

## European Parliament Adopts Resolution Chiding Azerbaijan For Destroying Armenian Heritage In Artsakh

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“The first casualty when war comes is truth” — a platitude, to be sure, but one that has again assumed relevance in the midst of the war raging in Ukraine. Often truth, historical truth, is not collateral damage, but a primary target in conflict.

Sometimes part of that truth can be rescued. That is the message relayed by a measure taken by the European Parliament (EP) in regard to the assault on truth waged in 2020 by Azerbaijan as part of its war in Karabakh. On March 10, the Parliament adopted a resolution on “Destruction of cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh.” The vote was 635 in favor, 2 opposed and 42 abstentions. It stands out for its clarity of purpose and demands for forceful, effective action. (See related editorial on page 18.)

The text draws on a series of previous resolutions and conventions, of the EP as well as the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regarding the protection of cultural heritage, to denounce Azerbaijan’s wanton destruction of Armenian monuments in its attempt to rewrite history. Among the documents cited are “the European Cultural Convention, the revised European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, to which Armenia and Azerbaijan are parties” as well as “the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” to which both are also parties. This latter document contains protocols, one applied to occupied territories and the second, to cultural property, “which prohibits ‘any alteration to, or change of use of, a cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence’...”

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After the war, an Armenian man is visiting his brother’s tomb at the Yerablur military cemetery overlooking Ararat Mountain, the mountain known for its historical importance to the Armenian people which is today in the territory of the Republic of Turkey

## Israeli Photojournalist Documents Artsakh During War and Peace in New Book

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Israeli photojournalist and documentary filmmaker Gilad Sade began visiting Artsakh in 2015, quickly establishing strong friendships with many of its inhabitants living in some of its most remote villages. He was present during various episodes of the 2020 war and its aftermath and is preparing a book which will include photographs from that time as well as of people and places that may no longer exist in the same way after the war. He calls the book project “Portrait of Paradise Lost.”

Sade began to describe his work with the words, “I think Artsakh was for me one of the hardest projects I did, both in the long term but also during the war.” Sade grew up in the West Bank, in the midst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and became a member of the extremist Hilltop Youth Movement. He eventually devoted himself to peace and traveled to many different conflict zones to raise awareness of human rights issues. He issued his first book of travel photos in 2021, *Travel Warning Photobook*, in a limited edition of 100.

In the summer of 2015, Sade was working as a mountain tour guide see PHOTOJOURNALIST, page 14

## EU ‘Concerned’ over Disrupted Gas Supply, Shootings In Nagorno-Karabakh:

By Siranuysh Gevorgian

TBILISI (RFE/RL) — The European Union (EU) is concerned over the latest ceasefire violations and the disruption of natural gas supply to Nagorno-Karabakh, a senior diplomat has told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service.

Toivo Klaar, the EU’s special representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, said on March 14 that these issues “will certainly be on the agenda” of his meetings in Yerevan where he has arrived to engage “in another series of high-level consultations.”

“The latest developments on the ground are indeed very wor-

rying. I have had numerous conversations with representatives of both Yerevan and Baku over the past days on these issues. Obviously, these developments are of



Toivo Klaar, the European Union’s special representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia

concern to the EU. It would be essential that the gas pipeline is repaired as soon as possible and that the shootings stop,” Klaar said.

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## Armenia ‘Responds’ to Azerbaijani Proposal

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia has responded to a new proposal from Azerbaijan by requesting international mediation for peace talks, official Yerevan said on March 14.

In a statement made last Friday a spokesman for Armenia’s Foreign Ministry said that official Yerevan considered requesting that the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group (the United States, France, and Russia) initiate peace talks between Yerevan and Baku.

Later that day, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov said that Baku had passed to Yerevan a new “five-point proposal” for the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. He said that Baku was awaiting an answer from Yerevan.

“We have recently sent a new proposal to Armenia as a sign of goodwill. We have proposed some fundamental principles that include the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We expressed our readiness to develop relations on the basis of certain principles. Armenia should consider this and give its answer. If Armenia sincerely wants to normalize relations, then this is a very good opportunity for them.” Armenia’s response will be known in the near future, and of course we will take appropriate steps,” Bayramov said, as quoted by Azerbaijani media.

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Commemoration of St. Gregory of Narek in Rome

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### GLOBAL

Exceptional Organizations Making A Difference In Armenia

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## ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

## Russia Sanctions Expected To Slow Armenia GDP

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Sanctions imposed on Russia will slow down economic growth in Armenia, Central Bank chairman Martin Galstyan told a press conference on March 15, Sputnik Armenia reported.

The Central Bank has thus lowered its GDP growth forecast for the republic for 2022 from 5.3 percent to 1.6 percent, the chairman said. In light of Russia's war in Ukraine, the uncertainty factor in the economy has increased significantly, he added.

Galstyan believes sanctions will mostly impact the industry, while the tourism sector, on the other hand, will expand. Compared to the initial forecast, a decrease in trade and services within Armenia is also expected.

## U.S. donates 306,000 Pfizer Vaccine Doses to Armenia

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Pfizer has donated 306,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, which arrived in Armenia on March 14, the Ministry of Health reported.

The donation was part of the US administration's Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing.

In addition, the Biden administration has provided more than \$15 million in assistance to the Armenian government to help mitigate the effects of Covid-19.

## Pashinyan Speaks with Blinken, Trudeau

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Nikol Pashinyan on March 14 spoke by phone with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The two touched upon the issues on the US-Armenian agenda, attached importance to ensuring the continuity of the strategic dialogue in order to develop and strengthen bilateral cooperation in various spheres. Pashinyan thanked the American side for its consistent support to Armenia in the democratic reforms.

Pashinyan and Blinken referred to the processes taking place in the South Caucasus, the situation around Karabakh and the escalating tensions. The parties stressed the need for stability and peace in the region, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Separately, Pashinyan had a telephone conversation with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Pashinyan praised the visit of Canada's Special Envoy to Europe Stéphane Dion to Armenia, and expressed hope that the meetings and discussions will strengthen cooperation between the governments of the two countries in various fields.

Trudeau expressed the readiness of Canada to further contribute to the strengthening of democracy in Armenia and the deepening of bilateral ties.

The two discussed the escalation of tensions in Karabakh.

## New Armenian President Sworn in

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Vahagn Khachatryan, an economist and veteran politician, pledged to “spare no effort to strengthen national unity” as he was sworn in as Armenia's new president on Sunday, March 13.

The inauguration ceremony took place at a special session of the Armenian parliament boycotted by its two opposition factions.

After 2015 amendments in Armenia constitution transforming it into a parliamentary republic the country president has largely ceremonial powers. Still, the president is considered to be the head of state.

Khachatryan was nominated for presidency by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's ruling Civil Contract party after a sudden resignation in January by Armen Sarkissian, who had occupied the post of the country president since 2018.

Civil Contract's faction in parliament later installed Khachatryan as president in a two-round vote boycotted by the opposition Hayastan and Pativ Unem factions.

In his speech Khachatryan acknowledged that he was assuming office at a pivotal time for Armenia amid “complicated regional and international challenges.”

“We are witnessing rapidly changing geopolitical developments as a result of which current global security systems are being



transformed. Today, more than ever, we need wisdom, confidence, stability and unity,” the new Armenian president said.

Khachatryan, 62, is an economist who had served as mayor of Yerevan from 1992-1996 during former President Levon Ter-Petrosian's rule. He was a staunch political ally of Ter-Petrosian until agreeing to join Pashinyan's government last August.

Khachatryan quit the Ter-Petrosian-led political party before being nominated as a candidate for president who, under Armenia's constitution, must not have any party affiliation.

Under Armenia's constitution, the president is elected for a term of seven years and the same person may not be elected as president more than once.

## Inflation Increases in Armenia

By Gevorg Gyulumyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — After the Russian-Ukrainian war, a large influx of tourists to Armenia began due in part to the restrictions of European countries. While Armenia might be able to use the opportunity to develop and stabilize its weak economy to some extent, as last week showed, everything in Armenia also became more expensive during the influx of Russians,

and this created additional problems for ordinary Armenian consumers. In particular, the prices of sugar, oil, bread and other important products have risen.

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“But,” she exclaimed, “what the devil! What extreme prices there are for everything here! It's the end of the world.”

Minister of Economy of Armenia Vahan Kerobyan assesses the situation differently. On his Facebook page, he called on citizens not to panic, declaring: “I am notifying [you], in connection with the information disseminated in the Russian and Armenian media over the last two days, according to which it is planned to restrict the export of a

number of food products from Russia to the EEU [Eurasian Economic Union] countries, that the food security issues of Armenia are under the direct control of the Armenian government. So far, the Russian government has not approved a decision to ban the export of food products, so the import of goods to Armenia is carried out normally.

“There is currently no projected deficit in the Republic of Armenia in terms of products included in the minimum food basket. We are in touch with our Russian partners and even in the event of a decision by the Russian government on possible export restrictions, the Republic of Armenia has all the necessary resources to ensure the food security of the population. The grain self-sufficiency of the Russian Federation is at about 150 percent, which means that Russia has sufficient resources for domestic consumption and export. We call on citizens not to cause panic and not to make unnecessary purchases.”

It should be noted that the price of flour has already risen in Armenia, as a result of which pastry and pasta products have also increased in price.

Economist Arthur Tovmasyan writes: “Wheat has risen in price by 20-30 drams. A 50-kilogram bag of flour increased from 12,600 drams to 13,400 drams, which is an increase of about 6-7 percent. All bakery products will increase in price due to the rise in these prices. The annual demand for grain in Armenia is about 980 tons. The demand for wheat alone is about 460 thousand tons, of which about 80,000-85,000 tons were produced annually by Artsakh. Armenia and Artsakh together produced about 600,000 tons of grain (about 57 percent of the total demand), and imports from abroad amounted to about 450,000 tons (43 percent). Our country and people may be facing a serious crisis and the elected prime minister and his woeful government are silent, or say, what next, we will not deviate from our path. They were saying, ‘If Artsakh did not exist, you would live well. How is it now? Are you living well? Is there a future, dear people?’”



Economist Armen Grigoryan

and this created additional problems for ordinary Armenian consumers. In particular, the prices of sugar, oil, bread and other important products have risen.

Inflation has increased in unbelievable proportions in the Armenian real estate market. For example, there are already houses in Yerevan for which the owner demands \$6,500 in monthly rent.

Economist Armen Grigoryan said that what is happening is not normal and can have serious consequences. He declared: “Yes, it is good that there is commerce, but everything is excessive and the ordinary cit-

izens suffers from it. I think the state should somehow deal with all this and regulate it, because this can also drive away tourists.”

The Russian tourists we met on the street appeared sincere. They think that Armenia is a very good country, but everything is very expensive. Ivan Tomachkov said, “Your country is unique, to be honest, but I do not understand why everything is so expensive.”

Anna Bunina, who came here with her family, said she was most surprised by the



ARMENIA

# Edward Avedisian's Mission to Leave His Mark on AUA

YEREVAN/BOSTON — A torchbearer of support for the American University of Armenia (AUA), philanthropist Edward Avedisian has been an unwavering champion, an influencer of new developments in the process of institutional advancement since the early years of the University. His name is etched in many educational establishments and higher education initiatives in Armenia, and in the United States. The most recent among those innovative undertakings is the establishment of the first two Endowed Named Professorships at AUA, which will promote attracting top quality scholars and educators from across the world.

Edward Avedisian, was born in 1937 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, to Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian, both from Kharpert. His father had emigrated to the United States in 1909 and settled in Rhode Island working as a weaver. His mother, a Genocide survivor, emigrated in 1927, marrying his father that same year, then teaching at a local Armenian school. Together, they raised Edward and his three siblings, Paramaz, Zvart, and Paul, placing utmost importance on their education.

Avedisian attended local public schools, finishing high school as the president of his class, subsequently earning bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Boston University, on scholarship. Though his family did not possess much, they had ample love and support for their children. His mother, a talented singer, was a source of encouragement, constantly reassuring him every time he picked up his brother's clarinet and began to play. That is how his early years of developing musical skills began.

Those early attempts with the family instrument led him to a decorated professional career in music as a clarinetist with the Boston Pops for 30 years and with the Boston Ballet Orchestra for 43 seasons. Avedisian guest performed with the Armenian State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Armenian Radio and TV Orchestra, and the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia. Aside from those rich experiences, he also served as instructor, lecturer, and arts administrator, later finding new success as a private investor.

Seasoned philanthropists, Edward Avedisian and his wife Pamela have planted a bounty of seeds at AUA that have sprouted in support of the University's ambitious initiatives. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the founding of AUA in the same year that Armenia gained independence in 1991, Avedisian found a niche to advance education in the homeland, getting directly involved with AUA shortly after its founding, and later joining the Board of Trustees in 1999.

In 1992, Avedisian sponsored the establishment of the Paul Avedisian Center for Business Research and Development (CBRD), named after one of his brothers, created to foster the economic development of Armenia in the pivotal process of transitioning to a market economy. The Center continues to engage students, faculty, and experts in researching various topics, and also serves as an information and consulting services hub.

In 1995, Avedisian funded the inception of the Zvart Avedisian Onanian Center for Health Services Research and Development (CHSR), named after his sister, as an applied research center within the AUA Turpanjian College of Health Sciences (CHS). The Center was established to specifically address the evident need for research and development in public health policy and practice. To this date, the Center partners with major global health organizations and prominent academic institutions in public health research.

Avedisian was also a major benefactor in the construction of the AUA Paramaz Avedisian Building (PAB) completed in 2008 and named after his second brother. As the principal donor of the 100,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility, he served as the Chair of the Construction Committee from 2005-2009. Today, the building accommodates multiple offices, classrooms, research centers, conference halls, student



Edward Avedisian in 2016 after receiving the Ellis Island Medal

union, an amphitheater, and ancillary space for teaching and learning.

Recently, Avedisian announced his sponsorship of two Endowed Named Professorship funds in honor of two AUA board members: Dr. Judson King Endowed Professorship and Dr. William Frazer Endowed Professorship. Avedisian notes, "These two Endowed Named Professorships for Dr. King and Dr. Frazer were established to recognize and honor their enormous contributions over some sixty cumulative years, both as AUA Chairmen of the Board of Trustees and their sustained service on the Board as Trustees. Both honorees have also served as Provost at the University of California and the wealth of their experience, interest, expertise, vision and distinguished careers have resulted in the tremendous advancement of AUA from 1991 to the present."

King continues to be involved as a member of the AUA Board of Trustees, which he joined in 1995 and served as its Chairman. He is Provost and Senior Vice President Emeritus of the University of California (UC), as well as Professor Emeritus in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at UC Berkeley. Commenting on how honored he is that Avedisian chose to name the first AUA Endowed Named Professorship in his honor, he says, "It is especially meaningful to me that it comes from Ed, who has been such a strong supporter of the University, as well as a long-time friend who came onto the AUAC Board soon after I joined as Chair twenty-seven years ago. Ed has done so much for AUA. I am pleased to be linked with him and his very meaningful efforts in this way."

The bulk of King's academic career had been on the UC Berkeley campus, until 1994, when he was appointed as the first Vice Provost for Research, and subsequently as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs in 1995. He recalls his first day in that position, when "Upon arriving in the office, I reviewed my calendar for the weeks ahead with Barbara Gerber, my Executive Assistant. There was a line drawn through one entire day with four letters inserted — AUAC. I asked, 'What's that?' and Barbara said, 'That's the American University of Armenia. As Provost, you chair the Board.' That was the first time I had heard of AUA! From that unknowing start, I came to know and love AUA, and to end up feeling that it has surely been one of the few most meaningful and vital enterprises among the many with which I have been associated."

Indeed, since King joined AUA, the institution has

grown in myriad ways, and he attributes some of the successes that helped its initial development to AUA's ability to stand on firmer and more diversified financial footing. "In the early years, AUA survived and developed through the support and great generosity of one philanthropist and visionary co-founder, Louise Manoogian Simone. AUA now has a more varied base of strong financial support from a greater number of people, allowing us a greater ability to build and grow," he comments.

Continuing to list the university achievements that he believes to be notable, he notes the leadership of four successive dedicated presidents — Dr. Mihran Agbabian, Dr. Haroutune Armenian, Dr. Bruce Boghosian, Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, and currently, Dr. Karin Markides; the campus expansion with the addition of the PAB building funded by Ed Avedisian; the ways in which AUA came out of the global Covid-19 pandemic undiminished; and the multiple areas of research and development in which the University is immersed for the greater benefit of Armenian society. "AUA has been vital for the progress of Armenia in developing its economic and sociological bases as an independent country and for giving it useful links to the world at large. Looking ahead, I hope and expect that AUA will become all the more central to the economic and societal development of Armenia, not just as a producer of well-educated citizens, but also as a source of the research and innovation that will launch new areas of economic growth and improvement in the quality of life for all," Dr. King concludes.

Frazer is a current AUA board member, as well as Senior Vice President Emeritus of Academic Affairs at the University of California (UC), and Professor Emeritus in the Physics Department of UC Berkeley. As the founding Chairman of the Board of Trustees, his involvement with AUA starts from the founding of the University, when he served on the task force to establish its affiliation with UC.

From those early years of AUA, Dr. Frazer recalls, "When I was UC Provost, three faculty members paid me a visit: Mihran Agbabian, Armen Der Kiureghian, and Stepan Karamardian. They wanted to help Armenia recover from the great [Spitak] earthquake that had just occurred. They proposed to found an American-style university, privately funded, but with UC participation to ensure the quality of education, an admissions process free of corruption, a dignified student culture, etc., and so I proposed and led a visit to Armenia by a UC delegation to decide whether that vision was possible." After the task force visited Armenia in 1990, the Regents of the UC unanimously voted in favor of the affiliation, establishing Dr. Frazer as the first Chair of the Board of Trustees. "I had the honor of presenting this resolution to the Regents, and it was the only time I ever received a round of applause!" he exclaims.

Speaking to the establishment of the newest Endowed Named Professorship in his name, Frazer says, "I feel deeply honored. Helping to found AUA is one of the two most satisfying accomplishments of my career, but more important is the value of the gift of these Endowed Named Professorships. These will be a great help to AUA's recruitment of distinguished research scholars." Moving forward, Dr. Frazer hopes for the University to maintain and further enhance the quality of education, and looks forward to achieving the goal of establishing a culture of research.

"Both Dr. King and Dr. Frazer Endowed Professorships set the beginning of the final stage for AUA's development in becoming a research university, attracting the best international professors and students to explore the future through research. Their continuing contributions to AUA are most appreciated and we thank them as we look forward to a very bright and promising future with the establishment of the final phase of an academic university as AUA begins to offer Doctoral Programs," Avedisian concludes.



## ARMENIA



The six soldiers

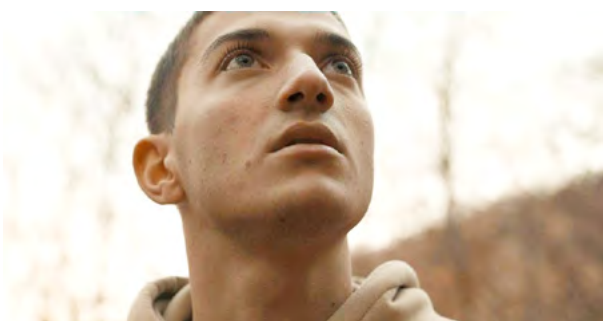
# Run Silent, Run Deep: The Six Survivors of War

By Lilit Shahverdyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Seventy days in a blockade, wandering around the abandoned villages, leaning on rice and compote. The story of six soldiers who were found alive after the war of 2020 is known to many. After a long recovery, they have reintegrated into their everyday routine and attempt to build a future for themselves and their homeland.

On September 27, Azerbaijan launched a full-scale military attack on the borders of Artsakh, initiating the Second Artsakh war. Soon, as the Azerbaijani army advanced in the territory, the connection was cut off. A platoon scattered in different directions, and six of them, Arthur, Arman, Ruslan, David, Nikolay and Arsen, decided to continue their route together.



## Arthur, How the Story Began

“I imagined what my family was feeling, and it gave me strength to move forward and tell them that I was alive, and they didn’t have to worry,” said Arthur.

Arthur had served for only two months when the war started and had never even held a weapon. As the Azerbaijanis took control over Jabrayil, Arthur’s detachment soon moved towards Hadrut. The commander pretended to be wounded and left the battlefield, leaving more than a hundred inexperienced soldiers alone against the enemy’s strong, composite army. “They kept telling us that they would send additional troops to rescue us, but they never did,” remembered Arthur.

The group had to simultaneously find shelter, feed themselves and care for their wounded comrades. “We

were short of food, and once we had to share two tin cans between more than 20 people,” said Arthur.

Soon, they advanced deeper into the west and sheltered in Vank, one of Hadrut’s villages. “We found the residents’ documents and saw the village’s name,” recalls Arthur. Besides the location, they found an empty house which became their food storehouse, where they saved goods gathered from neighboring homes.

The artillery sounds always accompanied the food search, and once they calmed down, the boys realized the war was over. “They would shoot in the air for around an hour, and then silence fell,” explained Arthur.

Later, when the Azerbaijani troops began checking the abandoned village houses, the group of twenty was almost caught. They scattered into smaller groups, and six of them, including Arthur, left the house together. Their destination was the Iranian border, where they could catch a signal to make a phone call, but they stopped by another village. “I entered the village with Ruslan in a food search, and we were shocked to see huge storage there. We assume there was an Armenian military unit before,” said Arthur.

The availability of food and water allowed the young soldiers to continue making their way despite the winter cold and exhaustion. The lights from the Iranian side were barely visible because they went down the mountain, and the last glimmer of hope was fading away. However, success was just around the corner as they caught signal as they approached the Armenian border. On December 20, 2020, the first news about the return of soldiers appeared on the Internet - the group of six was finally taken out with the Russian peacekeepers’ intervention.

“I was sitting on a hill with Ruslan and noticed smoke in the air. First, I thought it was a cloud, then I realized that it’s car exhaust, a sign that the rescue team was finally coming,” recalled Arthur.

The echo of war still rings in Arthur’s head and reminds him of the travails he underwent, but he returned home, and now his parents are happy. “Once we were discussing our future plans with the boys, and I realized that I desired to see myself going to university,” he recalled, noting he has made that dream come true.

“Sometimes I feel phantom pains in my lower limbs,”

said Arthur, “but it’s the least evil thing that happened.”



## Arman, the ‘Weirdo’

“My friends often say that I didn’t become a weirdo after the war because I was a weirdo before it,” said Arman. Not formally, Arman was the group leader in the blockade, who showed directions, motivated everyone, and brought them to mutual understanding.

“I always told the boys that we would get out of this, even when we were under attack, though I was often accused of being too optimistic in the game of life and death,” added Arman. Like all the others, he was unprepared for the war after only two months of military service. However, his cunning helped them survive. “At first, I even had no clue of where Hadrut is located,” he confessed, but his versatility paid off. He navigated the area through the sunlight, found the South and the North. The snow on the mountains also guided them. “The more snow we see, the closer we get to the South,” he recalled. The initial goal was to reach the Iranian border on the South to make a phone call, so the group moved in that direction.

The boundaries between reality and dreams got blurred during the war, as they both were abnormal and unreal. “During the blockade, my views and beliefs changed a lot, but once I was back, I became the person I was before the war,” he said. However, he realized that his pacific nature was no longer possible to maintain in life. “I’m a pacific, peace-loving person, I never show aggression,” said Arman, “but sometimes you reach the point where you have to attack to defend your beloved ones.”

The boys made a mistake by moving towards the southwest instead of the South, and by a lucky chance, they



## INTERNATIONAL

# Armenia ‘Responds’ to Azerbaijani Proposal

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“All the principles mentioned in this document are the principles of international relations,” the Azerbaijani minister added, noting that the proposal includes the issue of border demarcation as well.

In a statement issued on March 14, Armenia’s Foreign Ministry said: The Republic of Armenia responded to the proposals of the Republic of Azerbaijan and applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations for the signing of peace agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the basis of the

UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act.”

The OSCE Minsk Group has for decades spearheaded international efforts to negotiate a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The two neighboring nations waged a second war over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, with Baku regaining control over all seven districts surrounding the Armenian-populated region as well as parts of the former autonomous oblast of Soviet Azerbaijan proper. The war ended with a

Russian-brokered peace deal.

Since then, Azerbaijan has repeatedly claimed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been resolved. In his public statements Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has sought a peace treaty with Armenia that would reaffirm the current status quo in the region. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has also publicly called for “an era of peace” in the region, indicating that Yerevan was ready to negotiate a peace accord. Meanwhile, opposition members and many political observers in Armenia fear that signing a peace agreement with Azerbaijan would mean abandoning aspirations

for independence or some other status for the mostly Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In a statement Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry named the five fundamental principles on which it wants the future peace accord with Armenia to be based, including mutual recognition of each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual reaffirmation of the absence of territorial claims to each other and a legally binding obligation not to make such claims in the future, abstaining from threatening each other’s security, demarcation of the border and unblocking of transport links.

approached the border with Armenia, where they made a phone call from a mountain top and were taken out. “We often argued and had conflicts, made some wrong decisions, which ultimately brought us back to Armenia. We were destined to get free,” he said.



## David, ‘The Guy that Survived The War’

“I’m no longer ‘that funny guy;’ I am ‘the one that survived the war,’” said David.

On September 27, 2020, war broke out unexpectedly and surprisingly for many, but not for the 18-20-year-old soldiers at the frontline, since the Azerbaijani troops were concentrated along the borderline long before the first sirens were heard.

“A few days before the war, the commanders started to circulate the message that we will have to give our lives to defend our homeland,” remembered David, “and I prepared myself for it.” “I analyzed everything, understood that had I lived an exciting and adventurous life, and I felt ready to fall under the menace of war.”

Due to the numerous movies and shows he had watched, David had certain ideas about the process of war. However, he witnessed the actual atrocities after the hostilities began, and he realized that people often chose violence over humanity. “My views drastically changed when I saw the weapons people invented - fragmentation, poison needles, phosphorus... It is too abnormal and inhumane,” he said.

Soon, the blockade indicated that the tide of war was turning against them, and it became challenging to find the aspiration to move on. “What gave me hope? Arman!” remembered David. They had a choice: life, which required efforts to reach, and death, which they could easily achieve. “Arman kept telling us that death is not a way out, and it motivated us,” he added. The range of choice became limited, and only one was left - to live.

At the beginning of the war, David received a shrapnel wound, which Arman tied with his spare socks and treated. And then he suffered from frostbite, and his feet were partly amputated. “At first, I felt like half of my foot sank into the ground while walking, but I recovered soon,” recalls David.

He didn’t expect changes in life after his return, but he had one special wish: “I imagined that I would tell everyone this story after I’m back.”

## Ruslan, the Friend for Life



“The strong part of our friendship is that we would be good friends in ordinary life as well,” recalled Ruslan, who became a family with the boys during the war.

Ruslan’s friendship initially started with Arsen before they met the others. “Though we were alone, we didn’t feel lonely because even if one of us inspired hope, we could keep going,” said Ruslan. Conversations with his friends made the journey a little less exhausting. They had many topics to discuss - movies, books, music, and they learned about each other. The boys shared the same desires and dreams: to go back to their previous lives, even in the smallest detail. “I wished to be able to relieve myself without the fear of being killed,” said Ruslan. In moments of despair, their will to live became something divine that they believed in.

Conflicts often took place throughout the journey, but the unity and sense of responsibility kept them on the right track. “We realized that conflicts would only bring misfortunes, and we strived to resolve them immediately,” added Ruslan.

The thought of coming back became a dream, and ordinary everyday things seemed aspirational. “During the blockade, I believed that my mundane life was ideal, but now, when I’m back, I see that it still has many flaws,” he added. He noticed a huge contrast between his expectations after the blockade and the reality he was in. “We planned to drink together right after we go back, but we found ourselves lying in hospitals for months,” recalled Ruslan. “If I could do something different back then, I would only be attentive towards my lower limbs to avoid the amputation,” he added, as the frostbite resulted in partial amputation of his lower limbs.



## Nikolay, From Moscow to Artsakh Frontline

“What has been an obsession for the last five years and a real struggle for the last year is finally taking shape,” wrote Nikolay on Instagram before starting his military service in July 2020.

When the April War broke out in 2016, Nikolay lived in Moscow. The thought of being far from his homeland during the clashes had been torturing him until he decided to move to Armenia in 2020. Unbeknownst to his family, Nikolay collected all the necessary documents to reach out to the draft board in Armenia to start his service. However, he couldn’t share his joy of fulfilling his duty to the homeland. “To my regret, I am alone in my joy. Whether it’s family, friends, a taxi driver, or an officer of the draft board, everyone keeps asking, ‘Why are you doing it?’” he wrote.

After long disputes with the draft board, Nikolay implemented his long-awaited dream to start his military service. The idea of war seemed intriguing and exciting to Nikolay, and he was curious to experience it on himself before the actual disaster crashed down on his head — he was in an actual war.

“Every time I saw Kolya (Nikolay), his glasses were in the dust; he was always fighting intensely,” remembered Arthur. To lighten the tense situation in the blockade,

Koka (Nikolay) would come up with critical questions or sensitive topics like the definition of motherland and home. He didn’t forget his bookworm nature even in the blockade and strived to spend his short leisure reading books. Due to his deep knowledge of Chinese, Nikolay made up creative names for geographical locations surrounding them. One of the mountain peaks he called “Gaoler,” where “Gao” means “high” in Chinese, and “ler” is the Armenian mountain.

Nikolay had a tough time with the onset of cold weather. While crossing the river, he got his feet wet and couldn’t dry them, and therefore half of his feet were amputated. And despite the obstacles, his participation in the war justified Nikolay’s principles, which put homeland protection on the very top.

“I have fulfilled my duty, and now I have the right to life,” he said.



## Arsen, the Cooking Enthusiast

“As the war ignited, I didn’t manage to wish my sister a happy birthday,” said Arsen.

On September 25, the first sirens sounded, and the next day the commanders took away all the telephones. “The war started on my sister’s birthday, and I couldn’t make a phone call,” remembered Arsen.

The intense military activities were a new experience for Arsen, which initially seemed interesting. Like many others, he believed that it would last for only a few days and would “give him adrenaline,” but things went too far.

Arsen became friends with Ruslan on the first day in the army after discovering that his sister and Ruslan’s brother starred together in a TV show. In the blockade, they had to either join the group (Arthur, David, Nikolay, Arman) or go individually. After long discussions, they decided to merge into a group and continue the journey together.

“We were all different but always found things in common,” said Arsen.

While hiding in a village house, they had several ways to keep busy: reading books from local small libraries, playing children’s billiard they found, or even word games.

The group did a labor division to simplify their duties, and Arsen was in charge of preparing food. While they generally ate pasta or rice, Arsen tried to spice up their meals. “Once we made *ghapama* with a pumpkin,” he remembered, “or whenever we found animals, we ate meat.”

The boys’ destination and goal were the simple: to wake up in their homes again, have breakfast around the family table, attend university and do their daily jobs. However, the reality was way more complicated. “When we were finally back, things became difficult. I lost myself,” said Arsen. “I barely distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, and it often prevents me from making decisions.”

The boys often had roundtable discussions where they shared their plans for the future.

“Back then, we thought our plans would remain an unattainable dream,” recalled Arsen, “but it turned out that everything was possible.”



## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Armenia Insists on Peace Talks With Azerbaijan 'Without Preconditions'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Any negotiations over a peace treaty with Azerbaijan must be held without preconditions, Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan insisted on March 15.

In an interview with Armenpress Mirzoyan was asked to comment on the publication by Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry of five principles that Baku insists should underlie a future peace treaty with Yerevan.

These, in particular, include mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual reaffirmation of the absence of territorial claims to each other and a legally binding obligation not to make such claims in the future, abstaining from threatening each other's security, delimitation and demarcation of the border with the establishment of diplomatic relations and unblocking of transport links.

Mirzoyan implied that despite the Karabakh conflict Armenia has had no territorial claims against Azerbaijan. "Signing the Agreement on the Establishment of Cooperation of Independent States on December 8, 1991, the two countries, in fact, have already recognized each other's territorial integrity," he said.

Mirzoyan noted that the provisions mentioned in Azerbaijan's proposal "do not fully reflect the whole agenda of the existing problems."

"It is vital for the Armenian side that the rights and freedoms of the Armenians of Artsakh are clearly guaranteed, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is finally clarified," he underscored.

Asked about what format Armenia sees for possible negotiations on a peace treaty with Azerbaijan, Mirzoyan said it "had applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations on a peace treaty on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Helsinki Final Act."

### Aeroflot Resumes Flights

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Russian Aeroflot airline will re-launch flights to Armenia from March 22.

The airline said the flights will be carried out with the Russian SSJ100 planes.

Tickets are already available for purchase. Flights will be operated every day to Yerevan.

### Boxing Team Medals at Tournament in Montenegro

BUDVA (Panorama.am) — The Armenian team of young boxers led by Vazgen Badalyan took third place at the Adriatic Pearl Youth Tournament held here, the Boxing Federation of Armenia reported on March 14.

The boxers won 2 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze medals. Erik Israelyan (60 kg) and Artur Mkrtchyan (63.5 kg) won gold, while Aren Aslamazyan (51 kg) and Manvel Petrosyan (57 kg) took silver.

## European Parliament Adopts Resolution Chiding Azerbaijan For Destroying Armenian Heritage In Artsakh

RESOLUTION, from page 1

### The Physical Destruction

Moving to specifics, the resolution details the nature of the damage: "1 456 monuments, mainly Armenian, came under Azerbaijan's control after the ceasefire of 9 November 2020; whereas considerable deliberate damage was caused by Azerbaijan to Armenian cultural heritage during the 2020 war, particularly during the shelling of the the Holy Saviour/Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shusha/Shushi, as well as the destruction, changing of the function of, or damage to other churches and cemeteries during and after the conflict, such as Zoravor Surb Astvatsatsin Church near the town of Mekhakavan and St Yeghishe in Mataghis village in Nagorno-Karabakh; whereas during his visit to the 12th century Armenian Church in Tsakuri, President Aliyev vowed to remove its Armenian inscriptions..."

The indictment does not apply only to the most recent war, but considers that "the long-running conflict has had a catastrophic impact on the cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh and the region; ... over the last 30 years, the irreversible destruction of religious and cultural heritage has been carried out by Azerbaijan, notably in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, where 89 Armenian churches, 20 000 graves and more than 5 000 headstones have been destroyed; ... this has also occurred in the former conflict areas returned by Armenia to Azerbaijan, in particular the almost total destruction and looting of Aghdam and Fuzuli..."

Citing the UNESCO Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage of 2003, the EP resolution stresses that "cultural heritage is an important component of the cultural identity of communities, groups and individuals, and of social cohesion, so that its intentional destruction may have adverse consequences on human dignity and human rights;" furthermore, "the destruction of cultural heritage sites, artefacts and objects contributes to the escalation of hostilities, mutual hatred and racial prejudice between and within societies." Thus, preserving cultural heritage is crucial, in that it "has a key role in promoting lasting peace by fostering tolerance, intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and mutual understanding, as well as democracy and sustainable development..." The resolution underlines the special historical significance of Armenian monuments, whose "churches and monasteries are part of the oldest Christian heritage in the world and part of the common heritage of humanity..."

## EU 'Concerned' Over Gas Supply, Shootings in Karabakh

CONCERNS, from page 1

The EU envoy also posted a message on Twitter, saying: "Back in Yerevan for two days of meetings. As the international environment has become more tense, the EU is more than ever committed to the goal of a peaceful and prosperous South Caucasus."

For nearly a week now ethnic Armenian residents of Nagorno-Karabakh have been deprived of natural gas as the gas pipeline through which the fuel is supplied to the region from Armenia was damaged at a section passing through territory that has been controlled by Azerbaijan after the 2020 war. Authorities in Stepanakert accuse Azerbaijan of not allowing Nagorno-Karabakh maintenance workers to approach and repair the damaged pipeline to restore gas supplies vital for heating homes in Stepanakert and elsewhere in Nagorno-Karabakh amid subzero temperatures.

What authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh and many human rights activists in Stepa-

### Falsifying History

The European Parliament motion identifies the intent behind the elimination of physical monuments, which is to deny the existence of any Armenian historical and cultural existence: "the elimination of the traces of Armenian cultural heritage in the Nagorno-Karabakh region is being achieved not only by damaging and destroying it, but also through the falsification of history and attempts to present it as so-called Caucasian Albanian." The EP cites the announcement on February 3, 2022, by Anar Karimov, Azerbaijan's Minister of Culture, of "the establishment of a working group responsible for removing 'the fictitious traces written by Armenians on Albanian religious temples';" and "Strongly condemns Azerbaijan's continued policy of erasing and denying the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of international law" and a recent decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which ordered Azerbaijan to prevent and punish any such vandalism.

### Armenophobia

The charges go further, clearly defining the underlying policy behind these actions. In strikingly blunt terms, the European Parliament "[a]cknowledges that the erasure of the Armenian cultural heritage is part of a wider pattern of a systematic, state-level policy of Armenophobia, historical revisionism and hatred towards Armenians promoted by the Azerbaijani authorities, including dehumanisation, the glorification of violence and territorial claims against the Republic of Armenia which threaten peace and security in the South Caucasus..."

The intent is nothing less than to eradicate the very identity of a people. The European legislative body underlines "that cultural heritage has a universal dimension as a testimony of history inseparable from peoples' identity ... that cultural heritage constitutes a unique and important testimony of the culture and identities of peoples, and that the degradation and destruction of cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, constitutes a loss to the affected communities, as well as to the international community as a whole..." That is, cultural heritage is a component of a people's identity, as well as a treasure for humanity as a whole.

### Moving toward Action

The European Parliament, having established these acts of destruction and attempts at "historical revisionism," urges action; it calls for an "independent expert mission" as proposed by UNESCO, to be dispatched "without delay," and demands Azerbaijan

cooperate, allowing unfettered access "to all cultural heritage sites ... to draw up an inventory on the ground and to see what has happened to the sites..." and without any prior interference at these sites by Azerbaijan. The European Union is to play a role in implementation; one suggestion is that the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen) be deployed to make satellite images of the heritage sites, which can document their actual condition.

Although the emphasis is on protection of cultural heritage, the EP locates its initiative within a broader context, obviously acknowledging the fact that the fundamental issue is the need to resolve the conflict; this means ending all hostilities and finding a solution to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In this regard, the EP "calls on Azerbaijan to discard its maximalist aims, militaristic approach and territorial claims on Armenia and engage in good faith in negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh." It further demands implementation of the measures defined on December 7, 2021 by the ICJ, to prevent vandalism, destruction, racial hatred and all forms of violence. Furthermore, Azerbaijan must halt measures of Armenian cultural suppression, related to the language, cultural heritage sites or the historical record.

Finally, the EP appeals to the EU and all member states to contribute their support, including to humanitarian aid efforts.

The document will be delivered to officials and organs of the European Union, the governments and presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Director-General of UNESCO, the secretary generals of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Europa Nostra, the most representative heritage organization in Europe, which has members from 40 countries, endorsed the resolution on March 11.

The first reaction reported out of Baku came from the Committee for International and Interparliamentary Relations of the Azerbaijan Parliament, which issued an unusually lengthy statement, dismissing the resolution as "biased." As reported on March 11 by *Azer Tac*, the committee declared it was "entirely based on the false information fed by Armenia and the Armenian Lobby in the European Parliament." In its rebuttal, the Azerbaijani committee cites numerous instances of destruction of cultural heritage named by the European Parliament, and asserts that the perpetrator, however, was Armenia. Ironically, the committee's response constitutes yet another example of the commitment in Nagorno-Karabakh to falsify history.

nakert and Yerevan describe as an unfolding humanitarian crisis has been accompanied by more ceasefire violations along the line of contact between ethnic Armenian forces and Azerbaijan's military in Nagorno-Karabakh that both sides have blamed on each other. Armenia and Azerbaijan have also accused each other of escalating tensions along their border that remains un-demarcated since the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Last week, military authorities in Yerevan said that at least one Armenian soldier was killed and another wounded along the border with Azerbaijan. Authorities in Stepanakert said that one ethnic Armenian resident of Khramort was wounded as Azerbaijan opened mortar fire on the village in the east of Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku has denied any responsibility for both incidents.

On Friday, a spokesman for Armenia's Foreign Ministry said that official Yerevan considered requesting that the co-chairs of

the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group (the United States, France, and Russia) initiate peace talks between Yerevan and Baku.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, for his part, said the same day that Baku had passed to Yerevan a new "five-point proposal" for the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. He said that official Yerevan had not yet responded to Azerbaijan's proposal.

But in a statement issued on March 14, Armenia's Foreign Ministry explained: The Republic of Armenia responded to the proposals of the Republic of Azerbaijan and applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations for the signing of a peace agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act."



## INTERNATIONAL

# UK vs. Oligarchs: ‘The Gloves Are Now Off’

By Mark Landler and Stephen Castle

LONDON (*New York Times*) — On Friday, March 11, the day after Britain blacklisted seven prominent Russian oligarchs, residents of the wealthy London borough of Kensington and Chelsea rolled a washing machine overflowing with fake pound notes in front of a multimillion-dollar townhouse belonging to the family of the president of Azerbaijan.

It was a camera-ready stunt that made a serious point: For Britain to be successful in curbing the flood of dirty money — a phenomenon some call the “London laundromat” — it needs to go further than imposing sanctions on highly visible Russians like Roman Abramovich, the billionaire owner of the Chelsea soccer club.

The Azerbaijani leader, Ilham Aliyev, is one of hundreds of wealthy foreigners who have exploited Britain’s lax regulations to amass property and other assets, often under a web of offshore companies that disguise their ownership. Others have parlayed their fortunes into gilt-edged social status, endowing revered British cultural and educational institutions, or donating money to the Conservative Party.

Targeting these figures will be even more challenging than going after boldface names like Abramovich, whose ties to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia are longstanding and well documented. But the protesters in Kensington said such an effort was crucial if Britain genuinely wanted to rid itself of the taint of dirty money.

“The crisis exposed the issue of Kremlin-linked money in the U.K., but it’s a much more systemic, global problem, with London sheltering this kind of money,” said Flo Hutchings, who helped found a neighborhood group, Kensington Against Dirty Money. “We hope this situation will have a snowball effect.”

On Friday, Britain struck a blow in that direction, imposing sanctions on 386 members of the Duma, the Lower House of Russia’s Parliament, for recognizing the independence of two separatist regions of Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk. That will prevent the lawmakers from traveling to Britain and freeze their assets in the country — potentially a heavy

penalty for Duma members who do not have oligarch-scale wealth.

Even some of Britain’s harshest critics said its latest moves showed a new commitment. In addition to Abramovich, the government blacklisted Igor Sechin, a confidant of Putin’s who runs the oil giant Rosneft; Andrey Kostin, a banker known for renting a lavish ski chalet during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland; and Oleg Deripaska, a well-connected industrialist.

Deripaska had employed a Conservative member of the House of Lords, Greg Barker, as chairman of a metals company he partly owns. Last week, under intense political pressure, Barker stepped down from the company’s board.

“The gloves are now off in the U.K.,” said William F. Browder, an American-born British financier who has campaigned against corruption and human-rights abuses in Russia. “They hit Deripaska, who has his own representative in the House of Lords. I don’t think they’re specifically avoiding anyone.”

Still, on some level, Britain is simply catching up. Most of the Russians blacklisted by Britain had already been penalized by the United States or the European Union. While Britain has imposed sanctions on 18 oligarchs since the start of the Russian assault on Ukraine, on February 24, its list includes fewer than half of the 35 people identified by the jailed Russian opposition leader, Aleksei A. Navalny, as candidates for blacklisting because of their role in propping up a corrupt system.

Britain also signaled the measures against the Duma members last month, effectively giving them time to clean out their British bank accounts, though analysts said some were likely to have stranded real estate in London.

“Some of the smaller fry are almost more important because they won’t have millions here, but have something and it will irritate them,” said Chris Bryant, a lawmaker for the opposition Labour Party, who has called on the government to do more to root out corrupt money.

Another tactic for the richest of the oligarchs is to make generous donations to the arts, education or charity — a form of “reputation

laundering” that makes them harder to punish. A handful of oligarchs have become pillars of British society.

In a report in December on corrupt money in Britain, Chatham House, a research institute on foreign affairs, cited the Russian financier Dmitry Leus, who it said was “a supporter of St George’s Hospital, runs a children’s charity, supports a sports club in London, and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.”

“He also attempted to become a patron of the Prince of Wales’s foundation, making a £535,000 donation,” the report said. “However, the foundation later returned the donation, having learnt that Leus had spent time in a Russian prison.”

Leonard Blavatnik, a Ukraine-born British-American billionaire, donated almost \$100 million to Oxford University to build a school of government, and his name is on a wing of the Tate Modern Museum in London. One of the wealthiest people in Britain, Blavatnik has kept his distance from Putin, though he made his fortune in the post-Soviet breakup, investing with a fellow oligarch, Viktor Vekselberg.

“You have to be careful about where to draw the line,” Joe Powell, a founder of Kensington Against Dirty Money, said of going after individuals. “This is not meant to be an anti-Russia or anti-Russian campaign. This is first about transparency.”

For the activists, it is easier to shine a spotlight on Mr. Aliyev, the Azerbaijani leader, whose government engages in repression and human-rights abuses, according to the State Department. The problem with the influx of money like Aliyev’s, Powell said, is that it distorts the property market, making affordable housing scarce while leaving thousands of high-end residences empty.

The townhouse in Kensington is one of a portfolio of London properties, worth tens of millions of dollars each, owned by offshore companies with ties to Mr. Aliyev or his relatives. The ownership details came to light in the Pandora Papers, a trove of leaked financial documents that were published, starting last October, by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

But none of this has so far prompted Britain to act against Aliyev. His country is not involved in the war in Ukraine, even if he and Mr. Putin are friendly. Azerbaijan also maintains cordial relations with Britain, which is a major investor in its energy industry. Last year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain boasted 30 years of diplomatic ties, saying, “Cooperation is currently at an all-time high.”

Though Johnson has pressed hard for sanctions against Russia, including removing its banks from the SWIFT financial transfer network, he has been slower to target London’s rich Russians. That, critics say, reflects the fact that his Conservative Party has been the beneficiary of their largess.

Since Johnson became prime minister in 2019, the party or its constituency associations have received 1.93 million pounds (about \$2.5 million) from donors who are either Russian or who made money from Russia, according to calculations by the opposition Labour Party, based on disclosures to the Electoral Commission. The Tories typically raise more than 20 million pounds (\$26 million) a year in private donations.

Among the Russian Tory donors are Alexander Temerko and financier Lubov Chermukhin.

“These are not just happy-go-lucky Russians who came to the U.K. after starting some kind of a burger joint in Moscow,” said Thomas Mayne, a visiting fellow at Chatham House and an author of its report. “These are people with very clear links to the Kremlin or to people who have had roles in the past that are likely to raise security issues.”

Such concerns came up in the case of Evgeny Lebedev, a 44-year-old Russian-British press baron and friend of Mr. Johnson’s, whom he gave a seat in the House of Lords. Mr. Lebedev’s father, Alexander Lebedev, was an official in the K.G.B. who became an oligarch. Security agencies raised questions about his father’s background, according to a person familiar with the matter, but Johnson pressed ahead.

“For many years, we turned a blind eye to this and all of a sudden, we are worried about Russian money,” Mayne said. “Well, it’s a little bit too late.”

## Commemoration of St. Gregory of Narek and Presentation of English Translation of His Prayers in Rome

ROME — On February 28, on the occasion of the day of remembrance of St. Gregory of Narek (or Grigor Narekatsi in Armenian), in accordance to the Roman Catholic Church calendar, an ecumenical prayer service and a special presentation took place at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

The ecumenical service was presided over by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See and the Pontifical Legate of the Western Europe.

At the beginning of the ecumenical service Archbishop Barsamian welcomed everyone present and expressed his gratitude to both Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and Cardinal Koch for their patronage and thanked the Ecumenical Section of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas University and the Armenian Embassy to the Holy See for organizing these events with the Representation of the Armenian Church to the Holy See. Archbishop Barsamian concluded his remarks asking everyone to pray to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through the intercession of St. Gregory of Narek, for the peace in the world and, given the present circumstances, particularly in Ukraine.

Cardinal Koch in his remarks indicated



Pope Francis and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian with Prof. Abraham Terian and his wife Dr. Sara Terian

that this year again St. Gregory of Narek — the great Armenian Saint and Doctor of the Universal Church — has brought all of us together to this ecumenical service. “We ask his intercession in our walk for the full communion. We ask Saint Gregory of Narek, who is also known as the Saint of Peace, for the peace in Ukraine”, Cardinal Koch said.

The homily was delivered by Cardinal Sandri who asked everyone to pray with

the words of St. Gregory of Narek asking the Lord to grant everyone the profound faith of St. Gregory. His Eminence continued saying “Dear Armenian friends, this great Armenian mystical and lyrical poet, monk, theologian has become a Doctor of the Universal Church.”

Besides the high ranking Catholic clergy, this ecumenical service brought together also Armenian Catholic, Orthodox and

Anglican clergy, diplomats, academics and the faithful.

Following the ecumenical service a special program followed, during which the new publication of the English translation of the prayers of St. Gregory of Narek by Prof. Abraham Terian, titled *From the Depths of the Heart: Annotated Translation of St. Gregory of Narek*, was presented.

In the beginning of the program, Father Thomas Joseph White, the rector of the university, welcomed everyone, followed by Cardinal Koch speaking about St. Gregory of Narek and the unity of Christians. Prof. Marco Bais, an Armenologist and professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome made the presentation of this new publication. Afterwards, Prof. Abraham Terian spoke about the sacramental theology of St. Gregory of Narek. The program was concluded with the closing remarks by Ambassador Garen Nazarian, Ambassador of Armenia to the Holy See.

On March 2, at the Papal General Audience in Vatican, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian presented Prof. Abraham Terian to His Holiness Pope Francis. Prof. Terian had the opportunity to present to Pope Francis his three new publications including *From the Depth of the Heart: Annotated Translations of the Prayers of St. Gregory of Narek*. The Pope expressed his appreciation to Terian and gave his blessings to him and to his wife, Dr. Sara Terian.

# Community News

## AGBU Central Board Congratulates Berge Setrakian on 20 Years Of Leadership

NEW YORK — February 22, 2022 marked a milestone anniversary for AGBU and its leader Berge Setrakian, who assumed the presidency of the world's largest Armenian non-profit 20 years ago.

Reflecting on the past two decades, in addition to the 25 years he previously served as a member of the Central Board, Setrakian has cemented his role in AGBU history as a powerhouse of inspired action — a pioneering, enterprising Armenian whose dedicated service to our organization can be likened to a calling rather than a choice.

Many who know and work with him in the arduous process of governing a century-old multinational institution have observed that — despite his worldly success and meritorious professional achievements — his life purpose is embodied in the mission of AGBU.

A fierce proponent of the ethos of the AGBU founders that “in unity is strength,” Setrakian is always seeking ways to empower the Armenian Nation through shared visions and goals, bridging different generations and worldviews. To this end, he has taken bold steps to deepen our presence and impact in Armenia and Artsakh, always maintaining that the destinies of the Diaspora and Home-



land are entwined. He is also resolute in supporting and promoting the Armenian Church as the bedrock of the Armenian Nation. As such, he has spearheaded many initiatives to preserve and promote the relevance of the Church in the course of Armenian affairs, historically and spiritually.

Setrakian has enthusiastically supported the personal and professional development of Armenian youth. As one of the youngest members in AGBU history to be elected to the board of directors, he has helped ensure that the Armenian world is endowed with well-prepared leaders with the skills and confidence to give back to their communities just as he has.

Since taking office as president, Setrakian has been challenged with the complexities of globalization and geopolitics and encouraged an evolution in how we engage Armenians in meaningful activities that enrich

see SETRAKIAN, page 9



Len and Armine Wicks

## Exceptional Organizations Making A Difference In Armenia

By Vic Gerami

It's easy to focus on the negative with daily news of assaults on Armenia, Artsakh, and Armenians. But as they say in 12-Steps, we must not stay in the problem but get into the solution. Several non-profit organizations do just that. They help move Artsakh and Armenia out of their challenges, provide resources and support, and foster a better future. The list of these worthy organizations is too long, so I'll cover a few that I know best and personally.

### ArmeniaTools4Schools + Knights of Vartan

Jacob Bournazian

Armenia Tools4Schools, a 501©3 non-profit organization, is dedicated to helping the youth in the border regions of Armenia learn vocational trade skills for earning a living. Their projects contribute to the small towns' economic infrastructure and agricultural land areas along Armenia's border. The vocational/technical trade schools in the rural areas and border regions of Armenia and Artsakh need tools and equipment to teach students the basic trade skills for electricians, welding, tailoring, culinary, agricultural science, and machinery repair. Armenia Tools4Schools provides funding to purchase tools and equipment for vocational schools and renovate the facilities to train students. Providing youths with vocational trade skills increases their employment opportunities and contributes to the socio-economic development in the border regions.

The buildings in the town of Martuni, surrounding villages, and schools suffered heavy artillery bombardment during the October 2020 war. Four buildings at the Vladik Khatchadourian Vocational school were destroyed, two buses were blown up by drones while transporting passengers, and the school's whole technical/material foundation was burglarized. Basic transportation infrastructure, as well as electricity and clean running water, were destroyed. The school's buses were blown up by drones while carrying passengers on the road in the October 2020 war. The Knights of Vartan and Armenia Tools4schools coordinated their funding with the Ministry of Education and the school director to ensure the most pressing needs were funded. The Knights of Vartan also purchased a car to teach driver's education, providing valuable transportation services to residents during the war.

The damage to the school from the war caused a shift in priorities and additional supply needs for the school. The Knights of Vartan tripled funding from 2019 to 2021 to quickly restore safe transportation for the students living in the surrounding villages to attend vocational school. Funds were provided to construct a metal fence along the perimeter of the school property and install a new highway road sign at the entrance to the school. The perimeter fence and LED lighting on the entrance road sign are solar-powered, so the school perimeter stays lit. A new generator was purchased to provide a backup internal power source in the event of a power outage. ArmeniaTools4Schools donated \$5,000 to buy equipment, furniture, computers, tools, and supplies for the metalworking, carpentry, machine repair, sewing, hair styling, and culinary departments. 'It is a miracle the Armenians protected Martuni and survived continuous Azeri attacks during October 2020. We hope that the new metal fence

see ORGANIZATIONS, page 11

## Armenian Women's Welfare Association Expands Leadership Team at Its Skilled Nursing Center

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — The Armenian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA), a nonprofit health care organization dedicated to serving elders locally and internationally, and the sponsor organization of the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, today announced an expanded senior leadership team at the top-rated skilled nursing center with the appointment of two experienced administrators: Greg Messina, Chief Operating Officer, and Jessica Brigham, executive director.

Messina and Brigham each bring more than a decade of health care experience to the 83-bed, nonprofit provider of high-quality long-term care and short-term rehabilitation. Messina will guide the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center's strategic and planning initiatives, including the development of new services and programs, oversight of finances and collaboration with key health care partners. Brigham will lead the day-to-day operations, including the clinical care of patients and residents, management of staff, and communication with families.

“With these important leadership appointments and our continued commitment to strengthen our programs, we are well positioned to grow our mission of providing high-quality, person-centered care to the communities we serve,” said Martha Mensoian, president of the AWWA Board of Directors. “Greg and Jessica bring new ideas and a record of success in running a long-term care center, which will serve us well in these quickly evolving times.”

Messina previously served as a regional administrator for Whittier Health Network, a group of acute



Greg Messina

rehabilitation hospitals and subacute rehabilitation and nursing homes in Massachusetts. Prior to becoming a licensed nursing home administrator, he had a career in business and marketing. Messina earned a bachelor's degree in history and an MBA from the University of Massachusetts Boston.

“I am thrilled to join a nonprofit organization with such a rich history in serving its beneficiaries both locally

see AWWA, page 9





## COMMUNITY NEWS



Armenian Nursing &amp; Rehabilitation Center

## AWWA Expands Leadership Team at Its Nursing Center

AWWA, from page 8

and internationally, and a strong tradition of collaboration in health care with Boston's world-renowned medical centers," Messina said. "I look forward to bringing my experience in managing multiple skilled nursing facilities and helping our team build toward the future."

Brigham has served as the licensed nursing home administrator for several nursing homes in Greater Boston, most recently as executive director of Brighton House Rehabilitation & Nursing Center. Prior to these leadership roles, she worked for many years as a nurse and nursing director in health care and in long-term care centers. Brigham earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Simmons University in Boston and is a registered nurse.

"I am excited to return to a nonprofit health care setting and to guide the high quality care and services that the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center is well known for providing," said Brigham. "As a nurse who has worked in many roles and

settings during my career, I look forward to bringing my skills and experience in support of clinical programs during these highly complex times."

The senior leadership appointments at the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center followed the recent retirement of Scott Ariel, the AWWA's Chief Executive Officer, from a decades-long career in health care administration, who was also serving as the interim administrator of the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center. The AWWA Board of Directors credited Ariel for his steady management, particularly navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for his overall dedication and service to the mission of the AWWA and the Center.

AWWA is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to serving elders locally and internationally through the sponsorship of elder service programs. Founded in 1915 and drawing on the rich history of the Armenian community, the AWWA operates the Armenian Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Boston and supports an elder clinic and outreach program that provides medical care, food, fuel assistance and social support as well as visiting nurse services for the homebound to hundreds of elderly people who are alone in the Republic of Artsakh.

For more information, visit [www.awwainc.org](http://www.awwainc.org).

## AGBU Congratulates Setrakian on 20 Years of Leadership

SETRAKIAN, from page 8

their identity, honor their heritage, and serve the Armenian people. Yet even technological advancements in communications are no match for Setrakian's preference to connect in person with our constituencies and beneficiaries across our worldwide network. By visiting them in their own environments, he is better able to assess their priorities and coordinate our resources to more equitably touch and transform lives. As a result, our 60 chapters and districts continue to thrive as incubators of the Armenian identity, drivers of Armenian culture, and first responders when crises or disasters impact individuals and families on the ground.

Always prepared to shoulder the heavy burdens in times of need, Setrakian has led the organization through several daunting crises afflicting Armenians in Syria, Armenia, Artsakh, Lebanon and elsewhere. Ever resourceful, he confers with world leaders to advocate for our people while mobilizing Armenians for global fundraising campaigns that often generate multimillions in donations within a few days. This has enabled us to rapidly equip local chapters

and volunteers with the resources to deliver urgent relief to those in harm's way.

In a state, the AGBU Central Board said, "We wish to publicly express our immense gratitude to you, Berge, for your bold thinking, principled integrity, and clear-sighted grasp of the challenges and opportunities that inform our strategies and solutions to uplift Armenians around the world. With your highly sophisticated understanding of the world and keen appreciation of the legacy of your predecessors, you came to this office as the right leader at the right time to guide our organization to new and unimagined heights.

"We sincerely applaud you for uniting us around this noble mission and for sharing your time, wisdom and perspective gained over the better part of your life. We also wish to acknowledge Vera Setrakian, your steadfast partner on this consequential journey that the two of you began many years ago as ardent champions of AGBU. Congratulations on this important milestone in your exemplary life story and the history of our organization."

To learn more about the AGBU visit [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org).

## Donation

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator gratefully acknowledges the donation of \$100 by Khajag Tchakerian in memory of his late wife Regina Tchakerian.

## LA County Sheriff Offers Safety Points in Talk

By Kevork Keushkerian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PASADENA, Calif. — Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva was the guest speaker at a special community event at St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church on Thursday, March 10. The event was organized by the Men's Forum of the church. Also present was Mike Antonovich, former Los Angeles County Supervisor.

Villanueva is a veteran of the United States Air Force. He has a Master's Degree from the California State University at Northridge and a doctorate from the University of La Verne.

Berge Gourdikian, chairman of the Men's Forum, welcomed the guests and then invited Father Sarkis Petoyan, pastor of the Church, to make the opening remarks.

Petoyan first read the Primate Archbishop Hovnan Derderian's welcoming remarks, addressed to the guest, and then presented Villanueva with an Armenian Cross carved on wood with the letters of the Armenian alphabet carved on the four sides of the frame of the Armenian Cross.

Villanova is the 33th Sheriff of Los Angeles County and has a staff of 18,000. He is married and has an adult son and two granddaughters.

In his speech, he warned about some common schemes, such as fraudulent crypto-currency purchases and false claims.

He also warned about the dangers of on-

line identity thefts. He also suggested that for increased safety, those who want to go to an ATM or get gas, do so during daylight hours. He also advised against announcing on social media vacation plans.

He urged installing alarms, close circuit videos and Ring doorbells.

He suggested that anyone who fears they are being followed in their car, drive to a police station.

He also got political and suggested that the police get more funding and that prison sentences get longer.

At the end of this presentation, members of the audience were given a chance to ask questions and they did.

This was a tremendous opportunity for the Armenian community to come together to learn and understand what is needed to bring peace, safety, and peace of mind to all.



Sheriff Alex Villanueva

Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater Boston Chapter Presents

(Re)Turn to Stone:

Preserving a Culture of Stone Masonry

A Zoom talk with Armenian designer

with Q&amp;A moderated by

Nare Filiposyan

Ted Touloukian



Born in Sisian, Armenia, Nare Filiposyan is an architectural designer and researcher whose work focuses on the preservation of Armenian architectural techniques. Nare holds a Master's degree in Architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Her recent thesis, "(Re)Turn to Stone: Preserving a Culture of Stone Masonry," is a cultural inquiry mediated through conversations with Armenian stone masons aimed at preserving their first-hand knowledge of architectural techniques. Her work spans between interviews with masons; visits to medieval churches, quarries, and stone cutting facilities; and her own technical experiments to ultimately project a method for preserving the dying culture of stone masonry.

March 24, 2022

8 - 9 PM EST

All are welcome over Zoom



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<https://bit.ly/TCAMarch24>

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Elise Antreassian Bids Farewell to Diocese

NEW YORK — After four decades of service to the Eastern Diocese, Elise Antreassian is leaving the Diocesan staff. She has been synonymous with Christian Education in the Armenian Church for a third of the Diocese’s entire history. Over the years, that effort in our Diocese has gone forward under many names (most memorably, perhaps, the DRE, or Department of Religious Education).

As all who know Antreassian can attest, her work has been a true vocation: a calling from the Lord. Among countless contributions in her field, she revolutionized the Sunday School program, not merely in the sphere of our Diocese and its parishes, but in the worldwide Armenian Church. Indeed, many Orthodox Christian traditions have imitated the resources produced through her imagination, effort, and faith.

She was also a pioneer in educational conferences — chief among them the Mardigian Institute — that brought together teachers, superintendents, and all who sought to enrich their knowledge in the company of like-minded faithful.

She focused particular attention on the vital importance of spiritual growth, within individuals and within the community, through countless retreats, leadership seminars, and “Walk Thru the Bible” gatherings. The “Superintendent Summits” Elise led, and the “Conversation Clusters” that took place virtually during the pandemic, involving clergy and lay Christian educators, kept that endeavor alive and growing.

“Elise has been an inspiration to me since I first met her in the 1970s,” recalled Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan. “Her unreserved love for Christ the Savior inspired me and contributed to my discovery of my vocation to serve the Armenian Church as a priest. She excelled at challenging people to grow in the relationship with God, and I know that many would credit her with having helped them on their way to a fuller, more real experience of the presence of the Savior in their lives. I am one of them.”

“She built a true family of men and women that were, like her, committed to guiding children and adults closer to the

Lord. She nourished them by her own faith and love, so that they became a real family of Christian educators for our Diocese. They remain a beacon of hope in our Diocese and parishes.”

### A Ground-Breaking Effort

The Bishop added: “Our Diocese’s Sunday School Curriculum, first published in the 1980s, and continuously revised over the decades since, was ground-breaking not only in the Armenian Church, but in all of the world’s Orthodox churches. I saw this at first hand during a World Council of Churches conference in Cyprus, in the late 1990s. Its topic was ‘Christian Education in the Orthodox Churches,’ and I presented the Diocese’s curriculum to the attendees — who were simply stunned by the accomplishment. Credit for that, and so much more, goes to Elise and her longtime co-worker in the Lord’s vineyard, Nancy Basmajian, as well as the dozens of men and women who contributed to its success.”

Like the Primate, the thousands of peo-



Elise Antreassian

ple who have worked with Elise — fellow staffers, clergy, faithful in the parishes, and others — cherish her for her wonderful human qualities. She has been a warmhearted, encouraging colleague and friend to us all, and her presence on the Diocesan staff will be sorely missed, both institutionally and personally.

## Williams and Ohanian Keep Their Start-up Investments ‘Separate’

By Jade Scipioni

NEW YORK (CNBC) — When tennis legend Serena Williams and Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian first met at a cafe in Italy in 2015, the conversation quickly turned to business.

Today, the duo is married — with a daughter — and both have built sizable reputations as start-up investors. But Williams says they try to keep their business ventures apart. “One of our first conversations was investing, because I’ve been investing for over nine years now,” Williams told CNBC’s “Squawk Box” on March 1. “We try to keep business separate. Obviously, there are things that come up, where we talk about business at home — but we try to keep our businesses separate.”

Still, Williams said, it’s nice to have someone like Ohanian as a sounding board.

Williams just announced a \$111 million fundraiser for her new investment firm, Serena Ventures, saying she plans to invest in founders with diverse points of view. According to the firm’s website, Serena Ventures has invested in 61 companies since launching in 2014, including home fitness company Tonal, cryptocurrency resource CoinTracker and Impossible Foods.

Last year, Ohanian launched his own venture capital fund, Seven Seven Six — which has invested in 39 companies, according to the fund’s website, including Angel City Football Club, a Los Angeles-based National Women’s Soccer League expansion team. Ohanian has also invested in Impossible Foods, separately from Williams.



Serena Williams and Alexis Ohanian (People Magazine photo)



## Tekeyan Cultural Association

# 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary

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## in Armenia and Five Artsakh Villages






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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Exceptional Organizations Making A Difference In Armenia

ORGANIZATIONS, from page 8

and solar lighting to the school property will deter future artillery and drone attacks on the school by marking this property as a civilian government facility' said Jacob Bournazian, a regional representative for the Knights of Vartan, and the initiator of the Vladik Khatchadourian Vocational School project.

The new equipment and tools provide the means for students to learn by hands-on training from professional instructors in the trade departments. "The work of Armenia Tools4Schools along with the Knights of Vartan should inspire others to assist in our homeland in a manner that not only offers assistance today but in a manner that will generate benefits into the future", said Steven R. Adams, Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan.



Jacob Bournazian

"This generous donation from the Knights of Vartan and Armenia Tools4Schools gave us hope and faith. The school, being damaged during the 44-day war, not only

would get back on its normal course, but also enabled the education and preparation of professional specialists in our country for a better future' said Artak Sargsyan, director of the school.

The Knights of Vartan also provided \$25,000 in funding in 2021 to start small businesses in the villages in the Martuni province. Presentations were coordinated with local officials and meetings held with people during the summer in the 10 villages that surround the town of Martuni. 36 applications were received, and 5 individuals were selected to start new businesses. Tools and equipment were purchased for the businesses. The owners are responsible for 20% of the costs including building renovation and site clearing. By November, 2021, 3 greenhouses for small scale local food production were opened for business in three towns, a hair salon in Taghavard, vodka production distillery in Hatsi, and a shoe repair business in Martuni all opened in November. All the businesses are prospering in 2022 and supporting families. A coordinated small business development program is needed to replace the welfare-based aid that the Armenian government and other non-profit organizations are providing refugees said Jake Bournazian of the Knights of Vartan, initiator of this project. As we fund the opening of more small businesses, we help re-build a middle class in these rural agricultural communities. The improvements we are doing at the vocational school will be realized in the villages as graduating students learn how to use new agricultural greenhouse technologies and transition from a livestock based agricultural economy, said George Bournazian, president of Armenia Tools4schools.

The Knights of Vartan Inc. is a fraternal leadership and service organization of Armenian men dedicated to safeguarding and perpetuating the Armenian heritage and cultural traditions. Its membership represents the spectrum of the leadership of the Armenian community. It was founded in 1916 in Philadelphia and is based the United States with 22 local chapters which support Armenian causes around the world. For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>.

## Origins: Discovery' Adopt a Village' & Areni Open Air Cultural Museum

Len Wicks & Armine Hakobyan Wicks

Origins: Discovery's 'Adopt-a-Village' (AAV) project is the initiative of the husband-and-wife team of Len Wicks who is Australian/New Zealander, and Armenian Armine Hakobyan Wicks. The project aims to beautify villages for tourism and help rural Armenians with direct support projects. The objective of the Origins Project is to open the world's eyes to the beauty of Armenia and its ancient culture. Together, the two projects are intended to encourage tourism and business, and recognition of the

Armenian Genocide.

'The Adopt-a-Village (AAV) program prepares Armenia for tourism and focuses on strengthening the rural heartland by mentoring every village through a direct relationship with the diaspora and friends of Armenia,' said Len Wicks, founder of Origins: Discovery. He added, 'This is intended to stop depopulation that the over-emphasis on the development of Yerevan has actually worsened, which is a security threat. Eventually, this direct relationship might encourage some diaspora to move to the rural heartland, like the founders of AAV have done.'

Len and Armine are building a lodge in an orchard surrounded by water and nature. Areni Lodge is a part of the Adopt-a-Village project which aims at reaching every Armenian village. Aside from Vayots Dzor, the AAV projects also operate in Ararat and Shirak provinces.

The AAV project and the construction of Areni Lodge provide multiple benefits for the area and local people. The project encourages tourism and trade in the area and provides jobs for the locals. It also helps reverse depopulation which has been becoming a major issue on the background of rising ongoing between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As the village of Areni is located closer to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border where the risk of military conflict is still high, the risk of depopulation is high too. Continuing

The HDRC is a comprehensive rehabilitation complex. Both initial passive rehabilitation treatment and active treatment are provided at the Center. It provides all the necessary medical services with their interdisciplinary team of specifically trained experts, including rehabilitation doctors, acupuncturists, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech therapists, and other highly qualified specialists.

The center is in the premises of the First Clinical Hospital operated by YSMU which gives them access to the professional services of the university's teaching and lecturing staff. The university's hospital, its intensive care unit, laboratory, medical equipment are at the center's disposal.

A few of the treatments offered at the HDRC include brain and spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, neurological problems, meningitis, encephalitis, radiculitis, neuritis, post-stroke rehabilitation, among others.

The center also provides the services of kinesiotherapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, water kinesiotherapy, acupuncture, halotherapy, ergotherapy, paraffin therapy, speech therapist, psychologist, massage, etc. All the experts are highly qualified and leading specialists in their spheres who have taken international training courses in various European countries.

There are two pools available at the center for the disabled patients who can walk and for those who use wheel-



Veterans at Homeland Defenders Rehabilitation Center

to build and create is important for many reasons, including keeping the locals in high spirits and with hopes for a brighter and peaceful future.

The Areni Open Air Cultural Museum is sited in Areni, next to the beautiful Arpa River. The Museum's development is part of the Adopt-a-Village charity program to help strengthen rural Armenia. The Museum will be administered by the Areni Municipality for the benefit of local artisans and the wider community.

## Homeland Defender's Rehabilitation Center (HDRC)

Homeland Defender's Rehabilitation Center (HDRC) was established in collaboration between the 'Support for the Wounded Soldiers and Soldiers with Disabilities' NGO, Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia. HDRC is equipped with top-rate modern equipment needed for rehabilitation treatment, unparalleled in the region and is operated via the latest methods used in rehabilitation treatment industry and first-class research technologies.

chairs. The latter is equipped with a transportation crane. A water massage cabin is available for the full body treatment and two separate water massage cabins are available for the upper and lower limbs.

Beauty By Soldiers is a project the HDRC that provides several benefits, including a source of income for the Center, jobs for the veterans and a type of art therapy for their psychological rehabilitation. Natural butterflies bred in special farms around the world are donated to the Center. The soldiers are paid to create unique art compositions in special glass, which are then sold for considerable amounts. They give a second life to beauty without harming nature. All proceeds from the sale of the artworks fund the Center's various programs.

For more information about the gala, please visit <https://www.helpheroes.am/?lang=arm&p=29>.

(Vic Gerami is an award-winning journalist and the editor + publisher of *The Blunt Post*. Gerami is also the host and co-producer of the national headline news + politics program, *THE BLUNT POST* with VIC on KPFK 90.7 FM (Pacifica Network).)



## OBITUARY

## Dziadzan (Gia) Aivazian

*Cosmopolitan UCLA Librarian, Scholar*

LOS ANGELES — Dziadzan (Gia) Aivazian was born in Kavala, Northern Greece on December 22 1934. She passed away on Thursday, February 10, 2022 in Los Angeles.

She was the daughter of Levon and Zabel Aivazian, Armenian Genocide survivors from Yozgat and Bandirma, respectively. Levon and Zabel were blessed with four children, Gia, Adam, Krikor and Arshalouis. Their father's profession as a teacher in Armenian schools took the family to many countries. Gia had a peripatetic upbringing that saw her living in Greece, Cyprus, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. The Aivazian family moved to the United States in 1960.

Gia's childhood in Nazi-occupied Greece in the early 1940s, the 1947 Palestinian-Israeli war (after their move to Jaffa), and their escape to Amman, Jordan, among other harrowing experiences shaped her personality and character. Gia's outlook on life was greatly influenced by having witnessed the human tragedy caused by wars and the resulting suffering and injustice.

From a very young age Gia was a problem solver, resilient and steadfast. Her early life experiences sealed her sense of familial and societal responsibilities. Throughout her life, she remained attuned to hardships around her and the community at large.

Gia had a boundless thirst for learning and knowledge. From a tender age, she was an avid reader.

In the Greek town where her family had taken refuge from the Nazis, with the absence of schools, Gia taught herself the Greek alphabet in order to read.

After moving to Jordan, Gia enrolled in the British High School for Girls. She had no prior knowledge of English. Through

perseverance and hard work, she became the star student of the British school with a perfect command of the Shakespearean language. Once the Aivazian family immigrated to the United States, Gia, now an alumnus of the American University of Beirut, pursued her academic studies at UCLA. She earned a B.A. in English in 1967, a Master's of Library Science in 1968 and the Candidate in Philosophy degree in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, with an emphasis on Armenian literature, in 1982.

In 1968 Gia Aivazian was appointed cataloguer of Armenian and Greek books at UCLA.

Librarianship was not only a livelihood for Gia, but rather, a calling. Her profession was driven by a higher purpose; To transform the Armenian Studies field and raise awareness of Armenian Identity and culture.

Over a long, 40-plus year career, from 1968 to 2009, Gia contributed to the modernization of the cataloging of Armenian materials. In conjunction with the Library of Congress, she greatly improved areas of classification, subject headings and the Armenian alphabet Romanization table.

In addition to cataloging, Gia became the bibliographer for all Armenian materials from 1973 to 1990. She single-handedly developed the UCLA library's entire Armenian Collection. Through her continuous and sus-



tained efforts, the Armenian collection grew from a base of approximately two thousand books to some twenty-three thousand, giving UCLA the largest Armenian collection of books in the Western Hemisphere.

A pragmatic idealist, Gia played a pivotal role in the advancement of the UCLA Narekatsi Chair for Armenian Studies.

Gia Aivazian followed in her parent's footsteps, by continuously being immersed in the Armenian community. Gia served on multiple committees, boards and councils. She was a board member of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian Symphonic Music Association, Friends of

UCLA Armenian Language and Culture Program, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Arshag Dikranian School and the UCLA Narekatsi Chair for Armenian Studies Ad hoc Committee, just to name a few.

In addition, Gia participated in multiple conferences focused on Armenian Culture and history. As a sought-after speaker, she lectured on topics such as "The Armenian Folktale," "Armenian Manuscripts and Illuminations," "Problems in Armenian Collection development in U.S. Libraries" and "The W. L. Sachtleben Papers" at UCLA concerning the Erzurum Massacre of October 30, 1895.

Gia's proudest accomplishment was receiving the prestigious Hagop Meghabard Medal for Achievement in Librarianship and Bibliography from the National Library of Armenia.

She left an indelible mark on her family and friends.

Her loss is mourned by her brother Adam and Ani Aivazian; her nephews Sevag and Taline Aivazian, and Krikor and Taylor Aivazian; her sister Arshalouis Stevenson; her nephew and niece, Damian Stevenson and Anoush Stevenson; her grand-nieces and grand-nephews, Sevana and Atam Aivazian, Nathan, Christopher and Haylen Aivazian and Poppy Stevenson; Along with the Aivazian, Stevenson, Apamian, Kouyumdjian, Chuchian, Minasian and Missirli families.

Funeral services to be held on March 30, 2022 at 2:30pm. Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills, Old North Church.

## Anahid 'Dee Dee' Kouyoumjian

*Aunt to Many, Believer in Work Ethic*

WATERTOWN — Anahid Kouyoumjian, also known as Diane, Dee Dee, or Auntie Dee to her nieces, nephew, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, younger cousins and their children, passed away peacefully in her home in Watertown on March 1, 2022. She was 81.

Growing up in Watertown, Dee was very involved in the Armenian community, and loved the comfort and stability that the Armenian Apostolic Church provided throughout her life. She was the daughter of the late Toros Kouyoumjian and Paris Sohigian, to whom she was devoted. Most of her family predeceased her including her sister Lucy Johnson of Rhode Island, her niece Janie Johnson Rogan, and a great niece Erica Pederson; her brother Harry Koumjian and his wife Madeline of Arlington; and her first cousins Haig Deranian and his wife Donna of Belmont, and Charlotte "Shake" Eordekian of Watertown.

Dee graduated from Watertown High School and went to work in Harvard Square for University Travel and then American Express as a travel agent. Many of her clients were from Harvard University and the Harvard Business School, who were loyal to her year after year. She believed in great customer service and high work ethics. She was able to bring these values to her niece Karen's optometry practice after retiring from the travel business.

Close childhood friendships from the Watertown schools and Armenian community meant everything to Dee. She loved to travel and enjoy vacations with her friends to places like Jerusalem, Morocco, Armenia, Puer-

to Rico, and Disney World. Always supportive and encouraging, she was a comfort and never hesitated to be available, especially in times of need.

Dee admired Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis for her grace, fashion, and devotion to family. Indeed, she had grace, fashion, and was also devoted to family and friends. She was well loved by her family, friends and all those touched by her generosity and kindness. She is sadly missed.

Dee always said she felt young at heart. She enjoyed talking to the younger generation, always interested in their lives, believing in their dreams and successes, and their potential for making the world a better place. She loved living in the Boston area and going out nights to the theater and to dinner with family and friends. Dee had an avid interest in politics and loved discussing current events, always ending a discussion with a laugh and smile.

Dee was proud of her Armenian culture and was a lifelong parishioner of St James Armenian Apostolic Church. She especially loved the music of the Armenian church service, the Armenian foods she cooked and shared, and all of her Armenian friends. She was a volunteer for many years at the Armenian Nursing Home.

She leaves many nieces and nephews, and their families: Linda Pederson of London Ontario and daughters Ingrid and Kristen; Judith Johnson-Bishop of Rhode Island; sons of Janie Johnson Rogan, Sean and Matthew Rogan and their families of Rhode Island; Karen Koumjian and her



daughter Alexis Cheney of Waltham; Kevin Koumjian of New Hampshire, son Alec and family; Lauren Koumjian of Vermont, husband David Yandell and sons Evan, Duncan and Wilson; Pamela Koumjian Gechigian of Concord, husband Ara Gechigian and daughters Lara and Sophie; Andrea Koumjian of Acton, husband Stephen Trimble, children Melissa Bressner and husband Ryan, Lauren (Aunt Dee's Goddaughter), and Eric.

She was also "Auntie Dee Dee" to Haig and Donna's children and grandchildren, who was like a second mother and loved spending time with them and enjoying the children's activities. She leaves Greg Deranian, his wife Adrienne and their sons Nico and Christian; Jason Deranian, his wife Jennifer and their sons Sam and Sebastian; and Jennifer Deranian Granfield, her husband Mossey and their daughters Sophia and Mackenzie.

Funeral services were at Saint James Armenian Church, Watertown on March 11. Interment was at Ridgeland Cemetery, Watertown.

## Harry Keshishian

*Veteran of World War II*

WALTHAM, Mass. — Harry Keshishian, 100, of Waltham, formerly of Lexington, passed away on March 7, 2022.

He was the husband of the late Ozzie (Ohanesian) Keshishian; father of Sandra Keshishian, Chris Keshishian and his wife Debra and the late Anahid Susan Hoffman; uncle to Barsha MacDonald and her husband William and great-uncle to Brittany and William MacDonald.

He was the founder and president of H.K. Graphics of Everett, and member of Armenian Veterans of Greater Boston. He was an army veteran of World War II.

Funeral services were held at the Church of Our Redeemer, 6 Meriam Street, Lexington, on Tuesday, March 15. At the request of the family, cemetery services are private.

Arrangements by Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.



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# Arts & Culture

## Michael Goorjian

*Shooting 'Amerikasti' a Return to Filmmaking in Armenia*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/OAKLAND — Michael Goorjian is actor, director and writer. Since 1991 he has appeared in 58 TV and films, and directed 14 films, documentaries and videos. Among his notable works are his TV roles in “Party of Five” and “David’s Mother” (for which he won an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actor), his film “Illusion” with Hollywood legend Kirk Douglas, his philosophical novel *What Lies Beyond the Stars*, characterized by Huffington Post as “an absolute gem,” etc.

We met and became friends in 2006, when Michael was visiting Armenia for the first time, traveling and meeting people. At that time in an interview Michael said that Yerevan became his favorite city and he cannot wait to get back there and make a film.

After 14 years Michael came back to Armenia with a feature film project, staying seven months. Recently he finished his film “Amerikasti,” produced by “People of Ar,” “Palodeon Pictures” and “H&H Films.”



**Michael, it is typical for film professionals of Armenian descent — from top celebrities like Cher to unknown beginners — express their wishes to make films on Armenian topic or in Armenia, yet very few do it. But you did!**

I promised I would, remember? Back in 2006 when I first came to Armenia I was so inspired that I told you, somewhat jokingly, that I would find something I could shoot in Armenia as an excuse to come back. Well, it took me a little while to find the right story, but eventually, I did and the rest is history. You never know, sometimes the most whimsical impulses lead to incredibly important outcomes, which is definitely the case for me. Despite the many challenges involved — shooting a period piece, in a foreign country, in

see GOORJIAN, page 16



Armenian stone mason Harutyun sharing a photo from one of his many construction sites.

## TCA Boston Presents (Re)Turn to Stone

*Zoom Lecture on Preserving an Armenian Culture of Stone Masonry by Nare Filiposyan, March 24*

BOSTON — On March 24, the Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater Boston Chapter will host a virtual presentation and Q&A session with Armenian architectural designer and researcher Nare Filiposyan. Filiposyan, in her thesis, titled “(Re)Turn to Stone: Preserving a Culture of Stone Masonry,” explores the ancient stone masonry techniques practiced by masons in Armenia, and the cultural heritage imbued within their work. Her research spans interviews in Armenia; visits to medieval churches, quarries, and stone cutting facilities; remote conversations with stone masons; and her own experiments as a way to understand the techniques at play, and ultimately, to project a method for preserving the dying culture of Armenian stone masonry. Architect Theodore Touloukian will serve as moderator.

In contemporary Armenia, stone is ubiquitous — from street furniture to the home, from thousands of public water fountains to thousands of medieval churches, from municipal buildings to Soviet housing blocks disguised under stone tiles. Stone is a vital part of the cultural fabric, holding both physical as well as intangible cultural heritage. The history of Armenian stone masonry can be traced as far back as the Urartu period circa 900-600 BCE. Yet, despite the pervasiveness of this medium of cultural and artistic expression, certain medieval stonework techniques, tracing back to the 4th century, are dying out.

The existing academic literature on medieval Armenian architecture focuses on plan typologies (classification schemes) and formal descriptions and comparisons of various churches and monasteries. What has been overlooked is the underlying craft of building — the specific knowledge embodied by masons, that has enabled the existence of that architecture. With only a handful of masons that hold this knowledge alive today, the disappearance of their embodied techniques of stone masonry is at stake.

It is against this backdrop that Filiposyan, an Armenian architectural designer and researcher originally from Sisian, Armenia, has been working to understand and preserve these techniques through first-hand interviews with the few practitioners remaining in Armenia. Her current research on the preservation of Armenian stone masonry techniques has been supported by a NuVu research grant, the Marvin E. Goody Award, and an MIT Department of Architecture Graduate Fellowship.

Filiposyan holds a Master’s degree in Architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There, she served as a co-president of the Architecture Student Association and an executive member of the MIT NOMAS chapter. She has previously received scholarships to attend the United World College of the Adriatic, where she represented Armenia among 90 other nations. She received a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and Architecture from Bennington College, where she served as a trustee. She has held multiple design and research positions at SHoP Architects, Rockefeller

see STONE, page 17

## Books

### Across the Fourth Dimension with Kardash Onnig

By Arpi Sarafian

*Synergy from the Stress Points of Four Lifelines* (Baraka, 2021), the latest in Kardash Onnig’s Baraka Projects, makes the intangible tangible. In the artist’s own words, the sensually-created carvings assembled in this handsome volume (unusually hefty for Onnig), “transcend” the subject to reach the essence of the material he was “carving,” and become a gateway to the spiritual world Kardash has spent a lifetime exploring.

These carvings are charged with an emotional force that is very much felt as well as seen. When experienced in their totality, they create a sense of wholeness and harmony in the viewer, and bring her closer than ever to Onnig’s vision of a world where love and compassion prevail. In an uncanny way, the photographs of the sculptures, taken by celebrated photographers like Arthur Cholakian, Seizi Kakizaki, Tony Kent and others, make the artist’s elusive idea of a three-dimensional consciousness accessible to the viewer. In the words of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most influential sculptors, Constantin Brancusi, Onnig’s art is “most realistic . . . What is real is not the appearance, but the idea, the essence of things.”

The universal has always been at the core of Kardash Onnig’s initiatives. In a 25-page-long Introduction, Kardash draws a timeline of the different stages of his evolution, which has remained amazingly focused on his vision of a three-dimensional universe that will replace the two-dimensional paradigm that has us headed for destruction through its wars and its divisions.

In project after project, Onnig experiments with the “Four Tools of Being” he invented to create a universal alphabet. Kardash adopted the principle of four, the Quaternary, as a link among cultures worldwide. Sometimes, the artist is dismissed as a madman because the world he wants to create, “a world that can be brought together by a universal alphabet,” is an “impossible” world. Yet, the artist’s ability to transform his vision into visually appealing art objects, makes his plea to bring back the spirit (Voki) to a world reduced to surfaces and to commodities relevant, and needed.

Particularly appealing, both conceptually and aesthetically, is the 1990 “Way of the Cross/Crossing Borders,” an installation of sculptures at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The installation conveys a symbolic “crossing” of the Turkish/Armenian border by using 14 stations of the Cross as metaphors for reconciliation. In 1982, as a token of his genuine desire to reverse the destructive course of our ways, the artist changed his name to Kardash, which in Turkish means “brother.”

see CARVINGS, page 20



Architectural designer Nare Filiposyan will present her work on the preservation of ancient Armenian stone masonry techniques



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Photojournalist Documents Artsakh During War and Peace

PHOTOJOURNALIST, from page 1 in the Republic of Georgia and decided to go next to Armenia with the goal of visiting Karabakh for the first time. He said, “I was a bit anxious and not sure how it would be. I imagined basically that I am going to a place where everyone is in the street with Kalashnikovs and camouflage. This was the kind of information that was available on the Internet about Nagorno Karabakh. But I made a friend in Yerevan, and this girl, she was telling me, you know, ‘I am from Artsakh.’ She started to share information with me – how nice, how welcoming, how beautiful the place is.”

He went with her in her tiny car, he said, to Kelbajar/Karvajar and arrived at the border where there was a checkpoint and a little cabin. He wondered where all the militants were that he was curious about. The men at the checkpoint were curious about him too and invited him to drink vodka and eat food. He said, “We drank I don’t know how many *genats*’s [toasts] and ate food, and I was at the border and was almost dead drunk already. That was my welcome.”

One month and a half later, he came again for twelve days, and again returned at the end of 2016 to spend New Year and Christmas in a village in Hadrut with new friends. Sade said, “Ever since, I went there really often – so many times. I would come whenever I had free time.” He had one main goal. He said, “I wanted to understand the conflict. I wanted to understand this place because I saw what is in the media and what is the reality, and I wanted to dive into that. By diving into that, I mean I really went to every place possible. I went with people who took me to Aghdam and other cities. I wanted to see and understand what the conflict is, what is the situation, and how people live.”

He said that because he also grew up in a conflict zone, he understood that the status quo could not continue there. Sade declared, “In a way, I predicted that there will be a war, but I didn’t predict that it would be so early.” Thinking in that way, he decided, “I will go here. I will document the life of the people. I met people in the villages who became my very, very close friends. It was just amazing for me. But also I realized that my footage might be the only footage of some places. If there would be a war, these places might never exist again. I committed to the story of Artsakh.”

He felt that nobody was interested in these places, not even the majority of Armenians. He exclaimed, “It was really weird for me to see that there were such amazing people living there but at the same time, nobody speaks as their voice. Nobody speaks about it anywhere. You don’t know about Artsakh and that they want independence.”



Gilad together with the Sahakyan family in their home in Tumi village of Hadrut region in the summer of 2015. Gilad has documented the Sahakyan family from 2015 till 2021 (photo Gilad Sade)

He did not know Armenian, though he eventually picked up basic terms, and as for Russian, he laughingly said, “It depends on how much *tuti oghi* [mulberry vodka] I drink.” Apparently more people he encountered knew French than English in Karabakh, so he was able to use those two languages for more complex communications.

When he interviewed people, he said, “I would set up the camera and prepare my questions. I would ask a friend to translate it into proper Russian or Armenian. Then I would ask the person, saying this is one question, and then the next. Sometimes I had no idea what they were talking about, but it gave me something very unique because the people felt so comfortable to talk to the camera. They felt that nobody was judging them. There was no team with a cameraman, soundman and a journalist. It is just one weird guy in orange pants, or very colorful, having piercings, coming to the mountains and joining their celebrations, eating what they eat and drinking what they drink.”

Once he made friends, he said that they saw he was going to places that they had never visited, so they would join him for a few days in village visits and this would help also to facilitate communication. He exclaimed: “I feel in a way that I was blessed because I got to go to a place that not many people care about and the people really opened their hearts. They opened their doors. They gave me everything they didn’t have even, and shared with me their stories in the most honest and open way.”



Soldiers of the Artsakh Defense Forces walking towards the bombed entrance of the Martakert military hospital (photo Gilad Sade)

were spreading that the city is completely under their control. Sade said, “I was living with the villagers for a long time in the Hadrut area. I visited this place so many times with a car, and I walked around with the locals. I literally was in every corner possible. Nobody can tell me I don’t know what I am talking about in this region.”

He said, “That was the moment when I could not share much information anymore. I said okay, instead I will focus on writing my book. I will focus on my documentary so that I can show the story to the world, because right now if I will share some information I will be in danger.” Therefore, in his reports disseminated in Israel, he said that henceforth he only reported about what he personally saw, such as the Azerbaijani bombing.

Sade said that by the end of the war, he was spending nearly every day in Shushi, especially in the hospital there. When he saw sniper casualties and soldiers struck by Kalashnikov bullets, he said he knew the front was getting very close. November 3 was Sade’s birthday and his driver, Sayat, forced him to celebrate and drink in the morning. Sade said he told Sayat that the road is going to be cut soon and the war will be over, so they should drive every day to Goris, stay one hour and then come back just to see what is happening on the road.

On November 4 they went to Shurnukh village in the Goris municipality of Syunik Province of Armenia, where Sade took photographs. Sade said he realized that there would be problems there soon with the new border with Azerbaijan. On the

## 2020 Artsakh War

When Sade learned of the onset of the 2020 Artsakh war, he rushed back. Artsakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Armine Aleksanyan had told him when he was on his way, “Don’t come, Gilad. It is a real war.” He said he left his house all of a sudden with no idea of how long he would be away and ended up staying almost four months.

He stayed in Stepanakert, eventually



Armenian Defense Forces outside Shushi, during one of the attempts to recapture the city on November 7 (photo Gilad Sade)

after some difficulties deciding on a hotel as his home base, but traveled to different places in Artsakh every day. He went a lot to Hadrut and Martakert and wrote a long story for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* on the military hospital of Martakert that was bombed. He spoke with the head of the hospital, who was an Armenian who had been sent to Syria with one of the humanitarian missions, and with soldiers there.

He said that he reported on Israeli public radio nearly every day from the ground on what he saw. He filmed and photographed and published his articles and photographs in various periodicals.

He recalled, “It was really complicated because nobody knew what was going on.” He received information from friends who were actually in the villages in the mountains but he could not speak about what he learned out of fear for his safety, as well as in order to protect the local civilians from further harm.

During the fall of Hadrut on October 12, he witnessed the retreat of the Armenian military but saw reports that Armenians

way back to Artsakh that night, they heard gunfire and drove without their lights on to avoid attention. He saw excavating machines digging fresh trenches, and trucks brought young men, some teenagers who jumped into the trenches. Sade said, “It was humid and there was smoke – a lot of wildfires from the forest, there was shelling, gunfire. It was just horrific to understand what is going on. You see young boys jumping inside, and you don’t know what comes next. I didn’t want to take photos. I was afraid to lift the camera because someone would think we are shooting. We were driving and you could smell the soil. They just dug it. You could smell it mixed with the smoke, and in a way you could smell the fear, the going into the unknown. For me, this was one of the hardest moments.” Looking at the orange-red flames of fires burning, he said that he knew this was hell.

A few hours after Sade had passed through there, the Azerbaijanis had captured the road, according to people Sade spoke with, yet the next day, the Karabakh minister of defense said that nobody could



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

drive on this road because it was being cleared of saboteurs.

Sade was in Shushi as Armenians were losing the city and a video on his experience there, including an Azerbaijani ambush, can be seen on his YouTube channel. Though there was initially a debate as to what happened in Shushi, Sade's reportage confirms that indeed the Azerbaijanis were

sive propaganda to dehumanize the people there, so that when there is bombing nobody would care."

More than that, he said, "What happened in Hadrut was ethnic cleansing... There was a time for fighting, and a time that people escaped, but at some point, it was ethnic cleansing in Hadrut." Armenians made the mistake of burning the documentation

this off road and two Armenian men start to beat him, with karate chops to his head. He said he asked them to let him call someone from the government to prove his accreditation. The problem was, he said, that he had two accreditation papers. Due to the political situation, Armenia could not give accreditation to someone working officially in Artsakh, so on its papers, it was written in large letters, not valid in Artsakh. Sade also had a document from the Artsakh government. The attacker only looked at the first paper and did not listen to him.

Sade said, "At this point, I was one hundred percent sure that I am dead." The men spoke in Russian at first with him, but eventually he said he did not understand and speaks English. Then they let him call the Artsakh government's press center, but the person there responded that the center did not allow him to go to the front line. Sade said that the people at the press center did not even know where Tumi was, when he had asked them if he could go there. Finally, Sade called Aleksanyan, who managed to extricate him from this mess.

Looking back on the various incidents he experienced, he said that he understood that Armenian suspicion or hostility was connected primarily to the Israeli weapons delivery to Azerbaijan. However, what upset him most was that he felt some officials in Artsakh in the press center did not want him to go to the front line and talk with soldiers, while his journalist friends were able to do this. He said, "I told the guys, what you are doing is bad for you. How do you want me to push this story to the news if you don't let me tell your story?"

He also revealed that he had a personal connection to the Caucasus. His great-grandfather, he said, was from an area of Iranian Azerbaijan, possibly near Urmia, and would say that he was from the borders of the Caucasus mountains. He said, "When I heard about him, and we didn't know exactly where in the Caucasus, I started to look for Jewish remains in the Caucasus. I wanted to see where my roots are." Sade said that his great-grandfather's family was killed during World War I by Assyrians, Armenians and other Christians.

He said that he could have two possible perspectives on this: "I can say, okay, four generations ago, Assyrians, Armenians and other Christians living in the region were the majority of the people who murdered my family and I can say, who cares for these people. They can just bomb them. But I don't see it like this. For me, I really believe that we can overcome every conflict. It is hard. It is not fun. But it is possible. How many cycles of war do we need?"

### The Book

Sade spoke with palpable amazement about all that he had seen, exclaiming: "In a way, I feel sometimes that I can't believe myself that I as a journalist was witnessing all of this, the fall of Hadrut, the fall of Shushi, the cutting of the road, the excavators and these battles. I took a long cycling trip last summer just to digest everything."

He had the idea of working on a book on Karabakh before the war but was not sure whether it was the right time. When he took a photograph of Azerbaijani soldiers and the Azerbaijani flag over the fortress of Shushi, while snipers were still shooting, he said, "I was living something like the history scenes a few hundred years ago that I read about. That was the moment I realized that what I have is a piece of history, and I said [to myself], whatever the effort I need, I will share this story in a book with visual [images] and text."

He understood, he said, that books can have a big impact. "Portrait of Paradise Lost" will be a mix of notes and stories, a sort of diary of travel and quotes from people Sade interviewed. It is approximately

280 pages at present. It has photos of houses that were bombed, and churches that will one day be destroyed, even small ones that were barely known before the war.

"The idea," he said, "is to dive into a story, like a documentary." There are both photos and notes from various moments, like when he got drunk in the cabin with the policemen at the entrance to Karabakh, or various battles he witnessed. He exclaimed, "This is for the having this proof of history and the existence of the Armenian churches in the villages, the people living there, the *khachkars*, the places where we had *matagh* [requiem service with food]—all of this! I want people to know that this was part of history. If a tourist will go to Karabakh in ten years, those places will look different and the churches may not exist."

The book also presents the perspectives of people who have lived through different conflicts and crises and has implications beyond the Caucasus. For example, he said that though he was taught that Palestinians were his enemies, he was in Artsakh with them. Sade went to Zangelan/Kovsakan



with Palestinian friends and describes what happened when they met Syrian Armenians there. Without revealing the full anecdote from the book, he declared, "It was very important for me to see their perspectives on the conflict. And to see how it can be for our [Palestinian-Israeli] conflict. How can we promote something that can help us to solve our conflict?"

At present, Sade is working on the Ukraine crisis, moving between Poland and Germany at the borders, and working on a different documentary, but meanwhile the Karabakh book is almost ready. As English is not Sade's native language, he is raising funds for copyediting and hopes everything will be ready for printing by the end of July at the latest on a special type of uncoated paper. His online fundraising campaign can be found at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/lenabooks/portrait-of-paradise-lost>.

He still feels a real connection with Artsakh. He declared, "You see this nice heaven, this beautiful place. I really fell in love with Artsakh. I still have the key from my friend in Khandzadzor village. He said this is your home. You never have to call me again. If I am not here or I am here, it does not matter. You can come here. And I have the key with me still. This is how deep the connection I had with the place."

"The main message of the book" for him, he said, "is that there are no winners in a war. Secondly, I have a question from a friend of mine from Gaza. Once he wrote to me, 'Why are we only resting in peace? Why don't we live in peace.' He concluded, 'The first memory in my life is a bombing, a war. My first memory was when I was four years old and I was in a shelter and there was bombing. This is why I committed my life to tell those devastating stories of wars in places like Artsakh that nobody cares about. It is important for me to show this story from the perspective of a foreigner, someone who grew up in a conflict.'"



An Armenian man sitting at the entrance to the Sahakyan family's home in Tumi village. This will be the last days of Armenian control over the village (photo Gilad Sade)

more advanced than the official Armenian sources were reporting at the time, and at one point in the video, Armenian forces are firing towards Shushi. Sade also took some good pictures of Shushi just after the capitulation of the Armenians while the Russians were setting up their new checkpoints and borders.

At the end of the war, Sade said, "We documented all the exodus and escapes, the evacuation from Stepanakert. It was horrific as well. People at one point were running in the streets, just trying to stop cars to get out of the city."

When back safely in Yerevan, Sade was walking in the evening with Karlos Zurutuza, a journalist friend from the Basque country, and looking for a place to eat, when he accidentally witnessed and documented another historic event, Armenian crowds breaking into the Armenian parliament building out of anger and frustration over the war defeat. He related, "When I saw all the police, I told him [Karlos] that there is something going on. There will be

of ownership of their homes, he said, stating, "There were war crimes and you need the world to understand that there were war crimes."

While Azerbaijan thinks it won the war, Sade said it did not, as nobody can win such a war. He exclaimed, "How many young boys were killed there — both Armenians and Azeris? They were just boys. If they would meet in Berlin at a party they might become good friends, but they went into a conflict that is older than them, like me, and they had no choice but to fight this war... Why should so many people die, and for what?"

He pointed to outside powers like Turkey and Russia, and outside interests, such as oil, gas, railways and so forth, as among the underlying causes of the conflict. As for solutions, he said that he speaks from the Israeli-Palestinian perspective. "I think the solution would be, first of all, young people meeting, not only thinking that there are aliens on the other side." He said that when he grew up, he was taught that even after forty years buried under the ground and dead, Palestinians still cannot be trusted. He was told never to turn his back on a Palestinian because he will stab you, but, he said, "Once I met these people and saw that they are the same as me, I thought, wow, why do I think that all of them are enemies... the majority of people want to have a peaceful life."

### Attacks and Roots

During the war, for the first time, he faced some personal difficulties in Artsakh. He said that before the war, he did not experience any anti-Semitism. At the most, there were occasionally jokes about Jewish people saying that they are rich. However, during the war, there were some very harsh incidents and twice he was almost killed.

One time, he was returning from interviewing Spartak Sahakyan, a man trying to save his house in Tumi village in Hadrut district, whom he had known since 2015. It was October 16, four days after the Armenian retreat in the area, and the whole forest of Hadrut was full of mercenaries, Azerbaijani troops and Armenians, and nobody knew what was going on, Sade related.

All of a sudden, a BMW pulled up on



During the war, a soldier of the Artsakh Defense Forces offers a pomegranate at the entrance to the military hospital in Martakert (photo Gilad Sade)

some riot or something. Maybe they lost the war. Maybe they are not happy with the situation. There were so many riot policemen around the building. We finished the food, then we heard a Kalashnikov shot. We ran back to the government building, as the people were breaking its windows."

### Sade's Take on the Conflict

Sade has a clear interpretation of the Karabakh conflict. "I think that what happened in Karabakh, and this is the main point of my book, that for 30 years the Armenians were dehumanized. For all these three decades they were targeted by mas-



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# CALENDAR

OF EVENTS &amp; 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 Hovsepian, 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., new venue, Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic 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.

## Shooting 'Amerikasti' a Return To Filmmaking in Armenia

GOORJIAN, from page 13  
three languages, during a pandemic! — despite all that and more, "Amerikasti" is by far the most meaningful creative project I've worked on to date.

The title of your film is an Armenian word "Amerikasti" (American).

It took quite some time for us to find the right title for the film. Originally I had titled it, "The New Armenian," inspired by the William Saroyan's quote about how whenever two Armenians come together a new Armenia is born. Conceptually that title works and reflects the dynamic between the two main characters in the film. However, as you pointed out to me, out of context, "The New Armenian" has another meaning somewhat akin to "Nouveau Riche." Besides that, pretty much everyone who read the script felt that title just didn't reflect the essence of the film. So during the entire shoot (which due to the pandemic lasted close to five months), everyone was pitching alternative titles, all sorts of things. Eventually, after a hard week shooting, Rodin, our first assistant camera suggested "Amerikasti," which is what the main character is often referred to in the film. It just seemed to stick. And surprisingly, non-Armenians seem to like it as much as Armenians.

In your interview with *Asbarez* in 1994 you said: "I think with anybody who creates something, whether it be writing or film, the most powerful thing that they can do is something that is personal and dates from their own history." So as we can see, your film, dedicated to your grandfather's memory, also somehow connected to your family history.

Indirectly. My grandfather was not part of the post-WWII repatriation movement, however, he was, like the main character, a Genocide survivor who escaped alone as a child and made his way to America. What I said back in 1994, I still think is true but I think I would add to it by saying that, for me, the most powerful form of narrative storytelling involves reaching for a truth that resides deeper than facts. "Amerikasti" is by no means a historical account of any one person's experience. Yes, we did our best to attend to as many historical details as possible, to create an authentic representation of Soviet Armenia. But the story is an amalgamation of hundreds and hundreds of stories. So, yes, my grandfather, Manoog Goorjian, is in this film, his essence is in my performance as Charlie Bakhchinian. But also the father of Spanish-Armenian actor Hovik Keuchkerian can be seen in this film through his performance as Tigran. Everyone working on the film contributed to the story in this way, which I believe gives our film a richness.

In our interview of 2006 you said: "I don't necessarily want to do a film about Armenia and Armenian history and the Genocide. I would prefer to make a film that was made with Armenians or just happened to take place in Armenia." Though in your film there is reference to Genocide, the main focus is on Soviet Armenian reality of late 1940s, early 1950s.

I think it is extremely important to make films about the Genocide, and I applaud those filmmakers brave enough to take on the task. As a filmmaker, I felt I could better serve my Armenian heritage by focusing on other aspects of our history and culture. I also just wanted to make an Armenian film that would be a joy to watch, and hopeful, and most importantly, something non-Armenians could relate to. Knowing personally how hard it is to drag non-Armenian

friends to a film about the Genocide, and I thought maybe I could make a film that would be a little easier for proud Armenian grandmothers to get their *odar* neighbors to watch. I remember, one of the most encouraging comments I got about the script when I first wrote it, was from a fellow filmmaker who told me, "You know, your story is not just for Armenians, it's a universal story, everyone will relate to it."

You have not done a joint project, as it might be expected, but an Armenian one with an international cast and crew. Observing the shoot, I was very impressed by high professionalism of all participants. Tell us about them please.

In addition to myself, our cinematographer, and a few others, the entire cast and crew were hired locally in Armenia. And yes, everyone was extremely professional, but also very creatively motivated, which is not always the case with an American crew. When everyone involved in a film really cares about how it's going to turn out, it can make an enormous impact on what you end up with. That is what I experience working in Armenia, and it's why I would like to return and make more films there.

Iranian-Armenian director Anahid Abad once said that making films in Armenia is both hard and pleasant. What was your experience?

From a filmmaking standpoint, I would say the "hard" part of shooting in Armenia is mainly due to its isolation as a country and lack of infrastructure you would find somewhere else. For instance: the soundstage we shot on needed a new roof, there were no fancy trailers for the actors, certain filming equipment wasn't necessarily available inside the country. But for me, none of that mattered that much, and those are issues that will soon not exist once more films are shot in Armenia. As for the "pleasant" part of shoot in Armenia, there are many things I could tell you. Of course, the cast and crew were all wonderful to work with, and living in Yerevan was a blast (even during a pandemic). I will also say that there was a sense of creative freedom there that is hard to find in places where filmmaking has become over-institutionalized.

And when can spectators enjoy "Amerikasti?"

Later this year. We just finished our post-production.

I am sure there should be other Armenian stories you would like to share with the world through cinema!

Yes, but I think more important is that I want to make more films in Armenia — not just Armenian stories, but non-Armenian stories as well. To help build the film industry in Armenia would be my dream, and I think the more we can share our country and our culture with the rest of the world the better. There is so much creative potential in Armenia.

In 1994, after your Emmy-winning performance, in an article about you in *Los Angeles Times*, you said: "I can do something that not everybody can do. I can do something where I can say, 'Yes, I'm getting paid for a reason!'" I think with your film you prove that you did something that not everybody can do.

Wow, that's quite an ambitious statement. But yes, I still agree with that. As an artist, I don't want to just do what others can do. And I think with "Amerikasti," not just for myself but for everyone involved with the project, we succeeded in creating a film that is both unique and important.



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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian

(Photo: Lydia Walshin at <https://www.soupchick.com>)



## Lydia Walshin's Armenian Red Lentil Soup

Red lentils are ideal for a favorite Armenian soup like this one contributed by Lydia Walshin, a professional writer, long-time food blogger, and cook who lives in Boston's Chinatown. From 2006-2016, she published a successful food blog, The Perfect Pantry®, and for years before that, she worked as a food writer and cooking instructor. The Perfect Pantry® features more than 250 pantry ingredients used in everyday cooking — common ingredients like salt, pepper, butter, flour — and ingredients fundamental to a wide range of ethnic cuisines, she says. (<https://www.theperfectpantry.com/faqs.html>).

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), lentils are one of the best food sources for potassium. Lentils add essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber to the diet. Cooking red lentils is easy because it involves a shorter cooking time and does not require pre-soaking. Red lentils are added to soups, stews, dals, curries and chilis, chunky vegan pasta sauces, and serve as a meat substitute for wraps, veggie burgers and meatless sloppy joes. They are appetizing cooked by themselves or served over pilaf or mixed with other vegetables.

Lydia says, "I was recently in an Armenian frame of mind to make something with red lentils. I made this delicious soup with bulgur, but you can substitute rice for the bulgur to make the soup gluten-free, and water for broth to make it vegan. If you don't have Aleppo or Urfa biber — both varieties of Turkish pepper — use red pepper flakes, but I encourage you to try the slightly smoky, slightly sweet Turkish peppers (available online at The Spice House or Penzeys). Urfa biber is a dried Turkish chili pepper of the type *Capsicum annuum* cultivated in the Urfa region of Turkey. It is often described as having a smoky, raisin-like taste. Urfa biber is technically a red pepper; ripening to a dark maroon on the plant. You'll want to make room for one or both on your spice rack. The consistency of the soup should be creamy as the lentils collapse into the broth," she adds.

"Though I'm no longer creating recipes on The Perfect Pantry®, if cooking is your thing, please search there for hundreds of easy, mostly healthy recipes," says Lydia. For Italian, Greek and Mediterranean recipes, see: <https://www.theperfectpantry.com/italianmediterranean-dish.html>.

Note: Try Lydia's tasty recipe for Red Lentil Rhubarb Soup: <https://www.soupchick.com/2012/06/recipe-for-red-lentil-rhubarb-soup.html>

### INGREDIENTS:

1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil, to taste  
 1 large or 2 medium onions, diced  
 2 cups red lentils (or a mix of red and white, or red and brown), rinsed and drained  
 1 cup rice or fine bulgur wheat  
 1 sprig fresh thyme  
 A big pinch of Aleppo or Urfa Biber pepper (or red pepper flakes)  
 10 cups water OR chicken or beef broth, homemade or low-sodium store-bought  
 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice, plus some lemon zest (zest the lemon first, then juice it)  
 Kosher salt and fresh pepper  
 1/2 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish

### PREPARATION:

In a 5-quart Dutch oven or heavy stock pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Sauté onions for 2-3 minutes, until translucent but not yet brown. Add the lentils, bulgur, thyme, and Aleppo pepper, and sauté for 30 seconds. Add the water or broth. Reduce heat to low and cook, uncovered, for 30-35 minutes or until lentils and bulgur are soft. Stir with a wooden spoon to encourage the lentils to "melt" into the liquid. Taste and season with lemon juice, lemon zest, salt and pepper. The soup should be of a rustic consistency; for a smoother soup, use an immersion blender for preferred texture. Serve soup hot, topped with chopped parsley as garnish. Serves 6-8.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.soupchick.com/2010/12/recipe-for-armenian-red-lentil-soup.html>

For more soup recipes, go to: <https://www.soupchick.com/soup-list-by-name.html>

For Armenian lentil recipes, go to: <https://www.tfrecipes.com/armenian-lentils/>

Also see:

<https://veganarmeniakitchen.com/recipes/red-lentil-patties/>

<https://veganarmeniakitchen.com/recipes/>

<https://www.cooksillustrated.com/articles/2940-armenia-s-greatest-vegetarian-dish>

<https://www.curiouscuisiniere.com/mshosh-armenian-lentil-salad/>

<https://gourmetvegetarians.com/vegan-lentil-kofte/>

<https://armenianvegan.com/>

<https://armeniandish.com/2020/12/make-armenian-vospov-kofte-red-lentil-kofte/>

<http://juliasvegankitchen.blogspot.com/2010/05/complicatedly-armenian.html>

For spices:

<https://www.thespicehouse.com/>

<https://www.penzeys.com/>

ORDER TODAY: *The Very Best Recipes From The Perfect Pantry®*: Paperback – January 12, 2017. The author's 82 favorite recipes — out of more than 2,000 — from ten years of the popular food blog.

Go to: [https://www.amazon.com/Very-Best-Recipes-Perfect-Pantry/dp/0989701158/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&qid=1484335652&sr=8-2&keywords=lydia+walschin&link\\_code=sll1&tag=nine-cooks-20&linkId=3fd7b8a90cea5244c8d5f2ffbdf4e7df](https://www.amazon.com/Very-Best-Recipes-Perfect-Pantry/dp/0989701158/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&qid=1484335652&sr=8-2&keywords=lydia+walschin&link_code=sll1&tag=nine-cooks-20&linkId=3fd7b8a90cea5244c8d5f2ffbdf4e7df)

For Lydia's e-cookbook, go to: <https://www.theperfectpantry.com/my-books.html>

Read Lydia's e-books on any electronic device: iPhone, iPad, Kindle, Android, tablets, laptops, and any computer. Start by downloading the FREE Kindle Reading App at: <https://www.amazon.com/kindle-dbs/fd/kcp>

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## TCA to Present Zoom Lecture on Preserving an Armenian Culture of Stone Masonry by Nare Filiposyan, March 24

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Foundation, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, BSKS Architects, Caleb Linville Architects, WOJR and Matter Design, as well as multiple teaching fellowships for both graduate and undergraduate courses. You can read more about Nare Filiposyan's work at her website: <https://narefiliposyan.com/Re-Turn-to-Stone>.

Moderator Theodore Touloukian is an architect, owner, and founder of Touloukian Touloukian Inc. in Boston where he oversees the design and technical direction for a wide range of public, private, and institutional projects.

With over 20 years of interdisciplinary design experience, Ted has focused on civic-minded work that pairs a keen understanding of our environment with the detailed craft of architecture. He has served as the Boston Society of Architects Foundation Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 2019-2021, and his firm was recognized in *Architecture Magazine's* Top 50 Firms in the country from 2016 through 2019, and also the Architecture MasterPrize's 2019 Small Firm of the Year Award in Multi-Disciplinary Architecture. Ted is a second generation Armenian American whose grandparents immigrated from Turkey at the

end of the Genocide.

The event is free and open to the public. Please join on March 24 at 8 p.m. EST for an evening of learning and cultural enjoyment, followed by an audience Q&A session moderated by Boston architect and designer Theodore Touloukian. Please register at the following link to receive the Zoom invitation: <https://bit.ly/TCAMarch24>.



Theodore Touloukian



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## EDITORIAL

# Can European Parliament Resolution Complement OSCE's Mission?



By Edmond Y. Azadian

We Armenians, most of the time, define European or Western values in sarcastic terms, and for good reason.

A case in point was the destruction of thousands of *khachkars* (cross stones) in the Julfa region of Nakhichevan by Azerbaijani forces, when world organizations, and particularly the United Nations Educational, Social and Educational Organization (UNESCO), did not respond to the outcry raised by the Armenian and various cultural organizations, nor did they even raise the issue.

Now that Europe has acted forcefully, though belatedly, we may revise our perceptions of those European values and work around them to convert them into political assets.

Politics are based on self-interest. Viewed through that prism, Europe has every reason to cater to Azerbaijan, when the latter has come forward to offer to Europe its supply of gas, in case the Russian gas flow is interrupted due to the Ukraine war. Therefore, in the first case, we have to appreciate the European Parliament's principled stand before we deal with the context and impact of its recent resolution.

Indeed, on March 10, the European Parliament adopted a landmark resolution on the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in Karabakh (Artsakh). The overwhelming vote in support of the measure underscores the sentiments of the European community with regards to this heritage issue, with universal dimensions; the vote was 635 against 2, with 42 abstentions. Such resolutions do not come by easily as tremendous networking and diplomatic maneuvering are required. It looks like this time

around, Armenian diplomacy worked diligently, enlisting the support of friendly countries and diasporan organizations.

The resolution is not a simple and generic condemnation of Azerbaijani actions against Armenian cultural heritage, but it deals with specifics and presents the issue to other world political and cultural entities to stop the destruction and pave the way for their future preservation. It has even further political implications for the destiny of the people in Karabakh, if Armenia's diplomacy can tie the issue to the future plight of Armenians in Karabakh.

The resolution cites that over the past 30 years, Azerbaijan has committed irreversible destruction of religious and cultural heritage, especially in the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, where 89 Armenian churches, 20,000 graves and more than 5,000 tombstones were destroyed. Incidentally, we need to mention that the Nakhichevan-born historian Argam Ayvazyan, nicknamed spy-researcher, has clandestinely photographed, researched, documented and published the process of Azerbaijan's destruction drive there.

After outcries, resolutions and negative media coverage in the past of these Azerbaijani actions, the government there decided on a ruse to cover up their grizzly policies; most recently President Ilham Aliyev himself and his Minister of Culture Anar Karimov came before the news media to claim that the Armenians are not the actual creators of those monuments and that the Azerbaijanis only action consisted of "correcting" history by relabeling the monuments as the heritage of the Caucasian Albanians. The European Parliament resolution also addresses directly those actions as "falsifying history by presenting it [that heritage] as the so-called Caucasian Albanian." Therefore, the resolution denies any legal fig leaf for Azerbaijan to hide behind.

Europa Nostra also endorsed the resolution of March 10, "which strongly condemns Azerbaijan's continued policy of

erasing and denying the Armenian cultural heritage in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of international law and the recent decision of the International Court of Justice."

It looks like this resolution will have a domino effect by involving other relevant bodies, such as UNESCO, the European Union, Council of Europe, International Court of Justice and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The European Parliament's resolution also "welcomes UNESCO's proposals to send an independent expert mission and calls for it to be sent without delay" and "stresses that Azerbaijan must grant unhindered access to all actual heritage sites in order for the mission to draw up an inventory on the ground to see what has happened on the sites."

This is a direct call for action. In the past, Azerbaijani authorities have challenged international authorities by banning access to the areas which they are destroying.

The threat to erase the identity of Armenia's cultural heritage has direct relevance for the physical existence of the Armenians in the same areas. On December 7, 2021, the International Court of Justice issued a ruling which, in essence, targeted

Armenia and Azerbaijan but zeroed in particularly on the latter's actions, as the court had found there is an imminent risk of irreparable harm to the rights of Armenians under the "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination" and ordered Azerbaijan to: "protect from violence and bodily harm all persons captured and detained in relation to the military conflict of 2020, as well as to ensure their security and equality before the law."

The symbolic and symptomatic actions of convicted Azerbaijani murderer Ramil Safarov

and the documented torture and dehumanization of Armenian POWs do not leave any room to doubt Azerbaijan's state-sponsored policy of hatred against Armenians.

These facts have to lead the international authorities and particularly the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs to understand that under any condition, Armenian life is not safe under Azerbaijani control, in any shape or form.

This realization has to lead the OSCE co-chairs to consider, in Karabakh's case, remedial secession, the same principle of security under international law for minorities which was effectively used in Kosovo, South Sudan and East Timor to create independent nations.

The international community had arrived at the conclusion that the minority's life was no longer safe in an alien majority. It therefore justified the minority's secession from the majority and the former's ultimate independence.

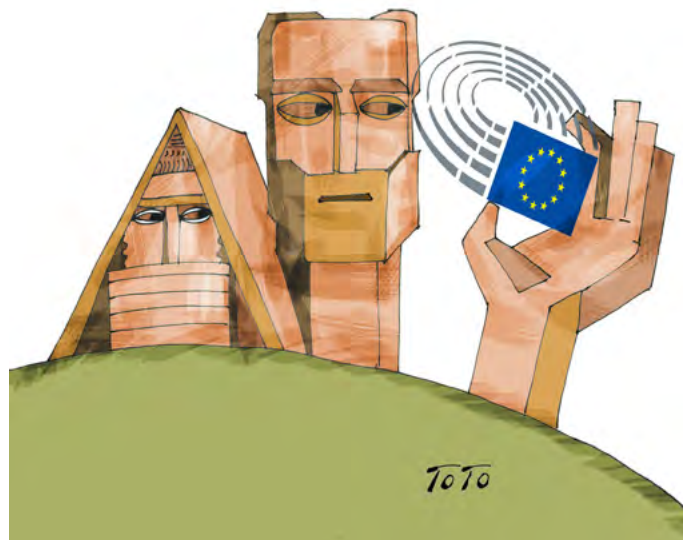
This brings the issue of Karabakh once again to the doorstep of the OSCE, as much as the latter has its hands full with the war raging in Europe.

Turkey and Azerbaijan have coordinated their actions to force Armenia into a corner and extract concessions which Armenia would not accept under normal conditions, now that the OSCE's and the world's attention are focused on Ukraine.

The OSCE Minsk Group thus far has maintained that the 44-day war has not resolved the status issue of Karabakh, and that it should be solved under the principles adopted through Helsinki's Final Act, which calls for resolving conflicts through peaceful means, without the use of force. Those principles also propose to reconcile the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. It is a challenge to the Armenian diplomacy to integrate the principle of the right to "separate for security" with the right to self-determination.

While the resolution at the European Parliament was making

*continued on next page*





## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Erdogan Exploits Ukraine War to Push for Turkey's Membership in EU

As the war in Ukraine is continuing to cause more deIn the midst of the Ukraine-Russia War, a few leaders have made questionable statements to take advantage of the chaotic situation and push for their selfish agendas!

As soon as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan learned that the Ukrainian government had asked for "immediate accession" to the European Union (EU), he made the same request for Turkey.

Erdogan hypocritically said: "We appreciate the efforts to get Ukraine EU membership. But I ask the EU members, why does Turkey's membership in the EU worry you?" He called on the EU to show the Turkish request the "same sensitivity" as that of Ukraine and arrogantly slammed EU member states for being "not sincere." Erdogan flippantly asked: "Will you put Turkey on your agenda when someone attacks (us) too?" He then complained: "Why don't you give the military equipment needed by Turkey?" What for? To attack and kill more people and occupy more countries?

Turkey applied to join the EU back in 1987 and was officially recognized as a candidate for membership in 1999, but its accession talks, which started in 2005, were stalled due to objections from the Cypriot government due to Turkey's occupation of Northern Cyprus in 1974. Germany and France also opposed Turkey's EU membership.

Even in the case of Ukraine, despite the current sympathy for that country, it would take a long time to complete the negotiations with the EU and make the necessary economic and political improvements to fulfill the criteria for joining the EU.

Turkey's EU membership, on the other hand, is farther away, if ever. Turkey does not comply with most EU criteria for membership. It has had several military coup d'états and attempted coups, in addition to its anti-democratic regime which in fact is a dictatorship. Turkey has violated just about every human rights law, including the wholesale jailing of journalists, shutting down the free press, supporting Islamist terrorists, massacring Kurds, desecrating Christian churches, occupying Northern Cyprus, intervening militarily in Syria, Northern Iraq and Libya, aiding Azerbaijan to occupy Artsakh, and refusing to carry out the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

To qualify for EU membership, Turkey first has to overhaul its entire constitution and laws to become a democratic country, release tens of thousands of jailed innocent citizens, stop supporting terrorists, adopt and implement European standards for human rights, restore minority rights, withdraw

from Northern Cyprus, acknowledge the Armenian Genocide and make restitution for Armenian losses.

When Erdogan sheepishly asked if Turkey would also be considered for EU membership "when someone attacks us too," in reality no one has attacked Turkey, but Turkey has attacked plenty of other countries.

Regrettably, the tragic suffering of the Ukrainian people during the Russian war is not a unique phenomenon. There have been countless such brutal wars and mass murders throughout history. One should not forget the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire 1915-23, resulting in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians; the invasion and occupation of Northern Cyprus by Turkey in 1974 which is still continuing; the Turkish incursion into Northern Syria; and the war on Artsakh by Azerbaijan and Turkey in 2020, committing barbaric war crimes during which the world remained silent when hospitals, schools, civilian apartments were bombed, children and women butchered, There were no sanctions against Turkey or Azerbaijan, no around the clock media coverage of the atrocities, and no military or economic assistance to Armenia and Artsakh.

Let us now move to two unexpected statements by Turkish political leaders. Mustafa Destici, head of the Turkish nationalist Great Unity Party and an ally of Erdogan's government, warned that after Ukraine, Russia will target Kars and Ardahan, two cities in Western Armenia occupied by Turkey. "If you see Russia on our borders later, do not be surprised," said the Turkish party leader.

Similarly, the chair of the opposition Turkish IYI Party Meral Akshener chimed in: "Who can claim that Turkey is safe? Who can say that the missing pieces in Putin's mind are not Kars, Ardahan and Erzurum [Garin]?"

These are obviously bombastic statements. Russia has no such intentions. On the contrary, Russia is trying to woo Turkey away from NATO. Nevertheless, these two statements have one important benefit to the Armenian side: They remind the Turkish population that Kars, Ardahan and Erzurum (Garin) are contested cities that do not belong to Turkey. They are a part of Western Armenia.

Finally, here is an interesting statement Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made to the UN Human Rights Council earlier this month: "The principle of respect for territorial integrity applies only to states whose governments represent the entire people living on their territory."

Even though Lavrov was referring to the 1970 UN declaration to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he must have forgotten that the principle he quoted applies to Armenians of Artsakh. Lavrov claimed that the Ukrainian government does not represent all of the people living on the territory of the Ukrainian state. If that's what Lavrov believes, Russia must acknowledge that the government of Azerbaijan does not represent Armenians living on the territory of Artsakh. Therefore, Russia should declare that it supports the self-determination of the Republic of Artsakh!

from previous page

headways in diplomatic circles, Armenia and Turkey were in the process of negotiations to establish diplomatic relations, to lift the blockade and open roads and lines of communication.

Although the sides began negotiating without preconditions, this column had predicted that the Turkish side had to coordinate its comments with the Azerbaijani government, and lo and behold, that has come true. The move constituted Turkish preconditions which supposedly were not there. During these negotiations, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu had suggested that it is better for Armenia to respond positively to Azerbaijan's peace proposal. Parallel to these negotiations, Azerbaijan proposed a five-point peace plan, which practically defies Turkey's pledge to negotiate with Armenia without preconditions. Basically, Baku has presented an ultimatum for Armenia to recognize its territorial integrity without entertaining any hopes for the future of the people in Karabakh and recognition for Karabakh as an entity. Turkey and Azerbaijan have coordinated their act to move any settlement away from OSCE to avoid the application of the principles of the Minsk Group. This so-called peace plan does nothing but move the negotiations to a dead-end. Ankara and Baku believe that as the OSCE is fully engaged in Ukraine, this is the opportune time to keep that organization away from the negotiations.

Nevertheless, it looks like the ball is moving into the court of the OSCE, which has made a positive statement to a question from Armenpress, stating, "The Polish OSCE chairmanship considers the protection of all historical and cultural monuments as our joint commitment. The preservation of Armenian historical and cultural monuments has been on the agenda of the Permanent Council. Against this backdrop, the Polish OSCE Chairmanship fully supports all relevant OSCE structures, including the OSCE Minsk Group and its cochairs in their endeavors towards achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace. It would considerably improve the security, stability and prosperity of the entire region and safeguard the protection of all historical and cultural monuments."

Opportunities appear and disappear in international relations. It is up to organized and perceptive foreign policy establishments to rise to the occasion and take advantage of such opportunities.

The current situation is a challenge to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, which we hope will detect opportunities and take positive actions.

## How Erdogan Could Emerge Stronger From War in Ukraine

By Pinar Tremblay

ISTANBUL — With Turkey facing a major economic crisis and presidential elections scheduled for June 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan faces a host of challenges. Yet the Turkish leader is a master of crisis management, and even the Russian invasion of Ukraine could provide unique opportunities.

Turkey pundits are used to hearing conflicting statements from Erdogan's supporters. For example, with Turkey facing its highest inflation in 20 years, Minister of Finance and Treasury Nureddin Nebati made two different promises about when inflation would peak and when it would go down within the span of weeks. According to his initial prediction, inflation would go down by the summer. Yet later on he moved the time frame to the end of 2022.

Turkish officials' financial predictions are particularly important as rising costs of living and eroding purchasing power are pushing more people in Turkey below the poverty threshold. Yet a denial of facts does not help the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The economic distress directly reflects on Erdogan's approval ratings. There is little confidence that economic recovery is possible before next year's elections.

Most AKP officials acknowledge the rising cost of living and how this will be the most important issue for the next election campaign. In mid-February, Numan Kurtulmus, deputy chairman of the AKP, told his party's members that "the AKP is the No. 1 party in polls by a wide margin, but still victory is in the lion's den." He advised them to canvas door-to-door to maintain their hold on power.

Indeed, for the first time in years, Turkey's prominent pollsters show a steady decline in AKP support.

In the June 2018 elections, the AKP's vote share was 42.56 percent; now it ranges in polls between 25-35 percent. But while the AKP is on a losing streak, it has a solidified base of die-hard supporters.

Yet since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began nearly three weeks ago, there has been a newfound optimism among the AKP ranks. No one can deny that the invasion will cost Turkey, as it will lead to revenue losses from tourism to agriculture.

However, AKP elites also see this as a God-sent opportunity to sweep the 2023 elections.

One senior bureaucrat told AI-Monitor on the condition of anonymity, "From every crisis — including the 2008 recession, the December 17-25 attacks, the July 15 coup attempt, you name it — Erdogan has managed to come out with fine colors, sometimes even with a stronger grip on the political institutions. Now he is on a charm offensive, hosting leaders from Greece to Israel to the UAE. We are confident that we will wipe the opposition off the table for good in the 2023 elections."

It is not just those associated with the AKP who can see opportunities for Erdogan in this crisis. One can explain three prominent reasons for this optimism.

First are the security vulnerabilities that will snowball due to the war and Erdogan's ability to blame the worsening economy on the regional turmoil.

Levent Gultekin, a prominent political analyst and author, told AI-Monitor that alongside the economic shock, "The war on Ukraine will create a security concern. The public will now worry about the possibilities of the spread of this conflict. When publics worry about their national security, they also start yearning for strong leadership. So, I can see that the increasing fear and unease added with a divided opposition can easily benefit the incumbent. In addition, the national security concerns could cloud judgment on economic despair and blur the focus on accountability. The weak economy will be accepted as due to war, and the reality of the government-made economic vulnerabilities will be invisible."

see ERDOGAN, page 20

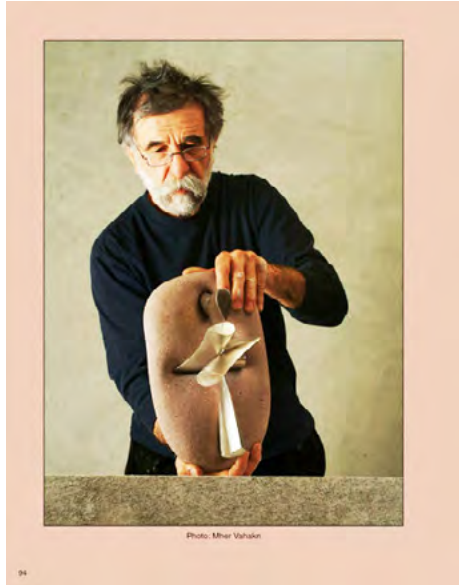


# Across the Fourth Dimension with Kardash Onnig

CARVINGS, from page 13

"This book is my tribute to others," writes Kardash Onnig. Onnig's vision of a "humanity with no borders" in no way contradicts his all too obvious connection to his Armenian identity, even if that connection sometimes manifests itself as rage at the lack of spiritual leaders in our present context. The artist's is a yearning for a return to our identity as Armenians, an identity given to us by our land. For example, with his 1988 "HyeKud" initiative, Kardash tried to "re-establish a link between a lost mythical

For one repeatedly accused of contradicting himself, the book is pretty consistent. The artist's passion to create an alternative world holds the narrative together. Nowadays, making toys for children has taken center-stage in Onnig's creative endeavors. Children, he says, give him hope for the future of mankind. Onnig's is indeed a very persuasive voice. The artist has the unique gift of keeping the reader interested with his vivid anecdotes and fascinating details. "One day," when looking for stone to carve, he went to a stone-recycling yard in New Jersey. This is his account



"Transfoumring Sorrow #4," 2015, 24"H. painted walnut.

past and a stagnating contemporary culture of exile." His 1987 "Portraits of the Dead" is a "eulogy for this homeless diaspora community." We are dead because we are not in our motherland, notes the artist. Yet, his traveling to Turkey in 1906, that is, his literally embracing the quintessential "other," was taken entirely out of the context of his life-long effort to help the evolution of mankind into a universal consciousness, and perceived by many as a betrayal of his Armenianness.



"Transfoumration #5," 2004 bronze, cement 8"H. Photo: Mher Vahakn

of a life-size statue of Jesus, "waiting to be cut up to pieces that could be used for steps, window sills and so on. . . . The shopkeeper lifted the life-size, white-marble statue of Jesus to a cutting station. A thin metal with carbide running through it began to cut Jesus, with water splashing all over. First went down the arms. On the next cut, the face of Jesus just fell to the ground. On and on. What was left of Jesus was a slab 36 inches high, 24 inches long, and 20 inches wide." Little known facts also keep the reader engaged. I



"Fertility," 1979 Carrera marble, 36"H

wonder how many of us know, for example, that Manhattan was paved with stones used as ballast left behind from ships sailing from Europe.

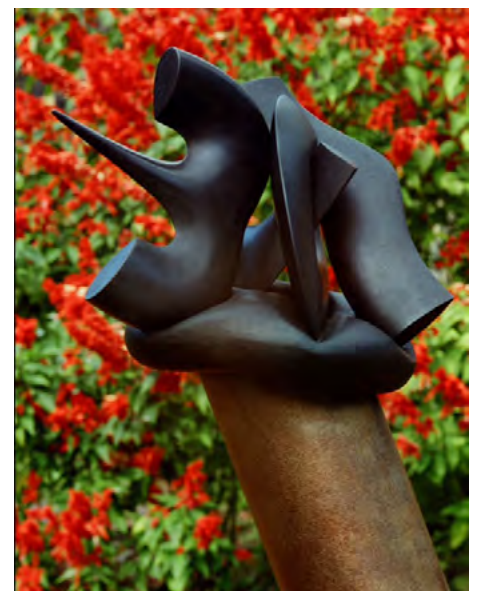
A glorious summing-up of a sixty-year-old career, the book is, in the artist's words, "another 'Hankervan' on the path." Kardash shows no signs of having reached the end of his journey. Indeed, the concept of Death, the quintessential "end" for many, is for him a new beginning. At the moment of death, the artist believes, a spiritual transference occurs from one person to another, which allows the soul to go on with its journey. Thus, rather than something to dread or to be depressed about, death becomes a call "to explore in the dark," in other words, an invitation to synergize into endless tomorrows. The thrust is always for renewal.

Aesthetics is a potent force. The unique power of Kardash Onnig's art to delight, which moves the viewer to "imitate" it, makes these carvings, to borrow the words of sixteenth-century English poet Sir Philip Sydney, "the best teacher." The aesthetic



"The Quaternary of the 99 Attributes of Allah," 1996, painted walnut, 9"H

appeal of Onnig's art makes me wonder if the concept of "too much beauty" can ever be relevant.



Front cover, "Annotations 12-4 #8," 2006 bronze 16"H..



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## Erdogan Could Emerge Stronger from Ukraine War

ERDOGAN, from page 19

The second reason is the war will detract attention from the crackdown on the country's political opposition. With regards to controlling the opposition, the government has gradually cracked down on opponents, particularly the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Several party members, including its former co-chair, Selahattin Demirtas, remain behind bars.

Fair media representation stands as another factor. Most of the country's media outlets are effectively under the control of the government.

Seren Selvin Korkmaz, a political analyst and executive director of Istanbul Institute, told Al-Monitor that the "visibility of opposition parties in the press is already low, and with war going on in the region their voices will be heard even less."

On Feb. 28, the country's six opposition parties revealed their roadmap outlining their plans to reinstate the parliamentary system and to strengthen the country's democracy. The gathering did not generate much excitement among the public, with Turks' attention focused sharply on Ukraine.

Furthermore, the AKP and its de-facto political ally, the ultranationalist MHP, have introduced a new election law that, according to government critics, aims to change the electoral rules and regulations to enhance incumbency advantage.

The third explanation comes from international and regional opportunities. Erdogan's rekindled diplomatic activism might generate a critical degree of economic and

political support that could help him make up for the absence of corrective mechanisms in domestic politics, particularly concerning the health of the Turkish economy.

"The opposition's foreign policy goals are still obscure for the international community," Korkmaz said.

Erdogan appears as the safer bet simply because the alternatives are unfamiliar. Ankara has made it clear that it will not join the global sanctions against Russia. Istanbul is on the fast track to becoming a hub for Russia's rich and well-educated exiles.

However, not everyone is as optimistic as AKP elites that the June 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections can be saved by the war.

Aykan Erdemir, senior director of the Turkey program at the FDD, told Al-Monitor, "The Turkish economy's structural problems and the country's widespread poverty are too extensive to be fixed by window-dressing measures on the diplomatic front. The lack of any economic or political reform domestically to accompany Erdogan's diplomatic initiatives internationally shows that the Turkish president has not really had any meaningful change in his ideological convictions that bankrupted his authoritarian project at home and abroad in the first place."

(This column originally appeared on the website Al-Monitor. Read more: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/how-erdogan-could-emerge-stronger-war-ukraine#ixzz7NcbAj6nV>)