

# Foreign Ministers Engage in New Talks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — In a rare phone call, the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan discussed on April 11 plans to sign a peace treaty between their countries and demarcate their border.

The conversation came less than a week after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met in Brussels for talks hosted by European Council President Charles Michel. Aliyev and Pashinyan agreed to instruct their foreign ministers to start official negotiations on the comprehensive treaty and to set up before the end of this month a joint commission on the border demarcation.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov “exchanged views on the creation of the commission on delimitation and border security, preparation of peace negotiations and humanitarian issues.” It gave no other details.

The call came hours after the conflicting parties traded fresh accusations.

In a statement on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of mass killings of ethnic Armenian civilians in the Karabakh village of Maragha, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said “ethnic cleansing” of the Karabakh Armenians remains “the real goal of official Baku.” It also said Armenia

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Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (left to right), European Council President Charles Michel, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev begin a trilateral meeting in Brussels on April 6

# EU Plans More Armenian-Azeri Dialogue

By Heghine Buniatian

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) — The European Union (EU) plans to organize more negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan to follow up on understandings reached by their leaders in Brussels on Wednesday, according to a senior EU diplomat.

“What will actually happen very practically is that we’re going to be having very regular meetings and a continued role of facilitation for the EU,” the diplomat privy to the talks told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service.

During their trilateral meeting with European Council President Charles Michel on April 6, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol

Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev decided to instruct their foreign ministers to start official negotiations on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty.

They also agreed to set up before the end of this month a joint commission on demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

“I’m fully conscious when I say that there’s not much time left,” said the diplomat. “I think we will need to be following up quite quickly with this. And I think there is an expectation that we would look to have a meeting at leaders’ level relatively soon to review progress and tackle any outstanding issues that are blocking the

moves forward.”

The source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, gave no possible dates for the next Aliyev-Pashinyan encounter.

Michel described the four-hour talks hosted by him as “productive,” saying that they yielded “concrete and tangible results.”

Critics in Armenia point out that the top EU official made no mention of Nagorno-Karabakh, let alone an agreement on its status or the Karabakh Armenians’ right to self-determination. They say this is a further sign that Pashinyan is ready to agree to Azerbaijani control over the disputed territory.

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# Dickran Toumajan Teacher, Scholar Of Armenian Language, Dies at 77

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — Dickran Toumajan died on Thursday morning, April 7, 2022 after a short battle with cancer. He was 77.

A loving husband, father, grandfather, son, uncle and friend, Dickran lived a fulfilling and meaningful life, one that radiated with kindness, happiness and joy for his family, students, and friends. Indeed, Dickran touched the lives of thousands of students and fellow educators throughout his 42 years of teaching in Michigan at the university and grade school levels.

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# Tribute to Aurora Mardiganian by Arsinée Khanjian at University of Michigan Screening

By Harry Kezelian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — How can we remember someone so deserving of being remembered, but whom we truly know so little about? And how can we do justice to their story?

These were some of the questions that seemed haunt actress and producer Arsinée Khanjian as she set about to retell the story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Genocide survivor and exploited star of the groundbreaking 1919 silent film, “Auction of Souls.”

Mardiganian’s story, little known for most of the mid-to-late 20th century, has gained greater awareness in

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Marie-Aude Baronian and Arsinée Khanjian at the Ann Arbor event

## YEREVAN

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## STEPANAKERT

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### Réme Panossian: Jazz is My Religion







ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Harutyunyan Says Right To Self-Determination of Artsakh Is Not Negotiable

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The right to self-determination of the people of Artsakh was and will be the main guide of the foreign policy of the Government, the President of the Republic of Artsakh Arayik Harutyunyan announced on April 12 at the meeting with heads of administrative districts of Askeran, heads of communities and local activists, emphasizing that the official Stepanakert will not deviate from that agenda.

“The fact that the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination is not a subject of bargaining is unequivocal. We will not deviate from our path of independence,” said Harutyunyan.

At the meeting he talked about the recent geopolitical developments and the actions be carried out in that context. Harutyunyan referred to the actions of Azerbaijan, in particular that on March 24 again the provisions of the trilateral agreement of November 9, 2020 were violated and Azerbaijan doesn't hide its expansionist aspirations.

“Azerbaijan violated the condition and for the first time questioned the Russian peacekeeping mission,” he said.

### Opposition Lawmakers Boycott Parliament, Visit Karabakh

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's two main opposition groups said on Tuesday, April 12, that their lawmakers will not attend this week's parliament sittings and will visit Nagorno-Karabakh instead as part of their campaign to prevent far-reaching Armenian concessions to Azerbaijan.

The Hayastan and Pativ Unem alliances rallied thousands of supporters in Yerevan on April 5 the day before Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels.

Seyran Ohanyan, Hayastan's parliamentary leader and a former defense minister, announced a four-day opposition boycott of the National Assembly. Speaking on the parliament floor, Ohanyan accused the Armenian government of ignoring grave security challenges facing Armenia and Karabakh.

“We are leaving for Artsakh and Armenia's border regions to continue directly communicating with our compatriots, to visit the sites of our country primary agenda,” he said before placing a Karabakh flag on the parliament rostrum.

Deputies representing Civil Contract party dismissed the move as populist. One of them, Vahagn Aleksanyan, removed the small flag from the podium.

“With this step the parliamentary is not defending Artsakh but aggravating the security problems of Artsakh and the Armenians,” charged another parliamentarian, Hayk Konjoryan. “The parliamentary opposition is using the Artsakh issue and our security problems to stage a coup and seize power in Armenia.”



More than 10,000 rallied against government

## Opposition Stages Huge Rally in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am)—Armenia's two main opposition alliances rallied thousands of supporters in Yerevan on Tuesday, April 5, to warn Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan against agreeing to restore Azerbaijan's control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Leaders of the Hayastan and Pativ Unem blocs said that Pashinyan is ready to make this and other concessions to Baku. They also accused him of jeopardizing Armenia's territorial integrity with his conciliatory policy towards Azerbaijan.

“These authorities have no mandate to lead the country to new concessions with

false promises of peace,” Hayastan's Ishkhan Saghatelian told the crowd that gathered in Yerevan's Liberty Square.

Saghatelian claimed that instead of strengthening national defense and security they are preparing the ground for “new concessions” by scaring Armenians with the prospect of another war with Azerbaijan.

“None of us present here wants war, but we can't surrender to the butcher,” said Aram Vartevanyan, another senior Hayastan figure.

“We can't lose again because we have nothing to lose anymore,” agreed Pativ Un-

em's Hayk Mamijanyan.

A resolution presented by the two opposition groups to the demonstrators says that Armenia must remain a guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh's security and avoid signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan that would undermine the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination. It warns that failure to do this would spark a popular uprising.

“Any government that deviates from our vital demands will be sent to hell,” Saghatelian declared before the protesters marched to a key street intersection in central Yerevan and blocked traffic through it for an hour.

## National Academy of Sciences Hosts Seminar on 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Maraga Massacre

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On April 11 the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Armenia hosted the “Maraga 30: Unpunished and Ongoing Genocide” Seminar dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Maraga massacre – the genocidal killings of peaceful Armenian population of the village of Maraga in Artsakh's Martakert region committed by the Azerbaijani military.

The seminar was organized by the NAS Institute of History, the Against Legal Arbitrariness NGO and the Center of Human Rights and Genocide Studies NGO.

“This is history and we must remember it. This was the beginning of a series of genocides perpetrated by Azerbaijan against the Armenian people. Historians, all of us must work in order for this to remain in history as a memory, and that generations remember it,” NAS President Ashot Saghyan said in his remarks.

“Genocide happened all across Armenia. This was committed not only by the authorities of Ottoman Turkey but also by Azerbaijan which was created by the Young Turks and Turkey,” said Against Legal Arbitrariness Executive Director Larisa Alaverdyan.

NAS Institute of History Director Ashot Melkonyan said the Maraga massacre was one link of the entire chain of genocidal policy.

“The genocidal policy directly passed on from the Ottoman Empire to the First Republic of Azerbaijan, it had other manifestations in the Soviet years, and during the third Republic we saw what manifestations happened by Azerbaijan in 1991-1994, in April of 2016 and in 2020. The Maraga genocide was left in the shadow. It was an example of a war crime against the peaceful population. This seminar will be another occasion to study in depth and note the entire genocidal policy which Azerbaijan inherited from Ottoman Turkey and continues to this day,” he said



Some of the panelists for Maraga 30

The grounds and possibilities for a possible application to the international court over the Armenian Genocide was also discussed at the seminar.

The continuous genocide against Armenians, the responsibility of the Turkish-Azeri

authorities and the issues of Armenians and Armenian communities in the post-war period were also discussed.

The documentary “Maraga 1992: Golgotha of the late 20th Century” was also screened.

## Armenian, Azeri FMs Hold Peace Talks

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will continue to defend the Karabakh Armenians' right to a “free, secure, dignified life in their homeland.”

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry responded by accusing Yerevan of lacking a “real desire” to make peace with Baku.

Earlier in the day, Mirzoyan met in Yerevan with Brice Roquefeil, the French co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

“Ararat Mirzoyan presented Armenia's position on the start of negotiations on Azerbaijan over the peace agreement, emphasizing in that context the mediation role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs,” read a separate statement released by his press office.

Speaking after talks with Mirzoyan in Moscow on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said France and the United States have stopped working with Russia within the framework of the Minsk Group co-headed by the three world powers. Lavrov claimed that they have “cancelled the co-chairing troika” of the group.

US and French officials have not publicly confirmed that.





## ARMENIA

# Vadim's Crazy Tours: From Churches to Explosion Sites

By Lilit Shahverdyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

STEPANAKERT — “Crazy Tours” is not only about discovering the magnificent peaks and churches of Artsakh. After the first rockets burst during the recent war, Vadim, the tour guide, changed his routes from hidden mountains and monasteries towards centers of explosions, and missile sounds replaced the tranquility of nature.

## The Birth of Crazy Tours

In 2017, Vadim Balayan, 46, received a phone call from his cousin: two German tourists needed a driver to travel around Artsakh. Although they already had a tour guide, Vadim was the one who found the places they wished to visit and accompanied the group. He gave them a chance to peek over the horizon and discover the majesty of the history of Artsakh and its churches, and the views left everyone astonished.

“They were so amazed that would often shout ‘This is crazy!’ and we named our group ‘Crazy Squad.’ That is how I came up with the name,” said Vadim.

Soon after Vadim started sharing photos and videos from his first “crazy” tours, he received several requests from locals to organize trips for them. “I decided to dig deeper into the field of domestic tourism, found new routes, and included lunchboxes and potlucks,” he said.

“Once a famous Russian chef visited Artsakh. We went to Kataro to harvest grapes for his show. I discovered later that he had a popular YouTube vlog,” recalled Vadim.

To expand his audience, Vadim started collaborating with other local entrepreneurs, such as the Maro Bed & Breakfast in Togh, Hadrout region, or the Hippodrome in Shushi. “Our collaboration gave color and diversity to the trips and supplemented them,” said Balayan.

Maro B&B organized dinners for the tourists and offered traditional dishes, such as *harisa* or *jengyalov hats*, allowing the tourists a full immersion into local culture.

Vadim's routes were always diverse: the peaks of Kataro and Dizapayt, the monasteries of St. Gevorg and Hakobavank, and he even went out of Artsakh, to visit the Tatev monastery in Syunik, Armenia. The tours were initially intended for the youth because of the distance and rough mountainous terrains, but demands from others grew, so Vadim came up with a solution for adults.

“I received offers to organize light tours, so that everyone regardless of age and physical preparedness could participate and enjoy the panoramas of Artsakh,” said Vadim.

That is how Vadim launched his first relaxation tours to Bovurkhan and Hakobavank monasteries, which are close to Stepanakert and do not require much effort to hike.

The first COVID lockdown in 2020 and the unavailability of going abroad became an opportunity for many to start exploring their surroundings and unearthing new wonders of Artsakh. When the borders got closed, domestic tourism gained momentum. Crazy Tours kept progressing and involved people of all categories — children, youth, and adults. Some of them became regular participants, others made new friends with mutual interests. The tours linked generations and even connected hearts.

“We have two couples who got acquaint-

ed while hiking with us. One of them already has a baby,” said Vadim.

## From Crazy to Really Crazy

Sunday, September 27, 2020: Vadim and around 20 people started their morning early, at 6 a.m., and gathered in a bus which headed for Syunik, for a tour of Tatev monastery.

“About halfway on the road, calls started coming in frantically. People were crying. Stepanakert was being shelled,” recalled Vadim.

Upon the request of the women in the group, they reached the monastery and lighted candles. Some of them stopped in Goris and didn't return to Artsakh. The situation was getting tense since many of the participants had family members left alone, including Vadim.

“My little son was sleeping at home alone when the first missiles exploded near our street. They even damaged my car,” he said.

A few days later, Vadim was drafted into military service. He returned for a shift change after two weeks and was shocked to see the city bombed, since he believed military operations were carried out only on the frontline. One of the local hotels was fully operating, and while enjoying coffee at the bar, Vadim made his new life-changing acquaintances.

“I told the journalists in the hotel that I used to be a taxi driver. When they learned that I had a car, they asked me to guide them for a fee. Turned out that the locals refused to drive under shelling, so I agreed,” said Vadim.

Vadim's tour routes changed notably: instead of mountains and churches, he drove



Crazy Tours poster

around. “The locals would call me immediately after explosions, so that I could take the journalists to take footage of the casualties,” remembered Vadim.

Vadim's last “crazy tour,” and perhaps the most hazardous and crucial one, happened during the fights for Shushi, on November 5, 2020. He received an emergency call from journalists asking to take them out of bombed-out Shushi. Stepanakert and Shushi are not too far from each other, and from any high point in Stepanakert, one could observe the clashes taking place by the highway, see the smoke rising after explosions, and hear the artillery operating.

“I saw Shushi being shelled and refused at first. Then I realized that I wouldn't leave them in danger, so I headed towards them,” recalled Vadim, who has not visited Shushi since then.

## Gaining an International Audience

After the war, access to Artsakh became restricted for international visitors, and tourism was curtailed. However, the post-war situation in the country pushed some people to rethink and set new priorities, which is

cause of uncertainty over Artsakh's status and risk, Maria thinks differently. “People are scared to visit Artsakh because they think it's dangerous, but for me, it's quite a safe spot,” she said.

Ivanova visited Artsakh several times after the war, and to diversify her routine, she decided to find a tour guide and travel to unknown places. Social media played its role and Maria noticed an announcement shared by [Crazy Tours](#) on Facebook. The organization's name seemed intriguing and mysterious, and she made “crazy” assumptions about its tours. “Are they going to travel to Baku or walk along the borderline on a knife's edge?” were Maria's first perceptions of the name.

“Then I discovered that it's Vadim, organizing his quiet, calm tours around Artsakh,” she added. Crazy Tours attracted Ivanova with its name but kept her as a loyal customer with its professionalism and tranquil atmosphere, which it maintained even in big groups. The experience of traveling with good people gave Maria a second wind and changed her attitude towards her roots.

“I love Artsakh because it was aggrieved, and no one condemned the aggressor. I liked Artsakh because of the injustice of the world community in the 44-day war. It withstood, lost its sons and lands.... It survived. I wanted to support Artsakh and I saw only beauty in everything, from people to nature,” confessed Ivanova.

One of the reasons why she chose Crazy Tours is the friendly relationship with Vadim due to his versatility and creativity. She especially liked their idea of opening an exclusive kindergarten for disabled kids.

Other than being a tour guide, Vadim manages a family cafe on Tumanyan, one of the main touristic streets of Stepanakert. The family opened a wine bar and cafe which offers traditional dishes made by Vadim's wife, and the interesting panoramas complement the Armenian ambience. For the spring and summer seasons, the Balayans will try to connect their two enterprises and organize tea at their cafe after the tours, where the tourists could discuss their impressions and enjoy the atmosphere. Currently they are focusing on special events for kids, such as pottery classes, movie screenings or cooking.

“We also decided to open a Christmas Market to cheer up the people, but unfortunately, the storage area caught fire and hindered our plans,” says Vadim. Vadim's friends organized a [fundraiser](#) to raise money for the restoration of damaged areas.

Remembering the importance and necessity of Artsakh's rebirth, Maria Ivanova said, “Every Armenian should spend his money in Artsakh, spend his holidays there, and invest in the economy of Artsakh, even if passively, through tourism.”



A Crazy Tour to Ulubab in May 2021

towards the hotspots, where missiles either exploded, or would soon explode. Whenever a new explosion was heard, Vadim would receive several phone calls from journalists who asked to take them there, hoping they would be the first to arrive. Standing at the frontline was dangerous and risky, and so was driving under the flying bombs, which could crash down at any moment, without warning.

“I put on my helmet and body armor which I didn't even wear at the frontline and hit the road,” said Vadim.

Vadim's Crazy Tours got a new formulation and became popular with journalists: he was among the very few people willing to drive regardless of the bombs above his head or the missile fragments scattered

contributing to Artsakh's rebirth and prosperity.

Maria Ivanova, 37, was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Russia, but her roots are in the village of Shekher in Artsakh. Ivanova first visited Artsakh in 2010 upon her husband's request to get acquainted with her ancestors' culture and land, and she was not impressed by the region. The second visit in 2017 was not memorable either, but her perception of Artsakh drastically changed during and after the war of 2020.

“I felt very sympathetic towards the people and the lands, which underwent wars,” she said. “We don't know who will own these lands tomorrow, and I want to enjoy it while it's possible.”

Though the tourists' inflow shrank be-



## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Azerbaijan Appropriates Monastery in Georgia

TBILISI (News.am) — Azerbaijan has appropriated the Georgian David Gareja monastic complex, the Azerbaijani government announced on April 12.

The Azerbaijani State Service for Protection, Development and Restoration of Cultural Heritage has announced that the installation of an information board at the beginning of the asphalt road leading to this complex has been completed, APA reported.

To note, despite the angry statements of Tbilisi, Azerbaijan has been secretly appropriating this historical monument on the Georgian border for several years now. In Azerbaijan, David Gareja has been renamed “Keshikjidagh” and, as in the case of Armenian monuments, it is presented as “Caucasian Albanian.”

## Germany to Give 116 Million Euros in Aid

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — During the April 12 session in the Parliament, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia Rafayel Gevorgyan presented the draft on ratifying the 2020 financial cooperation agreement between the Armenian and German governments.

Gevorgyan said that Armenia will be provided with 116 million euros in financial aid.

“This assistance consists of two main parts. 70 million Euros will be provided for the development of small and medium enterprises, and 40 million to development loans in renewable energy sector. The mechanism through which that assistance will be provided is the country’s banking system. There is an Armenian-German fund through which the sums will be distributed to Armenia’s banking system”, the deputy minister said.

He informed that it is also planned to provide 3.4 million euro financial aid to Armenia for the implementation of biodiversity and sustainable development programs and to provide 3.4 million Euro financial aid for the necessary measures aimed at the implementation and technical support of the program.

## School Gate in Istanbul Vandalized with Swastika

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A swastika was drawn on the gate of the Armenian Bomonti school in Istanbul, according to images spreading on Twitter.

The vandalism comes ahead of the 107th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

This is not the first time that anti-Armenian images and phrases are spray-painted on this very same school. In 2016, the exterior walls of the Bomonti Mkhitarian School were vandalized with graffiti that read: “One night, we suddenly will be in Karabakh.”

The 2016 incident came about three months after the walls of the Uskudar Surp Khach Seminary and two months after the walls of the Uskudar Kalfayan School were defaced with anti-Armenian graffiti.

## Armenian, Russian Foreign Ministers Meet in Moscow Immediately after Pashinyan-Aliyev Talks in Brussels

YEREVAN (Jam News) — The Armenian Foreign Minister met with his Russian counterpart in Moscow on April 7, the day after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s talks with European Council President Charles Michel. In Brussels, the bilateral agenda of the EU-Armenia was discussed, and negotiations were held with the President of Azerbaijan. In Armenia, the possible topics of the Armenian-Russian negotiations, scheduled immediately after the European ones, were actively discussed. Moreover, a visit to Russia by the Prime Minister of Armenia is also planned in the coming days, during which Pashinyan-Putin negotiations are expected.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan was in Moscow on a working visit at the invitation of Russian Minister Sergei Lavrov. It is officially announced that the visit is timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Lavrov assessed this meeting as an opportunity to “look at the whole range of areas” of cooperation and alliance with Armenia. Lavrov stated that Russia is interested in the further development of Russian-Armenian relations and the complicated geopolitical situation requires more often to compare watches and compare estimates.

“We will continue, from the position of a key ally of Armenia, to help you strengthen your defense capability, to ensure the protection of the border, and, of course, as the main trade and economic partner, as the main foreign investor, we will continue to look for new projects that will ensure the sustainability of our trade, create new production facilities, jobs.

“And now another package of proposals is being prepared, which are aimed at significantly supplementing Russian investments in the economy of the Republic of Armenia,” Lavrov said.

Mirzoyan stated that Armenia is also focused on the further development of allied relations in all areas:

“Russia played a key role in the ceasefire and hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone in the fall of 2020. We are confident that the effective activity of the Russian peacekeeping forces in NK, ensuring the security of the people of Artsakh, will serve the interests of strengthening the ceasefire in NK and preventing provocations, restoring normal life, ensuring stability and security in our region.”

Lavrov, speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and security in the region, announced that there are three groups of agreements reached by the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia in November 2020 and January and November 2021. And Russia intends to ensure their implementation, “including the activities of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Karabakh, in strict accordance with its mandate.”

Thus, he touched upon the latest escalation on the line of contact in NK, where the Azerbaijani Armed Forces took the territories under the responsibility of Russian peacekeepers. The situation has escalated

since March 24, and so far the Armenian side has unsuccessfully demanded the withdrawal of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces to their original positions. The Prime Minister of Armenia, in a conversation with Putin, spoke about the need to investigate the “actions or inactions” of the peacekeeping

the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which was engaged in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict before the 2020 war, is also unclear. The reason for the ambiguity is the position of the other two co-chairs, the United States and



Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, left, with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov

contingent stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh after the war.

Meanwhile, Lavrov, during a press conference, said that the circumstances of these events require clarification and the Russian military is looking into it: “For us, these circumstances are not completely clear. I would like not to get ahead of myself and make final judgments. We are convinced that our Armenian friends fully trust Russian peacekeepers.”

He expressed hope that “calls to call the peacekeepers to account, to conduct an official investigation do not reflect the attitude of the Armenian people and the Armenian leadership to the huge role that the contingent plays in maintaining stability.”

According to Lavrov, the further fate of

France, who, together with Russia, acted as mediators of peace negotiations:

“Our French and American partners (so-called partners in this group), in a Russophobic frenzy and in an effort to cancel everything related to the Russian Federation, said that they would not communicate with us in that format. This is their right. If they are ready to sacrifice their interests in the settlement in Karabakh and in the Transcaucasus as a whole, then this is their choice.”

Russia considers such an approach irresponsible, Lavrov stressed, but “it will not unsettle Moscow”. Russia will continue to contribute to the implementation of the agreements reached through its mediation by the parties to the conflict.

## EU Plans More Armenian-Azeri Talks

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Pashinyan reiterated on April 7 that Baku’s proposals on the treaty, including a mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity, are acceptable to Yerevan. But he said the question of Karabakh’s status must also be on the agenda of the talks on the peace treaty.

The European diplomat suggested that this would likely be the case, pointing to Michel’s remark that the planned treatment “would address all necessary issues.”

“I think you can see that the phrase would ‘would address all necessary issues’ in the statement [by Michel] is not there by accident,” the diplomat stressed.

Pashinyan has also been criticized by his domestic political opponents for agreeing to start the process of border demarcation without securing the withdrawal of Azerbaijani forces from Armenian border areas seized by them last year.

The Armenian government said earlier this year that the process should start only after a mutual withdrawal of troops

from contested border areas.

“I think there’s a recognition that you need a pullback on both sides of the border,” the EU diplomat said in this regard, adding that the demarcation commission is expected to also deal with “those contested areas where tension reduction is a priority.”

The diplomat also insisted that the EU’s growing involvement in Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations is not aimed at undermining Russian significant role and presence in the Karabakh conflict zone. The official pointed to the Kremlin’s positive reaction to the outcome of the Brussels talks.

The diplomat said Turkey, another major regional player, is even more supportive of the EU mediation: “This process that we’re running is very helpful for them because the Turks are not able or can not have a process of normalization with Armenia without being matched by a process, if you like, of normalization between Azerbaijan and Armenia. So there they are, in my view, mutually reinforcing.”





## INTERNATIONAL

# Inaugural Session of Armenia and China Forum Takes Place in Yerevan

YEREVAN — The inaugural gathering of the Armenia and China Forum, which was dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, took place in Yerevan recently. The conference was organized by the China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research in partnership with World Socialism Institute, Renmin University of China. It was supported by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Armenia.

In his welcoming speech, Dr. Mher Sahakyan, the founder of the Armenia and China Forum, director of the China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research, announced the creation of annual Armenia and China Forum, where Armenian and Chinese scholars and diplomats will introduce their research and recommendations for improving bilateral relations.

In his opening remarks Ambassador of the PRC to Armenia Fan Yong welcomed the establishment of Armenia and China Forum by the China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research. He noted, that after the establishment of diplomatic affairs, both countries created trustful relations and supported each other on an international level. He noted that China is the second trade partner of Armenia and sides supported each other and strengthened economic cooperation during the outbreak of COVID-19 as well. Fan emphasized the



Organizers and panelists with Ambassador Fan Yong

importance of developing relations within the framework of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Former Prime Minister of Armenia Prof. Armen Darbinyan mentioned that historically Armenia played an important role in trade relations between East and the West. He expressed hope that Armenia will be

able to regain the mediator's role between different players of Eastern and Western parts of Eurasia by the help of developing infrastructure. He also noted, that as a Rector of the Russian-Armenian University he gives great importance to the development of Chinese studies at the university, where many students study Chinese language

with great enthusiasm.

General Secretary of the Good-Neighborhood, Friendship and Cooperation Commission of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Wei Zheng, noted: "We see that in 30 years a whole generation has grown up committed to deepening friendship between China and Armenia and plays an important role in the social development of the two countries. No matter how the international situation changes, we always understand, respect and support each other."

Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia Dr. Artur Martirosyan, presented the range of existing programs of Armenian-Chinese cooperation, which includes student exchange programs, cooperation in educational, scientific and technical spheres. As he mentioned, the Armenian students, who came back from China contribute to develop the Armenian economy.

Dr. Robert Ghazaryan, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences, emphasized the importance of cooperation between China-Eurasia Council for Political and Strategic Research and Institute of Oriental Studies in the field of academic diplomacy. As he mentioned these efforts are serving for the developing scientific relations between scholars of Armenia and China.

Director of the World Socialism Institute at Renmin University of China Dr. Yuntian Zheng mentioned: "While COVID-19 disrupts regular field trips and offline conferences, people-to-people exchanges between our two countries have never come to a halt. So far, we've managed to hold a number of online events. For the year of 2021 only, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the foundation of CPC, the publication of our book, China and Eurasia: Rethinking Cooperation and Contradictions in the Era of Changing World Order, and the 3rd China-Eurasia conference was held. Through these activities, our friendship continues to grow and prosper."

## Armenia Sends Ambassador Back to Israel

TEL AVIV (Azatutyun) — Armenia has sent its ambassador back to Israel in an apparent effort to mend bilateral relations that soured during the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ambassador Arman Hakobyan presented his credentials to Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Thursday 18 months after his predecessor, Armen Smbatyan, was recalled by the Armenian government in protest against continuing Israeli arms supplies to Azerbaijan.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said at the time that Israel did not halt those deliveries even after Azerbaijan launched a full-scale offensive in and around Karabakh on September 27, 2020.

Smbatyan was recalled to Yerevan in October 1, 2020 just two weeks after inaugurating the Armenian embassy in Tel Aviv. The envoy was subsequently sacked by the Armenian government after being indicted in a corruption investigation.

Hakobyan was appointed as Armenia's new ambassador to Israel in December 2021 one month after a phone call between Foreign Minister Mirzoyan and his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid. The two ministers discussed Armenian-Israeli relations and "prospects for their promotion," according to the Foreign Ministry in Yerevan.

Reports from Israel said that during the



Israeli President Isaac Herzog (right) meets with new Armenian Ambassador Arman Hakobyan, April 7, 2022.

Armenian-Azerbaijani war Azerbaijani transport planes frequently carried out flights between Baku and Israeli airfields. Observers suggested that they delivered more weapons to Azerbaijan.

According to the Armenian military, Azerbaijani forces heavily used Israeli-made attack drones and multiple-launch rocket systems throughout the six-week hostilities stopped by a Russian-brokered ceasefire in November 2020.

In an October 2020 report, Human Rights Watch said that the Azerbaijani army used Israeli cluster munitions in the shelling of Karabakh's civilian areas. The US watchdog said its researchers identified the remnants of these widely banned weapons in the Karabakh capital Stepanakert and the town of Hadrut.

"Azerbaijan received these surface-to-surface rockets and launchers from Israel in 2008-2009," the report added.

## Russia Complains to Turkey over Drones Sales to Ukraine, Turkish Bureaucrat Says

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Russia has complained to Turkey over its sale of Bayraktar TB2 armed drones to Ukraine, a high level Turkish bureaucrat said on Friday, but added the sales were by a private Turkish company and not state-to-state deals.

Turkey has forged close ties with Russia in energy, defense and trade, and relies heavily on Russian tourists. The Turkish

defense firm Baykar had sold the drones to Kyiv despite Russian objections and signed a deal to co-produce more before the invasion, angering Moscow.

NATO member Turkey shares a maritime border with Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea, has good ties with both and has taken a mediating role in the conflict. It has hosted peace talks and is working to bring together the Ukrainian and Russian presidents.

While supporting Ukraine and criticizing Russia's invasion, Turkey has also opposed widespread Western sanctions on Moscow, saying communication channels need to remain open and casting doubt on the effectiveness of the measures.

Ankara also opposes Russian policies in Syria and Libya, as well as its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

After peace talks between negotiators in

Istanbul last week, Ukraine listed several nations, including Turkey and members of the UN Security Council, as possible guarantors for Kyiv's security. The bureaucrat said some countries listed would face "legal issues" as security guarantors, without elaborating.

Turkey has said it is ready, in principle, to be Ukraine's guarantor, but the details of the format need to be finalized.





INTERNATIONAL

# Turkey, US Launch New Strategic Mechanism amid Ukraine Crisis

By Nazlan Ertan

ISTANBUL (Al-Monitor) — The long-awaited Turkish-US strategic mechanism aims to set up regular channels to help the two countries cooperate where they can and prevent outstanding issues from blowing up into crises.

Following months of diplomacy, Turkey and the United States have launched a strategic mechanism to boost cooperation in areas such as economy and defense.

“There is a new energy in ties,” Victoria Nuland, the US State Department’s undersecretary for political affairs, told the Turkish media after meeting with Turkish Foreign Ministry and Presidency officials. The new mechanism allows Turkish and American officials to talk about all of the issues, from trade to human rights and civil society, or regional issues from Syria to Ukraine, she added.

A US-Turkey joint statement on April 4 held out the possibility of a minister-level meeting later this year. According to diplomatic sources, this is likely to occur in Washington, marking the first official visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu since President Joe Biden took office.

The statement said that Nuland and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal on April 4 “met in Ankara to review topics of mutual interest, including economic and defense cooperation, counterterrorism, and key areas of shared regional and global interest.”

“If the U.S. and Turkey were old friends engaged in a dispute, this would be the

moment they unblocked each other’s number,” joked Soner Cagaptay, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the author of “A Sultan in Autumn.” Diplomatic sources maintain that the aim is to focus on positive areas of cooperation, rather than dwell on the chronic problems that have dogged the relations.

“The launch of the mechanism is certainly the prelude to a more constructive era in the relationship,” Sinan Ulgen, a former diplomat and visiting fellow of Carnegie Europe, told Al-Monitor. “It will not be a cure-all to all the tough spots in the relations - from the US policy on Syria to Turkey’s acquisition of Russia’s S-400 missile defense system - but neither should it be dismissed as window dressing. The mechanism provides a comprehensive platform, with consultations at different levels, to deepen cooperation on issues such as trade or regional hotspots.”

The process was accelerated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ulgen said. Wendy Sherman, US Deputy Secretary of State, came to Ankara ten days later and underscored the importance of the strategic mechanism.

Disputes between Ankara and Washington include Turkey’s acquisition of S-400 missile defense systems from Russia, Washington’s cooperation with the Syrian-Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) militia, policy differences on Libya and the eastern Mediterranean, as well as human rights issues. Moreover, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken US President Joe Biden’s lack of

engagement as a personal affront.

Ankara sources say that the reconciliation efforts have intensified with the arrival of new US Ambassador Jeff Flake, a moderate Republican senator who went against his party to endorse Biden’s presidency and a former member of the Senate Foreign Relations, Energy and Natural Resources committees. “He knows how Washington works, and he is eager to use his knowledge, ties, and time here to improve and deepen Turkey’s relations with Washington,” said one diplomatic source in Ankara.

The open line between Onal and Nuland is essential, but it still falls short of the regular contact with US President Joe Biden that Erdogan craves, Cagaptay told Al-Monitor. “The Ukrainian war is a blessing and a curse for Erdogan,” he said. “It has acted as a catalyst that has pushed Turkey out of isolation with NATO and its Western allies. But it is also a curse because if the war goes on, it comes with political and economic costs, particularly if Ankara were forced to take steps that would antagonize Russia.”

US Department of Commerce undersecretary Marisa Lago visits Ankara on April 5-6 to advance the mechanism’s economic and trade cooperation goals. Given the economic situation in Turkey, Erdogan needs a narrative of good relations with Washington to woo foreign investment, Cagaptay said. “So it would be good for him to be on regular calls with Biden, but Biden has neither the bandwidth nor the inclination at this stage.”

While Nuland said in an interview with

Hurriyet Daily News’ Serkan Demirtas that the new mechanism would allow meetings at the ministerial or even presidential level, no Turkish pundit would yet like to bet on a face-to-face meeting between Erdogan and Biden, particularly after such a meeting failed to materialize at the fringes of the NATO summit in Brussels last month, despite Turkish side’s hints.

Such a meeting “is unlikely to happen as long as the S-400 issue remains unsolved,” opined Cagaptay. After Turkey bought the S-400s from Russia, the United States expelled Turkey from the F-35 joint strike fighter program. Turkey’s request to upgrade its existing F-16 fleet and buy new F-16s has been snagged by Congress.

“There is the possibility of progress on the F-16 issue - at least from the administration if not from the Congress,” said Ulgen. In a letter dated March 17, the State Department said the potential sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey would be in line with US national security interests and would also serve NATO’s long-term unity, Reuters reported.

But Ulgen cautioned that it would be more difficult for both Ankara and Washington to come to terms on S-400 missiles. “Their current positions seem starkly apart,” Ulgen told Al-Monitor. “Both sides will need to show flexibility there.”

In March, Sherman suggested that Turkey send its S-400 missiles to Ukraine, with whom Ankara has a military cooperation accord. Turkey flatly refused.

# AGBU Hosts First Regional Conference for 2022 in Beirut

BEIRUT, Lebanon — From March 17-19, 2022, 70 delegates from Armenia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Switzerland, UK, and the US gathered in Beirut to participate in an intensive three-day conference including multiple panel discussions, public recognitions, formal dinners, and quality entertainment.

This is the first of several regional summits that the AGBU central leadership has planned for over the course of this year and next in regions with a strong Armenian and AGBU presence.

Considering the historically significant events and crises of the last few years of an already turbulent decade, these gatherings are intended to take serious inventory of the new realities, changing trends, shifting attitudes and behaviors of Armenians around the world. The goal is to pre-emptively reimagine what the future looks like for the overall AGBU mission in response to the information and insights presented during the moderated panel discussions designed to encourage a free exchange of diverse observations, ideas, and perspectives.

On the evening before the public sessions, AGBU delegates and guests were invited to a welcome dinner for which the main event was the opening of the Berge and Vera Setrakian Hall at the AGBU-AYA Zabel Movsessian Center in Sin el Fil. The dedicated space honors Berge Setrakian, who recently marked his 20th year as the seventh president of AGBU, and Vera Setrakian for their devotion to the mission of AGBU.

Sylvia Libaridian and Gary Nazarian, secretary and member of the AGBU Lebanon District Committee, respectively,

praised the Setrakians for their lifetime of efforts to expand the reach of AGBU, unify the Armenian people, and keep the AGBU relevant and responsive through rapidly changing times. On this occasion, President Setrakian was also honored by an Official Letter of Blessing by Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia.

Among the distinguished guests were Leila Solh, May Mikati, Vahakn Atabekyan (Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Lebanon), MP General Jean Talouzian, Minister of Industry Mr. George Boujikian, and benefactor and former MP Mr. Arthur and Mrs. Tamar Nazarian.

The moderated panel discussions took place over March 18-19 at the AGBU Demirdjian Center. Launching the first session, Gerard Tufenkjian, the chair of AGBU Lebanon, welcomed the delegates, introduced the program, and set the stage for Setrakian to explain the importance of conducting such meetings in the context of the current challenges facing humanity and the Armenian people. Setrakian asserted that questions regarding the Diaspora, the Armenian homeland, and definitions of Armenian identity are crucial to address, adding, “It is the youth and young people who are going to continue the legacy of the AGBU. At this meeting’s level, we should be far-sighted and consider your and our concerns.”

Camilio Azzouz, an AGBU central board member representing the United Kingdom, set the conference agenda and moderated all the sessions throughout the proceedings.

During the first day’s sessions, ideas and insights were presented and discussed by a distinguished roster of panelists including: Ambassador Grigor Hovhannisyian,

the chairman of the board of Ararat Bank; Yeghia Tashjian, a regional analyst and researcher on Geopolitical and Energy Security Developments in the Middle East and South Caucasus, Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, the president of Haigazian University, and Dr. Asbed Kotchikian, an associate professor at the American University of Armenia (AUA). Panel 1 focused on “Today’s Armenia and Future Prospects”; Panel 2 addressed “Today’s Global Diaspora.”

Featured speakers of Panel 3 and 4, focused on the Armenian Church and the Armenian Diaspora of the Middle East, respectively. They included Abp. Shahe Panosian, the prelate of Lebanon, Bp. Ardash Nalbandian, the primate of the Diocese of Damascus; and Very Rev. Fr. Shahe Ananyan, the supreme archimandrite and dean of the Gevorkian Theological Seminary in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia; Dr. Antranik Dakessian, an associate professor in the department of Armenian Studies at Haigazian University; Shaghig Hudaverdian, an instructor in the department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Haigazian University; and Armenak Tokmajian, a non-resident scholar at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

Topics ranged from the new realities in the Armenian world, the future of Armenia in a post-war context, the state of the Diaspora globally and in the Middle East particularly, issues surrounding the Armenian Church, ethnic identity in a globally connected society, generational differences and experiences of Armenian-ness, the prospects for youth, and other concerns related to shifting priorities and prevailing attitudes across the Armenian world in general.

The second day’s sessions explored how

the issues raised the previous day in broad terms applied to the work of AGBU. The dialogues were framed in global, regional, and local contexts, but there was special focus on the role of AGBU in the Middle East. This region has experienced a disproportionate share of crises impacting Armenian communities over the last 15 years, marked by the great upheavals in Syria and Lebanon. Speakers included Marina Mkhitaryan, the executive director of AGBU Armenia, Grigor Hovhannisyian (for a second time), and Camilio Azzouz and Yervant Zorian, both AGBU board members.

That evening, AGBU Lebanon organized a concert of classical music, performed by the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, and conducted by Garo Avessian, at the majestic St. Joseph Church in Monot, Beirut. The following day, the conference concluded with a farewell dinner at the Cocteau restaurant.

Reflecting on the intensive discussions and special moments of the three-day summit, Setrakian expressed his personal gratitude and satisfaction with all that had transpired. “It was most striking and heartening to see so many inspired and gifted thought leaders and AGBU members coming together to share their knowledge, expertise and observations so generously. Everyone was eager to engage on a very high level of analysis, objectivity, and refreshing candor, which are critical to helping AGBU develop sound strategies and reachable goals for the near and long term. By the time these gatherings have worked their way around the globe, I am confident that we will be well positioned and prepared to meet the toughest challenges and most promising opportunities that lie ahead.”





# Community News

## Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee Program to Take Place April 23

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — On Saturday, April 23, the Connecticut Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee will present a program remembering the 107th anniversary of the beginning of the Genocide. The program will be held at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, 1910 Stanley Street, at 10:30 a.m. as an in person event but will also be livestreamed.

Because of COVID restrictions in place while the program was being planned, utilization of the State Capitol was not possible this year. The Armenian flag will fly over the Connecticut State Capitol building from April 20 to 27.

John C. Geragosian of New Britain, Connecticut State Auditor and a member of the committee, will serve as master of ceremonies. Geragosian stated that the commemoration and the lessons learned from studying past history is vital especially in the current climate of aggressions by Azerbaijan against historic Armenian lands and the war in Ukraine.

The program will begin with the Martyrs' Service which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will lead the service.

Rev. Haroutiun Sabounjian, pastor of the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection in New Britain, commented on the significance of the commemoration: "The story of our holy martyrs of the Armenian Genocide is a story of a group of exceptional individuals who kept their focus on the most important thing even in the midst of the darkest imaginable turmoil. Every year we gather together as Armenian Christians to learn from their example, to ask for their intercession, and to become re-inspired by their witness; that we as children of God might also keep our eyes on that most important thing and orient our lives as they did around growing into the love of our compassionate Father in heaven."

Remarks will be given by Connecticut State Rep. Edwin Vargas, Jr.

The keynote speaker will be Lillian Avedian, journalist and poet who works as a staff writer for the *Armenian Weekly* reporting on domestic and geopolitics in the South Caucasus. She is also pursuing master's degrees in journalism and Near Eastern Studies at New York University. She will speak on "Narrating Genocide: Journalism without Facts, Art without Truth."

The mission of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut, in addition to honoring the memory of the one and a half

see COMMEMORATION, page 8



SOAR 17th Anniversary Gala, March 26th, Springfield Country Club, PA

## SOAR Celebrates Anniversary, Marks Efforts On Behalf of Orphans and Adults with Disabilities

SPRINGFIELD, Penn. — Founded in 2005, the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) provides humanitarian relief to orphaned children and adults with disabilities in Armenia. During the past 17 years, SOAR has remained vigilant by spearheading child protection issues and satisfying the needs of Armenia's most vulnerable populations. Growing to meet these needs while keeping true to its mission, SOAR has expanded to prevent institutionalization by providing financial, educational, and humanitarian assistance to at-risk children, youth, and families. Today, SOAR boasts more than 600 volunteers in 145 Chapters worldwide, supports 34 orphanages and facilities in four countries, and has distributed more than \$11.5 million in humanitarian aid since its inception.

The week-long SOAR anniversary festivities kicked off Wednesday, March 23, with a Board of Trustees Meeting followed by a catered dinner held at the home of George S. Yacoubian Jr., SOAR Founder and Executive Board Chairman. On Thursday, SOAR welcomed global Chapter leadership to Tavola Restaurant in Springfield, PA, for a cocktail party where many, for the very first time, had the opportunity to meet their peers and SOAR's Executive Board and staff.

Global Chapter Meetings took place Friday and Saturday at the Springfield Country Club, providing a forum for Chapters, facilities directors, and invited speakers to exchange ideas and initiatives and explore areas of opportunity for cross cooperation and collaboration. The meetings also served as a special opportunity to recognize Chapter volunteers with 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year service pins for their unwavering dedication to the organization.

SOAR's Crimson and Crystal Gala took place Saturday, March 26 at the Springfield Country Club, with more than 250 celebrants in attendance. The lavish anniversary event began with a cocktail party where guests had a chance to mingle and bid on a variety of silent auction items while enjoying the musical talents of the Lucy Yeghiazaryan Jazz Quartet.

see SOAR, page 11

## Ardashes 'Ardy' Kassakhian Selected As Glendale Mayor

GLENDALE — On Tuesday, April 5, 2022, Glendale City Council Member Ardashes "Ardy" Kassakhian was selected as the city's mayor by fellow councilmembers. Kassakhian takes over the position from outgoing Mayor Paula Devine. This is Kassakhian's first time serving in the role of mayor.

Born in Boston, Kassakhian has been a resident of Glendale since 1986. Prior to his election to City Council, Kassakhian served as the elected City Clerk for Glendale for 15 years, having been elected and re-elected four times by Glendale's voters.

Kassakhian is the product of Glendale schools, having attended John Marshall and R. D. White Elementary schools, Wilson Middle School, and Glendale High School ('94). Kassakhian graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He received his Master of Arts in Public Policy and Administration from Northwestern University. More recently, he attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and completed the Certificate Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government. He is also an alumnus of the Coro Public Affairs Fellowship.



Mayor Ardashes "Ardy" Kassakhian of Glendale

The California Senate Rules Committee appointed Mayor Kassakhian to serve on the California New Motor Vehicle Board and to the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee by Secretary of State Alex Padilla.

Kassakhian currently serves as the Chair of the Glendale Housing Authority and was appointed to serve as Glendale's representative on the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors and the California Contract Cities Association.

"I have dedicated the majority of my career to serving the residents of the City of Glendale," said Kassakhian. "From my beginnings as the city's clerk, through my time as a councilmember, and now as mayor, I will continue to serve this great community and ensure its future. I am honored for this opportunity and thank my colleagues for enlisting their trust in me in this coming year."

Kassakhian and his wife, Courtney, live in the Pelanconi neighborhood of Glendale with their son.





COMMUNITY NEWS

California State Bar to Investigate Armenian Genocide Insurance Victim Payments

LOS ANGELES — Chief Trial Counsel George Cardona of the State Bar of California said on April 5 to the LA Times that the agency was taking a fresh look at attorney conduct in Armenian Genocide insurance reparations cases following a Times investigation that detailed corruption and misdirection of funds in the AXA French insurance company settlement case.

“The State Bar is reviewing these cases to determine whether there is any new information that would warrant further action,” said Cardona, a former federal prosecutor appointed last year to lead investigations and prosecutions at the agency that regulates the legal profession in California. The bar previously disciplined one attorney and attempted to discipline two others in connection with the genocide litigation.

“There was a terrible injustice done when descendants of those murdered in the Armenian Genocide were denied their rightful settlements,” Cardona said in his *LA Times* statement. He described those already prosecuted as “most directly responsible for these misappropriations” but added, “the State Bar has the responsibility to take action when it becomes aware of new evidence.”

UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW PHOTO



George S. Cardona



Clergy of the Eastern Diocese gathered for three regional Lenten Retreats in March and April. Pictured are participants in the 2022 Mid-Atlantic Regional Lenten Retreat.

Clergy of Eastern Diocese Refresh Their Spirits at Three Lenten Retreats

PARMA, Ohio — Under the leadership of Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan, the clergy of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America gathered at three regional retreats during the recent season of Great Lent.

The retreat for the Midwest took place at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Parma, OH (March 15-17); for New England at the Bethania II Spiritual Retreat and Conference Center in Medway, MA (March 30-April 1); and for the Mid-Atlantic region at St. Raphaela Retreat Center in Haverford, PA (April 5-7).

The theme of the retreats was “Refreshed by the Living Water.” Each retreat began with a reflection led by Bishop Daniel on Psalm 42: “*As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.*”

Guest speakers at the retreats included Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn (Midwest); Bishop John Abdalla, Antiochian Orthodox Bishop for Worcester and New England (New England); and Archbishop Mor Dionysius John Kawak, Patriarchal

Vicar of the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese for the Eastern U.S. (Mid-Atlantic). Each guest speaker developed the theme in a unique way, sharing insights from their pastoral experiences, using Bible studies and active discussions with the clergy.

On the last morning of each retreat, Diocesan Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan instructed the clergy on the basics of meditation according to the traditional monastic practice of the Armenian Church, and led the clergy in a discussion of Jesus’ sermon on “Rivers of Living Water.”

As in past retreats, the clergy prayed the *Jhamerkoutiun* each morning and evening. New to this year’s retreat was an evening spent at the local Armenian Church (St.

Gregory of Narek, in Richmond Heights, OH; Holy Translators, in Framingham, MA; and St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, in Wynnewood, PA) for a Lenten meal and film discussion.

Because the Mid-Atlantic retreat coincided with the Feast of the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary (April 7), the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Arakel Derian, pastor of St. Mary Church in Livingston, NJ, and the priests received Holy Communion together. Each of the retreats concluded with Bishop Daniel’s remarks on the necessity of receiving the “living spiritual water,” to energize the clergy in their important mission of ministering to their respective flocks.

Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee Program to Take Place April 23

COMMEMORATION, from page 7 million victims and survivors of the Armenian Genocide, is to support programs and events, itself or with other organizations, to inform the public and remember the Genocide. It is in the process of establishing a suitable permanent Genocide Memorial. The committee also assists in the legislative mandate to provide Genocide related curricula in the public schools.

Melanie Kevorkian Brown, chairperson of the Committee stated that she is gratified by the interest in the Armenian Genocide shown by both the Armenian and non-Armenian communities. She stressed that the failure to recognize and condemn past genocides can only lead to increased crimes against humanity in the future. She commended the Connecticut Genocide Commemoration Committee for its diligence in conducting its annual commemoration, and especially these past two years in light of restrictions posed by COVID related circumstances

Besides Kevorkian-Brown, the members of the committee are: Rev. Untzag Nalban-

dian, Rev. Voski Galstyan, Rev. Haroutiun Sabounjian, Rev. Garabed Telfeyan, Rev. Aram Stepanian, Rita Soovajian, Diana Colpitts, Svetlana Babadjanyan, , Evelyn Mukjian Daly, Mari Firkatian, John Geragosian, Armen Marsoobian, Sonia Gulbenk, Richard Arzooonian, Greg Norsigian, Harry Mazadoorian, David Paparian, Richard Hamasian and Kit Kaolian.

Mazadoorian noted, “Great strides have been made in recent years, especially with the recognition and condemnation resolutions of both houses of the US Congress in 2020 and the recognition by President Biden in 2021. Nonetheless, it is heartbreaking that 107 years after the Genocide, atrocities continue in the form of physical aggressions, human rights violations and cultural desecration against Armenians in Nagorno- Karabakh, a region which has long been an integral part of historic Armenia.

The program will also contain appropriate musical selections and a candle lighting. A reception will follow the program.

The Livestream link is: [bit.ly/34VhGbH](https://bit.ly/34VhGbH).

DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)  
Առաջնորդություն Հայոց Ամերիկայի Արեւելեան Թեմի

His Grace  
BISHOP DANIEL, Primate

Cordially invites you to  
A reception honoring

**ZARMINÉ BOGHOSIAN**

In honor of her newly published memoir  
Ազգէն – Ամերիկա (“From Azaz to America”)

♦ ♦ ♦

Wednesday, April 27, 2022  
Six-thirty in the evening

Haik & Alice Kavookjian Auditorium  
DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA  
630 Second Avenue (at 35th Street), New York City

RSVP by April 20 to [maryb@armeniandiocese.org](mailto:maryb@armeniandiocese.org)

PLEASE NOTE: All attendees must provide  
proof of COVID vaccination





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# NASSR Presents Inaugural Vartan Gregorian Lecture on April 28

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will present its first annual Vartan Gregorian Memorial Lecture on Thursday, April 28, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern) / 4:30 pm (Pacific). The inaugural program will be a webinar presentation by Prof. Houri Berberian of the University of California, Irvine, and Prof. Talinn Grigor of the University of California, Davis, titled “From *Bogeyman* to HAY KIN: Representations of Armenian Women in Modern Iran.”

Ara Arakelian, nephew of Vartan Gregorian and President of the Friends of Armenian Culture Society, will speak about his late uncle.

The annual NAASR lecture bearing his name will present cutting-edge Armenian Studies scholarship that intersects with some of the many areas that interested Vartan Gregorian as a scholar, such as Armenians in the Near East and the Muslim world, particular Iran; books and libraries; immigration; education; and more.

The webinar is co-sponsored by the Meghrouni Family Centennial Chair in

Armenian Studies at UC Irvine and will be accessible live on Zoom (register at <https://bit.ly/GregorianLecture2022>) and on NAASR’s YouTube Channel.

Vartan Gregorian (April 8, 1934-April 15, 2021) was a brilliant educator, humanitarian, and friend after whom NAASR’s headquarters is named. Born in Tabriz, Iran, he received his secondary education Collège Arménien in Beirut, Lebanon, and he graduated from and received a PhD in history and humanities from Stanford University.

After an academic career spanning two decades, including a period as Tarzian Professor of Armenian and Caucasian History at the University of Pennsylvania, Gregorian served as President of The New York Public Library, President of Brown University, and President of Carnegie Corporation of New York. He was the author of the memoir *The Road To Home: My Life And Times* as well as *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan, 1880-1946* and *Islam: A Mosaic, Not A Monolith*.

In the words of Edward Avedisian of the NAASR Board of Directors and the lead

donor of the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, “Vartan Gregorian embodies the values at the heart of NAASR’s mission. He dedicated his entire life to educational advancement and the pursuit of knowledge, engaging in public service throughout his career, and working to better the human condition.”

Berberian and Grigor’s talk is part of a larger book project that explores the history of Iran’s Armenian women from the beginning of Naser al-Din Shah’s reign in 1848 to the 1979 fall of the Pahlavi dynasty. As the first scholarly study of its kind, it analyzes the shifting relationship between Iran’s central nodes of power (absolute monarchy and patriarchy) and its Armenian female subjects (ethnic minorities and women) in Qajar and Pahlavi Iran.

In this talk, they employ pictorial representations of Armenian women to demonstrate their impact on the processes, strategies, and anxieties of modernization by examining two pictorial spheres redolent of the entangled relationship between modernization and women’s visibility and representation: satirical cartoons (1920–58) and costume exhibition (1972–76).

Hourly Berberian is Professor of History, Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies and Director of the Center for Armenian Studies at the University of California, Irvine. Her books include *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911* (2001) and the award-winning *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (2019).

Talinn Grigor is Professor and Chair of the Art History Program in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of California, Davis. Her books include *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage Under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (2009), *Contemporary Iranian Art: From the Street to the Studio* (2014), and *The Persian Revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture* (2021).

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

## Dickran Toumajan Teacher, Scholar of Armenian Language, Dies at 77

TOUMAJAN, from page 1

Born in 1945 in Cambridge, Mass. to Gürün native Nishan Toumajan and Istanbul native Louise Ajemian Toumajan, Dickran spent his early formative years in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. The Toumajan home was a welcoming hearth for family and friends, who often gathered to discuss intellectual and cultural topics of the day, in addition to Armenian customs and traditions.

The youngest of three sons, Dickran attended public elementary school in Manhattan, while simultaneously being treated with his siblings, Thomas and Barte, to baseball games and the movies, thanks to their doting uncles, Hrant and Mihran.

In 1955, the Toumajans left the hustle and bustle of Washington Heights and settled at 55 Union Street in idyllic Milford, NH, where Nishan worked as an accountant for Raytheon while Louise worked at a local nursing home. Dickran attended Milford public schools, where he played basketball, baseball and tennis, while working in his late high school years at the local Hayward Farms Dairy. He graduated from Milford High School in 1963 and enrolled at Bard College for a year before transferring to the University of New Hampshire (UNH) in 1964. Dickran earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from UNH in 1968.

In 1969, upon the encouragement of his uncle Mihran Toumajan — an ethnomusicologist, folklorist, and one of the five dedicated pupils of the great Gomidas Vartabed in Istanbul from 1909-1915 — who had been living in Soviet Armenia since 1966 and working at the National Academy of Sciences, Dickran relocated to Yerevan. He lived with his uncle at the former “Hotel Yerevan,” and seriously learned the Armenian language during his first year in the motherland. In 1970, Dickran matriculated

at Yerevan State University’s (YSU) Department of Philology, where he studied Armenian language and literature, as well as comparative languages. He earned a master’s degree in Armenian language history and linguistics from YSU in 1975.

In 1974, Dickran married the love of his life and native of Meghreshen (Shirak Province), Armenia, Anahit Karapetian, who was a YSU Philology Department classmate of Dickran. In the summer of 1978, Dickran and Anahit, with their toddler son Mihran, settled in Michigan, where Dickran taught Armenian history to the senior class of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Alex and Marie Manoogian School in Southfield. In 1979, Dickran embarked on a career as a lecturer in Armenian Language and Culture at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit.

Founded in 1950 upon the initiative of Prof. Kevork Nakhnikian, the Armenian Studies Program at WSU is one of the oldest in the United States. Beginning in 1960, Rev. Robert Puzant Rubyan served as the director of Armenian Studies at WSU, and handed the torch to Dickran in the Fall of 1981. Dickran taught Armenian Studies at WSU for 41 years (1979-2020), while also periodically teaching Armenian language courses at Oakland University and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. One of Dickran’s favorite subjects, which he taught for over two decades, was a multi-disciplinary course titled “New Soil, Old Roots: The Immigrant Experience,” which highlighted the Armenian, German, Jewish, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian immigrant experiences in the United States, its effects on the cultures (i.e. language, literature, religion, politics, music, art and theatre) of these ethnic groups, and its influence upon American life. The Eastern European immigration course was usually taught by

Dickran in the ornate “Armenian Room” — replete with murals featuring replicas of medieval Armenian manuscripts, as well as Armenian military heroes and intellectuals — located on the Wayne State University campus at Alex Manoogian Hall’s Ethnic Heritage Center.

For nearly three decades, Dickran passionately taught a wide range of subjects at the AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School, an award-winning, coeducational charter school accredited by Central Michigan University. He innately expressed a gentle and understanding disposition towards his students. Making it simple for students to comprehend, retain, and write about a lesson was fundamental to Dickran, who also taught Armenian Church History to high school-age students at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church’s Sunday School for 30 years. In addition to teaching, Dickran enjoyed editing *The Manoogian Voice* school newsletter, moderating the annual Student Quiz Bowl, and serving as an assistant coach of the Boys Basketball Team.

Spanning several decades, Dickran volunteered with a number of local organizations, including as a Parish Council member of St. John Armenian Church, secretary of the AGBU Alex Manoogian Cultural

Fund, secretary of the AGBU Detroit Core Group, and secretary of the Michigan-based Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul. A lifelong Red Sox and Celtics fan, Dickran enjoyed attending games in Detroit with his family and friends when the Boston teams were in town.

Dickran Toumajan is survived by his wife, Anahit, and their three children Mihran and Talin Toumajan (and son Nishan) of Glendale, California, Armen Toumajan of Los Angeles, California, and Ani Toumajan of Washington, DC. Dickran and Anahit instilled in their children a love of Armenian history, language and culture. Their home in Southfield, MI — like Dickran’s childhood home — became a gathering place for family, friends, and the greater community.

Dickran Toumajan’s public funeral service and *hokejash* will take place on Wednesday, April 13, at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Detroit (22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield), presided by Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, pastor of St. John Armenian Church, with the participation of clergy from all Armenian church denominations. Funeral arrangements are by the Edward Korkoian Funeral Home.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

**1915**

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Recognition**

**SUNDAY  
APRIL 24, 2022  
at 1:30pm**





COMMUNITY NEWS

# SOAR Celebrates Anniversary, Marks Efforts on Behalf of Orphans and Adults with Disabilities

SOAR, from page 7

Heartfelt video messages to SOAR were offered by Elisha Wiesel, the Armenian Evangelical Boarding School (AEBS), and California Rep. Jacqueline Speier, followed by inspirational words from Mother Arousiag Sajonian.

“Many charitable organizations help, but very few think about changing systems,” said Mother Arousiag. “The mentality in Armenia was orphans are not intelligent, orphans cannot accomplish something, orphans they are secondary people...SOAR has changed this mentality. If today the Our Lady of Armenia is soaring, it’s because of SOAR.”

Continuing with words of encouragement, Mark Geragos, Esq., Master of Ceremonies shared, “The idea that we are the first Christian nation in a nascent democracy who exists in sea of hostility and we have been able to thrive throughout all of these challenges and have organizations like this that do Gods’ work literally is a story that is not told and is a story that needs to be told.”

Annually, SOAR honors patrons and volunteers whose unparalleled service to the organization deserves recognition. 2020 and 2021 awards were distributed at the gala as follows: Sevana Petrosian, Greg and Laurel Sarian, 2020 Patrons of the Year; Syune Hakobyan, 2020 Chapter Volunteer of the Year; New York Juniors of the Year (2020); Margaret Yacoubian, Varooge Yerganian, 2021 Patrons of the Year; Tenny Amin, 2021 Chapter Volunteer of the Year; and New Jersey and Philadelphia Junior Volunteers of the Year (2021).

Greg and Laurel Sarian have provided significant financial support to SOAR since its inception, and Greg Sarian serves as an integral part of the Board of Trustees.



The more than 250 guests celebrating SOAR’s Crimson and Crystal Gala at the Springfield Country Club.

“Laurel and I are grateful to be able to support SOAR with our time and our resources...SOAR’s mission of helping Armenian orphans around the globe with a better life speaks to us,” said Greg Sarian. “But it’s more than that...our Christian faith is the cornerstone of our lives...thank you to SOAR for allowing us to honor Christ with our efforts.”

Two surprise dedications were also unveiled to Rev. Asadur Minasian, SOAR Executive Board of Director, and the Megerian and Bardakjian family. A kitchen renovation at the Our Lady of Armenia Center was completed in March 2022 in honor of Father Minasian’s Catholic ordi-

nation, with SOAR’s second Transitional Center opening this June in Yerevan named in honor of the late Papken and Anahid Megerian. The evening was capped off with dancing to a dynamic performance by Elie Berberian and band from Montreal, Canada.

SOAR extends its sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the Harold and Josephine Gulamerian Armenian Orphan Fund, Gala



sponsors, the SOAR Philadelphia Chapter, and all supporters who made its 17th year anniversary week unforgettable. Headquartered in Philadelphia, SOAR is the world’s only charitable organization devoted exclusively to providing humanitarian relief to orphaned Armenian children. To learn more about SOAR and view the gallery of anniversary photos and videos, visit [soar-us.org](http://soar-us.org).



SOAR Board of Trustees Dinner held on Wednesday, March 23rd at the home of George S. Yacoubian Jr., SOAR Founder and Executive Board Chairman.



SOAR Chapter leaders meeting for the first time at the Welcome Cocktail Party at Tavola Restaurant



## Knights and Daughters of Vartan

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**Sunday, April 24, 2022 at Noon**


**New York City:** March for Justice and Reparations  
**From:** St. Illuminator’s Cathedral (221 E. 27<sup>th</sup>St)  
**To:** Turkish Consulate and Azerbaijan Consulate on the way to Times Square  
**Sponsored by:** AYF NY/NJ and ANC NY/NJ

**Friday, April 22, 2022 at 12:30pm**

**New Jersey:** Bergen County Courthouse Green  
10 Main Street Hackensack, NJ  
**by:** Bergen County Officials  
**Sponsored by:** Knights & Daughters of Vartan  
Bakradouni Lodge, NJ  
Sahag Anoush Otyag , NJ  
Hovnanian Armenian School, NJ

**Saturday, April 16, 2022 at 1:30pm**

**Armenian Flag Raising Ceremony in FORT LEE, NJ to honor the Armenian Martyrs of 1915**  
309 Main Street, Fort Lee, NJ 07024  
Sponsored by ANC of NJ







# Arts & Culture

## Rémi Panossian

‘Jazz Is My Religion!’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / TOULOUSE — Jazz pianist Rémi Panossian was born in 1983, in Montpellier, France, to an Armenian father and a French mother and started playing piano at 7. He studied at the Lycée Jean Monnet in Montpellier, as well as Montpellier Jazz School and the Toulouse College of Music, where he received a National School of Music Certificate in Jazz and Improvised Music. Panossian taught jazz piano at the Enfants du Jazz Workshop and International Trio Session in Cape Breton. In 2009 he founded the Rémi Panossian Trio with Maxime Delporte (double bass) and Frederic Petitprez (drums). In 2011, the trio released their first album, “Add fiction,” and have released seven more. The trio has performed more than 500 concerts in countries including France, Japan, South Korea, China, India, Taiwan, Canada, Norway, Brazil, Germany, Venezuela, Portugal and Germany.



Rémi with Artsvi Bakhchinyan after his concert in Yerevan.

Last February 27, the Rémi Panossian Trio held a concert in Yerevan, their first time in Armenia. The enthusiasm of the audience was indescribable. Not only for enjoying a high-class jazz concert, but also for discovering another talented compatriot...

**Rémi, the performance of your trio is just bewitching. Where do you find inspiration for your bottomless drive and passion?**

I think mostly in travelling and meeting different people, cultures, food. It is really inspiring when you are discovering new things.

**I can see that with Maxime and Frederic you are not only colleagues, but also close friends, am I right?**

Yes, we have known each other for 20 years and we were friends even before we built this trio 13 years ago.  
see PANOSSIAN, page 13



## ‘Pride Jewel’

New Film Directed by Armen Dilchianian  
To Be Released in May

LOS ANGELES — A new film, “Pride Jewel,” from award-winning screenwriter and producer Armen Dilanchian, directed by Doug Thomsen, and co-produced by Megan Louise Thill will be released on May 3rd on Amazon, Apple TV, VUDU, On Demand and Google Play.

Set in San Francisco, “Pride Jewel” is an Armenian film about love, crime revenge, and the American Dream.

An Armenian father and son immigrate to U.S. after a massive earthquake leveled their small town in Armenia, Andre and his father move to San Francisco, to be near family, and in hopes of a better life. Amidst the challenges of this new environment, no job perspective, and desperate for a family life, Andre quickly turns to jewel thief, Cyrus for guidance. Andre tries to make fast money, but he has a change of heart when Cyrus instructs the crew he hangs with to make a score at an Armenian wedding. In the end, we find that revenge is the only way out and redemption is nowhere to be found.

“Pride Jewel” features Suro’s music, starring Jake Vincent, Sarkis Bakalyan, George Boudoures, Aya Hoja and others, including Kristina Ayanian.

This film won “Best Picture” at the Paris Film Festival and Amsterdam International Film Festival in 2021.

see FILM, page 13



Scene from “Pride Jewel”

## Celebrating German Publisher, Human Rights Activist Helmut Donat on His 75th Birthday

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BREMEN, Germany — It is not only his family and friends who have reason to congratulate Helmut Donat on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday; members of the Armenian community everywhere should join in as well. As a publisher, he has done more to educate the reading public on Armenia, its people and history, its tragedies and achievements, than any other German publisher. In her birthday greetings (printed below) his long-standing friend and colleague, the well-known genocide scholar and human rights advocate Tessa Hofmann references a few of the many books he has produced, which cover a wide range of topics and genres, reaching back in time to before the first World War.

The list of valuable resources he has made available includes works examining the role of Imperial Germany: In 2004 his publishing house Donat-Verlag presented the account of the genocide written by Heinrich Vierbücher, *Armenia 1915: What the German Imperial Government Concealed from Its Subjects*. Then came *Armenia, Turkey and the Duties of Europe* by Eduard Bernstein and Otto Umfrid (2005). *The Slaughter of a Civilized People at the Hands of the Turks, Two War Years in Constantinople 1915-1916* by German newspaper correspondent Harry Stürmer appeared in 2015. In the year of the centenary of the genocide, Donat-Verlag also released the definitive biography of Walter Rößler (1871-1929) by Kai Seyffarth. Rößler was a German consul in Aleppo, who displayed extraordinary courage in exposing the genocide as it unfolded, in hopes of influencing German policy to end the atrocities. And Yetvart Ficiciyan revealed what the public could read, in *The Armenian Genocide as Reflected in the German Language Daily Press 1912-1922*. Among works documenting its horrors is *Expulsion, Persecution, Extermination*, an album of photographs and texts associated with a permanent exhibition by Tessa Hofmann, in collaboration with Gerayer Koutcharian and Wolfgang Schlott.

In making such books available to the German public, Donat has performed the role of educator. And, most important, he has joined other scholars and human rights advocates like Hofmann, as an indefatigable campaigner for the recognition of the genocide by the German political establishment. Publishing, for Helmut Donat, is not a commercial enterprise but a vocation; he produces books and wields them like weapons in a campaign for historical justice.

### Discovering the Armenians

Who is Helmut Donat? And how did he come to devote his energies to Armenian issues? He was born in Lower Saxony in the immediate post-war period, in a family of refugees.  
see DONAT, page 14





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Rémi Panossian 'Jazz Is My religion!'

PANOSSIAN, from page 12

We live very close to each other. It is like a family!

**Let's talk a little about jazz. For some people jazz is an endless musical expression, for some it is just musical garrulity.**

Jazz is my religion! People always struggling to describe what jazz is! For some people jazz stopped in 1959; for others it is infinite. I don't really know. For me jazz is freedom. I try to play good music with a lot of influence and a lot of freedom.

**Some people blame jazz for various "sins." American singer Cathy Berberian once said that jazz is the root of all mischiefs of the 20th century. With all**

**my respect and admiration to Berberian, I found her opinion quite misleading.**

I would say the opposite. Jazz is the root of all the wonders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: soul funk, rock, hip hop, etc. When the music is good, no matter what is the name on it.

**Very few people know that an Armenian musician, Gregor or Krikor Kélékian (1898-1971) was one of the founders of French jazz. And one of your teachers was jazz pianist Stéphane Kochoyan.**

I met Stephane when I was 14 years old; he taught me a lot of things and a few years after he gave me a job as a teacher in a workshop, he always follows my works. He is a great musician and wonderful human being.



**Are you from a musical family?**

Not really. My mom was a social worker and my father a psychologist. They are now retired, but they always loved music and arts and they supported me a lot.

**At the concert you said you know only few words in Armenian from your grandfather. What are they? And please tell us about everything Armenian you have had in your family.**

It is difficult to know where my Armenian ancestors were really born. My grandfather Kamer Panossian was a survivor of the genocide; he had been through so many difficulties before arriving in France. I had the chance to spend a lot of time with him. He was an incredible source of inspiration. The words he told me often were *gamatz* (calm), *nesté* (sit down) and *achkapatz* (smart). My father is a great cook. I used to eat a lot of Armenian food in France: kefté, beureks, soudjouk, pasterma, etc. Also my grandmother Marie Baronian used to sing a lot of Armenian folk songs. I especially remember of one song named *Yeraz* (Dream). I played it also with duduk player Levon Minassian.

**There is an opinion that Armenian traditional music has elements of jazz and that's why folk jazz has been so popular in Armenia since 1930s. What is your impression?**

I totally agree with it. I used to play a few Armenian folk songs and for sure I could feel some links between these two music. It is really great to improvise on Armenian folk songs!

**Have you ever cooperated with other Armenian musicians?**

I have known pianist Tigran Hamasyan for a long time; we have had a tour in Japan together. And now I know cellist Artyom Manukyan; we played together a few songs, he is just amazing.

**How would you describe your trip to Armenia and concert in Yerevan?**

It was really special, it was like I was at home: it was my first time, but I felt like I have already been there. I cannot wait to come back.

**And we cannot wait to listen you again! Is there also something unusual that happened to you in Armenia you would like to mention?**

Not really - maybe that I cried during my dinner at Yerevan Tavern listening to beautiful Armenian duduk music.

**Rémi, I wish to see you often in Armenia and Armenian stages. And one day to listen your own jazz interpretations of Armenian music!**

Thanks a lot! It will be my pleasure!



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## New Film by Dilchanian to Be Released in May

FILM, from page 12

Despite unprecedented challenges, and an aggressive schedule, "Pride Jewel" began production on July 7, 2020, during the worldwide COVID 19 pandemic and with no vaccines available at that time. Due to 4D Legacy Studios' rigid COVID 19 safety guidelines, top-notch cast, crew, and their dedication to excellence, the talented team completed this epic feature-length film in just two weeks.

Born into an Armenian family, Dilchanian immigrated to the US when he was 12 years old and saw his own father start his life over again. Years later, Armen attended a lavish Armenian wedding and thought what a great place it would be if someone wanted to pull off a heist!

Thus was born the idea for "Pride Jewel," a heist film that unites the glamor of the genre with elements of an immigrant narrative many Armenians and others will recognize.

Armen has an MFA in theater and an extensive background writing and producing plays in and around San Francisco, CA. He has also written and produced several short

films. *Pride Jewel* is his first feature, and he hopes it will resonate with audiences far and wide.

Director Doug Thomsen Doug Thomsen is a director and production company owner of BT Studio. He belonged to an acting workshop for 6 years, giving him in-depth insight into what actors need to be successful. When he's not working on a film or commercial, he's watching cinema in all its forms.

Producer Megan Louise Thill Megan Louise Thill is an actor, singer, and producer from Wisconsin with theater, film, dance, and casting experience. After working as a project manager for many years in healthcare IT, Megan enjoys producing and acting in feature and short films, commercials, and industrials in San Francisco.

Cinematographer Jonathan Salazar Jonathan Salazar is a narrative cinematographer based in San Francisco. He is an alumni of the SFSU Cinema program where he began his career as a director of photography shooting short films. His experience ranges from independent features, documentaries to commercial and corporate work.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Celebrating German Publisher, Human Rights Activist Helmut Donat on His 75th Birthday

DONAT, from page 12

He trained for a career in the banking sector before returning to complete his secondary education, then pursued university studies in Braunschweig to become a teacher. From 1975 to 1981 he worked as an academic tutor and lecturer at the Bremen university, where he had settled. In 1981, Donat published his first work, a book on a naval officer named Hans Paasche. Born in 1881, Paasche had opposed the cult of violence developed in Germany and was killed in 1920 by radical rightwing soldiers. Not having found any publisher, Donat decided to put out the book on his own. In 1984, he set up a publishing house together with Horst Temmen, the Donat & Temmen Verlag. Four years later, the two parted ways, and continued independently. Donat-Verlag in Bremen has since come to occupy a special place in German publishing.

His first contact with Armenia goes back to his early years. He told the fascinating story in a speech delivered on April 9, 2010:

“The Armenian people represent one of the oldest Christian cultures,” he began.

“Almost no other population has accumulated so much suffering in the course of its history. It has consistently been a pawn of the Great Powers. Byzantines and Persians, Arabs and Turks have in turn subjugated and mistreated it. That the Armenians however have not perished, but rather have survived and have preserved their cultural identity, bears testimony to a robust resilience to be found in almost no other people.

“I first heard about Armenia when I was a pupil. I was 12 or 13 years old, when my geography teacher declared that Ararat was the highest mountain in the Caucasus and that German soldiers had fought there in the Second World War. Then he said, ‘A Jew can swindle ten Arabs, but an Armenian can swindle ten Jews.’ That was it. Nothing about the culture, the landscape, or at all about the genocide. So, the cloak of silence that the German Imperial government had once spread over the Armenian people, in order not to incriminate its Turkish ally, continued to exist long after the Second World War.

“It took another 20 years before I was to hear anything about Armenia again. At the time I was collaborating on a manuscript of the Bremen pacifist Ludwig Quidde, edited by Karl Holl, titled, *The History of German Pacifism during the First World War*. One of my tasks was to clarify facts that the contemporary reader might not be familiar with. For example, in November 1915 the General Meeting of the German Peace Society ‘expressed its sympathies for all oppressed and mistreated peoples, in particular the Armenians and Russian Jews.’ It was not clear to me what this meant, and all I could remember was what my geography teacher had said. So, I started to do some research – and was confronted with terrible events. It was not on the slaughter fields of Verdun that the bloodiest chapter of the First World War had been written, but ‘down in Turkey, far away.’ In an extremely cruel manner, over one million Armenians were tortured to death

in 1915/16; they were victims of an organized extermination and systematic killing. I was 30 years old at the time, but neither in school nor anywhere else had I ever heard anything about the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I felt misled, was outraged, swore to myself that I would do something about it, and began to inform myself, rummaged about in second-hand book stores, read old newspapers, found collections of documents and set up an ‘Armenian section’ in my library. When a couple of years later I began to publish books, they soon included works, pamphlets and writings on Armenia. Likewise, many others have contributed to breaking through the



Helmut Donat

continuing taboo.”

Donat told this story 12 years ago to a gathering at a cultural event in a suburb of Bremen, an “Armenian Evening.” He entitled his speech, “Wounds from the Past – Impact on the Future.” After sharing his own experience, he turned to the political reality of the day, issuing sharp criticism of the German government for kowtowing to Turkish government sensitivities, and refusing to recognize the genocide.

“In the Federal Republic of Germany,” he went on, “there are about 42,000 Armenians. They should know that we extend our hand to them and stand by them whenever — from whatever quarters — the attempt is made to confuse public opinion and blame their grandfathers and great-grandfathers for the crimes committed against their people. And they should know that we do not stand in the tradition of those Germans who, out of loyalty to their Turkish allies, have betrayed truth and justice and have stifled freedom of opinion. In this sense,” he explained, “the ‘Armenian Evening’ aims at recalling what happened and what must never happen again, and at the same time making clear that forgetting, silence and indifference – today as in the past – are accessories to crimes.”

For Helmut Donat, such an “Armenian Evening” was a means of assisting Armenia and its people in building their

future. “And we can help out even just by becoming acquainted with their great heritage of literature, music, poetry and culture, with the Armenian people...” Over the decades, Donat has contributed significantly to acquainting Germans with this heritage, by organizing such cultural events, like the Armenian Cultural weeks in Bremen, but, especially, by publishing works on Armenia’s history, politics and rich culture. He has received numerous awards for his achievements. In April 1990, he was given the Bremen Villa Ichon’s Peace and Culture Prize in recognition of his editorial achievements “which demonstrate a commitment to peace on a high cultur-

al level.” In May 1996, he got the Carl von Ossietzky Prize for Contemporary History and Politics. By spring 2007, his publishing house had produced over 300 books on contemporary history, with the primary focus on the peace movement, Nazism, the Armenian genocide, pacifism and the history of militarism, especially in Germany. Since then, the list of publications has continued to grow in quantity, quality and impact.

And, although he has reached an age at which many people retire into private life and tend their gardens, it is to be hoped and expected that Helmut Donat will preserve his energy and determination, to continue producing meaningful, beautiful books.

**Herzlichen Glückwunsch zum Geburtstag! or: Congratulations on Your Birthday!**

**Tessa Hofmann**

The Bremen publisher Helmut Donat is celebrating his 75th birthday. And the *Working Group Recognition - Against Genocide, for International Understanding (AGA) e.V.* says thank you wholeheartedly: Thank You, dear Helmut, for having worked towards human rights, peace and justice as a publisher for 40 years. Your commitment as a publisher for and with Armenians stems from your pacifist orientation. You have recognized that wars — including civil wars — are among those constellations that promote genocide and other atrocities. This was the case in World War I in the Ottoman Empire as well as in World War II in Nazi-occupied Europe.

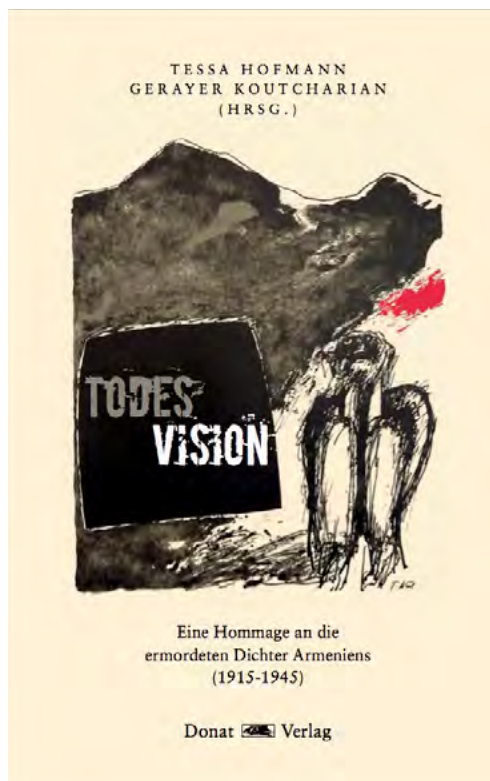
You have reissued classics of German-language documentary works on the extermination of Ottoman Armenians, especially the correspondence of the German Foreign Office published by Johannes Lepsius under the title “Germany and Armenia” in 1919 (reprint 1986), but also documentation of current violence against Armenians, including the one published in 1989 by the Armenische Kolonie zu Berlin e.V., the Armenian Apostolic Church Community of Berlin, and the Federation of Armenian Associations in the German-Speaking World, “Tanks against Perestroika: Documentation on the Conflict in and around Artsakh (Karabakh).” This work, published shortly before the beginning of the First Karabakh War (December 1991 - May 1994), helped many Germans to understand the struggle for freedom and the independence movement of the Armenian region of Artsakh, which was forcibly annexed to Azerbaijan by the Soviet regime in 1920.

Today we are one Karabakh war (autumn 2020) further, but still no closer to the realization of the right to self-determination in Artsakh. And it seems that in the shadow of the Ukraine War, which is occupying the attention of Europe almost completely, war and acts of violence in the South Caucasus are being once again “ignored.”

With your engagement, dear Helmut, you have actively and effectively supported the movement for genocide ‘recognition’ launched by the Armenian community in Germany as well as human rights organizations working here. We know of no other publishing house - even by comparison on the international stage - that has published as many books on the Armenian Genocide as yours; the following publications are currently available from Donat Verlag: <http://www.donat-verlag.de/buch-kategorie.php?id=13>

That the German Bundestag (Parliament) in June 2016 finally recognized the historical fact of the Ottoman genocide against about three million Christians before, after and especially during the First World War, is therefore also thanks to you. Some matters, unfortunately, take a long time. We, the *Working Group on Recognition*, submitted the first petition for parliamentary recognition to the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag as early as April 2000.

As a historian, you are familiar with the staying power of history, the slowness and obduracy of politicians, but also the power of perseverance. On your birthday, you can look back on many achievements that are due to your perseverance and principledness. But at the same time, unfortunately, we still face many unresolved issues. Nationalism and militarism are again threatening peaceful coexistence. Our wish for your birthday is therefore also to know that you will continue to be healthy and strong at our side, and to be able to leaf through the latest books of your publishing house, which, as always, you will print with attention and loving care.



Cover of one of the books published by Donat





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Tribute to Aurora Mardiganian by Arsinée Khanjian at Michigan Screening

TRIBUTE, from page 1

recent years. A genocide survivor from Chemeshgadzak, born Arshalouys Mardiganian, she underwent the horrors of the death march, seeing family members killed, being sold into slavery, and subjected to assault, before finding refuge in the Caucasus, meeting historic figures like General Antranig and then reaching New York City.

Since she was an attractive 17-year-old girl, local newspapers and writers seized upon her story as an image of idealized Armenian womanhood destroyed by the “terrible Turk” and published her ghostwritten autobiography, *Ravished Armenia*, in keeping with the pro-Armenian, anti-Turkish sentiment of the World War I period in the West.

Billed as the “Armenian Joan of Arc,” she was renamed “Aurora Mardiganian” by the publishers. By the end of 1918, she was brought to Los Angeles to star in the silent film version of her autobiography, named “Auction of Souls.” The film, widely shown at the time, is cited as the first in the screen medium to depict any genocide (not just the Armenian). But Mardiganian was emotionally drained from the experience of touring the country for the film’s promotion, and ended up alone in her later years, passing away at the age of 93 after she was forgotten and deserted by the Armenians and the film was lost.

Khanjian is one of many people in recent years inspired by Mardiganian’s story. In 2015 she was commissioned by the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin to write and direct a theatrical performance of “Auction of Souls,” which has been performed in Berlin on successive commemorations of the Armenian Genocide. A recorded film version of the stage presentation was also made. It was this film version which was presented in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on April 7, for the 2022 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Distinguished Lecture at University of Michigan’s Center for Armenian Studies (CAS).

Introduced by CAS Director, Prof. Melanie Tanielian, the presentation was followed by a “conversation” where film



Aurora Mardiganian, circa 1918

that what happened to Mardiganian was on one hand too horrible for her to relate (therefore the original book and film were full of euphemisms) and on the other hand, even a modern and more graphic film depiction would somehow be “not real.” In other words, it is impossible to replicate this story as it happened and therefore only an impression if it can be given in an artistic way.

As Khanjian read excerpts from Mardiganian’s biography in English, two young actors, male and female, acted out symbolic representations of the scenes of her life. At times, the roles were interestingly reversed; for example in a symbolic rape scene, the female actress “assaulted” the male actor. The actors at times spoke the dialogue related in Mardiganian’s memoir, except in German, rather than Armenian or Turkish. Hearing the “Turkish soldier’s” words shouted in harsh German interestingly brought to mind a connection between the Ottoman holocaust and that of the Nazis, although it was unclear if this was intentional.

Khanjian added a droning in the background of much of the performance, rather than music. This cold and unfeeling tone sounded like feedback or some kind of machine running in the background, but that

also was apparently the point. Khanjian mentioned in the question and answer period that she didn’t think it was appropriate to use music (certainly not the Tin Pan Alley style pop song *Armenian Maid* which was written in honor of Mardiganian), and the machine like background sound gave the whole

production a feeling of meaninglessness that was consonant with the subject matter. In all, the symbolically stylized reenactments of the scenes of Mardiganian’s life, the facial expressions, shouts, and utterances of the actors, were able to conjure horror and disgust perhaps better than a typically “Hollywood” style narrative film could have done.

Interspersed with the actors were clips from a 1980s interview of Mardiganian. Being able to hear her story in her own voice was gratifying, and interestingly it was statements from the woman herself that provided the most respite from the emotionally charged performance; a humorous story about meeting Charlie Chaplin worked as a kind of breather and at the same time showed us that Mardiganian didn’t lose her vivacious spirit despite what happened to her. Nevertheless, the “laughter” shown by Mardiganian in her interaction with Chaplin was immediate-



Aurora Mardiganian in 1988 interview

ly contrasted with the laughter of Turkish military in the context of their assault of Armenian women. In this part of the performance, as throughout, Khanjian used an overhead projector to write out keywords with definitions: “laughter,” “kissing,” “ravish” and so on, showing the irony of how human emotions, reactions, and acts associated with love were twisted during acts of genocide.

At the close of the performance, Khanjian and Baronian sat at the front of the theatre and engaged in a conversation about the project for the benefit of those present. Khanjian, who is married to noted filmmaker Atom Egoyan and has appeared in many of his films, noted a similarity between her approach and that of Egoyan in the making of “Ararat” (2002). Although many Armenians were disappointed that the latter film was not a narrative story about the Genocide, Khanjian similarly approached the Aurora Mardiganian story in a non-linear way, because as stated, to tell it in a “Hollywood” style would almost bowdlerize or romanticize an episode of such horrific human suffering. Khanjian’s effervescent personality and storytelling was ably counterbalanced by Baronian’s calm, scholarly

demeanor; with her deep knowledge of Khanjian’s as well as Egoyan’s work (she is one of the foremost scholars of Egoyan), Baronian was able to gently guide the discussion, making the end result quite fruitful and interesting for the audience assembled. Audience questions followed which sparked more discussion.

Khanjian’s work, with its subtitle “Performing Memory,” raised important questions about how the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide and the experiences of very real, though romanticized, people like Aurora Mardiganian can be remembered, how their stories can and should be told, and whether it is even possible to truly remember or tell these stories. Whatever one’s opinion about the merits of narrative storytelling and film as opposed to more avant-garde approaches, Khanjian, Baronian, and most of the rest of us would probably agree on one essential: we owe it to the survivors to at least make the effort, the attempt, to remember and tell their stories. In this respect, Khanjian’s work, which approached the subject matter with the utmost respect and with the desire to honor Mardiganian, cannot be seen as anything but successful.




Film Scholar Marie-Aude Baronian

scholar Marie-Aude Baronian (University of Amsterdam) acted as interlocutor, drawing out Khanjian’s thoughts on the work.

## Auction of Souls – Performing Memory

The film of Khanjian’s unique production was screened for a small audience at Ann Arbor’s State Theater. Rather than attempt to restore the original “Auction of Souls” film or recreate the scenes from Mardiganian’s life in a traditional narrative way, Khanjian opted to tell the story in a multifaceted manner that included theatre, music, sound effects, film, and other elements. Khanjian’s approach seemed to be that the story by itself, does not tell the whole story.

Concluding that Mardiganian’s story did not speak for itself, did not truly express the horrors she endured, Khanjian felt it was necessary to tell the story in a more artistic and imaginary way. To summarize Khanjian’s philosophy in a different way, it seems



Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter


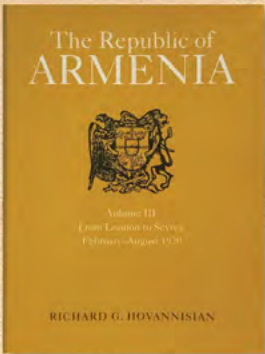
## ARMS FOR ARMENIA: THE MATTER OF AIRPLANES

The attempted purchase of surplus British Royal Air Force fighter planes for the First Republic of Armenia by the Constitutional Ramgavar Party of Egypt



Keynote speaker

## DR. RICHARD G. HOVANNISIAN

Past Holder of the  
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TCA Beshgeturian Center  
1901 N. Allen Avenue  
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ARTS & CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



## Traditional Armenian Chorag

from *TheArmenianKitchen.com*

Robyn Kalajian from TheArmenianKitchen.com suggests this traditional Lenten or Easter recipe: Armenian Chorag. It contains mahlab (or mahlepi), an aromatic spice derived from the ground kernel of the St. Lucie cherry. Prized across Greece, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, mahlab is often incorporated into breads and pastries.

“Mahlab makes a great addition to cakes, cookies, pies, brownies, muffins, cheese, and fruit salad, and is excellent in chocolate preparations. Treat mahlab like nutmeg. You don’t need too much for it to make an effect, but it can make all the difference between an ordinary dessert and something alluring. Many spiced desserts would benefit from a judicious application of the stuff, but using too much can cause bitterness. Like saffron and other more precious spices, mahlab is rather expensive. Most recipes call for a small amount, allowing a container to last for multiple bakes,” adds Robyn.

Mahlab, whole seed or powdered, is sold in specialty food shops (such as <<https://foodsofnations.com/product/mahlab-mehleb-or-mahlepi-whole/>> Kalustyan’s and <<https://sahadis.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=mahlab>> Sahadi’s) and via online retailers like <<https://snukfoods.com/products/whole-mahlab?variant=14691811131504&currency=USD>> Snuk Foods, both pre-ground and as whole kernels. Of course, most chefs and cookbooks recommend buying the kernels whole and grinding them at home in order to capture the spice’s full aroma.



It appears in Syrian string cheese—the plump, braided ropes of stretchy white cheese (similar to mozzarella) that come speckled with black nigella seeds. Not all recipes for the cheese, which is still commonly made at home, include the powdered kernel. But those that do benefit tremendously from its floral presence.

In Greek cuisine, mahlep is sometimes added to different types of holiday tsoureki breads, including Christmas bread, the New Year’s vasilopita and the braided Easter bread

called cheoreg (or choreg) in <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian\\_cuisine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_cuisine)> Armenian and paskalya çöreği in <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish\\_cuisine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_cuisine)> Turkish. In <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>> Turkey, it is used in <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Po%C4%9Fa%C3%A7a>> poğaça scones and other pastries. In the Arabic Middle East, it is used in <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27amoul>> ma’amoul scones. In <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt>> Egypt, powdered mahlab is made into a paste with honey, sesame seeds and nuts,

eaten as a <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dessert>> dessert or a snack with bread. In England, it is used in shortbiscuits, and in sugar syrups to go over fruit salad or to flavor whipped cream in the same way as you would use vanilla. (<<https://ottolenghi.co.uk/shop/hampers-and-gifts/spices>>).

Liliana Myers, who is the pastry chef at Safta, Alon Shaya’s modern Israeli restaurant in Denver, incorporates mahlab powder into Safta’s date-filled ma’amoul shortbread pastries. She also uses it in less traditional ways: in a flourless almond cake served on Passover and in an Ottolenghi-inspired Persian love cake offered for Valentine’s Day.

“Basically whenever a recipe calls for almond extract, I use mahlab,” she says. <<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/food/articles/mahlab-fragrant-addition>>).

### Armenian Chorag Courtesy of Robyn Kalajian

“Chorag, the traditional Armenian braided yeast roll, can be sweet or savory. Some cooks may be a bit intimidated by the intricate shape but check our how-to-make video below to see how easy it is to do,” says Robyn. This recipe was handed down to Robyn Dabbakian-Kalajian’s family from a dear family friend, the late Anne Marootian. “Unlike many chorag recipes which tend to be sweet, this one is savory with the addition of freshly ground mahlab, anise seed, fennel seed, and ginger. It might sound like an unusual mix of flavors, but the result is quite delicious,” she adds.

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 lb. unsalted butter
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 large egg
- 1 package dry active yeast
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon EACH of ground mahlab, fennel seed, anise seed (freshly ground is preferred.)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 2 tablespoons active baking powder (See NOTE below regarding baking powder.)
- 5 to 5 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 or 2 large eggs (beaten) for egg wash
- Toasted sesame seeds (optional) for garnish

#### PREPARATION:

Melt butter in a saucepan. Add milk and heat to a gentle simmer (do NOT boil). Cool.

Beat egg and add to cooled milk.

In a small bowl, dissolve yeast in 1/4 cup warm water (about 105-110° F). You can check the temperature with a food thermometer, or by putting a drop on your wrist. If it feels comfortable to your wrist, the temperature is good to go. Set aside.

Mix the sugar, salt, spices, and baking powder together. Set aside.

Place 5 cups of the flour into a large mixing bowl. Combine the blended spice mixture into the flour. Add the milk-egg mixture to the dry ingredients. Stir in the dissolved yeast and mix well.

Place dough on a lightly floured work surface and knead dough until it is smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. (This can also be done in an electric stand mixer using a dough hook, but only mix for about 2 minutes.) If the dough seems a bit sticky, add some of the extra 1/2 cup flour that wasn’t used earlier.

Place dough in a large, clean bowl, cover with plastic wrap, then cover that with a towel. Allow 2 hours for the dough to rise.

Break off about a golf ball-size piece of dough (roughly 2 ounces for each piece). Roll it into a long, thin rope, about 15 inches in length. Break off about one-third (5 inches) of the dough. Shape the longer piece of dough into a horse-shoe or “U” shape. Place the shorter piece of dough in the center of the “U,” and begin braiding the 3 strips of dough.

Place braided dough on an ungreased baking sheet. Continue to shape dough until tray is full. (Don’t place chorags too close to each other.

Give them room to expand while they bake.)

Cover unbaked chorags with plastic wrap and let the shaped dough rise on the tray for 1 more hour before baking. Remove plastic wrap and brush tops with the egg wash. Sprinkle chorag tops with toasted sesame seeds, if desired.

Bake at 375°F. Start by placing 1 tray on the bottom oven rack until the bottoms of the chorags are golden (about 15 minutes). Then transfer the tray to the top rack until the top of the chorag is golden (about another 5 minutes). Cool chorags completely on wire racks. Continue this procedure until all dough is shaped and baked.

Store completely cooled chorag in a container with a tight-fitting lid. If you plan to freeze them, layer chorags in a plastic storage container with parchment paper or plastic wrap placed between the layers to prevent them from sticking to each other. Alternately, chorags may be frozen in freezer bags. Chorags may be thawed in the microwave by simply wrapping each chorag in a slightly dampened paper towel, and microwaving for about 20-30 seconds on low power, or until defrosted. Serve them anytime with coffee, tea, Armenian string cheese or an assortment of cheeses and fruit.

NOTE: Before you begin, test the baking powder to make sure it is “active.” To do this, simply sprinkle some baking powder into a small amount of tap water. If it is active, the baking powder will fizz and foam.

For this recipe and how-to-make video, go to: <<https://thearmeniankitchen.com/savory-or-sweet-its-still-chorag/>>





ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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

CONNECTICUT

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

MASSACHUSETTS

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

**MAY 7** — In Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Celebrate Public Art! Saturday, 1 p.m., World Labyrinth Day: Walk As One in Peace and Harmony. Joining people in cities and towns in countries worldwide followed by reception to celebrate the abstract sculpture and all its configurations. Welcome: Ted Touloukian, AIA, Principal, Touloukian Touloukian Inc. Trustee, Boston Society of Architects Foundation. Greetings: Karin Goodfellow, Director of Public Art, City of Boston. Reception is hosted by Starbucks. RSVP appreciated [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**MAY 7** — Hye Pointe Church’s Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) is sponsoring a Mother’s Day Armenian Concert. Doors open 6.30 p.m., Concert at 7 p.m. Featuring singer Margar Yeghiazaryan, duduk and clarinet player Mher Mnatsakanyan, dhol and percussion player Markos Shahbazyan and keyboardist Gegham Margaryan. Tickets adults \$60, 18 and under \$40. For tickets go to [www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hyepointearmenianchurch.org) or contact Sarah Tavitian at 978-652-8448, [sarahtavitian@yahoo.com](mailto:sarahtavitian@yahoo.com)

**SEPTEMBER 21** — Gala Benefit Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation’s Immigrants. InterContinental Hotel, Boston.6pm 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)

**MAY 18** — Chris Bohjalian and Stephen Kurkjian in Conversation at the Armenian Museum of America. Chris Bohjalian will be in conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian (author of *Master Thieves*) at the Armenian Museum of America discussing *The Lioness* and what words and reading and books can mean to the soul. This is a free event and registration is not required. Wednesday, 7 p.m. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main St., Watertown.

**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/>

**MAY 20-21** — Armenian Memorial Church Fair, Friday 5-8 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Delicious Armenian chicken, losh and beef kebab dinners served under the tent or take-out, Armenian baked delicacies. Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Avenue, Watertown. For information call 617-923-0498. Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown.

**JUNE 8** — Armenian Night at the Pops will feature violinist Diana Adamyan as the featured soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart conducting. Wednesday, 8 p.m. Symphony Hall, Boston. Presented by the Friends of Armenian Culture Society. Details to follow.

NEW YORK

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

RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 24** — The Philadelphia Armenian Intercommunal Committee presents a commemorative program. Dr. Vartan Matiossian shall discuss, “The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide.” Students from the Armenian Sisters Academy will also participate in the program. The event will be held at St. Gregory’s Armenian Church, 8701 Ridge Ave, Philadelphia, on Sunday, 3 p.m. A reception shall take place after the program. All are welcome.

RHODE ISLAND

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

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

Armenian Rock Band Lav Eli Launches East Coast Tour

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The popular Armenian rock band Lav Eli this week announced a concert tour of select U.S. East Coast cities this spring. The tour will kick off in Richmond, VA on April 27, followed by performances in Washington, DC on April 28, New York, NY on April 29, Boston, MA on April 30, and conclude in Portland, ME on May 1. Lav Eli was formed in 1996 by Vanadzor, Armenia natives Mher Manukyan and Gor Mkhitarian. Previously from the band SNACK, they picked up two members from the group ALQ in David Grigoryan and Vahe Terteryan and formed their classic lineup for a demo recording in 1997 entitled “The First Lav Album.” This limited edition cassette of two hundred units was printed in Armenia and had 21 songs — ten in English and eleven in Armenian. It became a local underground classic in the hands of kids and adults alike who craved an original Western rock sound that was homegrown and Armenian.

In 2020, Lav Eli updated its lineup, now consisting of Mher Manukyan (guitar/vocals), Gor Mkhitarian (guitar/vocals), Gor Tadevosyan (guitar/backup vocals), Tigran Voskanyan (bass), Shogher Manukyan (cello), and Vardan Paremuzyan (drums) of The Bambir. Lav Eli’s website – <https://lavelimusic.com/> – features videos, photos, and more



Lav Eli in concert

from the band, and their music is available on all major streaming services, including [Amazon Music](#), [Apple Music](#), and [Spotify](#). For this tour, Mkhitarian, who resides in North Caroli-

na, will be joined by his bandmate Mher Manukyan, who will be traveling from Armenia. LA-based accordionist Ara Dabandjian, who has performed with Mkhitarian on his solo projects as well as with Lav Eli, will appear on this tour as a special guest. Further details on and tickets to the upcoming shows can be found at <https://lavelimusic.com/shows>. The Armenian Cultural Association of Maine (ACAME), which is a presenter of Lav Eli’s concert slated for Portland, will host a virtual conversation with Mher Manukyan and Gor Mkhitarian on Saturday, April 16, at 9 a.m. ACAME board member Raffi DerSimonian, who is also a Portland-based musician and recording artist, will be moderating the conversation. This free program will provide music lovers of all backgrounds and cultures an opportunity to get to know the music of Lav Eli and Manukyan and Mkhitarian as professional musicians, Armenian natives, and an inspiration to thousands of music lovers across the world. Those interested in attending the April 16th virtual conversation are invited to register on the ACAME website. “Twenty-five years after their first appearance, Lav Eli continues to carry on a rich Armenian folk rock musical legacy to the delight of three generations of listeners,” remarked founder of Pomegranate Music, Raffi Meneshian.



## COMMENTARY

# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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## EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

## MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

## ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

## SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

## STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

## CONTRIBUTORS

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

## REGIONAL

### CORRESPONDENTS

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

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

## VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA  
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Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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# EDITORIAL

## What Was Achieved and Not Achieved at Brussels Summit



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

There is a law of physics which also applies to politics: for every action, there is a corresponding reaction.

The 44-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended in a ceasefire brokered by Russia on November 9, 2020. At that time, Moscow haphazardly drafted a declaration to be signed by the three parties, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. The agreement favored Azerbaijan, which recaptured most of Karabakh, in addition to the Azerbaijani lands the Armenians had captured and held as insurance in the 1990s war, and also Russia, which regained a foothold in Azerbaijan, through the introduction of 2,000 Russian peacekeeping forces.

But what was achieved globally in addition to the local arrangements was Russia's control of the situation, sidelining the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and the West, which expressed a preference for international peacekeepers, specifically from the Scandinavian countries.

Now that Russia has been mired in the war in Ukraine, the opportunity for a reaction from the West has arrived. Indeed, the European Union has taken the lead to achieve peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, this time, pushing Russia to the sidelines.

Indeed, on April 6-7, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev met in Brussels under the auspices of the European Council and its president, Charles Michel. The choice of the location itself — Brussels, the capital of the European Union and home of the NATO headquarters — was symbolic and enough to cause concern for the Kremlin.

Although Michel assessed the meeting as a success with positive signs, that meeting signifies that Armenia is caught in a geostrategic trap.

Following the summit, the three sides signaled a positive movement toward a peace agreement for the Caucasus, although none of the statements touched upon the core issue of Karabakh, which seems worrisome.

Ever since the November 9, 2020 declaration, President Aliyev has been claiming that there is no longer a Karabakh issue left, since he solved the problem by military force. For him, there is not even a geographic area that should be known as Nagorno Karabakh and thus he suggests that the OSCE Minsk Group has no role to play anymore.

It seems that Pashinyan and Michel have avoided making any reference to Karabakh, so as not to offend Aliyev and entice him to come to the negotiation table, rather than the battlefield again.

Before taking up the actual agenda of peace negotiations, we have to outline the broader political implications of the move. Thus, Russia, certainly worried, reacted angrily. The occasion was the visit to Moscow by Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. We have also to be mindful that before Mr. Pashinyan's trip to Brussels, President Vladimir Putin had called the two leaders separately to discuss the upcoming talks. But as an afterthought, he called Prime Minister Pashinyan again, most probably to remind him of the red lines he should not cross.

Armenia's foreign minister was visiting Moscow on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. But the visit entailed more serious topics both privately and publicly. During a joint press conference of the two foreign minister, Mr. Sergei Lavrov used the occasion to score a few points by stating: "We will continue, from the position of key ally of Armenia, to help and strengthen your defense capabilities, to ensure the protection of the border, and of course, as the main trade and economic

partner, and as the main foreign investor, we will continue to look for the new prospects that will ensure the sustainability of our trade, and create new production facilities and jobs."

This statement was meant to assure his counterpart that Armenia's expectations will be met. Mirzoyan certainly had complained about the poor performance of the Russian peacekeeping force in Karabakh, which had ceded a strategic elevation in Parukh (Karabakh) under its control to the Azerbaijani forces, during which time three Armenian soldiers were killed and a dozen wounded. The incident was characterized as a "minor border incident," which was being investigated for an entire month.

Referring to the resentment of the Armenian side, Mr. Lavrov said, "For us, these circumstances are not completely clear. I would not get ahead of myself and make a final judgement. We are convinced that our Armenian friends fully trust the Russian peacekeepers."

Unfortunately, the Russian peacekeepers have been delinquent in the performance of their duties on many occasions, by trying to placate the Azerbaijani side whenever it is harassing Armenians going about their lives — for example, while cultivating their lands.

Such dereliction of duty occurred when Azerbaijan blew up the gas line to Karabakh, leaving the Armenians living in the enclave to freeze for two weeks in inclement weather. While their performance has been lackluster at best, Russia has always been fishing for compliments from Armenians to say how wonderful the Russian soldiers have been performing their tasks and that Armenia is forever grateful.

The climax of the conference came when Mr. Lavrov referred to the role of the OSCE in settling the Karabakh issue: "Our French and American partners [the so-called partners in this group] in a Russophobic frenzy and in an effort to cancel everything related to the Russian Federation, said that they would not communicate with us in that format. This is their right. If they are ready to sacrifice their interests in the settlement of Karabakh and in Transcaucasia as a whole, this is their choice."

When Mr. Lavrov cast in doubt the future of OSCE, Mirzoyan reacted by saying that international community believes that the Minsk Group has an important role to play in bringing peace to Karabakh. This was an unusual rebuke, given that the Armenian government representatives never publicly react to the statements of the Russian side, no matter how provocative they might be.

In an indirect response to Mr. Lavrov's remarks regarding the demise of the OSCE Minsk Group, the French co-chair of the group, Brice Roquefeuil, showed up in Yerevan this week to signal that the group is still alive and well and in pursuit of its mission in Karabakh. The French and Armenian sides added, however, that the visit had been planned in advance and were not a reaction to Mr. Lavrov's statement.

Thus, the Kremlin believes that the West is stealing the show in the Caucasus from the Russians and Armenia is colluding with the Western powers.

There is a tug of war between the two camps and Armenia is caught between them. Hopefully, Armenia's nascent diplomacy can cope with this complex situation and come out unscathed.

Although Pashinyan and Aliyev have placed separate calls to President Putin, informing him about the talk, Armenia's prime minister is expected to visit the Kremlin on April 19, to hold further talks with the Russian leader, who certainly will reprimand his guests for steering Armenia toward the West.

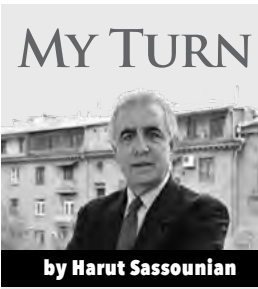
As the East-West confrontation continues, particularly  
*continued on next page*







COMMENTARY



# MY TURN

## Turkey Evades Western Sanctions By Welcoming Russian Oligarchs

The dispute continues between those who want to reward Turkey and those who want to condemn it, because of its contradictory positions on the Russia-Ukraine war.

The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) published on April 7 a detailed article by Jared Malsin and Elvan Kivilcim, titled: “Superyachts, Seaside Apartments and Suitcases Full of Cash: Russians Pour Money Into Turkey.”

As a result of the sanctions imposed by the West on Russian banks and businesses, tens of thousands of Russians have fled to Turkey with suitcases full of money, superyachts, private jets and other assets. “Many left carrying hundreds or thousands of dollars in cash because of capital controls that the Russian government imposed,” reported the WSJ. The Russians are buying houses and other properties in Turkey taking advantage of the law that allows foreigners to become Turkish citizens if they invest at least \$250,000. Many Russians are able to circumvent Western sanctions by transferring their money from Russian to Turkish banks and converting their Rubles to Turkish Liras or other currencies. All NATO member countries, with the exception Turkey, have imposed strict sanctions on Russia, preventing its citizens from wiring their money out of the country, blocking Russian Airlines from flying to Western countries, and confiscating the oligarchs’ superyachts and private jets. Refusing to impose sanctions on Russia, Turkey is trying to revive its bankrupt economy by generating desperately-needed funds.

Fleeing Russians are able to avoid Western sanctions and capital controls imposed by Russia on its citizens through “Russian cash transfer companies that operate in Turkey, cryptocurrencies and simply carrying thousands of dollars in cash through airports,” according to the WSJ. The Turkish government has come up with the lame excuse that it will allow the transfer of Russian funds to Turkey as long as “the money is legal.” Such scrutiny, if it ever existed, very quickly disappeared, ignoring the requirement that foreigners obtain a residency permit before being allowed to open a bank account. According to the WSJ, “at a single branch of one state-owned bank in Istanbul, Russians have opened more than 600 accounts in recent weeks.”

The WSJ reported that “Turkey’s central bank took in about \$3 billion in just two days in mid-March.... That money was likely largely composed of deposits from Russians, said Omer Gencal, an economist and former executive at HSBC Turkey and other major Turkish banks.”

Gül Gül, the chief executive of Istanbul real-estate company Golden Sign, told the WSJ: “the newly arrived Russians are buying as many as four apartments at a time, usually with cash, in order to invest the \$250,000 required for citizenship. ‘Currently, out of 10 flats [apartments] we sell, six or seven are bought by Russians, said Ms. Gül. They are mostly businesspeople, wealthy

ones, some of them oligarchs.” Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich moved two of his superyachts to Turkish ports in recent weeks. Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev docked his 74-meter-long (249 ft.) vessel called Universe in Istanbul last week, according to the WSJ.

Furthermore, the WSJ reported that the “search-engine company Yandex, classified-ad site Avito, commercial bank Tinkoff and software firm DataArt collectively had more than 1,000 workers fly to Turkey. About 900 Yandex workers flew to Turkey shortly after the beginning of the war, though around 300 of them have since left.”

Visa and Mastercard’s decisions to shut down operations in Russia have prompted Russians to use “the Russian Mir payment system, which works at certain locations in Turkey. ‘We accept Mir’ signs have begun cropping up in grocery stores around Istanbul,” the WSJ wrote.

“Middle-class Russians have mostly brought a few thousand dollars at a time, either in cash or by using Russian wire-transfer companies that continue to operate in Turkey. One popular service is KoronaPay, which allows people to wire money out of Russia and withdraw money in Turkey and a range of other countries. The company allows transfers worth more than 15,000 euros, equivalent to \$16,400, as long as customers verify their source of income, according to the company’s website,” reported the WSJ. “Volkan Celikyurek, a money changer in Istanbul’s Laleli neighborhood, which is frequented by Russian traders and one of the only areas where exchange offices buy and sell Rubles,” told the WSJ, “I bought at most 100,000 Rubles at a time. But there are those who bought millions.”

In the meantime, Turkey’s economy is benefiting from the flow of Russian money, while its hypocritical condemnation of Russia is winning dividends from Western countries. The UK government just lifted the restrictions it had imposed on exporting weapons to Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced on April 7 that Turkey is interested in “cooperating with the UK in important defense projects, including warplanes, warships and aircraft carriers.” Cavusoglu also announced that Turkey is discussing with Canada the resumption of the purchase of camera systems for the Turkish Bayraktar armed drones, suspended after the 2020 Artsakh war.

Amazingly, the Biden Administration, instead of punishing Turkey for its sanction-busting schemes, wants to reward it by indicating that selling Turkey F-16 fighters is in the best interest of the United States and NATO. Nevertheless, Congress is opposed to the sale. Over 50 Members of Congress signed a letter in February urging the Biden Administration to reject the Turkish request to buy 40 F-16 jets and upgrade 80 other jets already in Turkey’s possession. The Congressmen cited Turkey’s purchase of the Russian S-400 missile systems and the wholesale violation of human rights as the reasons for opposing the sale. Selling F-16 jets to Turkey would “more likely lead to further death and destruction in the region at the hands of Erdogan’s military,” the lawmakers wrote.

It remains to be seen how long Turkey can play its deceptive game on both sides of the fence in the Russia-Ukraine war.

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fueled by the war in Ukraine, the Armenia-Azerbaijan talks have their own life.

Pashinyan and Aliyev have agreed on an agenda which they have already begun to implement. They have agreed to charge their respective foreign ministers to work together to draft a peace plan. Aliyev has confided that Armenia has agreed to his five-point plan and that the parties will soon begin the delimitation and demarcation process, which may eliminate border conflicts in the future. Foreign Ministers Mirzoyan and Jeyhun Bayramov have talked to each other to jump-start the talks.

Although there is no reference to the Karabakh issue by any other party, upon his return to Armenia, Pashinyan gave a report wherein he underlined that Karabakh is a priority for Armenia and that the issue will be included on the agenda of the peace process.

Mr. Michel has reassured the public that “all outstanding issues will be on the agenda.” When there is no mention of the core question, there should be a cause for concern for the Armenian side, especially in light of Mr. Aliyev’s enthusiasm to engage immediately in the peace talks, before Armenia can have a chance to rebuild its armed forces and muster some political clout.

While the negotiations begin to take shape, the parliamentary opposition held an impressive rally, protesting the potential for a second “capitulation.” Barring derogatory remarks, the protest may strengthen Pashinyan’s hand at the negotiation table.

Even if the Karabakh issue is discussed, it is anyone’s guess as to in what shape it will emerge. Some pessimists already have been advising the evacuation of the Armenian population from the enclave. Others are preparing a referendum to

join the Russian Federation as South Ossetia is in the process of doing. Pashinyan’s and Mirzoyan’s statements that Karabakh does not represent a territorial issue but rather a “rights” one, indicates that the current administration has given up hope to see Karabakh in any other position than within Azerbaijan, with some cosmetic “rights,” which Azerbaijan can agree to and once again trample and resort to ethnic cleansing. The military government in Myanmar, for example, is carrying out an ethnic cleansing policy against its Rohingya minority, which international authorities ignore, except for some pundits in the press.

Karabakh has a good chance to implement a policy of “remedial cessation,” because of Azerbaijan’s often repeated state policy of hatred and also its genocidal tendencies.

There is also another legal course which is worth exploring. Azerbaijan has been able to convince the world community that Karabakh is an integral part of its territory. But throughout the Soviet period, Karabakh had the special status of an “autonomous oblast” or region, for a reason that citizens living in the enclave had a different and distinct identity than that of Azerbaijan. It even had its separate legislative body for self-rule. What Azerbaijan is doing is unraveling a system put in place by the Soviet constitution and international law and the international community is colluding with the Azerbaijani government to dismantle this system and breach international laws. Similarly, Nakhichevan had the status of an autonomous republic, which could not be disbanded and made a part of Azerbaijan’s own territory, which has a different legal status.

The Armenian government, to its credit, has begun to engage in active diplomacy. Hopefully, that diplomacy will help save Karabakh, and above all, bring peace to Armenia.

## Why It Matters Whether We Describe Putin’s Appalling Crimes Against Humanity as ‘Genocide’

By Robert Zaresky

The horrors produced by Russian soldiers in Bucha and Borodyanka have spurred countless commentaries on two concepts: crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide. Commentators rightly note that these notions differ not on the heinous nature of certain acts, but on how they should be defined. But often missing from these discussions is the historical context, which, in crucial respects, shaped both concepts — a context as ironic as it is tragic.

Think of it as two tales of one city. The western Ukrainian city of Lviv has, for now, been spared Russia’s indiscriminate air and artillery strikes. But the city has not been spared history, having known nearly as many rulers — and as many names, from the German Lemberg and Polish Lvov to Ukrainian Lviv — as the many nationalities it harbored.

Founded in the mid-17th century, Jan Kazimierz University numbered among the city’s cultural jewels. Shortly after World War I, when Lemberg became Lvov upon the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of an independent Poland, the university’s famed law school enrolled two young men, Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin. Remarkably, Lauterpacht and Lemkin would become two of the century’s most influential theorists in international law.

No less remarkably, the only biography of Lauterpacht is written by his son Elihu Lauterpacht, a distinguished British jurist. Lemkin has gotten more attention, though only of late, yet his biographers all heavily depend on his autobiography, *Totally Unofficial*. Nevertheless, their lives reveal striking affinities.

Both were unobservant Jews, yet keenly observant of the fates of religious and ethnic minorities in the redrawn map of Europe; fluent in several languages, both sought to frame the rights that all peoples, regardless of their language, shared as human beings; deeply



# Why It Matters Whether We Describe Putin’s Appalling Crimes Against Humanity as ‘Genocide’

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cosmopolitan individuals, both were always held by the gravitational pull of their provincial pasts. And as for those pasts, both were punctuated by pogroms in both the countryside and cities.

Soon after Lemkin arrived at the university in 1921 — Lauterpacht had left two years earlier — a former Turkish minister, Mehmed Talaat, was shot dead on a street in Berlin. His assassin, Soghomon Tehlirian, was avenging his family, as well as more than one million fellow Armenians, who had been murdered by the Turkish government during the war. The Allies, who had sentenced Talaat to death in absentia, sought Talaat’s extradition, but Germany refused the requests. As for Tehlirian, he had been arrested by German authorities and awaited trial for murder.

Lemkin found the paradoxical nature of these crimes and punishments as both morally and legally troubling. In an exchange with one of his law professors, he asked why the Armenians could not try Talaat for the massacre.

“Consider the case of a farmer who owns a flock of chickens,” the professor replied. “He kills them and this is his business. If

you interfere, you are trespassing.” Blurting that the victims were not chickens, Lemkin asked, “It is a crime for Tehlirian to kill a man, but it is not a crime for his oppressor to kill more than a million men?”

Lemkin’s effort to answer that question eventually led to his coining of a term for a crime, which, until then, did not have an adequate name. The term had to both capture our attention and convince us that something new and awful had exploded into our world, something that entailed “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.”

To give a name to the crime, this man of many languages fused the Greek derivative geno, meaning “race” or “tribe,” to cide, the Latin derivative for “kill. This unexpected joining of these words gave the world the word for the unholy of acts: genocide. Lemkin settled on this word while the Nazis were launching the Final Solution. This was of more than academic interest to Lemkin. Though he had, by then, made his way to the United States, the lives of nearly his entire family, as with Lauterpacht’s, were extinguished

in what the historian Timothy Snyder has memorably described as the “bloodlands.”

Though Lemkin did not mean for the term genocide to be exclusively used to categorize the Nazi project to eliminate Jews from the world, it became forever intertwined with this effort. This was, as historians like Samantha Power point out, a tragic confusion. Lemkin’s aim was to prevent such atrocities from ever reaching the point where a state has the time and means to build state of the art death factories. And yet, as Power writes, the link between genocide and Auschwitz “would cause endless confusion for policymakers and ordinary people,” who assume genocide happens only when death factories are already belching the ashes of dead men, women and children towards the heavens.

This is where the perspectives of Lemkin and Lauterpacht diverge. The latter, who had settled in Great Britain in the early 1920s and would assist at the Nuremberg trials, focused on the individual victim of such crimes. Yet Lemkin, who also attended the trials (but in a vaguely defined capacity), instead insisted on the primacy of the group. In his recent book “East West

Street,” the renowned international lawyer and author Philippe Sands considers the clash between these two concepts.

He writes that, whereas Lauterpacht held that people are “individual human beings and should be protected as individual human beings,” Lemkin argued that this ignores what, in fact, happened to the Armenians or Jews. When genocide occurs, people are killed not as individuals, but because they belong to a particular group. For Lauterpacht, the danger in Lemkin’s approach is that, in Sands’ phrase, it would “create the very conditions that Lemkin was trying to protect us from — namely, it would pit one group against another.”

Hence, Lauterpacht’s emphasis on “crimes against humanity,” which concerns crimes committed against individuals. Usually many, many individuals. And yet, as Sands acknowledges, Lemkin was also right: Armenians in Turkey and Jews in Europe, Tutsis in Rwanda and Muslims in Bosnia were killed en masse because, well, they were seen as nothing more than a mass. It’s as if the individual effectively dissolves in the alembic of the group — a group that another and dominant group does not wish to share the world with.

For Sands, part of whose family also hailed from Lviv, the tension between these two perspectives seems inevitable. Lauterpacht was right, in his embrace of individual rights, to reject tribalism, but Lemkin was also right, in his concept of genocide, to insist that murderous tribalism not only existed, but would flourish if the law ignored it.

This tension is more than inevitable; it is tragic. But as we try to make sense of events now unfolding in Ukraine, it also makes sense to try and hold on to both concepts. Several things are already clear, most immediately that appalling crimes have been committed by Russian soldiers and that these crimes have not troubled Vladimir Putin. It is less clear — and this is crucial — that he has either ordered or encouraged these acts with the intent of “annihilating an entire people.”

This becomes yet more problematic given Putin’s attitude towards the legitimacy of an independent Ukraine. Such a people, he insists, does not exist. Instead, it is a fiction wrought by Soviet rulers and weaponized by those he dismisses as “Nazis” who are now seeking to carve out this slice of Russian land from the underbelly of Mother Russia.

For this reason, his “special military operation” more closely resembles a crime against humanity than a genocide. The former, according to the International Criminal Court, applies to “crimes such as murder, extermination, rape, persecution and all other inhumane acts of a similar character (willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health), committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.”

To define Putin’s action as a crime against humanity, and not a genocide, does not diminish its appalling nature. Moreover, as George Orwell would have reminded us, at a time when Putin and his apologists use language to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, getting words right becomes more vital than ever.

(A professor at the University of Houston, Zaretsky is also a culture columnist at the Forward. His new book, *Victories Never Last: Caregiving and Reading in a Time of Plague* will be published in April by University of Chicago Press. This commentary originally appeared in the publication *The Forward* on April 7.)

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