you plant it, you water it, and finally the tree grows. In accordance with these three phases, we decided to make three albums. The first one should consist of only the music of Komitas Vardapet, but with Romanian instruments. The



second one should be Romanian music with Armenian instruments and the third album, where the tree finally appears, will be a mixture of Armenian and Romanian music.

**What is happening with your experimental music project of recording classical Armenian themes that you initiated with Petre Ionutescu?**

In Arad we recorded three of the six songs we decided on. And since Petrich, as we call Petre, and I both became fathers this year, we kept our recordings for the time being. We hope to meet again in Romania or Sweden and get back to work.

**Last March you were involved in Romanian B-Ton rock band’s project of recording of their version of System of a Down’s song, *Protect your Land* to raise awareness about the recent war in Armenia. It was unexpected and touching from. Could you please speak about it?**

I got a phone call from my friend, the founder of B-Ton, an activist guy. He knew the situation in Artsakh and Armenia and offered me to play a song from System of a Down with them, as one of the most famous Armenian rock bands. We chose *Protect your Land* without hesitating, because at that time we could not do anything but defend the country, which, unfortunately, we could not do. And we did the recording and the video in about two weeks. But because the Romanians do not pay much attention to the cover band, it has been spread only in some regions of Romania. That was not our goal: this work gave me and my friends satisfaction, I wanted to do something for my country, my nation and make my voice heard about Armenia in Romania.

**In a recent interview you said: “The Armenians will never give up the thought of returning home, to a small and beautiful country, the most beautiful one on earth, but which could never**

**have peace because of their enemies.” So do you also think about returning?**

Yes, of course. People think that Armenians living elsewhere are happy people. That is completely wrong. Wherever you are, you will speak the local language and you are a foreigner, no matter if you have German, Swedish or American citizenship. It is a dream for me to return to Armenia, it is a great pleasure to live there, but in order for that to happen, a decision must be made. I have not made a decision yet; it depends on me. As we say in Armenian, let it be late, let it be sweet, but this one thing will not be late. I see myself established in Armenia before I am 40. A big problem for us Armenians is that we love to help our country from afar. It would be very good for the Armenians to start helping their homeland within Armenia. I will prove my words after a couple of years, when we drink coffee sitting in Yerevan together. So let’s start to help Armenia from within!

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ARTS & CULTURE

# Sona Karakhanyan Tells Her Story in a New Book

EXILE, from page 13

Abraham Karakhanyan was the son of Fr. Hovsep Karakhanyan, the priest at the Saint Gevorg Church in Charmahal province in Iran. He used to be a senior supervisor in the Armenian schools of Charmahal and also held a higher position at the English oil company IPEOC in the south of Iran. When the second wave of the big Repatriation started in 1946, Fr. Hovsep was in Bombay as a missionary, and Abraham decided to join thousands of Armenians in Iran who were granted the opportunity to build a new life in the homeland.

The Karakhanyan family — Abraham with his mother, wife, two daughters, son and a nephew — moved to Sisian, Armenia.

Abraham was an active member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a fact that Sona thinks played a role in his future struggles.

A few years later, in June 14, 1949, Abraham and his family were convicted and forcefully sent to Altai region in Siberia to fulfill a life sentence on charges of treason to the homeland. They returned to Armenia only after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1955. Their case was dismissed in 1966 “due to lack of evidence” as it states the official court order.

In her new book, *Apology*, Sona Karakhanyan, who was born in the exile in Siberia and is the only Karakhanyan family member who doesn’t hold the status of a repressed person, vividly describes the village and the life of her exiled family recollected from her own memories and those of her sisters, mother and father. Her brother never talked about Siberia.

She said, “The houses in the village were made of mud. They had wooden covers and roofs and were half-buried in the ground which helped to keep the houses warmer during winter frost and storm.... Oil lamps were the only source of light and oil was very hard to find. The homes were linked to one another with a rope as it helped people navigate during the typical white-out



ficiency,” adds Sona.

When Sona’s brother was 10 or 11, he suffered from a severe case of peritonitis and had to be rushed to the hospital. After finally getting permission from the commissioner (without which it was impossible to do anything) to take his son to the nearest hospital in the regional center which was 18 kilometers away, Abraham found a horse and a carriage. They arrived at the hospital, and the doctor who treated him eventually took all their money. The Gharakhanyans took about 18 old rugs with them and traded them for half a sack of rotten potatoes with that same doctor who realized that they would do anything to avoid starvation. They would even cook and eat the potato skin. “We were one of the few families in Siberia who didn’t lose a member. And that was also because of the wealth we had and the inheritance that my father received after my grandfather’s death in 1952,” remembers Sona.

After returning to Armenia, Abraham Karakhanyan dedicated his life to collecting ethnographic data of Charmahal Province. His work is in the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. He also published a book called *Armenian Dialect of Charmahal* kept in the same Academy. In 1982 Abraham Karakhanyan started and

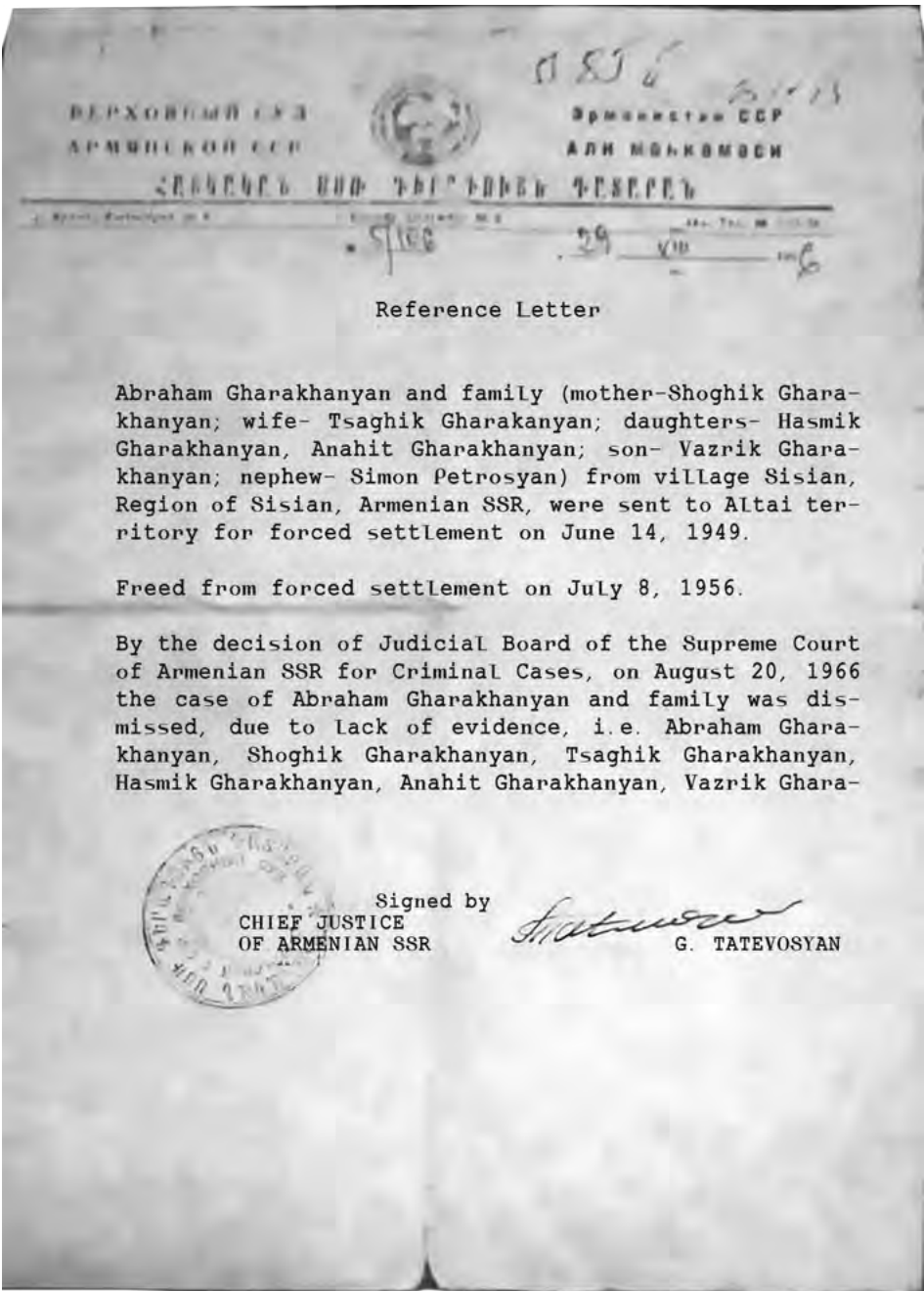
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Very Rev. Hovsep Karakhanyan

blizzards. When the snow melted in spring it was not uncommon to find the bodies of those who had frozen to death—those who had lost their way during the harsh winter.”

Sona asks me if she can show me a picture. She brings an old photo where her sister is wearing her father’s boots that are huge on her tiny feet, and Sona is barefoot, her feet wrapped in a fabric. “My legs were somehow crooked because of a vitamin de-



Legal decision letter clearing the Karakhanyans of all charges





Hasmik and Sona Karakhanyan

## Sona Karakhanyan Tells Her Story

from previous page

directed an award-winning dance ensemble, named Charmahal.

In 1984 Abraham and his wife were granted an invitation to visit Iran where he could finally ask for forgiveness at the grave of his father. “My father was always saying that he has to go back to Iran and ask for an apology at the grave of his father. Every time in his dream Fr. Hovsep would come to him and wouldn’t forgive him for leaving Iran and taking his family away,” remembers Sona.

*Apology* takes the reader through the history of an entire family by exploring the depth of a guilt first experienced by

Abraham towards his own father for leaving him. The theme of the apology evolves to the court hearings and comes to the culmination when Sona’s father forgives the Soviets for his exile, something her mother never did.

“Have you been able to forgive?” My last question makes Sona think out loud about all the deprivations and hardship that she went through. She remembers her mother who cried until her last days. “I did forgive,” her words come hesitantly. “Yes... I did. I did it to feel relieved. I forgave them while writing my first book and remembering all the details. I did it and I am happy,” now Sona adds, sounding certain.

## Martha Argerich and Sergei Babayan, Wigmore Hall, review: Unshakeable virtuosity

VIRTUOSITY, from page 13  
back from Paris to Moscow in the mid 1930s. Babayan’s arrangement found the pianists throwing backwards and forwards between them the scampering of the young Juliet, the irresistible rhythms of the morning market and the mandolin dance, and the dazzling swordfights with their violent ends.

With Argerich’s unique tone offering a sustained songfulness resembling a magical string section beside Babayan’s pointillist-bright touch, together they could match a full orchestra, or more.

As Romeo and Juliet bade each other farewell in music surging through waves of emotion “as boundless as the sea”, those pianos stopped singing and absolutely roared.



Martha Argerich (DW photo)

# 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/>

### MASSACHUSETTS

**MARCH 24** — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents Zoom talk with Nare Filiposyan, “(Re)Turn to Stone: Preserving an Armenian Culture of Stone Masonry, with Q&A moderated by Ted Touloukian, 8-9 p.m. For information, email [bostontca@gmail.com](mailto:bostontca@gmail.com). Register at <https://bit.ly/TCAMarch24>

**MARCH 25** — Amaras Arts Alliance presents an in-person concert dedicated to three major Armenian composers, Edward Mirzoyan, Alexander Harutunian and Arno Babajanian, titled “Three Armenian Composers, Three Centennials.” The concert will feature soprano Knarik Nerkararyan, pianist Levon Hovsepien, trumpeter Richard Watson, pianist Nune Hakobyan and clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan. A string quartet featuring Sarkis Karapetyan, Armenuhi Havakimian, Oleg Soloviev and Cherry Kim will also perform. 7.30 p.m., First Parish Unitarian, 630 Mass. Ave., Arlington. Tickets \$30, online at [Amarasonline.com](http://Amarasonline.com) or call 617-331-0426.

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

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

**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.



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Մեծագոյն 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





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SINCE 1932



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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

# Flurry of Diplomatic Activity Propels Turkey Center Stage



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

The Chinese adage that crisis creates opportunity has given a new lease on life to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's policies and Turkey itself.

The dramatic decline of the Turkish economy and dimming of hopes for Erdogan's reelection in 2023 had startled Turkey's ruling AK Party into looking for a realignment of its foreign policy to avoid an impending catastrophe down the road.

Turkey's expansionist policies had antagonized countries near and far; it led to tensions with Greece over the Aegean, Cyprus over explorations of the island's offshore gas reserves, Israel over support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause, Saudi Arabia over the murder of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, the United Arab Emirates over the Abraham Accords recognizing Israel, Egypt over its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, China for stoking violence in the Turkic Xinjiang Province, Armenia over the Karabakh War and the US and NATO countries for purchasing S-400 military planes from Russia.

All these missteps had led the country to isolation and economic crisis.

While Turkey was looking for opportunities to mend fences with neighbors and allies, that opportunity arrived with the eruption of war in Ukraine. The trips by French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz could not dissuade President Vladimir Putin from pulling the trigger. And after the beginning of the war, the visit of Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett or calls from President Macron were to no avail. Even after his call, Macron warned the media "to expect the worst."

War is brutal and the media is powerful, therefore it was easy for the West to orchestrate a worldwide protest against Russian aggression in Ukraine, especially in light of seeing the toll of war in real time. But, after all, it was not a bad deal for the West to weaken Russia through economic hemorrhage at Ukraine's expense, although sanctions against Russia will have a ricochet effect worldwide; oil and metal prices are at record highs already. Five thousand sanctions have been instituted by Western countries. Bloomberg has labeled these measures as the "nuclear level of sanctions."

After the failure of the third meeting between Ukrainian and Russian delegations on the Ukrainian and Belorussian border, a diplomatic breakthrough has been announced. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, will be meeting at the Diplomacy Forum of Antalya, in Turkey, scheduled to take place March 11 though 13, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu tweeted.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and European Union's Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell are also on the list of participants.

Erdogan's and Macron's earlier appeals to President Putin were rebuffed. He conditioned those negotiations with an a priori acceptance by the Ukrainian government to adopt a policy of neutrality, along with recognizing the independence of Luhansk and Donetsk and admitting that Crimea is a part of Russia. For a while, Russia's other high-stake demand was for NATO to return to its 1997 border has been sidelined.

The world will find out soon what has been the compelling factor which brings Russia to the negotiating table. Incidentally, we have to note that Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and chief negotiator for talks between Armenia and Turkey Ruben Rubinyan are also invited to the forum.

The European Union's Ambassador to Ankara Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut has lavished praise on Turkey for its actions in the Ukrainian crisis. "We appreciate Turkish involvement, engagement and anticipation with NATO. We appreciate very much that it voted with the majority of states at the UN."

Turkey's relations with Ukraine and Russia have also been highlighted and certainly the US and the European Union have been encouraging Turkey to play the role of mediator.

What Turkey has achieved thus far is no less than a diplomatic coup which will bring it back into the fold of the international community and reward it commensurately.

As if that diplomatic coup were not enough to propel Turkey centerstage, all its foes are lined up to visit Turkey soon to iron out their drawn-out problems with Ankara. Thus, after more than 10 years of tensions between Israel and Turkey, Israel's

President Isaac Herzog will be visiting Ankara to restart friendly relations between the two countries. Turkey might easily sell out the Palestinian cause and expel Hamas representatives from Turkey. These have been Israel's demands to President Erdogan, who was only paying lip service to the Palestinian issue to enhance his image in the Muslim world.

Next is the visit of Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis who will meet President Erdogan on March 13. Greece and Turkey have been accusing each other over provocations in the Aegean Sea. Recently, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu stated that the sovereignty of the Aegean islands could be challenged if Greece continued to violate the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and the 1947 Paris Convention.

The pieces of Turkey's foreign policy will be falling into place when the next delegation from Armenia turns up at Turkey's doorsteps to negotiate the lifting of the blockade and restoration of diplomatic relations.

Within the context and background of Turkey's diplomatic recovery, we need to view and analyze the quandry of Armenia's nascent diplomacy. Armenia, particularly with the war in Ukraine, has landed in a hard place. First, the fate of the 400,00-500,000-strong Ukrainian-Armenian community is



a serious cause for concern. Were it not for the West's overwhelming support of Ukraine, Armenia would have been justified to write off Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government's fate in light of its military support for Azerbaijan and the latter's jubilant congratulations sent to Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev after the 44-Day War. But the issue is more complex than that. Armenia has to balance its act delicately between its strategic ally Russia and developing ties with Europe and the US.

Armenia was almost alone in voting against suspending Russian representation in the Council of Europe. It abstained from voting at the UN Human Rights Council to suspend Russia. It also cast a similar vote at the UN General Assembly. We are not sure yet if that cautious stand jeopardized the EU's promised 2.6 billion euro aid but it looks like that policy has angered Russia which expects unwavering allegiances.

Indeed, Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov has placed a phone call to his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan, "to coordinate policies on the Ukrainian war."

No other member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has received such a mysterious and unsettling call, although they have not even cast any votes in world bodies. It looks like Lavrov has reprimanded Yerevan for its attempted neutral position. Pretty soon, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is scheduled to visit Moscow to sign an agreement, like that one that Putin negotiated with Aliyev in the hours before the launch of Russia's attack on Ukraine. Certainly Pashinyan will get an earful in Moscow.

The Putin-Aliyev agreement raised Azerbaijan to the level of strategic ally of Russia. That treaty was also meant to neutralize the "Shusha Proclamation" that had been recently ratified in the parliaments of Turkey and Azerbaijan, cementing the union of those two states. At this point, it seems that Mr. Putin could

*continued on next page*





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey: Caught Between Russia and the West

As the war in Ukraine is continuing to cause more devastation and the loss of human life, countries around the world, particularly Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, had to make difficult choices in their policies, public statements and votes in international organizations.

Despite concerns about Turkey's inconsistent positions, it is clear that neither Russia nor the West is willing to push Turkey to the opposing camp. Pres. Erdogan's senior advisor, Ibrahim Kalin, pompously told CNN that Western countries have urged Turkey to maintain its ties with Russia, which is highly unlikely. Erdogan was quoted as saying: "we can neither give up on Ukraine nor Russia." This is described as "strategic ambiguity."

Here is my analysis of the repercussions of this war on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Will they be able to maintain their ambiguous positions or will they stumble and lose their delicate balance?

Let us start with the votes these three countries have cast regarding the conflict. The first vote took place on February 25 at the European Council where Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey are members. Out of the 47 members, only Russia and Armenia voted against the motion to suspend Russia's membership in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers. Forty two countries voted in favor. Azerbaijan did not vote. Turkey abstained.

The next vote came on February 28 in the UN Human Rights Council on whether to include the situation in Ukraine on the Council's agenda. Out of the 47 Council members, 29 voted in favor and 13 abstained (including Armenia). Russia was probably not pleased with Armenia's vote. On the other hand, the Charge d'Affaires of Ukraine in Armenia Denis Avtonomov expressed his government's satisfaction with Armenia's vote. More importantly, on March 4, the Human Rights Council voted to establish a commission to investigate Russia's violations in Ukraine.

Thirty-two countries voted in favor and 13 abstained (including Armenia). Azerbaijan and Turkey are not members of the UN Council.

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on March 2 calling on Russian forces to withdraw from Ukraine. 141 member states voted in favor and 35 abstained (including Armenia). Turkey voted in favor. Azerbaijan did not vote.

Going beyond votes, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has the difficult task of balancing his country's military, political and military alliance with Russia with trying to maintain positive relations with the West. Pashinyan made his first cautious remarks regarding the conflict on March 2: "We are deeply saddened by the unfolding events which are now clear that will have global repercussions. Our hope is that the scheduled Russian-Ukrainian talks will take place and become fruitful, and diplomacy will be able to silence the cannons."

Azerbaijan also has its foot in both camps. On February 26, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky tweeted twice praising Azerbaijan for supplying \$5 million of medicines and ordering Azeri gas stations in Ukraine to provide

free fuel to emergency vehicles, just days after Azerbaijan and Russia had signed a treaty of alliance. However, Azerbaijan has not imposed sanctions on Russia, just like Turkey and Armenia. Since Ukraine had supported Azerbaijan politically and militarily prior to the 2020 Artsakh war and the fact that 2,000 Russian peacekeepers are providing security for Artsakh Armenians, the government of Artsakh announced its recognition of the "independence" of the Russian controlled regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine.

Turkey is the only NATO member that has refused to impose sanctions on Russia and kept its airspace open to Russian planes, in order not to lose Russian investments, gas imports, and large income from tourists.

Surprisingly, Erdogan approved on March 1 an investment promotion agreement with Belarus which is sanctioned by the West for joining Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On the other hand, Turkey blocked the passage of some Russian warships through Turkish straits to the Black Sea, as stipulated by the 1936 Montreux Convention. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed his appreciation for the Turkish decision. Nevertheless, Turkey-U.S. relations remain frigid.

After five of its dozen Turkish drones were shot down by Russia, Ukraine plans to purchase more drones from Turkey which have targeted Russian armed convoys. On the other hand, Turkey had purchased Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missiles causing the United States to sanction fellow NATO member Turkey, blocking its acquisition of the American F-35 stealth bombers.

On March 1, The New York Times published an article by Carlotta Gall titled, "Ukraine Invasion Increases Friction Between Erdogan and Putin." She reported that hours before the start of the war, two Turkish planes landed in Ukraine to evacuate diplomatic staff and other Turkish citizens from Kiev. However, the planes and evacuees became stranded, resulting in Pres. Erdogan getting criticized at home for misreading the looming danger and not acting quicker. Erdogan had invited Presidents Putin and Zelensky to Turkey to mediate the conflict. Putin politely declined the invitation. Erdogan shut down several Western media outlets silencing their criticisms of Russia.

Despite Turkey's fence-sitting in the conflict, "three Turkish factories and four warehouses in Ukraine were destroyed by Russia during the war. These factories manufactured ammunition and small bombs," reported the London-based Arabic newspaper Rai Al-Youm. In addition, "a large factory that specialized in building the structures of Bayraktar drones was destroyed." Ukrainian factories supply engines and other critical parts for Turkish drones. The newspaper quoted an unnamed senior advisor to Erdogan stating that Turkish losses in Ukraine are in the hundreds of millions of dollars and could possibly reach billions of dollars.

Meanwhile, Erdogan's son-in-law, drone manufacturer Selcuk Bayraktar, tweeted: "I condemn in the strongest terms the unlawful invasion carried out by Russia in defiance of the sovereignty of an independent nation." He said he supported "Ukraine and Crimea, the homeland of our Turkish brothers resisting the occupation." In a second tweet, Bayraktar regretted the "destruction and suffering caused by war."

Turkish citizens pointed out the hypocrisy of a "merchant of death" whose drones have caused so much destruction around the world. He obviously places his business interests ahead of human lives.

The Russia-Ukraine war has disrupted the norms of international order, forcing many countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, to delicately balance their interests on both sides.

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not care less if his agreement with Azerbaijan contradicts the military and political treaty which Russia has signed with Armenia. This cavalier treatment of Armenia reflects a recent statement by Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko, who said, "Who cares about Armenia? Sooner or later, it will come begging to become a 'union state' state" with Russia.

On the other hand, the French government has savoir faire; through all the niceties of diplomacy they have delivered the same message to Armenia. French President Macron placed a phone call to President Aliyev. Earlier, France as the current president of the EU, had rewarded Azerbaijan with 2 billion euros in an aid package for Aliyev's pledge to supply the European Union with natural gas in case the Russian deals fall through.

After his call to Aliyev, Mr. Macron invited Prime Minister Pashinyan to Paris to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the two countries. The festivities on March 9 featured artists and scientists, but no diplomatic component.

To top it all, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Minsk Group's mission to Artsakh has collapsed. The group already had its hands full with the Ukrainian crisis and now it has lost credibility and cooperation between its cochairs, representing Russia, the US and France. The OSCE Minsk Group has been Armenia's last hope as it still maintained on its agenda the settlement of Karabakh status. With Western sanctions taking effect, there is a flood of Russian nationals arriving in Armenia. Yerevan will find out soon if that is a boon or bane.

As diplomacy works its way through the crisis of Ukraine, Armenia is caught between a rock and a hard place.

## International Recognition and Condemnation of Armenian Genocide and Agenda of Armenia-Turkey Normalization

By Davit Safaryan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

For at least 60 years now Armenians all over the world have been trying to consolidate their efforts to make the world recognize the fact of Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire. Seemingly, in the course of the past decades there had been certain achievements and progress in this process, which is both inspiring and may serve a reasonable ground to ensure further progress. In this analysis, we'll try to make some judgments concerning the current state of a pan-Armenian agenda, which is actualized again in the context of negotiations for normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations.

### What Is the Aim of Armenian Genocide Recognition Currently?

The pan-Armenian perception of this process is that the Armenian Genocide should be officially and internationally recognized so that Armenia could feel safer in an ultimately unfavorable environment. In other words, Armenia must keep the issue of international condemnation of the Armenian Genocide alive at all times, thus compelling its enemies to abstain from the temptation of a new genocide of Armenians in their homeland if and whenever such conditions or possibilities occur.

In 1998, when the fact of the Armenian Genocide was recognized in various countries, the political authorities of Armenia turned recognition into one of the

key issues of Armenia's foreign policy, thereby joining diasporan structures actively and consistently working in this field for decades and making an important step toward strengthening the ties between Armenia and its diaspora. The recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide were included in the national security doctrine of the Republic of Armenia, which was reasonably coordinated with the major centers of power. The process of recognition was a success in many countries and showed to the Armenian communities of the world that restoration of historical justice is possible under conditions of correct and consistent lobbying. It was a belief of generations of public figures who sometimes, though not often, witnessed the successful results of their efforts.

Up to now Armenians over the world thought that they were pursuing two objectives: the first was strengthening the national security of Armenia as the center of all Armenians; and the second, compelling Turkey under international pressure to mitigate the atmosphere of hatred towards Armenians, to recognize the fact of Armenian Genocide and finally, to repair the damage to the legal heirs of the Genocide survivors. It seems that this is the logical minimum to be expected from this process. Now the process has reached its zenith with the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by US President Joe Biden. The decades-long work of the American Armenians has yielded worthy results.

Armenians the world over could presently expect see NORMALIZATION, page 20





## Recognition and Condemnation of Armenian Genocide and Agenda of Armenia-Turkey Normalization

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that such recognition might on the one hand strengthen the fragile guarantees of Armenia's security, and on the other hand hasten the logical consequences of international recognition. In the contrary case, Armenian organizations and the Armenian public as a whole should ask if the victorious campaign of recognition lasting for decades does not serve these important practical purposes, then why have these tremendous efforts been made?

### Public Background of the Process of Armenia-Turkey Normalization

After the defeat in the 44-day war, Armenian society has become deeply concerned that the collective interests of the Armenian people may be seriously endangered as a result of the normalization of Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijan relations. The results of public opinion polls testify that the majority of the population in Yerevan is against re-opening the Armenian-Turkish border and think that it may lead to Turkey-Azerbaijani economic and further political expansion in Armenia. The opposition politicians of Armenia do not welcome these negotiations and do not participate in the process. Historically shaped mutual distrust and the effect of fear and hatred is felt everywhere.

Turkish researchers confirm that a similar attitude towards Armenia and Armenians is felt in Turkish public opinion. Thus the majority of respondents in Turkey think that Armenia is the greatest threat to modern Turkey. They also find that they would not like having an Armenian neighbor. It is worth noting that almost nothing has changed in the public perceptions of the two sides since 2008-2009, when the attempts of normalization promoted by US efforts encountered strong public stereotypes. There were several perceptions then in Turkish public, which had a decisive influence on the attitude of authorities. Firstly, that normalization with Armenia would have no positive effect on the Turkish economy; secondly, that Turkey had no right to make any step that would be haz-

ardous for brotherly Azerbaijan and weaken its positions in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia; and, thirdly, that there is an almost subconscious fear in Turkey that under some uncertain conditions the mighty of this world may recall the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres (that have existed solely on paper till now), thus creating a threat to the territorial integrity of the Republic of Turkey.

This perspective which might evince just a smile or a grin is seemingly not totally excluded by Turkey's deep state. It follows from the above that Turkey must be ready to treat Armenia like an enemy even in the case when the potential and resources of the two countries are absolutely incomparable. Let's remember that one of the notable successes of the "Football Diplomacy" of the time was that while discussing the pro and contras, the Armenian and Turkish diplomats participating in negotiations held under international mediation arrived at the conclusion that establishing diplomatic relations without any preconditions was really the correct thing to do.

The obstacle on its way to implementation was the lack of progress in the process of political regulation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Thus, Football Diplomacy failed because Turkey was unwilling to make a step towards Armenia at the cost of Azerbaijani interests. Even then, the ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan were so strong and so important for both countries that the urging and efforts of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her counterparts could not change anything.

Currently the world is shocked by the confrontation between the most important centers of power. It seems that the urging of the international community that could positively affect the negotiating Armenian and Turkish diplomats are much less plausible, though certainly the Armenian public and political elites are anxiously looking at government policy, treating the ever-growing presence of Turkey in South Caucasus with distrust. On the other hand, it is clear that international political circles some-

what tired of the ideological and world view opposition of Armenia and Turkey would like seeing signs of some settlement and normalization with at least minimum negative consequences.

### Armenia between Turkish-Azerbaijani Tandem and Armenian Diaspora

The truth is that current Armenian-Turkish negotiations are part of different negotiating formats, the final goal of which is the reopening of communications and establishment of multilateral economic cooperation in the South Caucasus. For example, despite Georgia's non-participation in the 3 + 3 format, other countries are optimistically working on the projects of economic cooperation in the 3+2 format. Until the last dramatic events concerning Ukraine, Russia was consistently sponsoring negotiations between the vice prime ministers of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan for the purpose of opening roads and communications between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the full functioning of transportation means between Russia and Turkey and Russia and Iran. Notably, relations between Russia and Azerbaijan were lately raised to the level of strategic allies – in other words, to the same level as the declared relations between Russia and Armenia. Consequently, there is serious interest among political scientists as to whether this new level would enhance long expected peace in the South Caucasus.

Obviously Turkey's presence in South Caucasus is still growing. Turkey and Azerbaijan want to connect with each other also through Armenia. This new reality leads to the activation of Iran whose resources are less than those of Turkey. Nevertheless, Iran intends to activate the strategic North-South road, seeing in it a potential for economic development. All of these processes are going on in parallel and affect each other. It seems the object of Armenians' concern should be not allowing any division between Armenia and Diaspora; not letting the heavy burden of Genocide recognition and condemnation be placed solely on the shoulders of the Diaspora under the false

pretext of labor division; and involving friendly countries and political and public figures in the cause of solution of the most important problems of the pan-Armenian agenda, thus strengthening the guarantees of the territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Armenia. We need a sound and intensifying (not weakening) dialogue on a pan-Armenian level about what could be done by world Armenians to bring safety and peace to their motherland.

## Ambassador to Ukraine Presents Details about Work of Embassy

UKRAINE, from page 3

The embassy staff is in constant, daily touch with the Armenian citizens, provides consulting support about the ways and opportunities of leaving Ukraine for Armenia, prepares and provides necessary documents for this purpose.

Within its modest opportunities, the Embassy, together with the Armenian community of Ukraine, helped those people who wanted to leave their homes, their cities. It's important to consider an essential factor: several hundreds of thousands of Armenians live in Ukraine, and most of them are citizens of Armenia. I say this so that you can imagine the overload under which the Embassy has worked in Kyiv: constant calls, we answered several thousand calls, dozens of visits of citizens and applications for assistance. No embassy had the volume of workload which we had, given the big size of the community and the number of applications.

And all of these works have been done in the war situation. Two of the Embassy diplomats spent the nights in shelters from the first days of the war, sheltering from the explosions and shootings, and sometimes they communicated with our compatriots from shelter, received calls and gave consulting.



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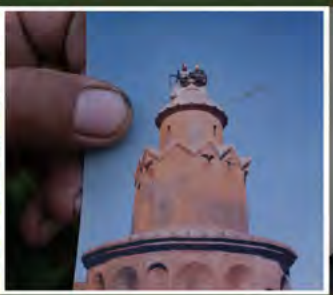

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