Karabakh Official Laments ‘Lack of Support’ by Armenia

By Arak Khulian

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Armenia has not only stopped being the guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh’s security but is also not providing the Armenian-populated territory with adequate diplomatic support, a senior official in Stepanakert complained on Monday, April 4.

Hayk Khamanyan, the Karabakh minister for local government and public infrastructures, said this is what is fueling calls by some Karabakh Armenians for a referendum on becoming part of Russia.

“The Republic of Armenia used to be the guarantor of our security, and in essence it cannot perform that function anymore," Khamanyan told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service in an interview. “The Russian peacekeeping contingent does not have a mandate to ensure such protection. So people are just trying to raise security issues. They want to be protected.”

“Defense is not just about weapons and ammunition,” he said. “It’s a whole set of measures. Diplomacy, diplomatic service is an important part of that, and it is quite rare.”

“I plan to meet on April 6 in Brussels with the European Council President Charles Michel and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev,” Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told a cabinet meeting on Thursday, March 31. He added that he hoped “to agree on all the questions related to the start of peace talks” with Baku.

“Armenia once again declares that it is ready to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan and to start negotiations without delay,” Pashinyan said.

The Kremlin reported that they continued “the exchange of opinions on maintaining stability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.” It said they both stressed the need for “strict observance” of Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Moscow during and after the 2020 war over Karabakh.

A statement on the phone call issued by the Armenian government said the two men talked about “ongoing steps to ensure security and stability in Nagorno-Karabakh” and the “tense situation” there resulting from last week’s Azerbaijani incursion into the disputed territory.

Armenia, Azerbaijan Leaders Hold Talks Amid Renewed Tensions

YELEVA (RFE/RL) — Leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan were scheduled to meet on April 6 for European Union-mediated talks in Brussels, amid renewed tensions over Karabakh.

“DEFENSE IS NOT JUST ABOUT WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. IT’S A WHOLE SET OF MEASURES. DIPLOMACY, DIPLOMATIC SERVICE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THAT, AND IT IS QUITE DIRE STRAITS THESE DAYS. I’M TALKING ABOUT ARARMINA.”

— HAYK KHANUMYAN KARABAKH MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES

is an important part of that, and it is quite dire straits these days. I’m talking about Armenia.

“Often times not only does it not carry out tasks but also does not receive tasks. The bodies formulating Armenia’s support need to be protected.”

“Armenia once again declares that it is ready to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan and to start negotiations without delay.”

— Nikol Pashinyan

“Armenia and Azerbaijan will also address issues related to prospects for a peace agreement between them,” it added.

Pashinyan also spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, April 1, regarding the conflict zone.

“The Moscow and Baku security councils discussed the need for de-escalating the conflict zone,” Putin said in a statement on Monday.

On Monday, April 4, Armenia’s security council accused Azerbaijan of “preparing the ground for fresh provocations and an offensive, including in the disputed territory.”

Russia accused Azerbaijan of violating the ceasefire regime after Azerbaijani forces seized a village in eastern Karabakh and surrounding territory on March 24. They reportedly withdrew from the village on Monday but continue to occupy nearby hills.

Putin discussed the situation in that area with Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in separate phone calls reported on Monday. Pashinyan told him that the Azerbaijani side may be planning to agree on all the questions related to the start of peace talks” with Baku.

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Akçam Appointed to UCLA Armenian Genocide Research Program within Promise Armenian Institute

By Aram Arku

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — After a period of expansion, Armenian studies in the United States appeared to have entered a slump or slow period. This seems to be changing again, with the establishment of new academic centers, chairs and programs, especially in California. At the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the Promise Armenian Institute is playing a supportive role in this movement.

Most recently, it announced the creation of the Armenian Genocide Research Program as one of its component parts, with Taner Akçam appointed as its inaugural director.

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Georgian Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN

Ani Hovannisian

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Karabakh Authorities Say Azerbaijan Is Destroying Armenian Cultural Heritage in Parukh, Karaglukh

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijan is destroying the Armenian cultural heritage in Parukh and Karaglukh and resorting to open falsifications, Artsakh’s Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport said in a statement this week.

In the statement, the government says, “On March 24, 2022, as a result of Azerbaijani aggression, the area around the village of Parukh in the Askeran region of the Artsakh Republic, the former settlement of Karaglukh and the homonymous height, were occupied by the enemy, and the Azerbaijani Armed Forces immediately proceeded to the well-known script of the destruction of the Armenian historical and cultural heritage in the occupied territory. ”

“Apart from its strategic importance, the area is also important for its unique historical-cultural and historical-natural environment. According to the government list of immovable monuments of culture and history, about 20 monuments are officially registered in the above-mentioned territories, including 2 churches (one of them is the 13th-century Holy Mother of God church), the famous Shik Sarkar-Karaglukh fortress, cultural monuments of archeological value, cemeteries, khachkars, tombstones. The Shikark cove is also located in here, where a research was conducted by the Azokh international archaeological expedition in 2011.”

The statement suggested that Azerbaijani media outlet AZTV on March 30, 2022 showed ancient human remains and said they were fresh corpses of Azerbaijanis murdered by Armenians.

The government also noted that appeals to the United Nations and its cultural arm, UNESCO, remain unanswered. “We regret that to date UNESCO, despite its commitment and mission, has not sent a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories of Artsakh, and does not exert significant efforts to prevent the commission of new crimes by Azerbaijan,” the statement noted.

Vanadzor Oppositionists Decry ‘Illegal Power Grab’

By Karine Simonian

VANADZOR, Armenia (RFE/RL) — Opposition groups in Vanadzor on Monday, April 4, accused Armenia’s leadership of seeking to nullify their victory in last December’s municipal election through what they see as an unconstitutional bill.

The city has had no mayor since Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party was defeated in the election. Civil Contract won only 25 percent of the vote there, compared to 39 percent polled by an opposition bloc led by former Vanadzor Mayor Mamikon Askanyan. The bloc teamed up with the opposition Fatherland party, giving them a majority of seats in the local council empowered to elect the head of the community.

Askanyan thus looked set to regain his post lost in October. But ten days after the ballot, he was arrested on corruption charges rejected by him as politically motivated.

Later in December, Armenia’s Administrative Court banned the new Vanadzor council from holding any sessions until July this year. It cited an appeal against the election results lodged by another pro-government parliamentarian.

The Armenian parliament hastily passed late last week government-backed legal amendments allowing Pashinyan to appoint an acting mayor of the city. The authors of the bill said it is aimed at addressing the post-election “disruption of normal governance” in Vanadzor and possibly other communities.

Opposition lawmakers dismissed that explanation, condemning the bill as an attempt to overturn local election results.

Askanyan’s Vanadzor-based political allies echoed those claims. One of them, Fatherland member Vahakn Doloyan, said that Pashinyan’s administration violated the Armenian constitution and may now be preparing to force another municipal election later this year.

“Why did they push such a bill through the National Assembly? In order to install a person of their choice as community head,” he told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

Doloyan also claimed that the government was behind the court injunction blocking sessions of the Vanadzor council.

“What keeps them from allowing the court or telling it, as they always do, to let [the council] meet and elect a mayor?” he said.

Vahakn Hovakimyan, one of the authors of the amendments affiliated with Civic Contract, said it is aimed at addressing “disruption of normal governance” in such communities.

“We have such a problem in Vanadzor at the moment,” Hovakimyan said during a short parliament debate held under a so-called “urgent procedure.”

Opposition lawmakers dismissed the official rationale for amending the law. They insisted that Pashinyan is doing everything to retain control over Vanadzor and possibly other communities against the will of local voters.

“We are discussing an issue which solely applies to a community or communities where [the ruling party] failed to take power,” said Agnesa Khosrovyan of the Hayastan alliance.

“If the authors of this bill were a bit more honest they would call it a bill on disenfranchising Mamikon Askanyan and the people of Vanadzor,” charged another Hayastan parliamentarian.

Four other communities were also left in limbo as a result of nationwide local elections held on December 5. Pashinyan’s party was defeated or failed to win outright there. Opposition politicians and human rights campaigners in Yerevan accused the authorities of sabotaging the election of their new mayors to prevent them from falling under opposition control.

In one such community comprising the town of Vartsen and surrounding villages, police cordoned off the municipal administration building in early January to prevent a local opposition figure, Ashot Khachaturyan, from taking over as mayor. Khachaturyan finally managed to take office last month.
Catholicos of All Armenian Receives British Lawmakers

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, this week received members of the UK-Armenia Friendship Group of the UK Parliament, headed by Tim Loughton. Armenian Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Varuzhan Nersesyan was also present at the meeting.

Welcoming the visit of the delegation of the UK-Armenia Friendship Group to Armenia, the Catholicos of All Armenians expressed his appreciation for their support and constant attention to the protection of the rights of the people of Artsakh. His Holiness expressed his concern over the new encroachments on the right of the people of Artsakh to live in peace, the ongoing hostilities, as well as the protection of the Armenian historical and cultural heritage. The Armenian Patriarch emphasized the international community’s consistent efforts to return the captives.

Karekin II noted with satisfaction the close cooperation between the UK-Armenia Friendship Group and the Armenian community of Great Britain. Loughton, in turn, attached importance to making efforts for the establishment of peace in Artsakh, ensuring the right of the Artsakh Armenians to a secure life, and expressing readiness to bring his support to the Armenian people in the British Parliament.

On the occasion of the visit, Karekin II expressed his special appreciation to Baroness Caroline Cox, a member of the House of Lords, for her constant support of the protection of the free and independent life of Artsakh Armenians in various international bodies.

Georgian Delegation Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — A delegation led by Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Shalva Papuashvili was in Armenia on a two-day official visit. On April 5, they visited Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan, accompanied by Ruben Rubinyan, a deputy speaker of the Armenian parliament and head of the Armenia-Georgia Friendship Group, the parliament press service said.

The members of the delegation laid a wreath and flowers at the Eternal Flame perpetuating the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims. Afterwards, they got acquainted with the exhibits documenting the massacre of the 20th century in the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.

President Vahagn Khachaturyan received the delegation later in the day. Khachaturyan noted that such meetings give special dynamics to the development and further deepening of cooperation between the two countries and should be as frequent as possible. He stressed that this visit is of special importance, as it takes on the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Georgia.

In the context of establishing security and stability in the region, President Khachaturyan presented Armenia’s long-standing efforts to establish peace, emphasizing the protection of the rights of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh.

Expressing gratitude for the reception, Papuashvili congratulated Khachaturyan on assuming the presidential. He expressed his support for the efforts for long-term peace in Karabakh, emphasizing that they are in favor of resolving the issues through dialogue, are ready to play a role and contribute to the matter.

Karabakh Official Laments ‘Lack of Support’ by Armenia

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foreign policy, whose orders the diplomatic service is supposed to execute, are confused or do not operate normally on the issue of Artsakh and defense.”

Khanumyan spoke two days before Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s scheduled talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that will be hosted by European Council President Charles Michel. The talks are expected to focus on an Armenian-Azerbaijani “peace treaty” sought by Azerbaijan.

Baku wants the treaty to be based on five elements, including a mutual recognition of each other’s territorial integrity. Pashinyan publicly stated on March 31 that Yerevan is ready to negotiate a deal along these lines.

Pashinyan did not explicitly mention the question of Karabakh’s status, speaking instead of the need to protect “the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh’s Armenians.” His remarks were construed by Armenian opposition leaders and other critics as a further indication that the Armenian government is ready to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan insisted on April 1 that Yerevan will seek to include the issue of the status on the agenda of negotiations on the peace accord.

On March 26, Karabakh’s leadership appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to deploy more Russian soldiers in Karabakh. It said that Russia 2,000-strong peacekeeping contingent is too small to carry out its mission.

The appeal came two days after Azerbaijani forces seized a village in eastern Karabakh and surrounding territory before engaging in deadly fighting with Karabakh Armenian troops. The fighting stopped following the peacekeepers’ intervention.

Khanumyan said that the current situation in the conflict zone leaves the Karabakh Armenians with no choice but to primarily rely on their military and other security forces.

The Russian peacekeepers were deployed in Karabakh under the terms of a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in November 2020.
INTERNATIONAL NEWS
France Says Situation in Karabakh Is ‘Disturbing’
YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — French Ambassador to Ar-
menia Hervé Loutoy has defied the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) as “disturbing.”
Loutoy made the remarks at a meeting on April 5 with Vice Pres-
ident of the National Assembly Ruben Rubinian, who provided detailed information on the situation in the Karabakh, created as a result of the invasion of the Azerbaijani armed forces.
According to Rubinian, the policy of Azerbaijan is aimed at the eviction of Armenians from Artsakh.
Azerbaijan has made incursions into Nagorno-Karabakh, with the last incident leaving three Arme-
nian civilians dead and at least 14 others injured. On March 24, Azer-
baijan stormed into the zone of the respons-
sibility of the Russian peacekeepers stationed in the area and is refusing to completely withdraw its forces from strategic heights.

Mourinho Campaigning to Keep Henrik Mkhitaryan Amid Contract Talks
ROME (Panorama.am) — Coach José Mourinho is campaigning to keep Roma star Henrikh Mkhitaryan an onim contract talks, The Cult of Calcio reports.
Mkhitaryan decided the contest between Sampdoria and Roma with his fourth goal of the season. His contract runs out in June.
The coach invited the parties to reach an agreement in his post-
game remarks to Sky: “I want him to stay, and I think the management and the player are on the same page. Mourinho is ex-
pected to return with his clients. If Mkhitaryan wishes to stay, and I think the management
will make it happen.”

Shushu Named ‘Cultural Capital of Turkic World’
SHUSHU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Shushu which came under Azer-
bajan control in 1920, was declared the “cultural cap-
tal of the Turkic world” for 2023, Caspian News reports.
The announcement was made at a ministerial meeting of the Inter-
national Organization of Turkic Culture. The meeting was chaired by TURKSOY, in the Turkish city of Istanbul.
During the war, the Holy Savor (Ghazanchetsots) Cathedral in Shushu, a site stricken twice by Azerbai-
jan, which resulted in the col-
lapse of part of the roof, injuring people sheltering inside and jour-
nalists covering the hostilities.
Human Rights Watch (HRW) said back then that the two attacks “suggest that the church, a cultural object with cultural significance, was an intentional target despite the absence of evidence that it was used for military purposes.”
In 1920, the Armenian half of Shushi was destroyed by Azer-
bajan armed forces, which also defiled the cathedral of the Holy Savor and other Armenian heri-
tage sites.

Armenia Signals Willingness to Cede Control over Karabakh
By Joshua Kucera
The Armenian government is effectively com-
ing to terms that it will not be able to re-
tain control of Nagorno-Karabakh, paving the way for Azerbaijan to regain full sovereignty over the territory and boding an uncertain future for the area’s current ethnic Armenian residents.
The concession has not been ex-
plained, but rather via a conspicuous shift in official rhetoric from Yerevan.
After Azerbaijan in mid-March offered a new framework for resolving the con-
flict, which included a mutual recognition of the territorial integrity of both countries which would in effect mean Armenia recognizing Azerbaijan sovereignty over Karabakh — Armenia said it did not ob-
ject, adding only that it also expected some “guarantee of the rights and freedoms” of the Armenians living there.
“For us, the Karabakh conflict is not a ter-
ritorial issue, but a matter of rights,” Arme-
nian Foreign Minister Arazt Mirzoyan said.
That follows statements in recent months that were less explicit, but in the same vein, by Prime Minister Nikol Pash-
inyan, who has publicly said that the Armenian government recognizes Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan and said the rights of the former Azerbaijani residents of the region had to be respected.
For decades, the question of Nagorno-Karabakh’s status has been the core sticking point be-
tween the two sides. Both sides have pre-
vented it in nearly existential terms, with what diplomats working on the issue call “mutually exclusive positions and com-
pletely contrary narratives.”
The Armenian government, seeking to con-
cede amounts to a concession that Yerevan will not be able to secure a status for Karabakh outside Azer-
bajan, but “in a way vague enough to be
acceptable to the general public," said one Yerevan-based analyst.
Of course, Yerevan denies that it is con-
ceding anything. “Armenia’s position is that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh should be discussed and it should consider ensuring all the rights of Armenians living in Na-
gorno-Karabakh,” a senior Foreign Minis-
tery official said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly. “Saying ‘all’ means including their rights,” the diplomat said.
It’s not clear what the shift would mean for the roughly 150,000 Armenians who had been living in Karabakh since Armenian forces won control of the territory in a war in 1994.
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Ani Hovannisian Shows ‘Hidden Map’ Documentary, Speaks in UK Parliament

LONDON — Filmmaker Ani Hovannisian was invited to speak and share her documentary, “The Hidden Map,” in the British Parliament on March 23. The gathering was attended by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Armenia, with invited guests including Armenia’s Ambassador to the UK, Varuzhan Nersesyan and his wife Narine Malkhasyan, Prof. Richard Hovannisian, and Scottish explorer Steven Sim, who is featured in the film.

The event, which marked the film’s inaugural presentation in the United Kingdom, was organized and hosted by Chair of the APPG, Parliamentarian Tim Loughton, and initiated by Annette Moskofian, Chair of the Armenian National Committee UK.

Hovannisian prefaced the film with a reminder about the continuing cycle of human destruction when colossal crimes as those inflicted upon Armenia and Artsakh are allowed to go unrequited. “The power of memory against forgetting is a great weapon,” she added, “and this film is for all of us and for the people whose voices cannot be heard.”

The diverse group watched “The Hidden Map” attentively, as an Armenian-American granddaughter of Genocide survivors journeys to her lost ancestral homeland to face the forbidden past. She encounters a Scottish explorer there, and together, they dig beneath the surface of modern-day Turkey, uncovering buried secrets, sacred relics, daring resilience, and the hidden map. A robust, constructive discussion followed, particularly about the current state of Armenian affairs, Turkish denial, world response and lack thereof, and building grassroots relationships between people, while trying to affect State policy.

In her closing remarks, Ani Hovannisian quoted former UK Prime Minister H.H. Asquith (1908-1916): “To stand aside with stopped ears, folded arms, with an averted gaze when you have the power to intervene is to become not a mere spectator, but an accomplice.” She continued, “And that’s what we have done as a world. We have watched and allowed it to happen over and over again. They knew here that it was wrong, and every piece of evidence one ever needs is in your archives, my archives, our grandparents’ stories, and countless books.” Speaking also of the current atrocities in Artsakh, she noted, “It is a continuation of man’s inhumanity to man that is not addressed,” concluding, “We have to get beyond power and might, and do what is right. Thank you, because you are the voices here of truth and humanity, and we need the world not to forget.”

The group topped off the evening with personal exchanges, Karas Armenian wine, and photographs of the historic gathering, just days before an APPG delegation was scheduled to depart for Armenia.

Parliamentarian Tim Loughton, Scottish explorer Steven Sim, ANC UK Chair Annette Moskofian, filmmaker Ani Hovannisian, Armenia’s Ambassador to the UK, Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan, his wife, Narine Malkhasyan, Professor Richard Hovannisian

“Nothing is more terrible than the human heart.”

— H.H. Asquith

In his words of gratitude to MP Tim Loughton, Steven Sim, Ani Hovannisian, and especially Ani’s father, Professor Richard Hovannisian for his lifelong dedication to genocide scholarship, documentation, and teaching, Ambassador Nersesyan stressed, “This documentary is the result of such great dedication, and reminds us of the tasks ahead. . . The Genocide is not only about the past. It’s about contemporary times and the prevention of future atrocities and crimes.”

Loughton commented, “That film was absolutely fascinating. The fact that so many sacred sites that have meant so much to generations of Armenian Christians are completely neglected or destructively destroyed as we saw in the film is heartrending.” MP Fiona Bruce, the Prime Minister’s Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, added, “Thank you for allowing me to understand more about the very sad history of so many parts of Armenia and for drawing this history to a much wider audience.”

Armenia’s Ambassador to the UK, Varuzhan Nersesyan and filmmaker Ani Hovannisian in the UK Parliament.

Richard Hovannisian and daughter Ani outside of Big Ben just before entering Parliament (which is under Big Ben).

Group photo of some of the participants of The Hidden Map event in UK Parliament.
Maloney and Bilirakis Spearhead Measure To Secure $10 Million for Armenian Genocide Education

WASHINGTON — Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) are introducing the Armenian Genocide Education Act, a bipartisan measure — introduced in the wake of official U.S. Congressional and Presidential recognition of this crime — to fund Library of Congress educational programs about the history, lessons, consequences, and ongoing costs of the Armenian Genocide, reports the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

This landmark legislation seeks to provide $10 million in funding over five years for the Library of Congress to educate Americans about Ottoman Turkey’s systematic and deliberate state-sponsored mass murder, national dispossession, cultural erasure, and exile of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christians, between 1915 and 1923.

“The ANCA thanks Congresswoman Maloney and Congressman Bilirakis, welcoming their introduction of this thoughtful and timely bill, brought forward in the wake of official U.S. Congressional and Presidential recognition of this crime and amid renewed efforts by Azerbaijan and Turkey to completely erase this crime against the Armenian nation,” remarked ANCA Chair Raffi Hamparian.

“This federal legislation represents a responsible next-step, building upon American remembrance, alerting Americans to the ongoing threat of genocide, and ensuring that future generations benefit from the lessons of this crime. The ANCA fully supports this bill and looks forward to this measure being passed by Congress and signed into law by the President,” added the ANCA Chairman.

Building upon the 2019 passage of H.Res.296 and S.Res.150 — which specifically rejected any official U.S. association with Armenian Genocide denial — the Armenian Genocide Education Act seeks to counter discourse and propaganda that claims that Ottoman Turkey’s systematic and deliberate state-sponsored mass murder, national dispossession, cultural erasure, and exile of millions of Christians between 1915 and 1923 did not take place.
KANSASVILLE, Wis. — During the weekend of March 25-27, 2022, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) gathered 35 young adults from across the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, for its 2022 ACYOA Seniors National Lenten Retreat. The participants were joined by Diocesan clergymen and laypeople for an enriching retreat focused on spiritual reflection and fellowship. The retreat was underwritten by the ACYOA Central Council, covering all costs of the program for participants, including lodging and meals at the retreat center. Participants arrived on Friday, March 25, happy to be reunited once again with old friends for the first time in a long time. For some of the weekend’s attendees, the last in-person ACYOA ministry that they took part in was also at the St. Jakovos Retreat Center: the ACYOA Seniors National Fall Retreat held in November 2019.

Bishop Daniel Findikyan, who spent the entire weekend with the ACYOA Seniors, was overjoyed by the smiles and emotions expressed by the participants as they all reconnected.

The retreat kicked off Friday evening with a series of icebreakers and a team-building exercises led by ACYOA Central Council Ministries and Outreach co-coordinators Melissa Fanizza and Ani Misriarian. Participants were then asked to reflect upon their Lenten season journeys, filling the walls of the St. Jakovos Retreat Center with notes on what Great Lent meant to them.

The evening concluded with a Vespers service and reflection led by Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, the Diocesan Director of Ministries, setting the tone for a weekend retreat focused on disconnecting from the outside world and being present in their spirituality. Saturday morning, retreat participants kicked off a full day of workshops with a Mattis service led by Fr. Guregh Handzazanyan of St. John the Baptist Church (Greenfield, WI). Kathryn Ashbashian, Program Administrator of the Eastern Diocese’s Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, led the first session of the day entitled “To Whom Do I Belong?” In a current world where human attention is constantly divided, this session offered participants the chance to reflect upon the distractions they encounter on a daily basis and relate that to a passage from Henri J. M. Nouwen’s book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

Saturday’s second session was led by Bishop Daniel and entitled “Building up the Body of Christ: In Living Color.” The session was marked by an engaging, back-and-forth discussion between Bishop Daniel and the retreat participants as they dissected a unique icon of Mary and Jesus, at the time of Jesus’ birth.

**Service to Others**

Following lunch, participants were introduced via Zoom to Sarah Sitrit, development officer of Ayo!, the Fund for Armenia Relief (FAR) fundraising platform driving local solutions to local challenges across Armenia. Sarah shared her life story as a diasporan living in Armenia and gave updates on Ayo!’s impactful projects. ACYOA Seniors participating in this summer’s Armenia Service Program will have the opportunity to volunteer in a community project with Ayo!

Later on Saturday afternoon, Fr. Avedis Kalayjian of St. Mesrob Church (Racine, WI), led a session titled “Holy Week at a Glance.” Kalayjian spoke about the intricacies of Holy Week services and gave participants the opportunity to dive deeper into various moments of Holy Week by tying together how those moments are depicted through iconography, hymns, and the Holy Bible.

A key component of the season of Lent, and one of five circles of the ACYOA, is service. Coming into the weekend, retreat participants were asked to bring socks for donation to two homeless shelters serving hundreds of men, women and children in Wisconsin and Illinois. Following dinner on Saturday evening, the participants spent time writing heartfelt messages on cards to tie to the pairs of socks. The hundreds of pairs were then collected and delivered by Fr. Andreas Garabedian of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church (Chicago, IL) and Fr. Yervant in Kojali.

Saturday’s evening Vespers service was celebrated by Fr. Garabedian. The powerful service combined various forms of prayer used by the Armenian Apostolic Church, helping to convey the importance of continental prayer in a distracted world and the power of taking in God’s light and passing said light on to others in our communities.

Saturday evening concluded with a campfire filled with treats, music, games and laughter amongst all of the participants.

On Sunday morning, the group wrapped up the retreat by participating in the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, with the sermon offered by Bishop Daniel. After a closing brunch and session reflecting on the retreat at large, the group departed St. Jakovos Retreat Center with a renewed energy and light to share with their families, friends and peers. The ACYOA Central Council sends its heartfelt gratitude to all of our Diocesan clergy who dedicated their time over the weekend to help deliver a wonderful retreat experience.

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**ACYOA Seniors Hold 2022 National Lenten Retreat**

**UCLA’s New Space Medicine Fellowship Program Welcomes First Inaugural Class**

**MEDICINE, from page 6**

Most emergency medicine residents enter professional practice after completing their four years, Lundberg said. However, because of the limited resources available, Aintablian said that he hopes the engineering training included in the fellowship will allow space physicians to develop medical devices that are both lightweight and easy to use.

However, Lundberg said regularly working with limitations qualifies emergency physicians for such a position, which is why they are so sought out by enterprises such as SpaceX.

“One of the really important skills that emergency physicians have to acquire is the ability to sort of improvise to handle unexpected situations to make do with say, less than ideal equipment or less than ideal physicians for such a position, which is why they are so sought out by enterprises such as SpaceX.”

As for the fellowship, it will continue depending year by year, depending on Aintablian’s experiences as well as whether or not interest grows, Hendey added.

Aintablian encourages students interested in medicine or other seemingly niche fields to ask the right questions to help guide their decision-making.

**KANSASVILLE, Wis. — During the weekend of March 25-27, 2022, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) gathered 35 young adults from across the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, for its 2022 ACYOA Seniors National Lenten Retreat.**

**35 young adults from across the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, for the 2022 ACYOA Seniors National Lenten Retreat.**
Akçam Appointed to UCLA Armenian Genocide Research Program within Promise Armenian Institute

**APPOINTMENT**; from page 1

Akçam will be leaving his position as Ka- loosdian Mugar Professor in Modern Arme- nian History and Genocide at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies of Clark University, in Worcester, Mass., and assuming his new post on May 1 of this year.

**Promise Armenian Institute**

The Promise Armenian Institute (PAI) was established in late 2019 as part of the UCLA Academic Senate. It aims to merge a $20-million bequest from the estate of Kirk Kerkorian. Dr. Ann R. Karagozian was appointed as its inaugural director in 2020, and has put to use in her new position.

Karagozian explained that while in the past she tended to keep her family and Armenian community life separate to an extent from her professional activity, she had taken the first step to break down this barrier over a decade ago, when she began to serve as a University of California (UC) representative on the board of trustees for the Armenian Studies Center, but it is going to take this risk because it is worth it.”

The PAI brings together a number of programs and structures that comprises the PAI, and sees three layers to it. First, there are around 250 Holocaust and Genocide research institutes and programs in the university setting has been created, while there are the areas that must be seriously researched in the social sciences.

He said, “One of my main goals is to train young scholars.” The Armenian Geno- cide program will have at least one or two course offerings per semester, and one course specifically on the Armenian Genocide. He said that he will have to decide which courses he will teach based on the needs of the various depart- ments Armenian and Eastern European studies.

However, he does not want to teach too many courses, he declared, “because the ult- imate goal of this program is research, and it is not just another Armen- ian-related topic, such as sociologist of the Armenian Genocide Program.

The PAI added an Armenian Studies Cen- ter to these existing chairs and programs in 2012 by Zaruhy Sara Chitjian, together established in 1987. There is a research program, declaring: “I am confident that the Armenian Genocide program will continue.”

In this far-reaching constellation of activ- ities and structures that comprises the PAI, one thing that was missing was Armenian Genocide-relevant academic disciplines. So this was already in the works. Karagozian said, “When we decided to establish this research program, we did a full search as per UCLA’s standards and Tana Karagozian (Akçam) was selected to be the inaugural director. This will be an entity that certainly will be related to Armenian studies, and there cer- tainly will be overlapping interests with the Armenian Studies Center, but it is going to be a separate program within the Promise Armenian Institute.

Akçam declared, “The reason why they make this an administrative position, but not a faculty position, in my understanding, is that this is the easiest way to establish such a position. A faculty position would have to go through different boards, meetings and departments, and it would take the 3-4 years because it is a state university.”

Akçam is leaving his tenured chair at Clark University permanently. He acknowl- edged that as a general rule, one should not hire a young scholar for a three- or four-year project, and an edited volume will result from his work.

Akçam exclaimed, “I would love to hear everyone’s suggestions! I can make a list of the areas that must be seriously researched but I am sure that people have other use- ful ideas.” He added that another aspect of initiating the program will be to raise funding for these kinds of projects.

Finally, as part of his new job, Akçam said he will organize small lectures, work- shops, and conferences.

**Broader Vision**

Akçam said that he will work out the vision of the Armenian Genocide Program in the PAI, and sees three layers to it. First, he said, is an understanding of where geno- cides have taken place as a general rule.

He said, “In this regard, we have to take part in new debates and tendencies of the field. One such new aspect is to include natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and environmental studies, including global warming, in the field as part of human destructiveness.”

Secondly, he stressed, “what I really want to develop is a systematic coordination among the studies of different genocides within the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.”

Third is the advancement of Armenian Genocide studies itself, he continued. New areas should be explored. Gender studies, he said, is not developed sufficiently, nor post-genocide studies. The role of religion must further be explored.

**Continuing Projects**

While initiating all of the aforemen- tioned projects, Akçam said that his first priority will be to continue with the work that he already has begun. One example is the translation and translation into En- glish of the materials in the collection of Fr. Krikor Guerguerian. Much of the Ot- tomans’ language materials are first being trans- lated into modern Turkish. Many reports of the Armenian Genocide have been written in Turkey and sent to the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople were written in difficult handwriting so these must be electronically transcribed.

Karagozian in turn had nothing but good words about Akçam, describing him as the ideal inaugural director for the program. She stated: “We are very excited about Tan- er joining us at UCLA. He is truly a world- class historian and one of the world’s lead- ers in the field of Armenian Genocide and its documentation, so we are very happy he has agreed to continue his research activities here at UCLA.”

Akçam concluded, “This is really a dream job for me, a dream come true. Do you know what Dr. Ann R. Karagozian said when she was appointed as the inaugural director at UCLA? She said: ‘We are very excited about Tan- er joining us at UCLA. He is truly a world- class historian and one of the world’s lead- ers in the field of Armenian Genocide and its documentation, so we are very happy he has agreed to continue his research activities here at UCLA.’”
Richard Melik Simonian Charitable Trust Scholarship

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

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

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

Requests for applications may be made to Christopher Mitchell at (508) 792-2800 or Cmitchell@chwmlaw.com.
1915

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THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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APRIL 24, 2022
at 1:30pm
**COMMUNITY NEWS**

**Ukraine Quagmire Spills Over into Armenian Security**

**EDUCATION, from page 6**

In the polarization between the West and Russia, the stakes of the war have become high, with many global countries and industries facing significant risks. While the Western countries have found themselves making deals with oil suppliers to overcome the energy crisis, oil-rich nations like Saudi Arabia and Azerbaijan find themselves in a position of strength.

One is the weakening of Russian power. The war with Ukraine has put Russia in a position of having to choose sides. The West has been putting pressure on Russia to withdraw from the war, but Russia, according to analysts, has not been able to do so. Instead, Russia remains in the war, and the situation “puts enormous pressure on their ability to not fall into the trap of choosing sides.”

Indeed, Armenia is engaging in what is known in political science literature as “strategic shirking.” Kopalyan differentiates this from “strategic silence,” as Armenia has not been silent; rather, they have made it known that they will refrain from any entanglements, despite various attempts by Azerbaijan to convince them to support them. Kopalyan notes that “the West will not allow Azerbaijan to pull the country into the conflict.”

“Strategic shirking,” said Kopalyan, is a pragmatic but vague posture; they discuss reconciliation without getting involved in the actual conflict. While some have come to that conclusion, said Kopalyan, that Russia is Russia’s Eastern European playmate against Armenia is not going to emerge victorious. The war is not going to emerge victorious, and oil-rich nations like Russia are under pressure to modernize.

Looking at whether a “new cold war” would emerge and how Armenia would fare, Ohanyan expressed the opinion that “Russia is a part of their agenda; Armenia’s previous foreign policy choices made sense in that context. But now, with Russia having been weakened, Russia is going to be the new norm, and not only Armenia but many other developing countries.”

Ohanyan noted that the West’s response to the Ukraine crisis amounts to an economic containment of Russia, an unprecedented attempt to expropriate Russia from the global economy. The economic fallout for Armenia is huge; the country is dependent on Russia for energy, and the country’s infrastructure is a part of a part of their agenda; Armenia’s previous foreign policy choices made sense in that context. But now, with Russia having been weakened, Russia is going to be the new norm, and not only Armenia but many other developing countries.

With the war in Ukraine, Ohanyan stated, Russia abandoned its institutionalized engagement with China to bring about Eurasian integration and connectivity. Such connectivity is in Armenia’s interest, and the country is looking for ways to advance its own interests, but when Russia is relatively weak, it acts in a more pro-Armenia manner, more like an “older brother.”

In response to another question on diplomatic ties between Armenia and Russia, Kopalyan stated that “there is no doubt that Armenia can rely on any single country for security and that Armenia needs to diversify its diplomatic presence. Armenia-Turkey diplomacy,” said Kopalyan, “is being done to the best advantage of Armenia, with great care because it links Armenia to European markets. Security is a multilevel product, she added. That which needs to be done for the security of Artashat is one thing; the broader security of Armenia as a whole, however, depends on Ohanyan’s mind on Armenia’s joining international organizations.

Chesterian argued that Armenia needs to look to other partners to diversify their security, naming France, Greece, China, and India as possibilities. He also pointed out that Azerbaijan makes it clear that it is going to prioritize Azerbaijan over Armenia, and understandably so, said Kopalyan, that “Azerbaijan is a part of their agenda.”

Chesterian also noted that there is a longstanding ambiguity on territorial issues against Russia, and understandably so, said Kopalyan, that “Azerbaijan is a part of their agenda.”

Finally, Ohanyan stated that the war in Ukraine “is being given up as a sacrificial lamb” by the West to get Russia in a Viet- nam-like quagmire, which will weaken Russia. He also mentioned that Azerbaijan got some sympathetic ears in the West because they based their argument on terri- torial issues, whereas Armenia based their argument on the interests of the Minsk Group, which is that Armenia is a part of its sphere of influence. From a diplomatic perspective, therefore, the West would not allow it to be “the greater concern over diplomatic polarization.”

Kopalyan also discussed the issue of se- curity in Armenia and Artsakh. He and oth- er analysts, using projection modeling, said they expect a broader incursion by Azer- baijan in April. According to the analysts, Azerbaijan appears to be preparing for a new assault, exhibiting behaviors consis- tent with the threat of a new incursion.

This behavior of Azerbaijan, Kopalyan said, could be attributed to two factors. One is the weakening of Russian power. The war with Ukraine has put Russia in a position of having to choose sides. The other is the effect of weakening Russia, at least in relative terms, more than strengthening it.

Ohanyan noted that it was too early to predict just what sort of Russia would emerge from the war, whether vindictive or remorseful. Ohanyan noted that Russian media and messages issuing from the Kremlin are already talking about the need to encourage business, which has been affected by the sanctions. The “social contract” between Putin and his people is threatened, but if there is an economic downturn, and so Russia may try to connect with the global economy through post-Soviet periphery countries like Armenia, she added.

Ohanyan seems to think that “the West is not going to emerge victorious” despite the strong show of unity against Russia, and that there will be a host of problems such as food crises in developing countries, global recession, and electoral backlash in the West. Ohanyan attributed the collapse of the oil price of gas. She also noted that several tra- ditional Western allies such as India, Israel, Turkey, and the Gulf States are on the fence of this. Ohanyan concluded that one change now, she explained, is that Russia is becoming more authoritarian and power is becoming more centralized, meaning the state’s institutional capacity to navigate their way out of the crisis has lessened. This is particularly true consider-
Top Lawmakers Demand Investigation of Corruption In Armenian Genocide Victim Payments

By Matt Hamilton and Harriet Ryan
LOS ANGELES (Los Angeles Times) — Four influential California lawmakers called this week for an investigation into a $17.5-million class-action settlement on behalf of Armenian genocide victims that a Times investigation found had been marred by fraud, diverted funds and a rejection rate of 92 percent.

U.S. Representatives Jackie Speier (D-Hillsborough) and Anna Eshoo (D-Menlo Park), the only Armenian Americans in Congress, along with Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) and state Sen. Anthony Portantino (D-La Cañada Flintridge), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said they were disgusted by misconduct.

“The Times’s investigation relied on new-sealed records, emails among attorneys and confidential settlement records. Authorities previously took action against three other lawyers in connection with the settlement. A Beverly Hills attorney, Berj Boyajian, pleaded no contest in Superior Court in 2014 to a felony and was ordered to turn over funds in connection with making false claims to the State Bar and ultimately served no jail time.”

The release from Kabateck’s firm also notes the “potentially decisive effect on Armenians of the LA Times story, proclaiming: ‘It is said that this misinformation campaign deliberately aimed at sowing division among the largest Armenian diaspora community in the world is being circulated just weeks before Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.”

Kabateck’s firm made available a copy of LLP’s response to over 60 letters from federal and state Armenian Bar Associations as well as with French and Kabateck, and his wife for allegedly misappropriating charity money. The case against her was thrown out. Yeghiayan did not immediately respond to The Times.

Some Armenians in France and the U.S. have campaigned to hold accountable additional parties — the U.S. government and others to recover $575,000 to a Syrian man who had been investigated and rejected in the past. The couple maintained that the applications were rightful heirs.

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Artsakh.

Dr. Armen Vartany and Oshin Harootunian, have teamed up with the acclaimed producers of “Motherland,” a feature-length documentary film that’s expected to blow the lid off of Azerbaijan’s concerted campaign of violence, deception and burgeoning genocide against the Armenian civilians of Artsakh.

Dr. Armen Vartany, who, in addition to his new role as a development producer, is a board-certified plastic surgeon and the founder of the Plastic Surgery and Laser Center in Burbank, is supporting the production of filmmaker-journalist and Los Angeles-based national radio host, Vic Gerami’s investigation into the global community’s tepid response to war crimes being committed on a daily basis by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s military as enabled and augmented by a cadre of regional allies led by Turkish forces under the control of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

“The 44-day war was an attempt by a corrupt dictator to squash the desire of a people to live free from a despotic regime,” says Dr. Vartany. “A corrupt and wealthy dictator with the direct assistance of Turkey and tacit approval of Russia was intent on destroying the tiny self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh. The imbalance of power and injustice was overwhelming.”

Like many Armenians glued to the TV for news and advocating on social media, Dr. Vartany and his wife, Alina, mobilized during the 44-day attack. In addition to donating money to various humanitarian causes, they sponsored several refugee families who’d been left unhoused after Azerbaijan’s invasion and occupation of Artsakh.

Members

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Artsakh is the Armenian-American community. Dr. Armen Vartany and Oshin Harootunian, have teamed up with the acclaimed producers of “Motherland,” a feature-length documentary film that’s expected to blow the lid off of Azerbaijan’s concerted campaign of violence, deception and burgeoning genocide against the Armenian civilians of Artsakh.

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see SUPPORT, page 17

Tribute to the Armenian Heritage Park
As It Celebrates Its First Decade

BOSTON (Art New England) — Something beautiful and powerful emerged from the Big Dig. Boston’s largest and most expensive highway renewal project of the 20th century — the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, a gorgeous greenspace where the ghastly Central Artery and Interstate state 93 once loomed. Stretching one-and-one-half miles, The Greenway is speckled with lush flora and fauna, fountains, installations of public art, food trucks, cassoulet, and the Armenian Heritage Park with its outdoor sculpture and labyrinth.

The year 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of the park. After numerous discussions with former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, state officials, and the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the Armenian Heritage Foundation, who raised the funds for the construction of the park, was granted parcel 13 on The Greenway.

The prestigious architectural firm, Tellalian Associates Architects & Planners, was commissioned to lay-out the space. Don Tellalian, AIA, assembled a Design Concept Committee, including an attorney, an architect, a student, a health-care professional, and representatives from the Armenian-American community of Boston.

Tellalian, renowned in the region, was the principal architect, and designed Abstract Sculpture in the Park as a split rhomboid deodecahedron (solid geometry). In geometry, a deodecahedron is any polyhedron with 12 faces. When asked why he chose geometric art, Tellalian explained, via email, “As an architect, one might say that geometry is our language. But for the park, the geometric figures had to have meaning and engage all ages.” The sculpture is dedicated to those who lost their lives in the Armenian Genocide from 1915 to 1923.

Each spring, Abstract Sculpture is given a new look. A crane pulls it apart and once its core is exposed, Tellalian, referring to the manual he wrote for the process, rearranges the sculpture into various designs depending on the year.

Each page of the manual carries a date, for example, Abstract Sculpture Year 11-2022, along with instructions and diagrams showing how to pull apart the work and reshape it into a stacked configuration. Each year, Year 12-2023, it will be a different stacked formation; Year 13-2024, a leaning arrangement; and so forth, until 2056, when the design reverses back to 2012.

The Abstract Sculpture sits on top of a reflecting Pool, water washes over the sides representing the tears of genocide victims. The water is recycled to a spray fountain in the middle of the Labyrinth (plane...
Books


By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In Three Apples Fell from the Sky (One-world, 2020), author Narine Abgaryan takes us to the heart of Maran, a village perched on a cliff in the Armenian highlands, at the farthest end of Maran-Kar. Abgaryan brings this isolated mountain village to life with her vivid, often hilariously funny, details and playful images. With painstaking detail, she describes the “tangy scent of tiny, delicately blushing apples with dark raspberry-colored seeds and little pink blotches on the cut edge,” or a pig “that particularly astounded the Maranians because it was as clean and neat as a round turnip that had been thoroughly washed under running water.”

We walk through the village roads and climb the perilous mountain path, rejoicing in the winter snow, the pale blue alpine violets, and the pink and white almond and cherry blossoms. Abgaryan allows us to participate in the ways of the villagers, as they gather over strong tea with thyme, tend their kitchen gardens, and help one another cook, babysit and care for the ill.

The book opens with the 58-year-old Anatolia, the youngest inhabitant in Maran, waiting to die. “If only I could hurry up and die,” she moans as she lies in bed soaking in blood from a sudden onslaught of a world of “endless summer nights” and “many wonderful things.” This world is, nonetheless, also a world where life’s hardships never cease. Famine, war, and earthquakes are constant occurrences. Death is a fact of life in Maran. When war breaks out and Maran’s men are drafted, the village is “reduced by half,” and plunged into “pitch-black darkness, hunger and cold.” Over the years, all the children are lost to famine. Indeed, the solitary village, with only twenty-three inhabited homes, may be “melodiously living out its last years as if condemned, Anatolia along with it.” “The young people had gone and the old ones would depart without even leaving behind memories.”

While it is true that a work cannot be disengaged from its historical and social context, one couldn’t say that Three Apples Fell from The Sky is immersed in a specific historical moment. There are passing references to historical truths, such as the massacres of the Maranians for, as Anatolia well knows, “there was no point in worrying.”

When things are the way they “are supposed to be,” there is no need to mask or to change them. The cycle of wars, of famine and of illnesses will continue, but it will all be survived. Life unquestionably prevails. The world of Three Apples Fell from The Sky may not be a paradise but it is not a desperate world either. “That’s just the way it is,” is “the old people’s favorite phrase.” Abgaryan “delivers the world to us in its human dimension,” to borrow the words of the celebrated French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (“What Can Literature Do?”). She creates a humane community where ails and misfortunes are redeemed by friendships and communication. We share in the Maranians’ unconditional connection to their fellow human beings. Even the fact that the gypsies, who occasionally came from the valley, spoke other languages and wore different clothing “held no significance whatsoever. In the end, the sky is always identically blue, and the wind blows exactly the same way wherever you were lucky enough to have been born,” writes Abgaryan. This focus on our common humanity might just be the balm to save us from despair at a time when we no longer find it possible to make sense of the greed that has taken over our lives. In fact, when many hope for doomsday, our sense of community is something we cannot afford to lose.

The world Abgaryan recreates is neither a retreat into a legendary past nor is it a flight into fantasy. Three Apples Fell from The Sky reasserts the validity of the human endeavor. Abgaryan’s tale of miracles reminds us that it is possible to find meaning amidst the discomforting truths of our lives when human connection has not been lost. Despite the troubles and the cares of real life that these stories reflect, the world of the novel remains a good-natured world. The three apples of the old Armenian legend, which the title invokes, have been dropped “to earth from the sky: one apple for the one who saw, another for the one who told the story, and a third for the one who listened and believed in what is good.”

Abgaryan’s delightful tale is an accomplishment worthy of the prestigious Leo Tolstoy Yasnaya Polyana Award and Russia’s National Bestseller Prize, which it has won. The book was originally published in Russian in 2015, but has recently been translated into English by Lisa C. Hayden, herself an award-winning translator.
Haig Avakian: ‘Today, the Diaspora Is Obsessed with Great Narratives’

AVAKIAN, from page 13

in 12 volumes with detailed notes in Arai- bic (available online). The manuscripts of famous Egyptian composer of Armenian descent Foad al-Zaheri (Garabed Panos- sian) are under my hand; the publication of which (by Armenian funding) remains a dream.

The series of supplements of Tcha- hagir weekly is a gift for the Diaspora, where 48 volumes with limited print run are disseminated for free. Most of them apply to the history and culture of Egyp- tian Armenians, giving new life to the unpublished manuscripts and stuff lost in the Diaspora. This initiative was this, and to what extent does it reach the reader?

The initiative was mine. The reason was the inner requirement of publishing col- lected materials and thoughts. It has been funded by Tchahagir, thanks to the encour- agement of its editor and director Mardiros Balbash. And for this reason, if you reach the reader, I do not think about it anymore. The printed and online books have been sent to the libraries of Armenia; they al- ways have enthusiastically accepted them, asking also for extra copies).

Are you one of the few publicists of the Diaspora well aware of the develop- ments of Armenian life, both in our country and abroad, and always finding pain- ful issues. How did the field of musicology expand for you to become a publicist - moreover, a political analyst?

In the beginning it was only my need to feel comfortable in my “professional” milieu. Afterwards, the professional ghettoization did not satisfy me. In 2014, I wrote a series of articles entitled “The Professional” crit- icizing those specialists, who stay only in their “professional” level. I suggested not erasing the professional niche, but to take a step forward, toward intellectual liberation, which I called post-professionalism, one of foundations of which is involvement. Pol- itics and other things, is a part of this involvement. For example, in Tchahagir I tried to draw attention to activist move- ments in Armenia as a healthy process re- vealing the internal layers of society. There are quotations from Facebook, that are not recorded nowhere. In 2016 I wrote largely about the rebellion of Sarafeh Tsarukyan; since 2018 I have consistently followed up the issue of Amulsar; in 2020 I wrote about the protection of Firdaus district of Yerevan. All these are tabs for the mainstream diaspo- ra. While the diaspora celebrated wealthy people, it also artificially made them culture fans, and Tchahagir published two large criticisms, trying to introduce the real motivation of benvolent rich men, not sparing criticism of idolized names.

Reading of Das Kapital by Karl Marx, provoked me to interpret COVID-19 in the sphere of periodic crisis of capitalist economy, putting the crisis before the vi- rus — crisis as the main source of the virus and not the opposite. I tried to observe also the Armenian Genocide through reading of anarchy and classical Marxism (not of Soviet communism, which is a different thing). We are afraid that the genetic understanding will be eliminated by Marx- ism, and for this reason, in the case of re- reading of Marxism writings, the very op- posite takes place. At least, Marxism (not necessarily Marx himself) is aware of the mechanisms that can ban genocide genet- ically. And today we want to ban the geno- cides by using the same tools in capitalist world, which have been the cause of genocide and will continue to be.

Collecting lots of information about the

Penyamin Tashian’s great translations of novels remain in the press scattered and un- familiar. Shahin Berberian’s writings about aesthetics) have rarely surpassed academic summaries. In music, the works of Edgar Menoukian, Vahan Haroutshian, Omay Berberian, Ashot Patmagrian and many others, who have been worked in and for Diaspora, are almost absent from our stag- es. The literature of Vahle Oshagian is being criticized, if someone decides to remember him. Etcetera, etcetera...

Today, the Diaspora is obsessed with great narratives, forgetting itself. Great narratives are important. They unify. The great narration narrative, being importance for the pan-Diaspora, harms the realization of the Diaspora’s particularities. Each Di- aspora, forgetting its own particularity, be- ing not interested in its internal conceptual productions, friends group of the Diaspora and its language — for enhancing life, not a subject of “textbook” transmission — causes to be a Diaspora unit.

Since the diaspora took the way of self-alienation, I do not find it surprising that an international foundation consid- ered Western Armenian as an endangered language. I did not find surprising that an influential part of diaspora Armenian elite representatives, praising the great narra- tives and especially making it an ideology, does not speak Armenian. Great Armeni- anness — without the Armenian language.

And in the end, with what new proj- ects will Haig Avakian make us happy in our unhappy times?

The answer will be on a purely individu- al level, on a self-advertising platform. The series of supplements of Tcha- hagir will be contin- ued. There is inexhaustible material and thoughts accumulated. Articles will con- tinue. The history of the formation of the Hunchak Party in Egypt is in the process of preparation for publishing, the archives of which I have. I also am preparing for publishing the diaries of Archishop Mamb- sirunian, the leader of the Armenian Church in Egypt, composer Dikran Tchou- hadjian’s annotated bibliography, discog- raphy of recordings of Armenian classical soloists from the beginning of the 20th cen- tury to 2010. Almost all of my publications can be downloaded and read here: https:// archive.org/details/@hav647?tab=up- loads&sort=–date

Tribute to the Armenian Heritage Park As It Celebrates Its First Decade

CELEBRATION, from page 13

geometry) that is emblematic of hope.

The inscription on the Reflecting Pool reads: “Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have offered hope and refuge for immigrants looking to begin new lives. This park is a gift to the Commonwealth and the City of Boston from the Armenian American community of Massachusetts. This sculp- ture is offered in honor of the one and one-half million victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. May it serve in remembrance of all genocides that have followed, and celebrate the diversity of the communities that have re-formed in the safety of these shores.”

The Friends of the Armenian Heritage Park, in reaching out to commu- nities, arranged a curriculum, Geometry as Public Art: Telling a Story, for fourth grade students in Boston schools. On field trips to the Park, guides explain how the geometric features, the Labyrinth and Abstract Sculpture convey a story. The lessons encourage students to learn how their own ancestors immigrated to Amer- ica and to feel more comfortable sharing their own immigration experience.

The configuration of the Artsculpture of the park in 2015

According to fourth grade teachers from Boston’s Eliot K-8 Innovation School, the curriculum has been a wonderful success: “(It’s) an exciting and engaging way for students to learn more about their family heritage and reflect on the American immigration experience. The curriculum is a wonderful way for teachers to learn about and better understand their students and for the students to learn about one another.”

Could there be a more important moment in time to reflect upon the unifying message of this sculpture? And to walk the Labyrinth, contemplating how we could take steps in our own lives to end divisiveness and celebrate diversity.
Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian

Armenian Cuisine’s Zadigi Kahke (Easter Cookies)

In April 2012, co-authors Aline Kamakian and Barbara Drieskens wrapped up a month-long, AGBU-coordinated tour across the US and Canada to promote their widely acclaimed publication Armenian Cuisine. Equal parts cookbook, photo essay, and oral history, the released hardcover quickly found, and is still finding, its place on kitchen counters and coffee tables in homes around the world. The book’s concept was developed by Aline, who is the Lebanese-Armenian chef and owner of the renowned Beirut restaurant Mayrig. She hoped to resolve her clients’ questions about why the Armenian foods listed on the menu were known by Turkish names, and record her mother Vardui’s cherished family recipes along the way. Aline’s quest took her to the ancestral Armenian land of Cilicia in present day southeastern Turkey. Knowing her talents lay more in cooking than writing, she forged a collaboration with Drieskens, a trained anthropologist. The two embarked on an emotional three-week journey across almost 2,000 miles. The result is a striking volume filled with 139 classic recipes and hundreds of photographs of landscapes and natural foods that have made it a 2012 New York Photo Festival contender.

“Cook with Aline” is Aline’s popular YouTube channel. It tells my story, my struggle and my love and pride for the Armenian heritage. With over 300 episodes filmed and edited, these episodes are an extremely powerful tool to reach out to food enthusiasts and introduce them to our wide culinary heritage. We teach how to prepare the best Armenian dishes. It’s a step-by-step guide through our history, through our mothers’ cooking and our holiday feasts. For me, this is more than a cooking show, it’s my heart, mind and soul, put all in one place, spreading the Armenian culinary heritage around the world.

For Aline’s cooking videos and information, go to: https://www.youtube.com/c/AlineKamakian/featured or https://www.youtube.com/c/AlineKamakian/videos or https://www.alinekamakian.com.

“Armenian Cuisine” by the founders and chefs at the Mayrig restaurant in Beirut have brought to market a stunning cookery book which would be a wonderful coffee table book in itself, but for the fact it will get quickly stained by food through overuse. The chapters are typically divided by ingredient but more interestingly, the book is an interview of the cuisine in different regions of historic Armenia and their specialties such as Urfa, Musa Ler and Cilicia, bringing together in one book dishes that remind me of my Lebanese-Armenian grandmother but also my Cypriot-Armenian grandmother and their cooking traditions. Like the best of these women, all the measurements are in cups and you can easily end up cooking for 20 people with one recipe—the only way for us,” wrote Arda Kalajian, from the Armenian Institute in London.

Robyn Kalajian at The Armenian Kitchen food blog (https://thearmeniankitchen.com) says, “When Armenians prepare for Easter or this time of year, chorag is always on the menu. This is also a time to be baking delicious Easter cookies like Zadigi Kahke.” Robyn contacted Barbara Drieskens since she had a question about the amount of flour listed in the recipe. “Barbara told me there was an error in the printed recipe — the cookbook said to use 2 and 2/3 cups flour, when in fact, it should be 6 cups of flour.”

Here’s Robyn’s updated version of the Zadigi Kahke recipe from Armenian Cuisine:

**Equipment:** Stand mixer with paddle attachment or a hand mixer.

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 6 cups all-purpose flour (sifted)
- 2 cups farina (sifted)
- 1 cup unsalted butter (melted)
- 1/2 cup sunflower oil (safflower oil may be substituted)
- 1 cup all vegetable shortening (melted)
- 11/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup milk (a bit warm)
- 1 teaspoon mahlab (freshly ground)
- 1/2 teaspoons ground nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon yeast
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 11/2 teaspoons ground cloves
- 1 pinch salt
- Glaze and garnish:
  - 1 egg
  - 2 tablespoons milk
  - 1 tablespoon raw sesame seeds
  - 1 tablespoon black cumin seeds

**PREPARATION:**

Preheat oven to 350F degrees.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, blend together 1 1/2 cups of the flour, 1/2 cup of the farina, and the rest of the cookie ingredients. Little by little, add the remaining flour and farina. Knead by hand until a workable dough is achieved.

Roll the dough into balls of dough into fine sausage shapes that can be formed into twists, twisted rings, or braids. Place each shaped piece on parchment-lined baking pans. Brush the tops with egg glaze, made by whisking equal amounts of egg and milk. Garnish with sesame seeds or black cumin seeds. Bake the cookies for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes about 50 cookies, depending on size.

For this recipe, go to: https://thearmeniankitchen.com/its-zadigi-kahke-easter-cookie-time/

To order Armenian Cuisine, go to https://www.alinekamakian.com/cookbooks

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

Aline Kamakian is a 2022 Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Honoree, whose full biography can be read on the group’s website. She says she believes that the easiest way to interest a foreigner in your nation is to offer a delicious meal. “This method is nothing new. My restaurants are an attempt to show people that Armenians not only survived the Armenian Genocide, but retained the ability to enjoy life.”

The names of the 2022 Aurora Humanitarians will be revealed on April 24, 2022, and the 2022 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity will be awarded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors later in 2022. The story is verified by the 100 LIVES Research Team.

For information, go to: https://auroraprizeforhumanitarian.com/en/aline-kamakian

“Putting Armenian cuisine on the culinary map was my father’s dream and my realization,” says Aline.

Connect at:
- http://www.mayrigbeirut.com/arm
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- https://www.tastelatias.com/mayrig
- https://www.peterlish.com/gamechanger/mayrig/
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFv88730O1B12gD7wyrY

For more news articles about Aline Kamakian, go to: https://www.hospitalitynews.com/?s=kamakian

For the 2012 Interview at AGBU Headquarters with the co-authors of Armenian Cuisine, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUxgPF8w-NU

See also: The Armenian Kitchen’s adapted version of Aline Kamakian’s Olive and Nut Salad, go to: https://thearmeniankitchen.com/olive-and-nut-salad-tzizavedougli-yev/
Vic Gerami’s ‘Motherland’ Production Team Gets Support of Two Prominent Community Members

Support, page 13

He added, ‘This attack was waged against the Armenians when the world was preoccupied with a pandemic and the US presidential elections. The world must know about this grave injustice, and that’s why my wife and I decided to join Vic Gerami and the team behind ‘Motherland,’ an important documentary film that will educate people who are still in the dark.’

Vartany shares positive feelings about doing his part to help the current situation in Artsakh. Newly minted Motherland associate producer, Oshin Harootoonian, is determined to kill or drive out Artsakh’s 110,000 population, Aliyev’s brutal regime shelling of Armenian villages, depriving the people of residents of medical care. “It’s a war zone,” he stated. “We need to support the people of Armenia.”

According to ‘Motherland’s’ producers, “I’m excited for Dr. Armen Vartany and Oshin Harootoonian are now in league with the criminal defense attorney Mark Geragos, California State Commissioner Sam Keshbayan, Dr. Nishan Odabashian, Lilit Dolkarian Odabashian, Judy Saryan, Jacob Bourzounian, and Professor John Dennem as ‘Motherland’ producers.

Previously, Los Angeles City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell, who secured a dramatically important grant from the City of Los Angeles to support the film, congratulated Gerami, Geragos, and Motherland’s entire production team on recruiting Commissioner Keshbayan. “We are racing against time to bring much-needed attention to this humanitarian catastrophe and the imminent threat it poses to millions of innocent people,” said Geragos.

For more information, visit the film’s website, MotherlandDoc.com.
The forthcoming Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations are the extension of the Armenian-Turkish talks, which started with the assurances that there will be no Preconditions. Ankara moved the negotiations to a related field, where preconditions emerged. While Turkey was insisting on no preconditions, in the meantime, it stated that it was coordinating those talks with Azerbaijan.

After two rounds of Turkish-Armenian talks from which “positive signs” emerged, it looks like these talks are temporarily suspended pending the outcome of talks between Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev in Brussels on April 6 (after press time). This way, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan is off the hook vis-à-vis the Biden administration, which initially had asked Mr. Erdogan to normalize its strained relations with Armenia. Should the Pashinyan-Aliyev talks fail to produce any concrete results, Turkey will have ample opportunity to blame the Armenian side.

In preparation for the April 6 summit, Pashinyan made an extensive presentation before Armenia’s Security Council where he outlined the major issues. He revealed that the country faces a tough situation, as Baku has sent a five-point peace plan, with a warning that if a peace treaty is not signed immediately, the next step would be war.

Yet many outstanding issues between the two countries have not been resolved and conditions set by the November 9, 2020 trilateral declaration have not been met: the refugees have not been resettled, the Armenian POWs have not been released, and Azerbaijani forces have not been moved out of Armenia’s Sev Lrij region and other border areas, among others.

Yerevan has agreed to the negotiations, even though one of the five points in the Azerbaijani proposal is the mutual agreement to the territorial integrity of both countries. This signifies that Armenia will have to agree to the premise that Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan. In short, the destiny of the Karabakh people is on the chopping block.

Turkey and Azerbaijan are making haste to create irreversible wins on the ground, now that Armenia is in a weak position after its defeat and Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are fully engaged in the Ukrainian crisis.

Recently, a British military delegation reportedly visited Azerbaijan, which may signal the latter has a free hand to possibly open a second front against Russia by attacking Artsakh and Armenia in yet another case of a global powerplay. With the background of a pointed reprimand from the US State Department to Baku, blaming the latter for border conflict escalations, and despite the US’s critical position on Azerbaijan’s culpability in the occupied territories, the recent waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act should not be construed as an anti-Armenian political move because that reflects America’s overall strategy of containing Russia. Armenia is simply part of the collateral damage.

The US or the Western powers do not have the wherewithal to neutralize or to push Russia out of the Caucasus. That role has been relegated to Turkey, which has become the necessary evil for both opposing camps. That is why all its transgressions are forgiven; for example, after blaming Russian for its aggression in Ukraine and voting against Russia for the annexation of Crimea, Erdogan has the guts to refuse to abide by the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West.

Turkey operates in a space of impunity it has created for itself. Therefore, to pin hopes on any major country to help Armenia against Turkish and Azerbaijani aggression is unrealistic. We have to admit grudgingly that Pashinyan’s trip to Brussels can amount to nothing but signing off on another document of capitulation, similar to the November 9, 2020 declaration. The only guarantee to preserve Armenia’s — and by extension Karabakh’s — security and sovereignty was the armed forces, not necessarily by winning a war but by deterring one.

During the last war, the Armenian armed forces fought valiantly for 44 days, despite spy networks, defections and the malfunctioning of its Iskander system. Since the war, four chiefs of staff and three ministers of defense have been charged, which does not bode well.

Turkey and Azerbaijan chose Brussels for the April 6 summit to spite Moscow, that city being home to NATO headquarters. That is why President Putin has been frantically calling President Aliyev and Prime Minister Pashinyan. Even after calls to each party, Putin called Pashinyan again, certainly to warn him not to cross certain red lines.

Incidentally, the war in Ukraine is a double-edged sword against Armenia; if Russia wins an overwhelming victory, the chances are that the prospect of a “union state” will have a new lease on life and Armenia will become a candidate for membership. If, on the other hand, Russia is humiliated there, the West will push it out of the Caucasus. In that scenario, Armenia’s security guarantor will no longer be the West directly, but its surrogate in the region, Turkey. That should certainly send a shiver down our spines.

It is apropos to quote here French Senator Valerie Boyer, who, commenting on a statement in the newspaper Figaro, stated this week, “During the 202 large-scale aggression, Azerbaijan, with the support of Turkey, massacred the Armenians of Artsakh though Turkish bombs, white phosphorus and drones. The genocidal spirit has awakened in them. And the world is silently watching without lifting a finger: Encroachments continue in an atmosphere of indifference.”

Armenia’s Foreign Ministry establishment has made a practice of forfeiting its assets before sitting at the negotiation table. That happened before the first round of Armenian negotiations and it is happening now, in preparation for the April 6 summit. Turkey Caucasus editor at Eurasianet, Joshua Kueca, writes, “Conceding sovereignty over Karabakh would represent a dramatic turn for Yerevan. The Armenian government is effective- ly conceding that the Armenians will not be able to retain control of Nagorno Karabakh, paving the way for Azerbaijan to regain full control of sovereignty over the territory and boding an uncertain future for the area’s current ethnic Armenian residents. The concession has not been made explicitly but rather via a conspicuous shift in official rhetoric from Yerevan.” To corroborate his statement, Kueca quotes Armenia’s Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan: “For us, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights.”

This is setting the stage to give up Karabakh, when there are other options to explore; one such option is a “shortcut” of “Re- medial Secession,” which was successfully used in the case of Kosovo, South Sudan and East Timor to attain independence. Karabakh is a perfect case for Armenia’s geopolitical policies. “Rights” are pretty vague formulations, wherein the OSCE can easily situate certain cultural rights after placing the head of the Karabakh people under Ramil Safarov’s axe. Of course, the latter case is a symbolic one, dating back to 2004. In the former case, when Safarov beheaded an Armenian soldier, Gurgen Margaryan, a fellow participant in a NATO-sponsored program. Safarov was arrested but repatriated to Azerbaijan, where the Hungarian government assured that he would face the death penalty. Instead, he received a hero’s welcome, a full pardon and a promotion.

When confronted with a resolve international community, Aliyev can even buy the principle of rights.
Paranoid Ottoman Sultans Murdered Their Brothers To Secure Their Thrones

By Harout Sassounian

We all know that the Ottoman army invaded many countries with utter savagery. We also know that the Ottoman Empire committted mass killings and genocide against millions of Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and Kurds. But, not everyone knows that the Ottoman sultans routinely murdered their own family members.

I recently saw an incredible YouTube video that documented the barbaric behavior of the Ottoman sultans. According to the 13-minute-long video, Ottoman leaders were engaged in “dark and messed-up practices.” The video is titled “frightening things that were ‘normal’ in the Ottoman Empire.” YouTube shows that the video was posted on October 15, 2021, and in less than six months, 640,975 people viewed the video of which 10,000 checked “like.” This means that more than 640,000 people are now aware of the brutalities of the Ottoman Sultans.

Here is a partial transcript of the video:

“When[Sultan] Mehmed the Conqueror besieged Constantinople, his own uncle was fighting against him from the walls. In typical Ottoman fashion, Mehmed dealt with his uncle offering no mercy, and after he took the throne, he had a message for future generations of Ottomans. He began rounding up all of his male relatives and executed them. His ruthlessness didn’t even have an exception for his younger brother [Ministers of Finance] - he was a child in the caliphate. Mehmed had him asphyxiated without bathe even an eye. Once Mehmed was done disposing all his possible competitors for the throne, he proclaimed: ‘Whomsoever of my sons the Sultanate shall pass, it is that fitting for the order of the world he shall kill his brothers. Most of the Ottomans [high-ranking religious leaders] allow this. So let them act on this.’

Thus began a series of generational civil wars where every next sultan, successively killed his brothers, had to soak in hands in their own brothers’, cousins’, and uncle’s blood to secure the throne for themselves. It is said that another Mehmet, Mehmed III, was so heartbroken that he tore his beard off in agony as his younger brother begged for mercy and swore, again and again, to do ‘it is a weapon against him. Yet, bound by the family tradition, and 23-year-old Mehmed III turned away without speaking a word and the loyalists killed the young boy along with the rest of the 18 brothers of Mehmed III. Bodies of all 19 siblings were out on the streets of Istanbul and it is said that the whole city cried for the souls that night. Mind you, the murders would not just stop after the new Sultan would secure the throne. The hunt for all of the Royal family’s relatives would be relentless.

“Even Suleiman the Magnificent’s hands weren’t clean as he had his son asphyxiated on the streets with a bowstring just because his popularity had become a matter of paranoia for the most acclaimed Sultan of the Ottomans. However, when Ahmed I was abruptly dethroned in 1617, a general agreement was struck between the relatives and the family he left behind. Instead of drenching the streets of Istanbul with royal blood this time, the clergy quietly banished it [the punishment of immanent order] and announced his younger brother Mustafa the First as the new sultan, because Ahmed’s sons were too young to rule. Mustafa himself was spared by his brother Ahmed the First as the 12-year-old and his 13-year-old brothers were too close to order death toward one another.

“Since then, the policy of killing relatives changed to incarcerating them. Potential heirs to the throne would be confined in the Topkapı Palace. In Istanbul, these special apartments would be referred to as the ‘kafees,’ however, in English this translates to the ‘cages.’ A reference of the Ottoman Empire would have to possibly spend his whole life imprisoned in the ‘kafees’ while being monitored day and night by guards. These princes were given all sorts of luxury and they were able to live a lavish lifestyle fit for royal kin, but the restrictions of house arrest were enforced strictly. This caused many of the princes to go mad from boredom or become heavily debauched. When a new Sultan would be taken to the [palace’s] Gate of Felicity to receive the allegiance of the empire, they would be the first to the ‘kafees’ in decades! Not an ideal preparation for a man who is about to become the ruler, was it? And even though the ritualistic civil wars were put to an end, the royal relatives would still live their lives in constant fear of losing their heads at second’s notice.

The second half of the video describes the isolated life of the Sultan in his palace with his many concubines in the harem, overseen by the Sultan’s mother. We know that some of these women were young Armenian girls. The un-named author of the video also described the beheadings in the palace and the two pillars on which the severed heads would hang.

From now on if anyone tells you that the Ottoman Empire was tolerant and civized, you can send them a copy of this article or refer them to the above referenced YouTube video. That should shut them up.
As Another Genocide Looms, Western Virtue-Signaling Won’t Cut It

By Michael Rubin

The West failed to prevent the atrocities in Ukraine by dithering in the weeks before the Russian invasion.

“Every year, politicians repeat ‘Never again.’ And now, we see that these words are simply worthless.” So said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last month. The images of Ukrainians, bound, beaten, and raped before their execution by retreating Russian forces in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, give his words new resonance.

U.S. politicians have affirmed his frustration. “It’s crucial to all of us who are committed to living up to the maxim of ‘Never again’ . . . to spot the signs of the worst atrocities [so] we’re empowered to prevent them,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared at the Holocaust Museum just two weeks ago.

Virtue-signaling is a placebo, not a remedy. It’s increasingly clear that the Biden administration has not learned any lessons from its mistakes. Just over 18 months ago, Nagorno-Karabakh exploded into war. Azerbaijan, backed by Turkish Special Forces and equipped with Israeli drones, launched a surprise attack on the centenary of the Ottoman Turkish invasion on newly independent Armenia. Azerbaijani dictator Ilham Aliyev’s eliminationist rhetoric left little doubt that the 44-day war was motivated less by territorial dispute and more by ethnic and religious supremacist. To underscore the point, Azeri forces systematically desecrated and destroyed centuries-old Armenian Christian sites in a territory predominantly populated by Armenians (but assigned by Josef Stalin to Azerbaijan). To support his aggression, Aliyev has said Armenians “have psychological disorders,” called them “a depraved tribe,” and compared them to dogs.

The 2020 war ended with a shaky ceasefire secured by Russian peacekeepers. In recent days, as the Kremlin withdrew many of these forces to support its languishing campaign in Ukraine, Azerbaijan has gone on the offensive, pushing into Armenian villages and targeting Armenians with drones. Minsk Group monitors have found Azerbaijan to be the aggressor, although Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gives Aliyev cover in the same way he once did after the International Criminal Court indicted Sudanese dictator Omar al Bashir for genocide in Darfur. Then, he dismissed criticism of his embrace of Bashir by saying “no Muslim could perpetrate a genocide.” As Azerbaijani forces once again go on the offensive, Blinken not only responds with moral equivalence but also appears ready to finance Azerbaijan’s war machine by waiving again Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act. It appears that Blinken wants to let Azerbaijan off the hook in the hope that it might assist Washington’s policies in Ukraine and Iran. This approach ignores both the letter of Section 907 and the fact that Azerbaijan, like Turkey, plays both sides of the issue.

In essence, the Biden administration is repeating the same mistakes it did in the run-up to Russian aggression against Ukraine: It telegraphs indecisiveness, if not impotence, in the face of an aggressor’s genocidal rhetoric and refuses to apply sanctions while they might save lives. Blinken and members of Congress might say “never again,” but increasingly, when it comes to caviar diplomacy, it appears they mean, “Well, maybe one more time.”

Michael Rubin (@mrubin1971) is a contributor to the Washington Examiner’s Beltway Confidential. He is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This commentary originally appeared in the April 4 edition of the Washington Examiner.

US Calls for Russia’s Suspension from UN Human Rights Council

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The United States will ask the U.N. General Assembly to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said on Monday, after Ukraine accused Russian troops of killing dozens of civilians in the town of Bucha.

A two-thirds majority vote by the 193-member assembly in New York can suspend a state for persistently committing gross and systematic violations of human rights.

“Russia’s participation on the Human Rights Council is a farce,” U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on a visit to Romania.

And it is wrong, which is why we believe it is time the U.N. General Assembly vote to remove them.”

Ukraine said that it will use all “available UN mechanisms” to collect evidence on Russia’s crimes in the country.

“No place for Russia on the UN Human Rights Council,” Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

Thomas-Greenfield said she wants to have the vote this week.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24, the Assembly has adopted two resolutions denouncing Russia with 140 votes in favor. Moscow says it is carrying out a “special operation” to demilitarize Ukraine.

Bucha’s deputy mayor said around 50 bodies found after Russian forces withdrew were the victims of extra-judicial killings by Russian troops.

Reuters was not able to independently verify who was responsible for killing those Bucha residents.