

New Glendale Mayor Kassakhian Focuses on Fundamentals of City Governance, Gives Voice to Armenians

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

GLENDALE — Ardashes “Ardy” Kassakhian was selected as mayor of Glendale, the Armenian-filled “Jewel City” of California, on April 5, but he is not a newcomer to public service. He has been serving on the city council for two years, and prior to that, held the elected position of city clerk for some 15 years. He declared in a recent interview that many people do not have a realistic notion of what a mayor can accomplish. “As mayor now, there is the expectation that somehow I am an all-powerful



Glendale Mayor Ardashes “Ardy” Kassakhian (photo Aram Arkun)

Wizard of Oz, controlling things in the city. I have to continuously give people small civic lessons and explain to them that it is mostly a ceremonial position. Although I am appreciative for their well wishes and their accolades, I am really only the first among equals and we all work together with equal powers, except for the fact that I get to run the city council meetings,” Kassakhian said.

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Police arrest demonstrators.

Armenian Opposition Protesters Face Criminal Proceedings

By Susan Badalian and Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian law-enforcement authorities have opened more than a dozen criminal cases against participants of daily opposition demonstrations aimed at forcing Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign.

They say that the protesters have defied police orders to unblock roads and committed “hooligan” acts during the week-long demonstrations organized by Armenia leading opposition forces.

The Investigative Committee said over the weekend that one man has been arrested on charges of hitting a policeman while two others indicted for burning tires at a blocked street intersection in Yerevan. The committee said other protesters may also be prosecuted for not

obeying “legitimate orders” of riot police.

Elinar Vartanyan, a parliament deputy from the main opposition Hayastan alliance, denounced the “absurd” criminal proceedings, saying that they are aimed at discouraging Armenians from campaigning for Pashinyan’s removal from power. She said opposition supporters simply exercised their constitutional right of peaceful assembly.

The authorities have not initiated such proceedings against any police officers accused by the opposition as well as human rights groups of disproportionate use of force. One policeman was caught on camera last week punching an opposition supporter during his arrest.

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New Primate Elected for Eastern Diocese

NEW YORK — In the inaugural session of the 120th Assembly of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, clergy and delegates elected a new Primate, in the person of the Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan. Pending approval by the Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, Parsamyan will become the 13th Primate of the Eastern Diocese.

The Diocesan Assembly convened on Friday, May 6, in a “hybrid” format incorporating both in-person and online participation. Current Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided. The in-person gathering took place at the St. Vartan Cathedral Complex in New York City, with some 56 voting delegates and a number of observers in attendance.

An additional 125 voting delegates attending the Assembly online, over the Zoom platform, interacting and fully participate in the meeting. For all participants, voting was conducted using a secure online balloting platform.

In all, 181 delegates and clergy, representing the parishes of the Eastern Diocese, took part on the proceedings. A second general session will go forward under the same format on Saturday, May 7. Several online “breakout sessions” are scheduled weekly through the month, with a final online general session wrapping up proceedings on May 31.

Following the announcement of his election, Parsamyan gave a gracious acceptance speech, thanking the people of the Diocese “for the privilege to walk



From left, Bishop Daniel Findikyan and Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan

with this Armenian family of faith, on this road to salvation.”

“Let us renew our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and again pledge to serve him by serving one another,” he added.

In warmhearted remarks, the present Primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, said, “On my part, I want to congratulate Hayr Mesrop Vartabed for being elected the next Primate of this Diocese. He is a man, I know from personal experience, of enormous gifts, powerful faith deep within, and passionate concern for the building up of our church.”

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Photojournalist Documents Artsakh Home Front



Children in Stepanakert Bomb Shelter Receiving Gifts

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

NEW YORK — When war strikes, we watch television or read the newspaper, hearing about attacks, geopolitics, international relations, and intervention by world powers. The 44-day war in Artsakh was no different. Among footage of Azerbaijani drones and reports of Syrian mercenaries, Ezras Tellalian, a psychology student, photojournalist, and deacon in the Armenian Apostolic Church, wanted to bring to light something he felt was missing in the media intake of the Western world: the human side of the life of civilians.

Inspired by the resilience of the people of Artsakh, Tellalian has put together a book of photographs, *Humanity During War: Artsakh, 2020*. “I felt like it needed to happen,” he said. “I needed to do this to honor these people.”

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Rhode Island Community Commemorates Armenian Genocide

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ARTSAKH
Yaron Weiss: ‘Come to Artsakh!’

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US Donates \$1 million in Equipment to Armenia

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) donated chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) response equipment worth over \$1 million to Armenia's Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), the US Embassy in Armenia said on May 6.

This donation allows the MES to enhance its capability to safely detect, identify, and respond to CBRN materials of concern, and decontaminate personnel.

Yerevan to Be Home to New Tech Center

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A technology center, which will be the first building in the region to meet the BOMA A Class construction standard, will be built in Yerevan with investments totaling \$110 million, Enterprise Armenia reported on May 10.

The standard is granted to the most prestigious buildings competing for premier office space with rents above average for the area. The project will be implemented based on LEED certification standards.

Construction on one of the largest investment projects, coordinated by Enterprise Armenia, the Dalian Technology Center, will launch in June and the building will be completed in 2026.

Levon Ohanesyan, CEO of Enterprise Armenia, believes the center has a special importance in terms of both the amount of investments and the expected impact on the development of Armenia's technological eco-environment and promoting cooperation between leading Armenian and world organizations.

Ex-Ombudsman Denies Affiliation with Any Party

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia's former Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan has denied that he is affiliated with any political force.

Tatoyan said this week that various pro-government circles have recently launched a "hate campaign" against him on social media.

"Obviously, my name is causing a lot of political anxiety among many people in power. Instead of engaging in real governance and problem solving, you are busy hazing others," he wrote on Facebook on May 9.

"By ruling the country through Facebook, you have brought an entire state to the brink of disaster; our statehood and security are under threat," Tatoyan said, accusing the incumbent authorities of failure in all areas.

"I would like to remind the insolent government and community officials that you should focus on your real mission of protecting the country and ensuring its security, dealing with the problems of people living in border settlements, rather than collecting likes on Facebook," he noted.

Tatoyan stresses that he actively participates in public life, but he is not affiliated with any political force.

Modernization of Irrigation Systems of Tavush Region As a Way of Strengthening Border Security

YEREVAN — The H. Hovnanian Family Foundation, together with the Government of Armenia, is actively involved in the improvement of water systems in Tavush region border villages.

Rural development is a part of the foundation's mission thus the design, construction, and modernization of irrigation systems in this border region is critical for providing a means of economic livelihood for the population there. The current lack of efficient irrigation systems, which has been limiting agricultural production and variety of products, is one of the reasons Tavush inhabitants have migrated into more urban areas, resulting in a further emptying of these strategic border villages. The programs will also have a direct impact on drinking water usage, as currently about 50-60% of drinking water is used for land irrigation.

Cooperation with the Tavush region began in 2020, when the Foundation did a 42,000,000 AMD pilot project in Varagavan. Because that project was successfully implemented, the Foundation then signed a memorandum with the regional municipality within the framework of a government subvention program for 23 more villages for an estimated 2 billion 300 million AMD investment.

It is envisioned that five new projects, in the villages Aknaghbyur, Achajur, Aygehovit-Vazashen, Berdavan and Chinari — all prioritized as top urgency — will be implemented by year end 2022. For 1320 beneficiaries who will have access to irrigation, this means an average increased efficiency of land cultivation by 70-80%, due to the projects implemented by the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation in 2021-2022.

Five more similar projects are slated to be implemented in the villages of Koghb, Bagratashen, Vazasen, Barekamavan, Khashtarak in 2023. Modernization projects undertaken from 2021-2023 will result in irrigation of an additional 5000 hectares of land overall. As Aghabek Galstyan, Head of the Department of Local Self-Government and Republican Executive Bodies of the RA Tavush Marzpetaran stated, "Hovnanian Foundation's involvement and contribution is going to be something unprecedented in the region..."

However, the restoration of Tavush irrigation systems is not only for socio-economic benefit, but also of strategic-security significance. Most of the water systems



Varagavan

feed the Kur-Caspian basin (Azerbaijan). During the Soviet Union period, four reservoirs were built for water storage, one of which is the Berkaber reservoir located in Ijevan region. Three others, Khndzorut, Tavush and Hakhum reservoirs are located in the Berd region.

During the Soviet Union, reservoirs were built in the lowest zones, almost on the border with Azerbaijan, due to which Armenia's irrigation system was 95 percent based on pumping systems. As a result of the war, dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the ensuing economic crisis in the 1990s, 90 percent of these reservoir

infrastructures were became outdated or non-functional. As a result, it is possible for Armenians to use a very small part of these water volumes, as due to gravity they mainly flow to Azerbaijan, enriching the bordering regions of the neighboring country.

Thus, expansion of the irrigation system and the full use of water resources is also of great strategic importance in terms of having an impact on Azerbaijan. It is therefore considered a multifaceted strategic issue; it is considered the number one priority, which in its turn will lead to the generation of income that will solve many other infrastructural problems in the future.

Baku Reacts to Armenian Proposals on Peace Treaty

By Anush Mkrtchian, Tatekiv Sargsyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov downplayed on May 10 Armenia proposals regarding a peace treaty between the two states sought by Baku.

In March, Azerbaijan presented Armenia with five elements which it wants to be at the heart of the treaty. They include a mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity. The Armenian government said they are acceptable to it in principle, setting the stage for official negotiations on the issue.

Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, said last week that Yerevan has also come up with its own ideas about the comprehensive peace deal. Grigoryan did not disclose the six proposals submitted to Baku. He said only that the two sides have tentatively agreed to discuss them in their planned negotiations.

"If we look at that [Armenian] document

we will see that they cannot be called proposals," Bayramov told Azerbaijani journalists. He said Yerevan simply reacted to what was proposed by the Azerbaijani side.

"I can list some of the six points of their reaction so that you conclude to what extent they can be considered proposals," Bayramov added.

In particular, he went on, the Armenian side made clear that it has no territorial claims to Azerbaijan and suggested that the would-be peace treaty reaffirm the parties' commitment to Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Russia during and after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azerbaijani minister did not shed light on the other Armenian proposals.

Edmon Marukyan, a recently appointed Armenian ambassador-at-large, told the Armenpress news agency later on Tuesday that the proposals also relate to the future status of Karabakh and security guarantees for its ethnic Armenian population. Marukyan too insisted that Baku had agreed to

include these issues on the agenda of the talks on the peace treaty.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev pledged to launch such talks soon when they met in Brussels on April 6.

Pashinyan said afterwards that the international community is pressing Armenia to recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and scale back its demands for international recognition of Karabakh's secession from Azerbaijan. He signaled his readiness to make such concessions, triggering anti-government street protests in Yerevan.

Pashinyan and Aliyev also agreed to set up before the end of April a joint commission demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. The commission has not yet begun its work.

Bayramov said on Tuesday that the two sides have agreed on its composition. But he gave no dates for the first meeting of the task force.



ARMENIA

Analysis: Former Government Supporters Continue Civil Disobedience in Bid to Dethrone Nikol Pashinyan

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Activists affiliated with the “I Have Honor” and “Armenia Alliance” parliamentary opposition blocs have been engaged in a series of civil disobedience actions and protests since May 1, as part of an effort to force Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation. Protesters, led by key figures from the administrations of Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan, accuse the prime minister of a conspiracy to “sell” Artsakh to Azerbaijan, and to “Turkify” Armenia itself. They also blame him entirely for Armenia’s defeat in the 2020 Second Artsakh War.

This latest round of protest comes as a response to a speech which Pashinyan made on April 14 when, upon his return from a controversial round of negotiations with his Azerbaijani counterpart hosted by EU President Charles Michel in Brussels. He announced to Parliament that the “international community expects us to lower the bar just a little on the issue of Artsakh’s independence” in order to throw its backing behind Armenia in negotiations. Opposition figures took these cryptic words, along with Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan’s agreement to five negotiation points with Azerbaijan, as a tacit admission that the government was preparing to abandon Artsakh to Azerbaijani control, promptly calling for the government’s removal yet again.

Pashinyan later clarified his comments during a cabinet meeting held on April 22, following his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which he pointed out that “lowering the bar” on status had been part of the negotiation format for every peace summit that Armenia participated in since the 1990s. “Various documents adopted by various international bodies since the 1990s contained direct or indirect calls for lowering the bar. And that the meaning of these facts were carefully hidden from our public doesn’t mean that they didn’t exist,” Pashinyan said. He also suggested that “lowering the bar” in this context meant maintaining the status quo while delaying negotiations on a final status for Artsakh for the time being. He added that Armenia had received security guarantees from President Putin over Artsakh. Pashinyan declared Armenia’s priority as ensuring “the kind of situation or solution where Artsakhtsis continue to live in Artsakh [...], for them to live in a way that they feel themselves Karabakhtsi, Artsakhtsi and Armenian.”



Heavy truck owned by an oligarch affiliated with former president Serzh Sargsyan blocks rush hour traffic on Yerevan’s Victory Bridge (photo Raffi Elliott)

Political analyst Tigran Grigoryan, himself an Artsakh native, noted that the government’s shift in position from a guarantee of status for Artsakh towards a guarantee of human rights for the people of Artsakh was a result of external pressure, primarily from EU negotiators. “The process started in June 2021. Between the parliamentary election, and the adoption of the government’s agenda, a number of European delegations visited the region, and publicly messaged that Armenia needs to focus on economic growth and democratization, while the less-published second part of that message was that Armenia should probably abandon some of its positions on Karabakh,” he told Civilnet host Emilio Cricchio. Indeed, Nikol Pashinyan campaigned on the promise of pursuing a policy of remedial secession for Artsakh in the runup to the 2021 election, and this position remains on his party’s website. However, a number of regional and global events have shifted the government’s political calculus.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February complicated negotiations for both Yerevan and Baku, and significantly raised the threat of renewed violence in the region. Azerbaijan used the opportunity to put more pressure on both Armenia and Russia by cutting off gas to Artsakh, and attempting to capture a village which was officially under

the Russian peacekeepers’ mandate. Lightly armed Russian troops have few mechanisms with which to de-escalate tension in the region, while the Russian military presence as a whole has been reduced with the redeployment of some forces from their 102nd Military Base in Gyumri to Ukraine. Meanwhile Armenia continues to undergo a far-reaching military reform and reequipment process, while trying to avoid any escalation with its authoritarian neighbor.

While concurrent negotiations with Turkey continue despite providing little in terms of concrete results, a report by Crisis Group calls the resumption of talks by all parties, including the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, United States, France, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and even Turkey, essential to preventing a return to violence in the region. “The way forward in the meantime may therefore be to continue pursuing common ground where it is most likely to be found — on issues of common economic interest — and begin to address status and other political issues as openings present themselves,” the group concludes, adding that this approach might help create space for the parties to ease tensions and enable economic engagement to proceed.

Armenia’s leadership seems to have gotten the message. In his annual May 9

speech, commemorating both the Soviet date to the end of World War Two, and the 1992 liberation of Shushi, Pashinyan reminded citizens that “our response to this situation, however, should not be apocalypticism, but a sober, cold, professional analysis of the reasons underlying the current military-political and regional situation, and the pragmatic planning of the future.” He also judged the promotion of regional peaceful co-existence as the most realistic way to guarantee the security of Artsakh and Armenia.

These comments have done little to convince the leadership of ongoing opposition protests. They continue to call for Nikol Pashinyan’s removal as prime minister. Its supporters, mainly made up of activists from the former ruling Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Republican Party and Robert Kocharyan’s inner circle have been attempting to paralyze the capital city for days now. Having set up a tent city on France Square, which connects Yerevan’s three largest boulevards, Mashtots, Baghramyan and Sayat Nova, protesters have parked large trucks on bridges leading into the city during morning rush hour and attempted to close other streets with park benches before being cleared away by the police. Armenia’s Ombudswoman has accused police of excessive use of force, and abuse of the rights of detainees. Nightly demonstrations have also been held in central Yerevan.

Analysts and other observers have put the average number of attendees over the last two weeks at around 10,000 to 15,000, while the protest leaders themselves estimated the number to be around 50,000. In either case, both figures are comparable to last year’s failed opposition protests, and appear to be stagnating.

An attempt to widen the scope of the “Resistance,” as the protesters have dubbed their movement, by driving to Vanadzor and Gyumri, Armenia’s third and second largest towns, respectively, wielded disappointing results. Parents of soldiers still being illegally detained in Azerbaijan blocked the road to Gyumri and refused passage to the opposition. They accused the opposition of hindering the return of Armenian POWs by using them as a political football. An investigation was also launched against a group of ARF activists who beat up an old man on the street in Gyumri. Both cities overwhelmingly voted for Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party during the June 2021 election.

Nightly protests in Yerevan have remained largely peaceful, however. At a rally held on France Square on the evening of May 9, Deputy Parliamentary Speaker Ishkhan Saghatelian, who leads the ARF faction, unveiled the protesters’ political agenda. He called for the country to be led by a group of technocrats for one and a half years, before holding a free and fair election. Observers have noted that this agenda is virtually identical to that presented back in 2021, right before his party was soundly defeated in a free and fair election. None of the leaders have provided concrete steps as to how they would stop the “Turkification” of Armenia and Artsakh once they do take power, insisting that the first step is to remove “the traitor.”

Not all in Yerevan seem convinced. “If Kocharyan’s son weren’t marching, I would be the first to protest,” passer-by, Shushan Paronyan, told the *Mirror-Spectator*. Right now, they have no plan to stop Azerbaijan, let alone to remove the government, she added.

Armenian Opposition Protesters Face Criminal Proceedings

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The Armenian police have said they are conducting internal inquiries into nine alleged instances of such misconduct. No officer is known to have been suspended.

On Friday, May 6, law enforcement officials raided the offices of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) party, a key member of Hayastan, in Armavir province. Two local Dashnaktsutyun activists were arrested afterwards on charges of paying people to attend the anti-government protests in Yerevan.

Dashnaktsutyun’s governing body in Armenia was quick to condemn the arrests and reject the accusations, saying

that they are part of government efforts to thwart the opposition push to oust Pashinyan.

The Investigative Committee also claimed to have obtained evidence of vote buying by Dashnaktsutyun in general and local elections held last year.

“To accuse Dashnaktsutyun of vote buying is just absurd,” Artsvik Minasyan, a senior party figure, said on Monday.

Minasyan claimed that the authorities are opening “false and illegal criminal cases” because they “realize that this liberation movement is gaining momentum.”

“This movement will not die down,” Ishkhan Saghatelian, another Dashnaktsutyun leader, told thousands of people who again rallied in the center of Yerevan later in the day. He said the protests will continue until Pashinyan agrees to step down.

The prime minister, who is accused by the opposition of planning to make sweeping concessions to Azerbaijan, has rejected the demands for his resignation.

The authorities raised eyebrows last Thursday when they effectively threatened to have the Armenian military call up men of fighting age participating in the protests. Senior pro-government lawmakers said law-enforcement agencies should pass their personal data on to the Ministry of Defense.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Greece Blocks Turkey from NATO Air Drill

ATHENS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Greece nixed Turkey's planned participation in a May 9, Greece-hosted NATO air drill known as "Tiger Meet," saying Turkey was "neither an ally, nor a friend," Voice of America reported on April 30.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meeting in March and agreeing to try to resolve their countries' age-old differences was billed as a promising breakthrough.

But on Thursday, April 28, as armed Turkish jets streamed into Greek airspace, conducting more than 125 unauthorized flights within 24 hours, Athens retaliated.

Greece also suspended confidence-building negotiations due to begin between Greek and Turkish diplomats in May.

The snub came as the Greek Foreign Ministry summoned Ankara's top envoy to protest the record number of violations over the Aegean Sea.

Greece and Turkey, both members of NATO, have long been at odds over air and sea rights in the oil- and minerals-rich Aegean.

Armenia Square Inaugurated in Geneva

TRIONEX, Switzerland (Panorama.am) — On May 7, in Trionex, in the canton of Geneva, the solemn inauguration ceremony of Armenia Square took place in front of the Armenian Apostolic St. Hakkob Church and the Armenian cultural center.

Armenian Ambassador to Switzerland Andranik Hovhannisyan, Trionex Mayor Guy Lavorel and President of the St. Gregory the Illuminator Foundation's Daniel Papazyan delivered congratulatory speeches. Ambassador Hovhannisyan, in particular, thanked the mayor of Trionex and the members of the city council, as well as the representatives of the Armenian community, due to whose efforts the square was opened.

The event was attended by deputies of the Geneva and Troinex regional and city councils, politicians and public figures, representatives of the Armenian community.

The ceremony was broadcast by the local Swiss TV channel.

Turkey to Open Consulate In Occupied Shushi

ISTANBUL (News.am) — Negotiations are underway between Turkey and Azerbaijan to open a Turkish consulate in the Azerbaijani-occupied Armenian city of Shushi in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).

"Negotiations are underway between Turkey and Azerbaijan to open a consulate in Shusha [(Shushi)]," Turkish Ambassador to Azerbaijan Cahit Bagci told journalists, APA reported on May 10.

According to him, negotiations are now underway between the foreign ministries of Azerbaijan and Turkey on this matter.

Azerbaijan's President Sued for Facebook Block

By Heydar Isayev

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev is being sued by an opposition activist after being blocked from the leader's official Facebook account.

Ahmad Mammadli, the 21-year-old chairman of the small opposition group Demokratiya-1918, filed a lawsuit on April 9 at a district court in Baku against Aliyev, arguing that the block means that he is deprived of access to public information.

At the same time he sent a formal inquiry to the president's office asking for details on the blocking practice and how the social media pages are operated more generally. (He has not yet received a response.)

He said he has only been blocked from Aliyev's account on Facebook, although he also has interacted — critically — with the president on Twitter and Instagram, as well.

"Some time ago I wanted to check some posts on the president's page, then I realized I couldn't enter," he told Eurasianet. "I thought maybe it was a technical problem, I asked some friends to check it on their accounts, and they could all enter. I realized I was blocked."

"I was mostly active on Instagram and Twitter, replying and retweeting," he added. "On Facebook I would mostly write my own posts, tagging Aliyev."

Mammadli is not the only Azerbaijani activist blocked from Aliyev's social media: Azerbaijani news outlet Mikroskop reported that it had found at least 20 political and public figures who had been blocked, mostly on Facebook but some on Twitter as well. That is to say nothing of the countless ordinary users who have been blocked after criticizing the president.

In the comment section of Mikroskop's story on Facebook, some users reported that they went to the president's page and

found that they had been blocked, too.

Human rights activist Fuad Ahmadli says he found out in March that he was blocked from viewing Aliyev's Facebook page. "He can't just block and unblock anyone he wants," Ahmadli told Mikroskop. "It's a state resource funded by our taxes, so seeing us blocked on this resource was strange and saddening."

Other of the activists who were blocked also are considering suing Aliyev, Mikroskop reported, though so far no other suits have been filed.

Critics argue that the practice is a breach of Azerbaijanis' right to receive information as well as freedom to criticize the president publicly. "According to the constitution, all officials have an obligation to listen to citizens; in that framework, this too [blocking on social media] is an issue, violation of which falls under that category," media lawyer Alasgar Mammadli told RFE/RL.

The case is not unique to Azerbaijan. Perhaps most famously, former United States President Donald Trump was sued successfully for blocking people on Twitter; American courts ruled that the president's account was a public forum and that it violated the right to freedom of speech to block people because of their viewpoints.

In neighboring Georgia, opposition politician Giorgi Noniashvili sued the Ministry of Justice after it deleted a comment and blocked him from the ministry's Facebook page. The ministry came up with a "trick"

and unblocked him days before the trial was to begin, so that the judge dismissed the suit, Noniashvili told Eurasianet. He said he was aware of similar lawsuits that also were dismissed because of similar tactics.

It's not even the first such lawsuit in Azerbaijan: In August 2021, prominent activist Bakhtiyar Hajiyev reported that he had sued Aliyev in a district court in Baku after being blocked on all Aliyev's social media accounts. "Perhaps if I wrote flattering comments on the President's posts, liked all of them, and put heart emojis, he [Aliyev] wouldn't block me," he told RFE/RL then.

The court dismissed Hajiyev's application days later, arguing that the activist mentioned in his letter that the pages were "probably managed by the presidential administration," and thus Aliyev could not be held personally accountable and brought in as a defendant in the case. Hajiyev sued again, this time removing that part from his complaint. Thus far there has been no progress in the case, with no scheduled trials.

Ahmad Mammadli also isn't keeping his hopes up. "I don't have high expectations from local courts," he told Eurasianet. "I'm prepared to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights because I'm also interested in what they have to say."

(With additional reporting by Nini Gabritchidze. This piece originally appeared on the Eurasianet.org website.)

Syrian Ambassador To Armenia Named

YEREVAN — By a decree by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Dr. Nora Arissian has been named the new ambassador of that country to Armenia.

Arissian has a doctorate in modern history and has published several books, including one on the Armenian Genocide.

Her most recent book is about Syrian parliamentary women from 1960 to 1985.



Dr. Nora Arissian



The Embassy on dismantling of Armenian Genocide Memorial in Cologne

COLOGNE, Germany (Public Radio of Armenia) — In response to inquiries since May 6 regarding the Armenian Genocide Memorial located on the left side of the Hohenzollernbrücke bridge in Cologne, the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in the Federal Republic of Germany issued the following comment:

The monument was erected on April 15, 2018 at the Remember the Genocide Initiative (Initiative Völkermord erinnern) and a number of individual citizens. Due to the absence of an official installation permit, the monument was dismantled four days after its installation (April 19, 2018), which was the subject of a legal dispute.

Every year, ahead of April 24, the monument is erected and then dismantled on the grounds of the absence of an official permission, which has clearly become the subject of outrage by many of our compatriots and a legal dispute with the local authorities.

The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia is in direct contact with the members of the initiative and other interested parties and will make efforts to reach a mutually acceptable solution.



INTERNATIONAL

Frankfurt Genocide Remembrance: Reflections on the Lausanne Treaty

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT — This year's central commemoration of the Armenian Genocide was held in the historic Paulskirche in Frankfurt, organized by the Diocese of the Armenian Church in Germany, the Central Council of Armenians in Germany, together with the Armenian Embassy in Berlin.

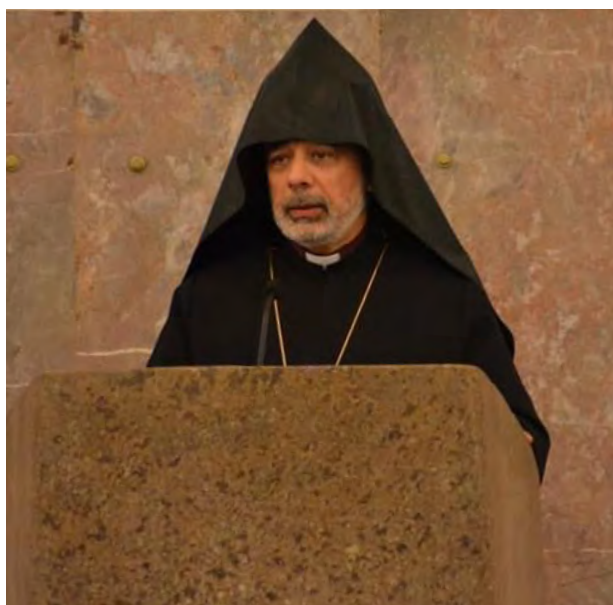
St. Paul's Church was the place where the first freely elected legislators convened in 1848 to deliberate on the first democratic constitution for the nascent German state, a site comparable to Independence Hall in Philadelphia for Americans. The war raging in Ukraine defined an extraordinary political context which impacted remarks offered by several participants.

Ani Smith-Dagesyan, from the Central Council of Armenians in Germany, opened the event and introduced the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in Germany, Viktor Yengibaryan, who in his address referred to the resolution on the Armenian Genocide passed by the Bundestag (Parliament) on June 2, 2016, which signaled Germany's contribution to the international process of recognition and prevention of similar crimes against humanity. Yengibaryan presented his country's efforts to advance the international campaign to prevent genocide.

Representatives of the local and regional political bodies, Dr. Bastian Bergerhoff, treasurer of the City of Frankfurt, and Karin Müller, vice president of the Hessen State Legislature, drew attention to the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, as well as Artsakh — a theme to be developed by the keynote speaker. Bishop Serovpe Isakhanyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church, read the April 24 message by Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and offered requiem prayers. The event was framed by musical selections from Komitas and J.S. Bach performed by the April String Quartet.

Democracy as Democratic Defense

Swiss historian Dr. Hans-Lukas Kieser is professor of Ottoman and Turkish history at the University of Zurich, currently a lecturer at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and the author of several scholarly studies on the genocide, including a biography of Talaat Pasha, *Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide*. In his keynote,



Bishop Serovpe Isakhanyan reads Greetings from Karekin II Catholicos of all Armenians

Kieser explored the concept of true democracy, with critical reflections on the significance of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.

Characterizing true democracy as the willingness to defend democracy, Kieser began *in medias res*, addressing the war in Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have been denied their dignity, rights and identity by Vladimir Putin, he stated, and drew a comparison to 1915, when denial of dignity and identity led to denial of the very right to life.

Quotes from Young Turk officials, including War Minister Enver Pasha, documented their genocidal intentions. Comparing the ideological Pan-Turanism then to current imperial ambitions, Kieser issued harsh criticism of those nations — then and now — that sacrifice democratic



Bishop Serovpe Isakhanyan

movements and oppressed minorities on the altar of economic and financial interests with authoritarian regimes. “Up until the Ukraine war,” he said, “the European Union and Germany have hardly ever wielded the powerful economic and financial instruments they possess in the defense of justice,” and pointed to the horrendous human rights violations of both Russia and Turkey, exemplified by the latter's persecution of Osman Kavala and Selahattin Demirtas. Thus, it was no surprise that “it took more than a century” for Germany to acknowledge the genocide, despite its involvement as the Ottomans' wartime ally.

Kieser cited President Biden's recognition of the Armenian Genocide last year as an example of courage and lauded his assumption of leadership in the Ukraine crisis. In contrast, he recalled the Trump era when, in response to Azerbaijan's 2020 aggression in Artsakh, there was “no pressure for sanctions or oil boycotts to force a ceasefire, and revive the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk [Group] process” to seek a viable solution. The West's inaction in the face of that aggression, according to Freedom House's latest report, served as an incentive for Putin's recent aggression.

The Armenian Experience

“To suffer under passive impotence of Western democracies one orients to: that has been the Armenian experience since 1895 and World War I. No other people has had to go through such disappointments, repeatedly and archetypally, and yet has not given up,” Kieser stated. In 1921, when Turkey and Russia divided the South Caucasus, they “made a mockery of Armenia as a miserable creature of the Paris peace treaties and the League of Nations.” The League of Nations failed to protect Armenia and in the same year, Stalin annexed Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Nor would Kurds, or Armenian genocide survivors in Dersim, be defended in 1937-8.

For Kieser it is unthinkable to commemorate the genocide without dealing with the Lausanne Conference and Treaty. This, the “sole remaining post World War I treaty still in force sealed an interest pact among powers” and “could never become the basis for peace among and for peoples.” In an effort to keep Turkey away from the USSR, the West at Lausanne “made the numerically small Armenian people into a victim *par excellence* of the 20th century.” Having lost everything, homeland, possessions, over a million lives in the genocide, they were denied their identity, an articulated history, for decades; they became a half-lame, wandering, closed circle of exiles, as in Tatul Sonentz-Papazian's poem.

The Lausanne Treaty brought the new Republic of Turkey into Western diplomacy and, later, the Western alliance. Silence and “verbal acrobatics” reigned over the genocide. Kieser was not suggesting a revision of the treaty, but a reappraisal that denounces its assumptions and measures outright. For example, history books still

present it as “a constructive treaty,” despite the forced migrations, or population transfers of Anatolian Christians and Muslims from northern Greece. The treaty signaled *de facto* the end of the League of Nations, by ignoring its charter and establishing the precedence of “might over right, violence over criminal prosecution.” Turkey abandoned the League of Nations' clause on protection of minorities (Kurds and Yezidis). “Above all,” he said, “for us



Hans-Lukas Kieser

today, the Lausanne Conference made of the Armenians, their actual history, the genocide, the expulsions of survivors, their Anatolian homelands, the question of justice and accountability, the restitution of plunder, the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage and so forth,— into a taboo, or non-issue, a political *quantité négligeable*.” Genocide came to be considered a diplomatically acceptable means of extreme nationalist policies.

Commemoration therefore means intervening in defense of threatened peoples, in the Caucasus, Ukraine, Northern Syria, parts of Turkey, and rejecting appeasement. Kieser put forward three concrete demands: a German relationship to Armenia that treats its democracy “as an element of German and EU *raison d'état* (*Reason of State*),” (perhaps a reference to former Chancellor Angela Merkel's definition of Israel's security as a *raison d'état* for Germany); a “commitment in Artsakh to guarantee its inhabitants a future and a secure link to Armenia” and pursuit of an effective legitimate solution; and urgent initiatives to secure the freedom of Osman Kavala, Selahattin Demirtas, Aysel Tuğluk and others.

Community News

Lafayette Midfielder Heads to Brazil for Deaflympics

By Shannon Sigafos

EASTON, Penn. — When she first walks into a room, Ani Khachadourian '25 seems like your average first-year college student. Clad in a Lafayette Athletics jacket with a bag of books slung over one shoulder, Khachadourian is bright-eyed and easygoing, with a warm presence and a natural ease for making conversation. But once you get to know her, you quickly learn that she isn't exactly like the rest of her peers.

Born with a hearing impairment, the Cary, NC, native has never known a world without sound. Thanks to a team of doctors and audiologists who screened her just after she was born, Khachadourian was able to be fitted with hearing aids when she was just 2 months old.

Soccer came into her life at the age of 3, following in the footsteps of a family friend who played soccer. The program she begged her mom to sign up for was called Lil' Kickers, and from her first time on the field, she never looked back.

And through the persistence of balancing practices and school, she came



Ani Khachadourian

to have a conversation in 2016 with someone who had a connection to the US Deaf Women's National Team.

"I was at a practice, and the coach recognized that I had hearing aids because I had put my hair up. And he asked me if I was hard of hearing, and then mentioned that he knew the coach of the deaf national team. I had no idea what he was talking about," recalls Khachadourian. "I gave him my contact information, and he connected me with Amy Griffin, the head coach, and assistant head coach Joy Fawcett, who was a member of the historic 1999 World Cup team. When I reached out, there was an upcoming camp that January. I attended that camp and have been training with them ever since."

The practice squads included women of varied ages and cultural backgrounds. They came from across the country and also had varied degrees of hearing loss. It was Khachadourian's first time being immersed in an environment with all deaf people — a moment she gave herself pause to reflect on, as she realized that she was surrounded by those who faced similar challenges in a world where there are stigmas attached to disability.

see DEAFLYMPICS, page 9



Zarmine Boghosian

Eastern Diocese Honors Zarmine Boghosian for 50 Years as an Educator and Writer

By Florence Avakian

It was a special evening of paying tribute to a dedicated individual, Zarmine Boghosian, the former principal and teacher at the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School for decades, and a lifelong champion of teaching and transmitting the language, culture, and history of the Armenian people throughout her life.

More than 150 family, friends, students, and admirers gathered in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium of the St. Vartan Cathedral Complex and Diocesan Center, where the warmth that flowed throughout the evening made it feel like a family affair. The event was a continuation of the revival of events at the Diocesan Center following a two-year absence due to the pandemic.

On April 27, Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan presided at the reception honoring Mrs. Boghosian on the occasion of her newly published book, *From Azez to America*. The book compiles the events of her life through notes, speeches, addresses, articles and commentaries, and details the difficulties of surviving as an Armenian.

The book was published in Armenia, with all proceeds devoted to the "Armenian Teachers Fund," a project Boghosian founded and champions.

Prominent among the attendees were Diocesan Legate in Washington D.C., Archbishop Vicken Aykazian; Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian; Diocesan Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan; St. Vartan Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan; Holy Martyrs Armenian Church pastor Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan; musicologist and concert pianist Sahan Arzruni, and several officials of the Tekeyan Cultural Association including Hagop Vartivarian, and the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey's Vartan Abdo.

Following an opening prayer by Archbishop Aykazian, Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center director Dr. Jesse Arlen welcomed the enthusiastic crowd and introduced the two main speakers, Fr. Untzag Nalbandian and Hovannes Khosdeghian.

Two Powerful Perspectives

Nalbandian, pastor of Holy Ascension Church in Trumbull, CT, and teacher of Western Armenian and Armenian Literature at St. Nersess Seminary for six years, spoke eloquently in both Armenian and English. He paid tribute to the honoree's dedication as an educator and principal of the Holy Martyrs Day School, her devotion to the Armenian Church, and her role as a writer to Armenian-American newspapers and the Armenian Radio Hour of NJ.

In a revealing episode in *Azez*, he related that Zarmine wrote that on *Dyarnuntarach*, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord to the Temple, she had to make sure she could take the light to their homes "without extinguishing it." Fr. Nalbandian then said: "She has not only brought that light, but she has radiated it wherever she went, including into the minds and hearts of her students," many of whom were present.

The book, Nalbandian continued, spans the writer's life in Syria and America, her childhood and education in the Syrian Armenian community and church, her Jerusalem odyssey with her brother, the late Fr. Vertanes Kalyajian, the Armenian language teachers' training in Armenia, her poetic inspirations on important cultural, historical and church anniversaries, and the many individuals who encouraged her to write, including her husband, Missak, her lifelong pillar and supporter for 55 years.

In 2014, Boghosian was a recipient of the "Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Medal" by Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians. Nalbandian warmly concluded with the

see BOGHOSIAN, page 7

Feds Move to Seize \$63M L.A. Mansion Linked to Corruption Scandal Involving Armenian Politician

By Matt Hamilton, Jack Flemming

HOLMBY HILLS, Calif. (LA Times) — For sale: a French chateau-style mansion in one of Los Angeles' most exclusive neighborhoods, Holmby Hills, complete with 11 bedrooms, 27 bathrooms and an asking price of \$63.5 million.

At 33,652 square feet, it is among the largest homes on the market in Southern California, but there are a few hitches. For one, the interior is not yet finished. And, this week, federal prosecutors in Los Angeles moved to seize the estate, alleging that it was the fruit of corruption involving a powerful Armenian politician and his children.

The U.S. Department of Justice outlined in a court filing how the property on South Mapleton Drive — a few doors down from the Playboy Mansion — was purchased in 2011 for \$14.4 million with bribes to the family of Gagik Khachatryan, Armenia's former minister of finance, from a prominent businessman there.

Khachatryan, 66, his two sons and the businessman are all facing criminal charges in Armenia; the businessman is accused of providing more than \$20 million in bribes. An attorney representing WRH Inc., the company that owns the home, did not respond to a message seeking comment.

The Holmby Hills property went on the market April 7, with real estate agency Hilton & Hyland heralding its "immaculate architecture, manicured landscaping, and your chance to completely customize the interiors."

The listing agent, Richard Maslan of Hilton & Hyland, told the *Times* that a potential buyer will be able to finish the home in the style of their choosing. He maintained that he is still looking for a buyer.

"I've been told by the FBI that I can continue to do showings," Maslan said. "If we receive an offer and both the seller and the Justice Department agree on a sale price, we can still sell it."

The saga of the residence begins in 2008, when Khachatryan took over leadership of the State Revenue Committee, the government agency that assesses and collects taxes in Armenia. Following that post, he served two years as the country's finance minister but continued to oversee taxation duties, earning him a reputation as a "superminister," prosecutors said.

To secure favorable tax treatment, the businessman, Sedrak Arustamyan, allegedly entered into two sham loan agreements with Khachatryan's adult sons — the first loan in 2009 for \$7 million and another in 2011 for \$13.4 million. Both loans bore agreements specifying when payment was due and the terms of interest, but according to court filings, Arustamyan never received any interest or principal payment on either "supposed loan."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

New Primate Elected for Eastern Diocese

PRIMATE, from page 1

The Very Reverend Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan

Immediately prior to his election as the 13th Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Parsamyan served the Diocese as its Director of Ministries.

A native of Yerevan, he attended the Gevorgian Theological Seminary of Holy Echmiadzin, where he received his bachelor's degree in theology in 2003. He was ordained into the holy priesthood that same year, and thereafter served until 2004 as the staff-bearer for Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians.



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan

He earned hold a master's degree in theology and religious sciences from the University of Strasbourg, France, and studied in Dublin, Ireland, at the International Study Centre. In 2011, he received his Archimandrite (*Vardapet*) rank: the doctoral degree of the Armenian Church.

As a professor at the Gevorgian Theological Seminary from 2007

to 2011, he taught Christian Ethics, and simultaneously served as deputy-chancellor of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin. During this period, he had two pastoral stays in Brussels, Belgium, and in Nice, France.

He went on to serve the Armenian Church Diocese in Geneva, Switzerland, as its Locum Tenens Primate. He was Vicar General of the Armenian Diocese in Marseille, France, from 2012 to 2013, and the following year served in Paris as Locum Tenens Primate of the Armenian Diocese of France.

Throughout his ministry in Europe (2007-2014), Par-



From left, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan and Bishop Daniel Findikyan

samyan was member of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches.

Parsamyan came to the United States in 2015, and took up the pastorship of Holy Shoghagat Church in Belleville, IL, for a period of two years. In 2017 he took up a position at the Diocesan Center in New York City as its director of Ministries. He was appointed as vicar of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in 2018.

In the autumn of 2019, Parsamyan answered the call of

Karekin II to return to the Mother See and take up a new role as Dean of Gevorgian Seminary. He led the seminary through Armenia's ensuing years of trial and affliction, before completing his mission, returning to the U.S. in 2021.

His election as Primate took place during the 120th Diocesan Assembly, meeting in New York City and online. Pending approval by His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Fr. Parsamyan will be the 13th Diocesan Primate.

Eastern Diocese Honors Zarmine Boghosian for 50 Years as an Educator and Writer

BOGHOSIAN, from page 6

inspiring words of the great poet Vahan Tekeyan who wrote, "In the final accounting, what did I get out of life? Amazingly, only what I gave to others."

Hovhannes Khosdeghian, principal of the St. Vartan Cathedral Armenian School, trained by the eminent Mekhitarist Fathers of Venice, and former assistant pastor at St. Ann's Armenian Catholic Cathedral, ex-

He stated with tearful emotion that the book demonstrated "the love of the Armenian language, the foundation our identity built through the contributions of countless individuals speaking, singing, praying and mourning." He also paid powerful tribute to "the superhuman struggle of saving from total oblivion and utter demise every letter of our alphabet created by the genius of St. Mesrob Mashdots, every bit of our cultur-

ancient culture to the next generation."

He expressed the hope that "we must preserve our marvelous identity rescued from total annihilation and rebuilt through the immense courage of our grandparents and parents, so that it does not fall victim to cutting us off from our language and heritage."

"I wish we will not become orphans in search of an identity," he stated with emphasis, to extended applause.

An artistic program was presented by longtime Armenian actor (and Zarmine's husband) Missak Boghosian who sang *a capella* the well-known "*Anusgispin*" in a deeply heartfelt tribute to his beloved wife. Janet Marcarian, a longtime teacher at the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School, played with great feeling two piano selections, *Sicilienne* by Bach, and the soul-searing *Elegy* by Babadjanian.

In Her Own Words

Honoree Boghosian, on her 50th anniversary as an educator, speaking from the heart without notes, paid tribute to Nubar Kupelian, distinguished educator and longtime stalwart at the Diocesan Center, for his help in her decision to become a teacher in the United States, and to all the teachers who worked with her — most of whom were present at the reception. "You were our foundation," she stated, flashing her well known smile.

She emphasized "how important our language and the Armenian schools are in order to defend and fortify our church."

Turning to the Primate, she stressed the necessity of preparing Armenian School teachers. "A program should be set up at the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary for the purpose of teaching Armenian. This is my passionate goal. On this 50th anniversary of my teaching, I created the 'Armenian

Teachers' Fund.' The proceeds from the purchase of my book in Armenia will be dedicated for this purpose."

Reciting a poem from the legendary Daniel Varoujan, she quietly and slowly voiced with heartfelt passion: "Our language is the eternity of our people." She emphasized each word, and received a standing ovation.

During her moving remarks, my personal thoughts turned to the supreme dedication of Armenian school teachers. In my life I remembered how my mother, who taught Armenian for 50 years as a volunteer and principal, used to prepare the meals each Friday for my sister and me as children, so she could spend her Saturdays performing her Armenian teaching obligation, a duty she looked forward to and loved deeply.

The Primate, before sharing the closing prayer, stated, "Beyond all you have accomplished, most of all you are a teacher, the spirit of who we are. The highest honor is to be a teacher, and to transmit the spirit of who we are as Armenians and as Christians. And this is what you have achieved," he stated, looking directly at the honoree.

"Continue to teach and transmit our Armenian spirit to our youth and to the world," the Primate said before presenting her with the gift of a grapevine plaque from the Michael Aram collection.

Among the many students of Zarmine Boghosian who have gone on to promising careers was Arthur Ipek, a former volunteer at the Zohrab Information Center, and now a 24-year-old graduate student pursuing a career in nuclear science. He commented that "some of my most memorable and happy days were as a student at the Holy Martyrs Armenian Day School with the smiling face, encouragement and leadership of Zarmine Boghosian."



At the Diocesan Center in New York, April 27, 2022. Pictured (l-r): honoree Zarmine Boghosian; keynotespeaker Hovhannes Khosdeghian; Diocesan Primate Bishop Daniel Findikyan. (Photo by Diran Jebejian)

pounded a passionate address in scholarly Armenian.

Starting with the descriptive words of the great St. Gregory of Narek, he called Boghosian's memoir "a feasting table of delicacies," and said it reflected "the strength and resolve that animated Zarmine's dedication to her calling as an educator."

al treasures torn into pieces and falling off another kind of feasting table by so-called civilized nations during World War I."

Khosdeghian emphasized the importance of devoting and strengthening "a mature Armenian identity, nurtured day after day in the sacred protection and the warmth of the Armenian school, the carrier of our



COMMUNITY NEWS

New Glendale Mayor Kassakhian Gives Voice to Armenians

MAYOR, from page 1

On the other hand, he explained: “While you still have to rely on three total votes – in other words two votes in addition to your own on the city council, to make sure that people on the council are supportive of your agenda, the mayorship does give you a pulpit for urgency.”

The Covid Period

Kassakhian was elected to the Glendale City Council on March 3, 2020. He said, “Literally two weeks later we went into lockdown and I had to take my oath of office over Zoom. The world changed, conceivably forever — although we are now seeing some return to ‘normalcy.’”

Covid pushed aside all his goals for office. He said, “The last two years were very difficult, very challenging, if for no other reason than the uncertainty of what the future held. In terms of the local economy, business closures, issues regarding relations, and this now-maligned word ‘mandate,’ these were all things that we tried quickly to understand and implement, and do this in a way that was most effective... We tried to do the best we could with the information that we had.”

He said, “We were one of the first cities to push for protections for certain businesses. We were very eager not only to protect those individuals who were renting and unable to meet their rent obligation but also to come up with a program that would help the landlords who were also not receiving rent. As a result of this chain reaction, they were unable to make their own payments, if they owned money on a property that they were using for their own income. We took revenue from our sales tax and put it towards helping businesses, renters, landlords or housing providers to weather the storm.”

Many of these programs, intended for only a few months, ended up lasting two years, but eventually state and county regulations and programs superseded the efforts of the municipality, Kassakhian said, which served their purpose.

One of the most affected business sectors was that of tourism, which declined greatly during Covid. To help bolster the sector, the city, Kassakhian said, instituted the [Al Fresco Glendale](#) dining program, while hotel passes were encouraged for day visits. Kassakhian said that he suspects al fresco dining will be continued even after the end of Covid.

As far as dealing with the large Armenian population of Glendale in this period, Kassakhian declared that the municipality recruited and engaged Armenian physicians to issue public service announcements. It tried to raise awareness of Covid issues by sharing the stories of individuals and incentivize vaccine usage, but cutting through the misinformation spreading through the community and the public in general was difficult.

He said, “Now you can pick and choose what you want to read and as long as it fits with your greater world view and reinforces certain biases or other information you are receiving. That partially created the very dangerous situation we are in today... I think we are masters of our own destiny, but there are some dangerous trends I see in terms of news consumption and sharing of information, and that certainly played a significant role in how we fought Covid and how we were unable to convince everyone of the importance of remaining safe, socially distanced, and vaccinated.”

He added that there was no scientific or statistical research to indicate that Armenians were less likely to have taken Covid precautions, yet anecdotal evidence and extrapolation from statistics such as the low-

er number of vaccinations in Glendale in comparison to other cities in Los Angeles County could lead to the assumption that this situation was in part because of the Armenian population. Perhaps, he speculated, the skepticism that was one of the survival traits of the Armenians may have somehow affected their response to Covid, and not in the best way possible.

American and Armenian Community Politics

The last few years have also been filled with largescale disagreements and challenges on other issues for Armenians. Kassakhian observed: “I think that first of all, the partisan or ideological chasm that exists in American politics has percolated down to the Armenian community, or rather has affected the Armenian community, so you have these divisions of individuals who supported President Trump and those who did not but supported President Biden, and all the rhetoric that goes with this... And in addition to that, you also have had the issue of the politics of Armenia.”

He thought there may even be a connection there with the global trend towards populism. However, he said, “I think that with what happened in Armenia with the war and its aftermath, there is a general sense of heartache and even deeper skepticism and a lot of people who feel let down. I think that it is going to be a long road to recover from that, but recovery is essential.”

He observed that the local Armenian community and even the Armenian-American community as a whole, is wealthier than it has ever been during its existence in the United States, and during the 2020 Artsakh war a great deal of money was raised for Armenia. Yet, he said, “What I find troubling is that despite that wealth, despite the amount of ‘new’ money, and our increased numbers, there has not been as much support and bolstering of traditional cultural institutions or the creation of new ones.”

Such support is necessary, he said, because despite the activism of the young generations during the war, they lacked knowledge, though they had information. He said: “I was very disappointed about how lacking we were, or that new generation of activists was, in the knowledge of the history or the memory of how we got to where we did in the Artsakh war. It was disappointing but I guess we have no one to blame but ourselves, and the previous generations that have not put into place the tools to access that knowledge... I think we need to figure out ways in which we can do a better job. Why I think the understanding of the past is important is because there are a lot of lessons that we can glean from it.”

A related issue is the increasingly decentralized sense of community. Kassakhian said, “I don’t know whether that is because of technology and just where we are as the human race, but that decentralization has allowed for decentralized activism.” During the Artsakh war, GoFundMe and other independent platforms for fundraising for Armenia multiplied, until according to some estimates they were in the thousands. Kassakhian said, “It is not your local church, it is not your local *agoump* or cultural center doing that. I think the danger in this is that it creates a decentralization that does not ideologically stand for anything. The act of helping is great, but it is akin to everyone collecting blood on their own versus going to the Red Cross to donate blood. At the end of the day, you are trying to do good, but what good is it if there is no central repository and place that brings people together.”

The aftermath of the Artsakh 2020 war

also affected Kassakhian’s city council work to a degree. He said that some people carried the weight of the defeat very heavily while others did not show anything at all. He wondered whether this was due to the different psychological stages of loss of individuals.

It certainly affected Kassakhian personally. He declared, “Halfway through my first term, when the war was happening, and immediately afterwards, to try to put on a face and carry out the duties of a council member, and go through the motions that I care about a particularly localized issue like trash or curb repair while there is this underlying trauma, was very difficult. I think that is probably the case for a lot of us. You have some days that are okay, some days that are better and some days that are worse. I think you see the same thing in the community.”

Plans for the Future

It seems that gradually California and the US in general are better able to handle the spread of Covid and government and people can return to their usual concerns, but this is still novel territory. Kassakhian said, “For us, what is challenging is that as a community we are in this place psychologically where we are trying to figure out how do we get back to the way we were. Some people are quick to rush into it. Others are more cautious and there are some people who are very, very fearful and anxious. To be able to do all the things that we want to do, do it at a pace that is reasonable, and setting the goals that are achievable, will be the challenge as we come out of Covid, while helping support our local economy and helping support our residents in terms of maintaining the quality of life.”

On his campaign website, Kassakhian had arrayed a series of goals for his work on the city council. Now that he is mayor, and the Covid pandemic hopefully will gradually recede in importance, he was asked what comes next. He prefaced his response with cautionary words: “I often tell folks, you campaign on poetry, you govern in prose. You have all these lofty goals, but then you get in and see what the real situation may be in terms of the finances of the city and potential deferred maintenance of various city resources, like sidewalks and roads, which are not inexpensive to repair.”

He said also that he felt it was necessary to be conservative in spending resources at this time because he personally feared that there may be an economic downturn sometime in the near future and it was necessary to prepare for that. Already, he noted that the rising cost of materials, supply chain issues and inflation are starting to have an impact on city spending.

Many of the problems Kassakhian and the city council face are not new. Among his most immediate goals is to allow access to school playgrounds as park facilities, as Glendale is in dire need of more open space for recreational use, especially in the southern, most densely populated parts of the city. He said he frequently related a story from his own childhood to support this, as follows: “Growing up, I would go to the elementary school that was just a few blocks from my house. It had a huge playground which was probably one of the largest swaths of open space in the area that was not a parking lot. On the weekends and after school, the gates would be closed most of the time, and we would be restricted from accessing it unless we hopped the fence, or, on the rare occasion, found it unlocked. Instead, most of the time, we turned into juvenile delinquents by either going through or over the fence. This was trespassing, which is criminal activity. We were just kids but we were willing to risk

that just simply to be able to play.”

Today, Kassakhian’s goal is to enter into agreements with schools to rethink how those facilities can be used. This would help not only children, he said, but their parents, who do not have to worry about children who otherwise have to play in the streets and risk being struck by cars.

Kassakhian is also interested in introducing more arts programs into the city.

Housing, Homeless and Crime

Housing is an ongoing question of importance for the city council and in fact for many parts of California. Kassakhian said, “We have an issue of people who have been left behind by the rising tide of the economy, with prices going up and rents going up. Home prices in Glendale have almost doubled in the last 9-11 years and that has priced out a lot of people from being able to find options to adequately house themselves.”

In some ways, he said, with higher earners moving into Glendale and replacing those who cannot afford housing there, this trend may be part of a process of gentrification of Glendale and many parts of California, which was pointed out in a *New York Times* article earlier this year by the economist Paul Krugman.

While he agreed that this is part of a broader problem beyond the authority of Glendale alone, Kassakhian is not a fan of broad-brush solutions such as the recent California state laws on zoning, declaring “Any time a jurisdiction takes away control from another jurisdiction, it is problematic. I think that it erodes the essence of democracy — that people can make decisions for themselves.” He had some ideas of what the state could do to improve the situation (hint: better transportation options and networks) but preferred to focus on Glendale’s own municipal actions.

For now, he observed that “We have tried to build affordable housing in Glendale. We are going to be bringing on another 500 units in the next five years, but 500 units given our population is still not nearly enough.”

Public safety is on the agenda, with an escalation of crime not just in Glendale but in the Los Angeles metropolitan region recently due to a variety of causes. One of them, regionally and statewide, Kassakhian said, may be connected to policies to alleviate the overpopulation of prisons and jails, which he said, “although well intended have not hit their mark.” For some crimes, for example, the penalty is not immediate jail, while there is a no-money bail policy in California allowing criminals to easily get released. Furthermore, some criminals may not have been given the tools when they had been initially incarcerated to reintegrate into society and so fall into very bad habits for themselves and society, he said.

There is another factor, Kassakhian said: “Not to associate the crime with the unhoused population necessarily, but we have a number of people who are homeless and unhoused and need help. For that reason we are trying to get them the help that they need. Some of them have mental health issues and need psychiatric help, as well as medical help. Without this, the homelessness issue from which they are suffering may not be resolved.”

Kassakhian said that Glendale has been up until now able to address the spike in crime but its resources are stretched thin. Consequently, he said, “I am looking in upcoming budgets to see how we can increase some police personnel.” This is also important for traffic safety, he said, because there are major issues with people who

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Feds Move to Seize \$63M L.A. Mansion Linked to Corruption Scandal Involving Armenian Politician

SEIZURE, from page 6

To make use of these purported loans, Khachatryan and his sons formed multiple entities “to receive, disguise and conceal illegal bribe payments” as well as their purchase of the Holmby Hills property. More than \$13 million was wired by Arustamyan directly to West Coast Escrow’s Comerica Bank account, but days before the sale closed, he affirmed he would not hold title and relinquished any claim to the money, according to court filings.

Soon after buying the home — previously owned by Lions Gate Entertainment executive Jon Feltheimer — the family razed the property and hired Richard Landry, a mega-mansion architect who has built trophy estates for celebrities including Mark Wahlberg, Tom Brady and Wayne Gretzky.

Khachatryan’s sons told Landry’s design team that they wanted their children to attend school in L.A. and instructed the team to envision the home as their family’s residence, according to court filings.

Plans called for an elaborate compound, including rooms for Khachatryan, his two sons and his daughter, along with servants’ quarters, a wine cellar and a two-story library, according to court filings.

Construction began in 2015, and although the home’s French-Normandy exterior was completed, along with gardens, a pool and spa, the interior is incomplete.

In 2016, when Khachatryan left office, the alleged bribery scheme came to light and authorities discovered millions of dollars in unpaid taxes owed by Arsutamyan’s companies, according to prosecutors. In 2019, Khachatryan was charged with abuse of power and embezzlement. His sons and Arusatamyan were charged in 2020. The sons, Gurgen and Artyon, have since fled Armenia, according to court filings.

Lafayette Midfielder Heads to Brazil for Deaflympics

DEAFLYMPICS, from page 6

Ani Khachadourian ’25 poses with her teammates on the US Deaf Women’s National Soccer Team. The women are headed to Brazil to compete in the Deaflympics.

“It made me realize that there are people there like me, who struggle on and off the field. That was a huge bonding part of the team. That first experience was a little shocking and a little intimidating, because different ranges of hearing means that everyone has different methods of communication,” she says. “Some people there used sign language and some didn’t, so it was a matter of learning how to communicate together and play together.”

On April 29, Khachadourian and her teammates — who meet on the West Coast for practices that are few and far between — traveled to Caxias do Sul, Brazil, to compete in the Deaflympics, where the US women’s team is heavily favored to win gold. It will be her first international event (the games run May 1-15), and it’s not lost on her that she and her fellow athletes are getting the opportunity to represent their country in a special way. The culture they’ve created is part of what helped her get comfortable with the transition between high school soccer and collegiate soccer.

“You have varying ranges of [athletic] commitment in high school, and people have their own things they’re focusing on. Some people are more into it than others. Some people play differently, and it’s hard to get on the same page. In college, you have to be on the same page and realize you all share the same goal,” reflects Khachadourian, who was able to get to

know her Lafayette teammates well despite being kept off the field by an injury this past fall. “We’re very bonded here. Our coach likes to use the word ‘collectivist.’ We’re a shared team with shared values. It



Ani Khachadourian on the playing field

shows on the field that we’re committed to winning and putting our best foot forward.

One of the things that Khachadourian didn’t initially share with her peers was that she deals with hearing loss. Though she faces slight degrees of difficulty hearing when she’s in crowds, and her hearing aids pick up sound better from her sides and front, she didn’t expect anyone to have to be cognizant about whether they were talking from behind her, or whether she could hear on the outside of a group versus being on the inside. It’s important to her now, she says, because awareness of hearing impairment and advocacy for the

Deaf community hasn’t always been easy to come by.

“A big thing for me in college is that you’re meeting new groups of people, and usually you’re meeting in big groups. I want to participate, but I can’t always understand what’s going on. I do read lips, which was really difficult when everyone was wearing masks. I want to join in, but there are times I just stay silent — which is funny because, in high school, I used to be pretty reserved and quiet,” she muses. “Now, I want to talk to people, and I want to be social.”

The engineering and international affairs dual major has had her eyes opened to multiple interests at Lafayette. Beyond her lifelong love of all things STEM and desire to work in a field where she can use her hands, she’s spent the last several years paying more attention to public policy. The pandemic, she says, brought attention to world events and how politics plays a part. She looks forward to being able to focus more on her studies and finding her balance at Lafayette — including research opportunities in sustainability — after she returns from Brazil with a winning team.

St. Hagop Church to Hold Annual Madagh Picnic in Racine, WI

RACINE, Wis. — This year’s annual St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church Madagh Picnic will be held on Sunday, June 26.

Although the church will again only serve the Madagh and Bulghur Pilaf as a drive up/takeout event (rather than their full menu offerings), it will continue with the Sponsor-a-Madagh Item Program for whoever would like to list their donation in memory of a departed family member or friend.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, contact Zohrab Khaligian at khaligian@netzero.net. Similar to the 2021 Madagh, the church will print any donation and message received by June 1, 2022 on

a Thank You card that will be distributed along with the memorial Madagh meal on the day of our event.

In addition, the church will post any donation and message received on its Armenian Madagh Picnic Facebook page. The goal is to ensure the church provides every donor with the proper name recognition for supporting this worthwhile annual event.

“On behalf of St. Hagop Armenian Apostolic Church, we’d like to thank you in advance for your ongoing support during such challenging times. Although once again we will not have the opportunity to gather all together as one big Armenian family at Johnson Park this year, our sin-

cere hope and desire is that we can all symbolically ‘break bread together’ via our June event in order to carry on our amazing 84-year tradition of family, friends and Armenian hospitality,” said Khaligian. “We served over 300 meals last year.”

For information, go to:

https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Madagh-Picnic-St-Hagop-Church-Racine-Wisc-250610052493495/?tn-str=k*F

The church is located at 4100 N. Newman Road.

For Madagh video, go to: <https://racinearmenianmadagh.wordpress.com/> Donations to the church can be brought to the church on the day of the event.

from previous page

drive recklessly and must be brought into compliance with traffic laws.

Energy, Environment, Civic Education

An important energy and environmental issue he is concerned with is the question of replacing or repowering the natural gas fired Grayson Power Plant. He did not stake out a position but noted that there is an ongoing vigorous debate in the community between those rightfully concerned about global warming and climate change and those approaching it from the utility’s point of view. In addition, there are those who both want to do right for the environment but also make Glendale energy independent, especially in the event of a catastrophic event like an earthquake which could, Kassakhian said, otherwise leave Glendale isolated and without power for some time.

A long-term goal of Kassakhian is to start a civic academy to train the next generation of city leaders. He said, “A lot of folks, I think, are excited or impassioned to be involved in the political dialogue but

may not have all the tools available to them to have an effective voice — mainly the knowledge and understanding of how city government functions.” The understanding of the basic financial obligations of a city to remain solvent, maintain infrastructure and respond to emergencies is often lacking, he said.

In particular, he pointed to a type of distraction he called “municipal inertia.” Kassakhian explained: “When a hot issue or topic captures the national attention and then it percolates down to the city level, then everyone wants the city to shift gears and pursue that issue, forgetting that there are certain fundamental responsibilities that we have as elected officials to maintain the quality of basic life in the city — parks, roads, public safety, utilities, waste disposal and all the things that help a city function day to day.”

Civic education can also remind residents that people need to take personal responsibility both for their actions and for enhancing their community. Kassakhian stressed, “Government is not here to be their caretaker for everything.”

Representing Armenians and Glendale

Though not a primary goal, Kassakhian did have one goal on a personal level which directly concerns Armenians in the US. He said, “I want to use my platform as an elected official representing one of the highest concentrations of Armenian Americans in the United States to educate and inform people about what is happening in Artsakh and the help our compatriots need to be able to survive under some very dire circumstances — the threat of continuous attack, harassment, displacement and ethnic cleansing. We are all up in arms and upset over what is happening in Ukraine, but there is absolutely no reason to dismiss what happened and what is continuing to happen in Artsakh.”

In fact, Kassakhian noted one such step towards that goal: the city had sponsored the premiere of a documentary on post-war life in Artsakh, “A Desire to Live,” on April 21, with the producer and composer answering questions afterwards.

Kassakhian recently participated in or spoke at a number of Armenian Genocide

commemoration events, including to a group of children in the Glendale Unified School District, and gave interviews to several media outlets. He served as program chair of the city’s own commemoration, back after a two-year Covid-related hiatus, at the Alex Theater. Prepared with the Lark Musical Society, it focused on the music of Gomidas Vartabed, who suffered trauma as a result of the Genocide, but through his music continues to inspire many. Kassakhian said: “By performing his music — those village songs from the towns of western Armenia, we can showcase it and show the world what was lost when the Turks tried to eradicate this ancient people from the face of the earth.”

Ultimately, Kassakhian is second to none in his hometown spirit, and enthusiastically declared: “I am excited about what the future holds for Glendale. I am very bullish on Glendale. I think that it is still one of the best places in the country to live, work and raise a family in, and I consider myself very fortunate to have the opportunity to continue serving this community as much as I can.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day at St. Garabed Armenian Church of the Desert Inspires, Empowers

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. — The Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day has acquired the magical power to connect all Armenians in the world, physically, virtually and spiritually. A vibrant and fast-growing Armenian community celebrated the 107th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2022, at St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church of the Desert in Rancho Mirage, California.

Thanks to dedicated and visionary leaders, generous donors and hardworking community members. St Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church, with its impressive complex, including the inspiring sanctuary, elegant social hall, and rapidly growing enthusiastic community, is recognized as the “Crown Jewel of the Desert.”

After an inspiring church service, parishioners and guests gathered at the Ron Kra-



Deacon Gevork Gevorkian

jian Social Hall for luncheon which was followed by the 107th Anniversary Genocide Remembrance Day Remembrance Day Celebration.

Reverend Deacon Gevork Gevorkian’s opening prayer, Aida Askejian, Ladies Society chairlady welcomed the guests and announced that the luncheon proceeds will be dedicated to the Echmiadzin Children’s Fund. Parish Council chairman Vartan Nazerian warmly welcomed the guests and expressed his appreciation of the church community for their unwavering commitment, enthusiasm and support. He then introduced the Parish Council members.

The program started with a beautiful rendition of three Armenian songs played on

duduk by Deacon David Gevorkian.

The first speaker, Dr. Silva S. Karayan, Professor Emeritus at California Lutheran University, is the granddaughter of Der Nerses Avak Kahana Babayan, a genocide survivor and a dedicated leader, who stayed with his flock through three deportations until Aintab Armenians settled safely in Aleppo.

Karayan reassured the audience that we will all continue to get together every year, on the 24th of April, for remembrance and reflection, for appreciation and inspiration, and for solidarity and empowerment. We Should do so with a firm determination to continue to live and prosper as proud, productive, and loyal Armenian American citizens.

The second speaker was Dr. Garabet Moundjian, an independent historian, researcher and security consultant and lin-

guist specializing in the Middle East. He is also an Arabist and Ottomanist.

Moundjian spoke authoritatively about the Armenian Genocide. He underlined the importance of raising the issue of compensation for Armenian assets, fixed and liquid, parallel to pursuing the recognition of the Genocide. He further stressed the point that solely the pursuit of the Armenian Genocide recognition has come to an end in itself, adding that recognition efforts should be linked to demands for compensation.

The 107th anniversary of the Armenia Genocide celebration was a remarkable event, both impressive and empowering, which will be remembered by the fast-growing parish of St. Garabed Armenian Church of the Desert, for a long time, thanks to the untiring efforts of the Parish Council and the Ladies Society.




Vartan Nazerian



Dr. Silva S. Karayan



Garabet Moundjian




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ժամը 6:00 ին, Պէշկէթօրեան Կեդրոնին մէջ, Ալթադենայ:

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Rhode Island Community Commemorates Armenian Genocide

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — For the first time in five-years, the Rhode Island Armenian community met at North Burial Ground, Providence, to commemorate the Armenian Genocide, and to venerate those victims who are now canonized as Holy Martyrs. The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island hosted this

Dr. Ara Heghinian conducted a service for the Holy Martyrs with the able assistance of deacons and service participants from Armenian Evangelical Church, Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church. It began with "The Lord's Prayer" ("Hayr Mer") being recited by the clergy and all those present;

nian Genocide. Zeitounian stated, "Let's always wear our "Forget-Me-Not" flower to honor the memory of those who perished beginning in 1915."

The guest speaker was Stepan Piligian. Piligian is a native of Massachusetts and has spent many years as a volunteer teacher of Armenian history and contemporary issues to the young generation and adults at schools, camps, and churches on the East Coast. He gave a riveting speech to an audience of approximately 200 – 250 individuals about martyrdom and the sacrifice made by those who were massacred by the Turkish Ottoman Empire beginning in 1915 and most recently their canonization through which they have transcended from victim to victor. He discussed the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by President Biden and Congress but suggested the work of Armenians is only beginning. Recognition of Genocide is something Armenians have been aware of for 107 years but he stressed that an unpunished crime by the Turks does not serve justice. (To hear his speech, go to "Video" at www.ammri.org.)

Following the guest speaker were the Armenian School children of Saints Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church where they sung *Hyortik* under the direction of Raffi Rachdouni.

There were a few elected officials invited to speak at the Commemoration to say a few words including: Rhode Island Governor Dan McKee; United States Sen. Jack Reed; and Rep. James Langevin. Langevin, who is retiring at the end of this year, was presented with a plaque in appreciation for his continued support over the years on Armenian issues locally and abroad.

State Rep. Katherine Kazarian was given

recognition for sponsoring a resolution bill to recognize the Armenian Genocide at the State Capitol General Assembly.

In addition, there were numerous elected officials in the audience to share this special day with Armenians and included: Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos, Secretary of State Nelle Gorbea, Attorney



RI Armenian youth singing "Hyortik"

year's event, which featured two emcees, Melanie Zeitounian and Steven Zaroogian.

A procession commenced with flag bearers, clergy, invited guests and wreath presenters surrounded by able-bodied honor guards as beautiful hymns were sung by choir members of the three local Armenian churches under the capable direction of Alysha Melkoun.

Officiating clergy Rev. Fr. Kapriel Nazarian, Rev. Fr. Shnork Souin, and Rev.

readings from St Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and the Holy Gospel according to St. Paul; the Litany of The Saints and concluding with the singing of "The Lord's Prayer" by the choir and congregation. In addition, soloist Joanne Mouradjian sang a beautiful rendition of "Hrshatsan Bagootsmamp" to the Holy Martyrs.

It was 45 years ago when the majestic monument standing 29-feet-tall was dedicated in 1977 to the victims of the Arme-



Keynote Speaker Stepan Piligian

General Peter Neronha, General Treasurer Seth Magaziner and Former Central Falls Mayor Thomas Lazieh. Longtime supporters Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Congressman David Cicilline were not present as they were travelling internationally but sent their warm regards.

Master of ceremonies Steven made several acknowledgements as the program was nearing a conclusion and made mention that there were 10 wreath presenters this year – a record! He then closed with a heartfelt thank too all present.



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OBITUARY

Marilyn J. Woloohojian

Patron of Newport Arts, Former Staffer at *Mirror-Spectator*

JUPITER, Fla. — Marilyn J. Woloohojian of East Greenwich, RI, and North Palm Beach, FL, died on April 30, 2022, at Jupiter Medical Center in Jupiter, FL.

Marilyn was the wife of the late James H. Woloohojian. She leaves three children and their spouses, Merrill and Glenn Friedemann, M. Peter and Rhonda Woloohojian both of East Greenwich, RI, and James H. and Susan Woloohojian of Bridport, VT, and her beloved grandchildren, Lauren, Menas, Cara and Mikhail Woloohojian and Alex and Katie Friedemann. She also leaves her brother, George D. Sarkisian and wife Aramene of Arlington, MA, and her nieces, Kristin Sarkisian, Stephanie Jewell and her

husband Russell, and Wendy Zannini and her husband Jay.

Born in Boston, she was the daughter of the late Aram and Beulah (Ansbikian David) Sarkisian. Marilyn was raised at her family homes in Arlington and North Falmouth, MA, summering on Old Silver Beach with family and many friends.

She graduated from Arlington High School, Class of 1950. She earned her B.S. degree in communications from Simmons College in 1954. While at Simmons, she worked for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, as assistant to the editor.

Following her graduation, she joined the editorial staff at the *Raytheon News*, the

Raytheon Company's employee publication.

Marilyn married James in 1957 and moved to Providence, RI. Marilyn and James lived in East Greenwich for more than 40 years and enjoyed their home in Bonnet Shores with their family. They were married for 50 years prior to James' passing.

She was an active member of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence for 65 years, teaching Sunday and Armenian school for many years.

Marilyn was also an announcer on the Armenian Radio Hour. Proud of her heritage, she was a member of the Armenian Students Association and a charter member of the Armenian International Women's Association.

In the late 1970s and 80s, Marilyn was a dedicated member of the former National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), an organization which promoted brother-and sisterhood of all people, tolerance, civic and social justice as well as understanding and mutual respect through education and dialog among persons of all races, ethnicities and faiths. She also served on the Rhode Island Heritage Commission.

In 1982, Marilyn joined Weight Watchers of North America as a leader/ambassador. She was instrumental in the creation of the Corporate Solutions At Work Program, which led her to travel throughout the United States to implement this program at WWs' various locations. She worked for WW for 30 years, universally admired and well-respected by the hundreds of clients whom she guided through weight loss.

Marilyn was generous patron of the arts and many other charitable organizations in both Rhode Island and Florida too numerous to list. Of these, her work with the Newport Music Festival (now Newport Classical) was her proudest accomplishment. She served on the Board of Directors for 30 years. Marilyn was also a sponsor of the festival, creating the Woloohojian Family Foundation for such purpose. She also served on the Board of the Island Moving Company, Newport's contemporary ballet company as well as Opera Providence.

Marilyn loved her alma mater, Simmons



College (now University) and was an active alumna. She organized many wonderful events with her peers throughout these many years, her favorite among these were the "picnic" outings at Newport Polo. In 2016, Marilyn was honored by Simmons with the Alumnae Achievement Award for her many years as President of the Class of 1954 and for her 25-year tenure as the Treasurer of the Rhode Island and Southeastern MA Simmons College Club.

In 2003, she joined the Daughters of Vartan, celebrating close to 20 years of membership. She was elected Chair of the Providence organization, Aik Otyag, and led many successful social and charitable fund-raising events. Additionally, Marilyn served as Chaplain of the national organization for two years. She was also a contributing member of AHARI, the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island.

The funeral service was held on Wednesday, May 11 at Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson St., Providence, followed by burial at Swan Point Cemetery, Providence. Arrangements were by the Nardolillo Funeral Home.

The family requests in lieu of flowers, donations to Newport Classic Musical Festival, P.O. Box 3303, Newport, RI for The Marilyn J. Woloohojian Emerging Artists Fund., Simmons University (College) or her church are requested.

Helen Q. Chilian

Devoted to Family

WATERTOWN — Helen Q Chilian, 95, daughter of the late Youlita Elbag and Armenag Arslanian of Watertown, passed away on April 26 after a brief illness.

She was the child of Armenian immigrants who like so many others sought refuge and comfort in America. She learned at a very early age from her beloved mother the importance of family, kindness and generosity. She applied what she learned throughout her life as a daughter, sister, aunt, friend and eventually wife, mother, and grandmother.

She was a graduate of Watertown High School and worked for the phone company until she met the love of her life, Arthur Chilian, who preceded her in death.

She met Arthur at a dance at the Sheraton Commander Hotel in Cambridge and knew immediately he was the man she was going to marry. They lived in Waltham during their 54-year marriage. Together they raised three children David (Karen Kerrigan), Steven (Sally Swihart) and Karen (Alex Bejian).

Helen enjoyed cooking and entertaining friends and family, especially at their summer cottage on the Cape. She is fondly remembered for many things, including dancing up a storm at each of her children's weddings. Nieces, nephews, grandchildren and children of friends adored spending



time with her. She never failed to let people know she loved them and complement them on how good they looked. She left the family a wonderful gift — a book, *My Cup Runneth Over* — that tells her and her family's story.

In addition to her parents and husband, Helen was predeceased by her older brothers

Philip Arslanian and his wife Mildred, Rupert Arslanian and Michael Arslanian and his wife Charlotte. She is survived by her children and their spouses, her grandsons Brandon Chilian, Jonathan Chilian (Christopher Emmerich) and Keaton Chilian of Atlanta; Matthew Bejian, Andrew Bejian and Alex Bejian of Needham; sister-in-law Louise Arslanian of Watertown; nephews Paul Arslanian and his wife Sharon of Northampton and Robert Arslanian and his wife Christina of Sebastopol, CA and her nieces Sandra Boyajian of Sarasota, FL and Joyce Arslanian of Framingham.

The Chilian/Bejian family wish to extend their sincere appreciation to Helen's caregivers Ilda and Carrie, who enabled her to remain in her home.

Funeral Services were on May 5 at St. James Armenian Church, Watertown. Interment followed at Ridgelawn Cemetery, Watertown. Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.



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Arts & Culture

Book Release and Reading of Tenny Arlen's Book of Armenian Verse

LOS ANGELES — On Friday, May 20, at 6 p.m., (PST), the release of Tenny Arlen's book of Armenian verse entitled *Կիրքով ըսելու՝ ինչո՞ւ ի հոս եմ* (*To Say with Passion: Why Am I Here?*) will take place in Bunche Hall 10383 of the University of California, Los Angeles. As the first full-length volume of creative literature composed in Armenian by a US-born author after over a century of Armenian-American community development, this is a landmark achievement. It is also one of the first public outcomes of the emphasis that UCLA Narekatsi Chair's Armenian program places on the concept of Armenian as a living and creative language in diaspora.

Tenny Arlen grew up in San Luis Obispo, far removed from any Armenian community. She began her undergraduate studies at UCLA in 2011 with no prior knowledge of Armenian. She took courses in Western Armenian language and literature for two years with Dr. Hagop Kouloujian, and, already a talented writer, soon began to write poetry in Armenian. In 2013, she graduated from UCLA with highest honors, earning a BA in comparative literature. In 2015, she was admitted into the University of Michigan's doctoral program in comparative literature with a plan to study French and Armenian symbolist poetry, but she passed away in a car accident in the summer of 2015 before beginning the program.

She wrote the first drafts of most of the poems collected in this book about 15–20 months after beginning Armenian language studies. Her posthumous book of poetry, published by the ARI Literature Foundation (Yerevan, 2021) with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, is entitled *To Say with Passion: Why Am I Here?* (*Կիրքով ըսելու՝ ինչո՞ւ ի հոս եմ*), a line taken from one of her poems, in which the Armenian language speaks about its own existence in the twenty-first century Diaspora. The book was edited by Dr. Kouloujian, who also wrote its afterword, in which he tells of Tenny's creative journey in Armenian and highlights the book's significance as the first full-length volume of creative literature written and published in Armenian by a US-born author.

This event is co-sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, UCLA Narekatsi Chair of Armenian Studies, UCLA Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, The Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA, and the UCLA Armenian Students' Association.

Copies of the book will be available for sale at the event (paperback \$15; hardcover \$20).

For more details visit: <https://www.international.ucla.edu/armenia/event/15664>

This is a hybrid event. Those unable to attend in person may register by Zoom on the above webpage.



Putting a flower where Monte Melkonian was killed - Merzili, Artsakh, April 2013.

Yaron Weiss 'Come to Artsakh!'

Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Yaron Weiss is an Israeli pro-Armenian activist. He was born in 1976, in Israel, to a family from Hungary. Currently he lives in the small

town of Kefar Weradim in the north of Israel with his wife and four children. Yaron works in a large Telecom company; during the tourist season he works as tourist guide in Armenia and Georgia. He considers Armenia one of the most attractive countries in the world with great potential for tourism. Yaron always raises awareness on Armenia and Artsakh in Israel, making an effort to promote issues such as recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Israel, always claiming that there is no justification for the government of Israel that it has not recognized the Armenian Genocide, also addressing the Israeli government to stop supplying weapons to Azerbaijan.

I met Yaron during his last visit to Armenia. This tall, dynamic gentleman with an intellectual face came to the meeting wearing a T-shirt with Monte Melkonian's portrait.

Yaron, you just came from Artsakh, a land you call Heaven. How was your trip this time?

I have traveled to Armenia and Artsakh since 2012. This is my third visit after the war. For me Artsakh is a symbol of a nation, people, living in their region for thousands of years and still struggling for not their independence, but for their survival. They started their struggle in late 1980s, and they say that the collapse of Soviet Union started from Artsakh. So when I visited this region for the first time, I was curious to visit Artsakh. I fell in love with Artsakh and stayed there for three weeks. I walked through the "Janaparth Trail" through mountains, valleys and villages of Artsakh, staying at homes, enjoying beautiful panoramas and the hospitality of a very kind people. Everyone treated me as a family member, as I am one of them. So I felt it to be my duty to talk about Armenia and Artsakh in my country and to do whatever I can to support this people. I started to work as tour guide in Armenia for Israelis in my free time. In Israel there is a lobby for any nation, many Georgian and Azerbaijani immigrants support their interests, especially Azerbaijan, which send lots of money to bribe the politicians and media, but almost no one speaks for Armenia, not even about

see WEISS, page 16



With Bako Sahakian, former president of Artsakh in Shushi, Artsakh, near the statue of Vazgen Sargsyan.

Armenian Night At Pops to Feature Violinist Diana Adamyan

BOSTON — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society will present the 69th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Wednesday, June 8 at 8 p.m.

This year, violin sensation Diana Adamyan will appear as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. The 22-year-old virtuoso, winner of the 2018 Menuhin International Violin Competition — the world's most prestigious prize for young violinists — will join the orchestra and music director Keith Lockhart in a performance of a romantic masterpiece — the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E-minor* by Felix Mendelssohn.

Adamyan is quickly gaining an international reputation as one of her generation's most outstanding violinists. After winning the first prize at the Menuhin International, she went on to receive first prize in the 2020 Khachaturian Violin Competition, held online due the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adamyan gave her London debut playing Bach's *Double Concerto* with Pinchas Zukerman and the Royal

(BAUER-SCHMITZ PHOTO)



Diana Adamyan

Philharmonic Orchestra in 2015. She has also appeared at Seiji Ozawa's Matsumoto Festival in Japan, at Yerevan Perspectives International Music Festival, and at HIMA Festival in Iceland. She is no stranger to the Boston Community, having performed spectacularly with a group of young and talented musicians at Longy School of Music in 2016 in a concert presented by the YerazArt Foundation.

Her upcoming engagements include recitals in Tokyo and France, and debut appearances with the Deutsche Symphonie Orchester and Göttinger Symphonie Orchester, and a performance at the Aspen Music Festival this summer.

Tony Award nominee Christopher Jackson will round out the program on June 8, joining Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall. Best known for originating the role of George Washington in "Hamilton," Jackson will perform music from Harry Belafonte to "In the Heights," drawing from his favorites in pop, soul, Broadway, and his own original music, including his Emmy-award winning songs for "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company."

Tickets for this concert are available from www.FACSBoston.org.



ARTS & CULTURE

Photojournalist Documents Artsakh Home Front

ARTSAKH, from page 1

During the war, Tellalian headed to Armenia to work as a photojournalist with Civilnet and document the turmoil of his ancestral homeland. A fourth-generation Armenian-American from Fresno, Tellalian earned his theological and Armenian studies degrees from the St. Nersess Seminary and was ordained a deacon; he is currently working on his doctorate in psychology at the New School in New York City.

Serendipitously meeting journalist-writer Michael Krikorian from Los Angeles on the plane to Armenia, the duo headed to Artsakh for their documentary mission. In addition to acting as the photographer, Tellalian was also the translator for the American-Armenian team.

"I never intended to put a book together," said Tellalian. "I went as a photojournalist and worked with Civilnet, providing them photos. Going through the photographs, I didn't feel satisfied. I wanted there to be better understanding of what we were doing and what we were seeing."

Tellalian pieced together the book from his photos of everyday civilians, people he knew personally and befriended, photos that were "not usable" for Civilnet's typical straight news coverage. Through the book's many photographs, he has brought a larger picture of the humanity he saw in Artsakh to the eyes, and hopefully to the hearts of the Diaspora and all people across the world.

A Story of Resilient Armenians

The book is 50 pages long and includes 37 photographs, split into sections telling the story of individuals and groups of people from Artsakh; some stayed in Artsakh during the war and others took refuge in Armenia proper. Each section is preceded by a short poem-like introduction.

Tellalian shared his impression of the Armenian spirit that he saw when he visited Artsakh. "There's a remarkable resilience of our people; of humanity [in general]... but there is something distinctive about our people." He pauses to muster the correct words, then said, hesitatingly, "Not everyone [around the world] believes in Christianity in the same way. But there is something in our culture that resists hate and the temptation to be angry. There was a life [in Artsakh during the war] that wasn't centered around killing and destroying. It was focused on living and surviving and honoring those heroes by doing so."

The author continued, in relation to the broader reasons for the war: "We were protecting our lands; our homes. Not trying to take someone else's home. And from the Azerbaijani perspective, they are trying to take their lands back too, but that disregards a lot of history. There was a different sense on this [Armenian] side of the war. There's just a desire to be left alone and live in peace. That doesn't seem to be a shared desire with the Azeri government."

In Tellalian's impression, the individuals he met in Artsakh seemed to embody this ethos. The photos presented in the book also tell the story of resilient Armenians who are full of life and have the will to continue.

The first photographs in the book are of a band of youthful musicians from the music school in Artsakh, who had fled to Yerevan. "We met them on the street because they were raising money," Tellalian said. "We went into a café and Mike [Krikorian] was interviewing them. The servers start bringing drinks and cookies for the kids. Arshak [the driver] mentioned to the owner that they were refugees and the owner gave them a bunch of stuff. There was a woman in the corner who decided to record them. They were moved by one of the songs and they couldn't keep going."

With that introduction to the resilient spirit of Artsakh, Tellalian and Krikorian continued into the historic Armenian territory which was under attack.

A Shepherd Doesn't Sit Home Waiting For The Sheep

The first individual in the book that the team met in Artsakh is Fr. Varazdat. He was one of the head military chaplains during the war. Tellalian said: "Ter Varazdat went out on the front to baptize soldiers and do *badarak* on the front lines, and there were times when he didn't know if he would make it back. One of his deacons didn't make it back. There was just a different spirit, it seemed." Currently, Fr. Varazdat is back in Yerevan where he continues to minister to soldiers from the St. Anna church. "He's very charismatic, always with the soldiers," Tellalian said. "A shepherd doesn't sit home waiting for the sheep to come home."

The next individual, also a clergyman, will be familiar to many readers: Archbishop Pargev Martirosyan, the Primate of Artsakh. Tellalian reminisced that he first met him in Shushi on a pilgrimage organized through St. Nersess Seminary in 2003, humorously recalling that along with being introduced to the archbishop, he was also introduced for

the first time to the high-octane *tuti oghi* (mulberry liquor).

Upon returning in 2020, "He remembered us. That was one of the times I wasn't translating, because Pargev *Srpazan* speaks fluent English. He's full of life, the fire is still there. He's carried from the 1990s to 2016 to 2020." Tellalian notes that in his opinion, this is all the same war. Armenians became complacent, he opines. "While they [Azerbaijan] were building up their army and a culture of hate and this propaganda machine, we [diasporan Armenians] were doing what we thought we were supposed to be doing, going [to Artsakh and Armenia] and hanging out, not arming and training and being more foresighted."

As to Archbishop Pargev, "He carried them through three decades of war," Tellalian said. "He came [to the US] after the war for some procedures. The guy went through a heart attack and still ticking with the same fiery hope that he had. Some people look at a guy like this and say, 'how can you still have hope.' It's the notion of faith as a gift." Tellalian relates that Martirosyan was leading the faithful in prayer throughout the day from a bomb shelter underneath the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi, where an attack at any moment could wipe them out.

Life Under Siege

Tellalian next takes us to a bomb shelter in Stepanakert. "They were friends of Lika," he said. "Lika worked for Civilnet and was kind of a guide. She connected with the family. They were just finishing up making the *tanov* [a yogurt-based soup also known as *tanabour* or *spas*] as we arrived. We weren't going in as journalists but we were welcomed as guests. I sat in the room with the TV. There's a room with warmer light and a room with cooler light that has the TV and food. They're feeding me food from the pantry, vegetables. The guy gave me a shot [of liquor]" None of these shots were usable by Civilnet. They weren't material for that outlet, but they're priceless to me.

Another memorable section of Tellalian's book was the wedding of a soldier and his bride, a story which was widely reproduced in the international press with the help of Tellalian and other journalists. "There's a press center for international journalists [in Artsakh]. They kept track of credentials and who was there and where they were. They didn't tell us where we were going or what we were doing. They said come to the office and we're going on a tour. We gathered in the morning and we end up in Shushi and they say there's going to be a wedding. This is the church [Ghazanchetsots] that was shelled twice, the double-tap method that Russia is using in Ukraine."

Tellalian recalled that he was able to gain special access due to his status as a deacon. He asked the presiding clergyman if he could participate in the service and was allowed to do so. Being able to participate in the couple's special day and a celebration for the community was also meaningful to him. "The wedding I could shoot from the bema because I'm a deacon and I knew the service, so there were certain privileges I had because of that. The shot of the wine. [chalice of wine used in the Armenian marriage service]. I sang with [the priest] and did a couple of *karozes* [chants]. That was another way to plug in, through the services through the church community."

Tellalian mentions that the Artsakh authorities apparently desired to publicize the wedding as a human interest story by inviting international journalists, but were extremely secretive until the moment Tellalian and others arrived at the church. The reason of course, was security: "Had there been any sort of leak, I have no doubt the Azeris would try to hit it again with us all inside," said Tellalian. He adds, "There was something really symbolic about it. It was really moving. You don't get married if you're hopeless."

Repatriates and Returnees

The book also profiles Hovig Asmarian, a Syrian refugee who fled with his family to Artsakh. He has opened a restaurant with his wife in Stepanakert, named "Samra," which was the only one to remain open during the war.

"His wife was back and forth, she made all the food," Tellalian relates. The Asmarians started off feeding the soldiers, but because the types of food they were making were the same as the soldiers' rations, they instead began to cook up what they called "Geroosoos" soup. Roughly translated as "eat it and shut up," the soup is made of motley ingredients, which its name suggests one is better off not asking about. "He doesn't take a dram from anybody," said Tellalian. "He accepts food donations, and kept his restaurant open throughout the war."

Tellalian hopefully relates that both Hovig Asmarian as well as Mariam Sargsyan, who was the bride in the wedding Tellalian photographed, both work for Artsakh Public Radio. Hovig has a show called "Spiurki Tzayne" (Voice

of the Diaspora) where he utilizes Western Armenian, and Mariam talks about war heroes.

In regard to Hovig's restaurant, Tellalian said, "By virtue of his presence and hospitality and spirit, it was a center, as small as it was." Tellalian continues, "He showed us his garden (depicted in the book). He's in his paradise." And in response to writer Krikorian asking the couple where they would go if they could leave, the reply was "where would we go?"

Another returnee was Dr. Gevorgyan from Glendale. He returned as soon as the war broke out. "We were waking up to it Sunday morning, and Monday he's telling his wife they need me there," Tellalian said. Gevorgyan's wife protested that his family in California also needed him. He replied the people of Artsakh needed him more. Tellalian found him in a makeshift hospital in the village of Gishi, where Gevorgyan and his crew had retreated from Mar-duni. "He spent a month and a half on the frontlines in the hospital, doing surgery over and over again"

Armenia's Future

One of the most powerful aspects of the photographs are how they portray the hope and vibrancy in the faces of young people and children. Anyone looking through the book would think this bodes well for Armenia's future. One of the people the author met on his journey who most embodied this was Lika Zakaryan, to whom the book is also dedicated.

Zakaryan has gained a bit of international notoriety since that meeting. During the war, she was also working for Civilnet as a reporter, reporting on the events with a videographer who is now her husband. An Artsakh native, at the time, she was just starting classes in journalism but in reality, "the war was her teacher," said Tellalian. She started writing a diary in Russian and posting it, gaining the attention of Russian-speaking around the world. It is now available as a book in Armenian, Russian, and English (<https://www.44daysbook.com/>). In Zakaryan's diary, the world saw "this amazing young woman who is bright, spirited, and passionate, but not hateful. The anger, for her, was directed toward the international organizations who could have stopped it," Tellalian said. The website for Zakaryan's book describes it as "a definitive chronicle of those 44 days."

At the time, Zakaryan was starting to get some coverage, and Salpi Ghazarian of the University of Southern California, one of Tellalian's and Krikorian's mentors, suggested that they interview her. It was the first thing the duo did when they got to Artsakh. "The first night we got to Artsakh, we put on the gear, drove without lights through the Lachin corridor. At a certain point our driver Arshak stopped. He was a seasoned war veteran from the 1990s. We passed Shushi to go meet Lika, we went and they were staying in a bunker in Stepanakert. She was just a lovely person and we bonded, she became like a little sister to me. I was with her when she found out her cousin was captured." The photographs of Zakaryan depict her with her brother and her father, another heroic figure of the book. "He was going around giving supplies to people. He was delivering them in a car, which was risky for him [because of the possibility of being targeted by the enemy]."

Arpi is another young woman from Artsakh pictured in the book. "She fled her home, her brothers were fighting," said Tellalian. "Her faith was grounding her. She was reading scripture the night everything started. I kept pushing her to say what it was. She said it was 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'" The quotation, from John 12:24, is prominent in the Armenian requiem service. "She and the women were at this resort hotel that a lot of refugees were put up in," said Tellalian.

The photographer, who took pictures of these woman making wine, states: "they were at this resort hotel in Goris. It was gorgeous. I'm listening to the river and thinking it would be a lovely place to vacation. And we hear missiles being fired from down the way." He continues, "they're refugees, but they're going to work. They are cleaning the grapes and smashing them. There was a teenage kid who was buzzed walking around and picking the grapes from the trellises."

Tellalian concludes that wine-making is a sign of hope. "You don't make wine, which is going to take time to ferment, unless you think you are going to drink it."

The book can be ordered through its official website, <https://www.humanityduringwar.org/> or from Abril Books in Glendale.

Tellalian's personal photography site can be found here: <http://www.ezrasphoto.com/>



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Shahka Lokhmahs Traditional Armenian Cookies

From the Armenian Museum Website

This treasured family recipe for *shahka lokhmahs* (sugar cookies) from Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh is featured at the Armenian Museum of America website. It is a recipe her beloved grandmother and mother made for many years. Now, Ruth makes it frequently as it brings back fond memories of working in the kitchen with her mother.

“Baking with my ‘menz mama’ as well as ‘menz hireek’ were special opportunities to not only learn but the exercise patience. Many of the things we made were very time-consuming and could often take a whole day. Think delicious, flaky baklava from scratch including the dough, syrup, chopping nuts by hand, and assembling the dough, each sheet slathered with clarified butter. It would take a full day to make two ‘tapsees’ (9X13 baking pans) of this treasured concoction,” remembers Ruth.

“My creative and talented grandfather was a baker in Beirut who brought some of his pans to Wisconsin where my parents eventually settled. His baking style would include preparing for a full day’s worth of baking. Making pita bread and other breads from scratch were his specialties.”

“It seems that many cultures share a similar type of recipe with similar ingredients for these buttery cookies (Shahka Lokhmahs). This one is a melt-in-your-mouth delight,” she adds. “The recipe makes about ten dozen — plenty to share (or keep for yourself). If you don’t want to make them all at once, you can keep the dough in the refrigerator. Bring it to room temperature before you roll it out and bake it. This is a time-honored recipe in our family, and a no-fail baking endeavor,” she says.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound unsalted butter (at room temperature)
- 1 large egg yolk, add to butter and beat until creamy
- 1 teaspoon vanilla, added to the above ingredients
- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar, added to the above ingredients
- 5 cups sifted all-purpose flour

Optional: Add 1 cup of finely ground toasted pecans or walnuts, if desired
Powdered sugar

PREPARATION:

With an electric mixer, combine the butter and the egg yolk until they are very creamy. Add the vanilla, and mix until well combined. Add the sifted powdered sugar, and mix again. At this point, add the finely ground toasted pecans or walnuts and mix until fully incorporated into the dough.

Gradually add the flour to this mixture. The dough will be stiff. If the dough becomes too stiff for your mixer, use your hands. Try not to handle the dough too much. (Note: The dough works best if you use it when it is freshly made rather than refrigerating or freezing it for later use. It can be done that way, too, if necessary.)

Put flour on the palms of your hands as you roll out small portions of the dough into a log about 12-15 inches long and about 3/4 inch in diameter. Cut cookies with a butter knife every 3 inches on an angle. Use leftover dough for the next log that you will roll out. Handle dough as little as possible. Repeat process until all cookies are cut and placed on an UNGREASED cookie sheet. Arrange cookies close together as they will remain the same size when baked.

Bake at 325° for at least 15 minutes. Check bottom of cookie for doneness. Cookies will be done when they look slightly browned. Add more time if nec-

essary. Sprinkle cookies with powdered sugar when completely cooled. These cookies travel and freeze well once baked. They are best served with Armenian coffee or tea.

“My dad is from Beirut, Lebanon. Mom’s family is from Ankara, Turkey. My grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide in 1915 when they both met in an orphanage run by German missionaries. Food has always been a way of bringing back memories; I remember being part of a two-person army, jockeying the skewered lamb from the kitchen to my dad outside, where the handmade charcoal grill and his expertise made these pieces of lamb a very succulent dish. He even fashioned the skewers; being a watchmaker and jeweler came in handy with his kitchen gadget-making skills. We’d do this for a full day and then freeze what we didn’t need, so we had grilled goodness in the months ahead,” says Ruth.

“I spent many hours learning how to make traditional Armenian dishes. It’s all we ever ate. Sadly, there were times when I dreamt of macaroni and cheese and hot dogs instead of what I had access to. Looking back, I fondly recall the great food we all enjoyed. I think the kitchen was hallowed ground. With poverty and hunger in my history, nothing ever went to waste.

The phrase ‘starving Armenians’ was for real for my grandparents.

When they finally arrived in this country, they even brought leftover thread from buttons that fell off a shirt; I found some, years later, in my grandmother’s sewing tin...”

“It would not be an Armenian meal or gathering without coffee and some kind of sweet like this cookie. When I visited Armenia in 2019, there was literally a coffee machine or storefront where you could get coffee without walking just a few steps. There are tricks of the trade, but know that it’s easy to make. Sometimes people would turn the cups upside down after finishing their hot, sweet drink and tell one another’s fortunes. Often coupled with dried and fresh fruit, baklava, and nuts of some kind – even cordials -- it speaks of friendship, belonging and fellowship. Enjoy these traditional Armenian cookies that melt in your mouth. They represent a true taste of home for me,” she adds.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/armenian-recipes>

See Ruth’s latest stories at: <https://armenianweekly.com/author/ruth-hartunian-alumbaugh/>

Also see Ruth’s “My Armenian Table” from Connecticut Food & Farm Magazine, Spring 2020, Volume 20 by Connecticut Food and Farm at: https://issuu.com/connecticutfoodandfarm/docs/connecticut_food_and_farm_magazine_spring_2020/s/10371020

Ruth has visited Gandzasar Monastery. “Gandzasar is a 13th-century Armenian Apostolic cathedral headed by the Church of St. John the Baptist, and is the most significant shrine of Nagorno-Karabakh. The monastery of Gandzasar, as well as hundreds of other ancient monasteries, testify to the thousand-year presence of Armenians in Karabakh and prove that the sacred Artsakh land from time immemorial has belonged to the Armenian people.” (<https://www.gandzasar.com/holy-see-of-gandzasar.htm>). The construction of Gandzasar began in 1216 under the patronage of the Armenian prince Khachensky. First mentioned in the tenth century, from the 14th century to the nineteenth century Gandzasar was the residence of bishops, and to this day the monastery is still the religious and cultural center of the country.*

“My heart skipped a beat when I got to the Gandzasar Monastery. My beloved mother has been gone from this world for over a decade. But I thought I saw her when I viewed the little lady making jingalov hats. This herb-filled bread is to die for. Since I love to cook and bake, I am always drawn to the places where food is made. This woman invited me to come close and watch her work. She reminded me of my grandfather from Beirut who owned a bakery. He made bread in our kitchen all his days here in the United States. He never used fancy tools either. Just a cutting board and sharp knife and the best tool ever-his hands. I found another Hartunian in spirit. Her bread was cheap (hardly \$1 American) and generous in size. And the added bonus was the man with colorful flags riding on his horse to entertain the crowd.” – Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh, 2020. Also see: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1020760-jingalov-hats>

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https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVna-GIm6e_hk2zDhPP9iYg

About the author: Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh is an avid taster of all things edible and has written food blogs (Ravings and Cravings), taught cooking classes to locals and internationals, travelled to Armenia (in addition to many other far-flung places), is a music therapist, veteran homeschool mom, lover of Jesus Christ and deeply devoted to her family. She is the sole owner of Music and More International and lives in Connecticut, welcoming conversations at ruthalumbaugh@gmail.com. She has a stash of cookies in her home at all times.

Connect at:

Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh, MT/BC

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*<https://araratour.com/gandzasar-monastery>

ARTS & CULTURE

Yaron Weiss: ‘Come to Artsakh!’

WEISS, from page 13

tourism. I started one of the first Facebook page on Armenia and wrote articles in Hebrew to show the country. I published an article about Artsakh in the most important website in Israel and then I became a kind of expert on Armenian issues, and people started to contact me. I made a connection with the Armenian community; they support Armenian interests, but my advantage is not being Armenian and I am not getting paid for my pro-Armenian activities. The big difference between me and Israelis who support Azerbaijan is that I pay money to support Armenia, while they get money or benefits for their support, so anything they say is worth nothing.

I am sure you are on Azerbaijan’s black list.

Nothing will ever stop me from supporting Artsakh, especially during and after the 44-day war. I organized protests, gave interviews to the media about our agenda, as some Israeli media supports Azerbaijan. They invited me to talk about it from our perspective — although I am not Armenian, but I say “our” as I consider myself a patriot of Armenia and Artsakh. Along with the Armenian community, we founded an organization for assisting Armenia and Artsakh. Last year in May I visited there for the first time after war. At that time people said they understand their new situation: they are survivors and they were ready to build their new future. They were shocked, but still optimistic. In last September when I came for the second time, it looked like they are kind of tired of this new situation with refugees living in temporary shelters, being less motivated. And now, people seem a bit depressed, as all the young people are on the border, not with us as in previous times, and you feel in the atmosphere that something is going to happen. People are really anxious that maybe there is no future, so why open businesses, build houses, if in a few months the situation might change. The state of affairs is similar what is now happening in Ukraine. So my message is to the world, to the Armenian and Russian passport holders, as they can enter Artsakh — now it is the time, the only choice: come to Artsakh, come to help this brave land with your skills. If you just visit, of course you support the economy, but let people in Artsakh to feel they are not alone. Now they feel they are abandoned. I don’t want to talk about politics here, but my feeling was that people in Artsakh think that the Armenian government and the Diaspora abandoned them, not to mention the Western world. We cannot control the Armenian government, but at least we can bring our message to the Diaspora. What really hurts me is that many people from the Diaspora, also in Israel, just fight on Facebook, writing that “we will not give any inch of Artsakh,” but they never visit there.

We call them Facebook fedayis.

Exactly. There are some in Israel too. Israel is a micro-cosmos; you can imagine what is happening in the Diaspora. When Israel was established, people came to fight in the 1973 war, leaving their comfortable lives in the States and elsewhere. Even though we have lots of problems in Israel, also among people, but when it is an emergency, everyone is united and fight and supports the nation. So the Armenian Diaspora can support just with their presence in Artsakh. Please come tomorrow, don’t wait to book a flight in the summer. And if all these people come, I am sure, there is no power that can break the spirit of the Artsakh people. But they need help. After three visits on the one hand I was happy to see my friends, the landscapes I like, to

breathe the air of Artsakh, which is so important for my soul, but on the other hand, it was a sad situation. People lost their families, friends, their houses, even some parts of their body, and they are afraid of the future. Yet even if I have this twin feeling of happiness and sadness, I decided to make this way by Janaparth Trail that still under our control. I walked from Kolatak to Gandzasar — a very nice section going



Yaron Weiss at a protest in Tel Aviv, November 2021.

through forest, from Hakobavank monastery through open fields and villages until Vank village. It is fantastic. I published on Janaparth’s website that we still are walking on that road to show everybody, that even you take 75 percent of our territory, we still continue to be there. There is no reason to lose. It is not written in the Bible that Artsakh should belong to Azerbaijan. It is in our hands — of Artsakh’s population, Armenians of the Republic of Armenia and foreigners like me. We can control the situation even if it seems that Russia, Turkey, Iran and the West cannot control them, but we can unify normal people from all around the world to support Artsakh. If you see that Diaspora people almost do not do anything, in that case maybe the future is unclear, but if the people join and help, I am sure we will never lose Artsakh.

What can the Israeli people learn from Armenians and vice versa?

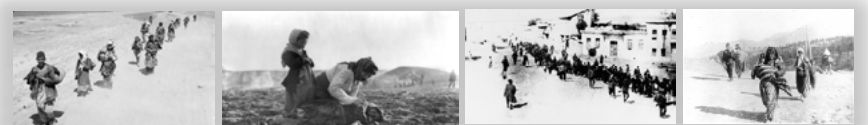
I think there are many things that we should learn from the Armenians. First thing: politeness. Everywhere using public transportation you see how people respect each other, giving seats to women and the elderly. Then, Armenian hospitality is exemplary. People in Artsakh do not hesitate to welcome me even knowing that I am not Christian and I am from a country that sells weapon to Azerbaijan. The family relationship you have at your parties, keeping your homes open for guests is just great. A few years ago my wife and I joined a project to host travelers in our home in Galilea for free. Many people did not understand how it was possible to host foreigners. It is unusual in Israel, but I learned from my Armenian friends that it is very normal and natural. And in Artsakh people even became offended when I want to pay for their hospitality. I also would like to mention the culture. Israel is a very new nation, although the Jewish religion is very old. There is no ancient culture, it is new and undeveloped, while here there are old traditions — the festivals, arts, food. Every Armenian bears in his bag a big package of history. You go by streets and see

the portraits of Sayat-Nova, Komitas or Monte Melkonian — you are proud of your heritage, a heritage of a people who always wants peace, who never harmed to anyone, just wanted to protect themselves. You cannot see the same in Turkey — they are proud of killing the minorities. As to what the Armenians can learn from Jews — well, we are very separated people, there are Ashkenazi Jews, Sephardic Jews, many political par-

under fire, which did not stop the Armenian government from negotiating with Azerbaijan. If you negotiate under fire, you lose — this is a first rule your government should learn from Israel. The Israelis also were smart to develop a good weapon industry to protect their country and also, they export weapons from many countries, but you cannot develop weapon industry only for the local market. The only problem is that Israel, compared to other countries, sells weapon to dictatorships. Western countries put in place embargos to not sell weapons to Azerbaijan, but Israel does not care about dictatorships. This is something that I am against.

Do the small group of Israeli friends of Armenia have some mechanisms — even minor — to impact the Israeli government to change its attitude toward Armenia?

Just today I met a local politician and we discussed the issue, that it would be reasonable to find somewhere in world a rich Israeli person and give him the position of honorary consul of Armenia to develop contacts between two countries and spend money for Armenian interests. Actually there was an honorary consul in Israel, an Armenian, but we need more. The last months we have Armenian ambassador, which is important, as all these years there was nothing — excluding Armenian community, it was just me with few other people representing the issues of Armenia and Artsakh, but were not official. I should say that soon we are going to organize a forum of Israelis to support Armenia. We do hope that eminent Armenologist Michael Stone with other intellectuals will join us, so we will become the voice of Armenia in Israel. We will cooperate with the Armenian embassy and the local community, as well as try to involve Israeli businesspeople to find cooperation in Armenia. We cannot compete with the big money from Azerbaijan but we can at least start such initiative. For my part I will continue to write articles, bring tourists, make interviews, make contacts. Every tourist I bring here from Israel, becomes friend of Armenia. I am sure, this is my mission!



**Tekeyan Cultural Association, Detroit Chapter
AGBU, Detroit Chapter, C.S.A.I., Detroit Chapter,
& AGBU Young Professionals, invite you to...**



A Very Special Lecture Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 7:00 pm

AGBU School Library

commemorating the 107th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

Dr. Ari Sekeryan

*The Aftermath of the Armenian Genocide: Survival and
Resilience During Armistice (1918-1923)*

In April 1915, the Ottoman state ordered the arrest of Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul and sent them to isolated prisons in central Anatolia, where most of them were killed. This marks the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. Through the spring and summer of 1915, in all corners of the Empire, even cities far from the conflict zones, the government orchestrated the deportations which soon transformed into a genocide, in which thousands of Armenians perished. Yet in October 1918, the Ottoman Empire officially signed the Armistice of Mudros and the Young Turk leaders fled the Ottoman capital. While it was a signature of defeat for the Ottoman Empire, it was the beginning of a new period for the Armenians. In this lecture, Dr. Sekeryan will analyze the post-genocide period, the social and political developments regarding the post-genocide Armenian community by utilizing the Ottoman Turkish and Armenian press sources. The lecture will focus on the survival and resilience of the community amid political chaos.



Dr. Ari Sekeryan received his PhD from the University of Oxford in 2018. His first manuscript, *Armenians and the Fall of the Ottoman Empire, After Genocide (1918-1923)*, will be published in December 2022 by Cambridge University Press, analyses the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the transformation of the Ottoman Armenian political stance and the impacts of social and political developments of the period on the Ottoman Armenian community by examining the Ottoman Turkish and Armenian press as well as the Ottoman archives. Armenian and Ottoman Turkish media sources published in the Ottoman Empire during the Armistice years (1918-1923) are employed to track the post-war communal relationships in Ottoman society in general and with regards to the Armenian community in particular. His research was grounded in detailed archival research conducted at the library of the Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna, Austria; the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, Turkey; and the National Library of Yerevan, Armenia. He edited *The Adana Massacre 1909: Three Reports and An Anthology of Armenian Literature 1913*. His latest articles appeared in the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Turkish Studies, the Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association, and War in History. Dr. Sekeryan was a fellow at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2019, the Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno during Spring 2020 and the Manogian Postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor during the academic year of 2020-2021.

Refreshments and “meet the Scholar” to follow lecture...



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 15 — A Chess tournament to Benefit "City of Smile" children with Cancer in Armenia, featuring chess prodigy Sam Sevan. Sunday at 2 p.m., at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC), 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown. For all interested in playing chess - all ages welcome! Tickets can be reserved on line by making a \$50.00 tax deductible donation to City of Smile USA: (Please indicate CHESS in comments so we can keep track of the number of tickets. (<https://us-donate.cityofsmile.org/>)

MAY 17 — Author and poet Peter Balakian will read from his new book of poems, No Sign, at a program sponsored by Grolier Book Shop. The reading will take place at a residence at 49 Hawthorne St., Cambridge, at 7.15 p.m. The reading is free and open to the public.

MAY 18 — "Chris Bohjalian and Stephen Kurkjian in Conversation" at the Armenian Museum of America. Author Chris Bohjalian and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian will talk about The Lioness: Bohjalian's 23rd novel. Wednesday, May 18 at 7 p.m. 65 Main St., Watertown. Free event but please register: www.tinyurl.com/lionessatama

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

MAY 20, 21 — Armenian Memorial Church Annual Fair (rain or shine). On Friday, May 20, from 5 to 8 p.m., the church will be serving kebab dinners and selling desserts. The entire fair will be open on Saturday, May 21 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fabulous Armenian beef, chicken and losh (ground meat) kebab dinners complete with sauce, rice pilaf, salad and pita bread. The selection will also include Armenian meatless meals. Eat in or purchase takeout. Gourmet specialties including paklava, kadayif, cheoreg, koufte, eetch, cheese beureg and many others. The Church sets aside 10 percent the proceeds to benefit a worthy charity. This year's funds will be donated to Miaseen, a charity that supports family and community stability in Armenia.

32 Bigelow Avenue in Watertown. The Church is wheelchair accessible. For more information, call 617-923-0498.

JUNE 4 — The Daughters of Vartan Santoukht Otyag No.5 is presenting HYEIGHTS 2022, an Armenian Cultural Show Highlighting the Performing Arts on Saturday, First Baptist Church Gordon Hall, 111 Park Avenue, Worcester. An Armenian Buffet following the show is included. Call 978-537-2752 for Reservations: \$15 per Adult, \$8 per Child ages 5-12, Children under are Free. The event is open to the public.

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

SEPTEMBER 9 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites everyone to a cultural event honoring author, editor, philologist, educator and public figure, Jirair Tanielian from Beirut, Lebanon, for his 60 years of service and dedication to Armenian culture and the community. Friday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn, Watertown. Details to follow. For more information, please contact us at bostontca@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 21 — Gala Benefit Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation's Immigrants. InterContinental Hotel, Boston. 6pm Honoring Stephen Kurkjian, Distinguished Citizen, Leader, Pulitzer Prize Journalist and Author, and Recognizing Organizations Serving Immigrants and Refugees. Funds raised support the Legacy Fund, endowed fund to care for and maintain the Park year-round. Advance Reservations only. To receive the invitation, please send name and address to hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

NEW JERSEY

JUNE 17 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group in association with Huyser Music Ensemble presents "Huyser and Friends Project: Harmony," an open-air concert dedicated to the 75th Anniversary of Tekeyan Cultural Association. Featuring Gohar Hovhannisyan & Band from Armenia. Friday, 7:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Armenian Church, 174 Essex Dr. Tenaflly, NJ. Donation \$60, includes Aran Wines from Artsakh. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. For tickets call Marie: 201-745-8850 or Talar: 201-240-8541 or visit: www.itsmyseat.com/harmony

NEW YORK

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

Erevan Choral Society Back for First Time Since Pandemic



The Erevan Choral Society of Holy Trinity Armenian Church

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — After 2.5 years of absence due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Erevan Choral Society of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston was back with an impressive, inspirational concert dedicated to the 107th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The concert was held on Sunday, April 24, in the Sanctuary of the church.

In his opening remarks, pastor of the Church, Rev. Vasken A. Kouzouian, paid tribute to the memory of 1.5 million innocent Genocide victims.

Under the direction of the long-time music director and conductor, composer Konstantin Petrossian, the chorale opened the program with the national anthems of the US, Armenia, and Artsakh. The program included well-selected works of Gomidas (Komitas), contemporary Armenian composers, and popular patriotic songs.

One of the highlights of the program was the virtuoso performance of soloist, accomplished soprano Kate Norigian, who impressed the audience in-present with the popular *Groong* and *Karoon-a* by Gomidas. Violinist Armen Ghazaryan and pianist/organist Levon Hovsepian accompanied her.

The Armenian School students of Holy Trinity Armenian Church also participated in the program, reciting popular poems dedicated to the Genocide and Armenia.

Rev. Mampre Kouzouian, the former pastor of the church, delivered the closing remarks, stressing the importance of the event and praising the singers and the soloists for their dedication and magnificent performance.

The program was concluded with the Lord's Prayer. The concert was indeed a celebrated event in the Armenian community and was warmly received by the public.

— Aida Diloyan



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**MIRROR
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SINCE 1932



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COMMENTARY

Israel Should Not Fear Turkey in Recognizing Armenian Genocide

By Israel W. Charny

Clearly, our hearts and minds are deeply concerned with the murdering hells of war crimes or crimes against humanity — that in my professional language as a genocide scholar are one of the several subtypes of genocide — that Putin’s Russia is committing. But at the same time, some of our attention deserves to be saved for the issues of other peoples’ welfare as well, and that includes the ways we extend respect to past events of genocide, such as the Armenian Genocide, whose official day of remembrance is April 24. (This was the day in 1915 the Turks rounded up some 250 leaders of every aspect of Armenian culture and executed almost all of them.)

Quite obviously, Israel has been refraining these many years from officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide out of an effort not to excite the fury and retaliation of Turkey. The Turks have persisted in their bizarre denials of the factual history of the Armenian Genocide through all these years, and are known to have devoted literally millions of dollars to campaigns of censorship and cancellations of reports, articles, books, professional congresses, art exhibits, and even musical events that in one way or another were intended to express pain and caring about the Armenian Genocide.

In Turkey, an easy one-way ticket to jail has been to bring up the subject of the Armenian Genocide prominently — although strangely there also grew a generation of brave intellectuals and artists who managed to get across the memory of the slaughter of the Armenian people and survived, though a good many of them had to go through painful legal trials of charges of insulting the government, and the ones who survived came at the expense of periods of being in jail. Obviously, the Turks took the subject terribly seriously. One might say that it was the Turkish version of the American taboo of cussing the other guy’s mother — in the age when to say that to a good old American marine was an established one-way ticket for getting yourself slugged — in Turkey you went to jail if you talked of a genocide.

So, big grown-up countries — like the United States and I think Israel deserves to be characterized in this way, too — have been scared from getting involved with Turkish sensitivity. Writing in the *Times of Israel*, Lazar Berman notes, “Many countries have refrained from recognizing the genocide out of fear of the Turkish response, which often involves recalling its ambassador for a period of time. That was Ankara’s reaction in 2011 when the French National Assembly passed a bill making it illegal to deny the Armenian Genocide. It also recalled its ambassador to the Vatican when Pope Francis used the word genocide during a 2015 mass marking the 100th anniversary of the slaughter, and its ambassa-dor to Germany after the Bundestag passed a resolution calling the murder of Armenians a genocide in 2016.”

Happily, author Berman nonetheless was of the opinion that Turkey likely would not take any steps against the US for its recog-

nition, and that has proven to be the case. In fact, even in earlier years when Turkey was far less stressed, economically and politically, than it is today, its characteristic modus operandi has been to react with a torrent of invectives and threats, including concrete announcements that it would cancel major economic relationships, and in some cases seemed to go about implementing their threatened repercussions, but then, quite consistently, withdrew from retaliating and resumed essentially complete relationships.

Israel is a country that takes special pride in not being afraid, and of standing up proudly and firmly against huge Samson-like antagonists. It has been humiliating and puzzling that in a matter of basic ethics and factual truth, Israel has been so meek, obsequious and fawning that it has failed to extend the simple honor of recognizing another people’s suffering and destruction in a massive genocide. Is it so beyond our imagination as Israelis to be able to say to Turkey at this time, “We have every respect for you as an important country and are happy to work closely with you, but we owe our own culture the clear cut responsibility to identify with a people whose historical record — confirmed by an overwhelming number of scholars all over the world — shows that they were subject to governmental extermination. The truth is that this is a universal problem for all of mankind, and as Germany has shown in its greatness, it is possible to acknowledge genocide in one’s history and go on to contribute to building better lives for one’s own people and other peoples.”

Will we not feel prouder and stronger if we speak that way?

Insofar as Israel still fears the Turkish response, it has an unusual opportunity to recognize the Armenian Genocide under the umbrella of the first anniversary of American recognition. The linking of Israel’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide to the recognition by the US on the same day, April 24, which is designated as the start of the Armenian Genocide, will also provide an additional layer of defense for Israel, since any retaliation against Israel will also take on a meaning of being an attack on the US, as well. As President Joe Biden said, “Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian Genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever occurring again... the American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide.”

(Israel Charny has directed the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem since the famous conference on the Holocaust and genocides of all nations in 1982, which took place despite fierce opposition from the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Turkey. Recently, his book was published in the US: *Israel’s Failed Response to the Armenian Genocide*. In the early 1990’s he was one of the founders and a president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. This opinion piece originally appeared on the *Jerusalem Post* website on April 5.)

The Proven and the Unprovable

By Levon Ter-Petrosian

Part 1

That the policy of rejecting mutual compromises and preserving the status quo led to a national disaster, there is no need to demonstrate. Even some who supported that policy before the disaster are now confessing that it is true.

Despite that fact, many, in an attempt to justify their positions, are trying to prove that the path of mutual compromises would have ended up in the same place anyway. This is nothing but a poor attempt at self-justification. It is also absolutely unprovable, since history does not like “ifs”. History records that which has already become reality. Therefore, whatever manipulations the opponents of solution based on mutual compromises (government and party leaders, intellectuals) use to justify their destructive steps, it is all the same; sooner or later they will be judged by history, a judgment no one has yet been able to escape. It is, in fact, their sense of such a judgment that is compelling them to find some way to justify their disastrous politics. And that compunction, sad to say, is further deepening the crises in Armenia and Karabakh.

Part 2

I am referring to the current domestic confrontation which, in my opinion, is making Armenia’s position in the forthcoming complex negotiations weaker and not stronger. It is difficult to understand, therefore, what is the real purpose of today’s opposition. Serzh Sargsyan off-handedly labeled Nikol Pashinyan as the “capitulator” which, although appropriate, still represents half

the truth. In reality it is not Pashinyan who has been compelled to capitulate, but Armenia; Pashinyan has simply signed the capitulation document.

Therefore, whoever stands in that office instead of Pashinyan, be it Robert Kocharyan, Serzh Sargsyan or even Ishkhan Saghatelian, it is all the same: they will obediently accept whatever solution is wrapped around Armenia’s neck. The problem, in that sense, does not depend on the person of Armenia’s leader. If this simple truth is not understood and the internal tremors continue, the solutions imposed upon us will be even more painful, regardless of whether it is Pashinyan or someone else who ends up signing the final document.

The question arises: Is it possible that the leaders of today’s opposition are not realizing that fact? If they are not, that means they understand nothing of politics. If they are aware of that fact but are still continuing the domestic upheavals, then we must conclude that that they are pursuing altogether different goals, goals that have absolutely nothing to do with national interests. The rude actions that the authorities have undertaken against the demonstrations and meetings organized by the opposition too have nothing to do with national interests.

Being a hopeless optimist, I am still expecting that the opposing sides will finally understand the danger that their positions represent and exert efforts to reach some kind of understanding in order not to complicate the situation further and to avoid new dangers.

If our intellectuals really wish to undertake a task that is helpful to the nation, they could compel Pashinyan, Kocharyan and S. Sargsyan to sit at the same table and find a solution to the domestic crisis. Incidentally, I offered this advice as early as last January 15.

(This article was originally published in Armenian on May 5 in *ILur.am*, with an accompanying video in Armenian at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=qhvho_lTg2I&feature=emb_logo).



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Armenian Patriarch Of Turkey Spreads Contradictory Messages On April 24

Ever since Archbishop Sahak Mashalian became the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey in 2019, he has made a series of questionable statements on the Armenian Genocide and bestowed lavish praise upon Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his denialist remarks.

It is understandable, to a degree, why Armenians in Turkey, especially those in leadership positions, are forced to go along with the Turkish government's denials of the Armenian Genocide, since they are hostages in Turkey. However, there are red lines that no Armenian, let alone a clergyman, should cross regardless of circumstances or locality.

However, we should not ascribe all of the patriarch's declarations to threats or pressures from the Turkish government. He has made many subservient statements of his own free will in order to get elected as Patriarch or endear himself to the authorities.

The patriarch's most recent controversial statement came in a lengthy sermon he delivered in Armenian and Turkish on April 24, the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide at Istanbul's Kumkapu Sourp Haroutioun Church. While I welcome his desire to commemorate the Armenian Genocide, I question the accuracy of some of his statements. In my humble opinion, the patriarch would have been better off giving a short sermon, simply expressing his sympathies to those who lost their lives in 1915. Given his mixed messages, he risked alienating both Armenians and Turks.

Let us now turn to the patriarch's sermon. He started by saying that April 24 commemorates Armenians who were killed during World War I. The Patriarch is thus copying the denialist words of President Erdogan who misrepresents the Armenian dead as victims of war, not genocide. The patriarch also capitalized on the fact that in 2015, Catholicos Karekin II declared all victims of the Armenian Genocide to be "saints," which led the patriarch to qualify April 24 as "no longer a day of mourning," but "a day of remembrance for the consecrated saints."

The patriarch then came up with the following strange explanation: "The immortality of the victims of the Meds Yeghern began on the day of their death. We simply awoke to this truth after a hundred years of mourning!" He accused all those who continue to commemorate the Armenian Genocide of wanting "to sink in and remain forever in the inescapable nightmare of labyrinths of the Yeghern."

While the patriarch falsely represented the genocide as resulting from war, he also made some accurate assessments regarding the consequences of Meds Yeghern on the Armenian people, particularly the loss of their homes and lands:

"Today is April 24. It is the infamous day of remembrance of the terrible tragedy of our nation a century ago; a miserable date that symbolizes the start of one of the darkest chapters of our history.... which is familiar to us as 'Meds Yeghern.' ...A nation was torn from its centuries-old settlements as a result of a policy cultivated and developed for reasons incomprehensible to us. The word deportation is embossed on our Armenian identity in its most painful shades. This unfortunate practice has led to the emptying of monasteries, the desolation of places of worship, the deprivation of schools of teachers and students, and in general, the settlements from their inhabitants. Families were left to mourn the loss of their parents and children. Men and women, old men and boys, young men and virgins were forced to follow a deadly path. In other words, a negative situation as a result of which hundreds of thousands of people were forced to bear in their wounded hearts the pain of irreversible and irreparable losses."

The patriarch continued his mixed messages by condemning the denial of the genocide, while criticizing its recognition by foreign parliaments, describing their actions as "provocations by distant countries." On the positive side, he dared to use the term genocide once in Armenian and Turkish in his sermon: "It should be noted that the denial of the pain experienced by the Armenians on these lands wounds the conscience. We should also mention that we find contrary to moral principles the efforts that tend to use the pains of our fathers on the international stage as politicized theses against Turkey. Neither the denial nor the genocide resolutions adopted by the parliaments of various countries will bring honor to the pains suffered or to the people who lived through them on these lands. On the contrary, angry and defensive sides, by augmenting the shadows of the past, cause the peoples' hopes to reconcile and develop natural relations to be dimmed and to block the present and future of the neighboring peoples."

The patriarch then suffered from a massive spell of amnesia by falsely describing "the events of the past 107 years... as a painful exception to the millennial common history" of Armenians and Turks. The Patriarch conveniently forgot the centuries of oppression suffered by Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the Hamidian massacres of the 1890's that caused the deaths of 300,000 Armenians, and the Adana massacre of 1909 that resulted in the killing of 30,000 Armenians.

The patriarch, however, did not forget to praise President Erdogan as the "unique figure" who issued sympathetic statements on April 24. The fact is that Erdogan's statements should be condemned, not praised, for distorting the truth about the Armenian Genocide.

The patriarch ended his sermon by supporting the ongoing diplomatic efforts for "rapprochement" between Armenia and Turkey. He must realize that without acknowledging the truth and establishing justice, there can be no reconciliation.

Turkey Interfering More Than Ever In Turkish Cypriot Politics — Report

By Esra Aygin

The Turkish Cypriot ruling coalition collapsed for the second time in 10 days last week, amid serious allegations of meddling by Ankara, leaving deep political uncertainty in the northern part of Cyprus.

The third Faiz Sucuoğlu coalition collapsed within just five days of being formed, after small partners Democratic Party DP and Rebirth Party YDP announced they would not be giving a vote of confidence to the coalition that included themselves. Their excuse was Sucuoğlu's refusal to sign a declaration of the policies DP and YDP wanted to fulfil in the first 100 days.

Nobody believed this to be the genuine reason, but only an excuse to make the coalition collapse. Rumors had already been rife that Ankara was trying to prevent a coalition under National Unity Party UBP head Sucuoğlu.

"When did DP and YDP ever care about reforms?" asked Kudret Özersay of People's Party HP. "How could these issues now cause them to leave the government?"

"Unfortunately, against customary practices, the two coalition partners decided to introduce a new declaration," said Tufan Erhürman of the Republican Turkish Party CTP. "And then they announced they would not give a vote of confidence to the government that includes them. The intervention that began with the presidential elections has become official now."

"Ankara's intervention is obvious," Doğuş Derya of CTP tells the *Sunday Mail*. "Nobody denied this anyway. It is certain that there was a direct intervention."

The media also wrote extensively about Ankara's hand in the developments.

"Everyone, in off-the-record conversations, even gives the names of those, who intervened..." wrote journalist Serhat Incirli in his column in the daily Yenidüzen. "DP and YDP decided not to be in the government due to some hard pressurising, provoking, intimidating, suggesting... [They] could not withstand the pressure and the blackmailing... The reality is looking us in the eye. The reality is the reality of a coloniser and a colony. They are telling us: 'We will rule you'... And they are telling us: 'To hell with the Turkish Cypriot community.'"

"There have been serious political interventions in the Turkish Cypriot community by Turkey," continued Incirli. "But I don't think we have come across one that is so shameless."

Online newspaper Özgür Gazete reported that UBP officials acknowledge the intervention in informal conversations, but refuse to go on the record, saying: "If we confess there has been an intervention, we will find nobody willing to stand by our side."

Before the latest collapse, the previous ruling coalition had come to an end on April 20, only 59 days after being formed, when Sucuoğlu submitted his resignation to Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar. The resignation had come after Tatar did not readily accept Sucuoğlu's decision to replace Sunat Atun, responsible for the economy and energy dossier, with Olgun Amcaoğlu. Sucuoğlu and Atun had had public disagreements over electricity prices.

Ankara's support for Atun is believed to have been the reason why Tatar preferred to accept Sucuoğlu's resignation rather than a decision to replace Atun.

"The point in question is that there is an elected prime minister here," says Mine Atli, head of the Social Democratic Party TDP. "And he has the right to form his own cabinet. This is nothing but a minister removing the prime minister from office with the support of Ankara."

On April 22, Tatar had to give the mandate to form a coalition to Sucuoğlu again, since the latter is a strong leader with full backing of his party. The coalition was formed with just one change in the cabinet: Amcaoğlu had replaced Atun.

Sucuoğlu seemed to win this battle, but the move is said to have infuriated Ankara.

"They don't want to see Faiz Sucuoğlu as the prime minister," wrote journalist Incirli at the time, who called the attempts "a coup" against Sucuoğlu.

Previously, Sucuoğlu is said to have been forced by Ankara to make a change in his cabinet only about two weeks after forming his first coalition after the January 23 general elections. Sucuoğlu, on March 9, had to replace Hasan Taçoy, responsible for the foreign affairs dossier, with the hawkish Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu, who is known to have close relations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. On the same day, DP and YDP announced their decision to withdraw from the coalition, Ertuğruloğlu is said to have told Sucuoğlu during a party meeting: "Ankara does not want to work with you. Resign!" Neither Ertuğruloğlu nor Sucuoğlu has denied these reports.

Ankara's intervention against Sucuoğlu is believed to have started at the November 2020 General Assembly of UBP, where he was leading the race to be elected the party leader. After coming out in the lead in the first round, Sucuoğlu mysteriously withdrew his candidacy, together with the other runner up, Hasan Taçoy, amid rumors of an intervention by Ankara. However, in what was seen as a playoff, Sucuoğlu won a sweeping victory, with 61 per cent of the votes at the General Assembly in late 2021.

At the time, journalist Hasan Kahvecioğlu described this as the "UBP voters' democratic uprising against AKP." Kahvecioğlu could, however, foresee that Ankara would seek revenge.

"This uprising by UBP will cost Turkish Cypriots a lot," wrote Kahvecioğlu. "They will make Faiz Sucuoğlu curse the day he was born. Probably his prime ministry will not last long."

There are different scenarios as to why Ankara does not want Sucuoğlu, ranging from him belonging to another sect of Islam, to him having gained too much power in the Turkish Cypriot politics.

"Faiz Sucuoğlu is not wanted by the Gods," says political scientist Sertaç Sonan. "There is a lot of bad blood there... We are used to Ankara treating the left badly, but now it's also treating the right badly... The mistake is that many politicians here still think they have a room for manoeuvre despite Ankara. And Sucuoğlu is one of them."

see INTERFERENCE, page 20



Turkey Interfering More Than Ever in Turkish Cypriot Politics

INTERFERENCE, from page 19

Sonan believes that Turkey’s intervention in Turkish Cypriot politics became stronger especially with the 2020 elections for the Turkish Cypriot leader. A report by independent researchers and lawyers had documented Turkey’s blatant interference against the then-Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci during the election period.

“Turkey has always had an important weight on our political life,” says Sonan. “But it was never this explicit... The ‘suggestions, recommendations’ were given behind closed doors. Now the interferences are done in a forceful manner.”

Nobody can be sure what will happen now. Any coalition formula is likely to exclude Sucuoğlu. If no formula can be

found, there will have to be early elections.

Sonan is optimistic that early elections can be averted for now.

“The problem is not with UBP. It’s with one person,” he says. “They will convince him to withdraw. When he goes, the government will be formed under someone else.”

The Eid al-Fitr message last week of former Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu, who is the spiritual leader of UBP was very telling. “Our relations with Turkey are vital,” said Eroğlu. “I would like to underline with all my experience that the biggest mistake we can make is to come into conflict with Turkey.”

Early elections may be averted this time, but both Sonan and Atli draw attention to

the damage being done to the Turkish Cypriot democracy.

“The percentage of boycotters will increase,” says Sonan. “All surveys show that trust in politics is falling drastically.”

The abstention rate in the 23 January elections was 41.8 percent – the highest up to date.

“All segments of society will soon reject

that there is such thing as a ‘Turkish Cypriot democracy,’” says Atli. “They are making the community say: ‘Turkish Cypriots cannot govern themselves.’ Therefore, they will say: ‘We must govern you.’ And this will just consolidate annexation.”

(This commentary originally appeared in the *Cyprus Mail* on May 8.)

Armenian Open Returns to Tallwood Country Club

HEBRON, Conn. — The Armenian Open golf scramble will once again return to Tallwood Country Club in Hebron, Connecticut on Saturday, June 11. Once home to the original Armenian golf tournament in the region, the three Armenian Churches of St. George in Hartford, St. Mark in Springfield and Holy Resurrection in New Britain have again combined their efforts to continue the tradition. The event grows year over year, and last year saw its highest golfer attendance to date.

The format is a four-player scramble and will feature 18 holes of golf, lunch and dinner, raffle prizes, a \$25,000 hole-in-one prize, and various contests with cash prizes. Registration begins at 10:45 a.m. and there will be a Putting Contest at 12 p.m. Golf begins at 1 p.m. After play is complete, awards and raffle winners will be announced at a dinner hosted on the course grounds.

To register to golf, visit the Armenian Open website at www.armenianopen.com. Those who would like to become an event sponsor can also make a contribution through the website.

‘Poets in Conversation’ at NAASR Features Barba, Mankерian

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will host a literary evening titled “Poets in Conversation,” with authors Susan Barba and Shahé Mankерian on Tuesday, May 17, at 7:30 p.m., in Batmasian Hall, at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

The program will be moderated by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian of Harvard University’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC).

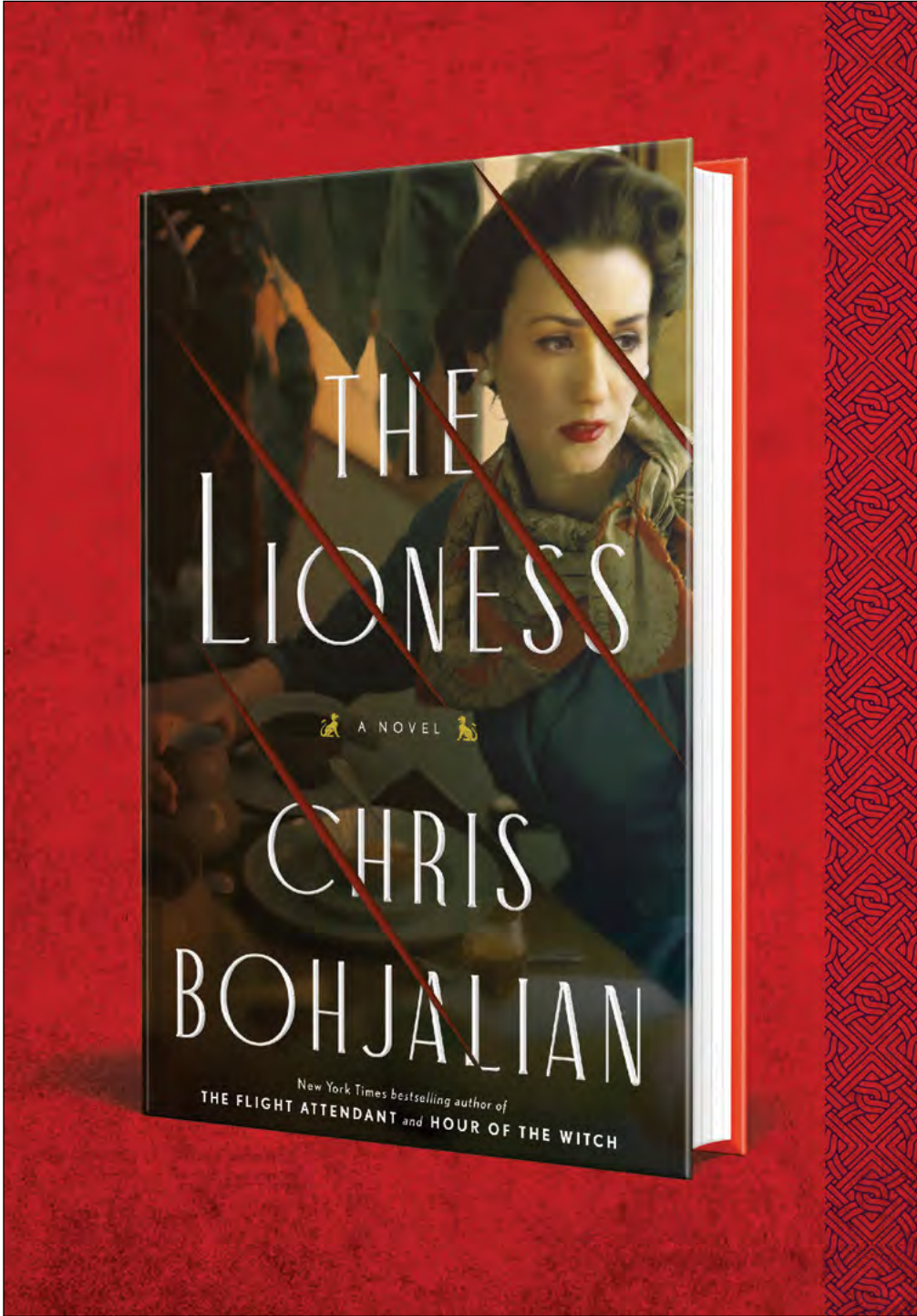
This will be an in-person event and also presented online live via Zoom (Registration: <https://bit.ly/NAASR-Poets1>) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/c/ArmenianStudies). For those attending in person, NAASR recommends the wearing of masks to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Barba is the author of *geode* (2020), which was a finalist for both the Massachusetts Book Awards and the New England Book Awards, and *Fair Sun* (2017), which was awarded the Anahid Literary

Prize from Columbia University. Her poems have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Review of Books*, *Poetry*, *Raritan*, and elsewhere, and her poetry has been translated into German, Armenian, Romanian and Swedish. She earned her doctorate in comparative literature from Harvard University, and she has received fellowships from the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. She works as a senior editor for *New York Review Books*. She currently serves on the NAASR Board of Directors.

Mankерian is the principal of St. Gregory Hovsepian School and the director of Mentorship at the International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA). His debut book of poems, *History of Forgetfulness* (2021), has been a finalist at the Bibby First Book Competition, the Crab Orchard Poetry Open Competition, the Quercus Review Press Poetry Book Award, and the White Pine Press Poetry Prize.

For more information about this program, contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



In-Person Safari Book Tour

Chris Bohjalian
A conversation with the author of
The Lioness

Wednesday, May 18, 2022
7:00 pm

Chris Bohjalian will be discussing his new novel *The Lioness* with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian at the Armenian Museum of America, in Watertown, Massachusetts.

This will be the only local appearance for the author on his national book tour.

This event is free and open to the public. Signed books will be available for purchase.

Register:
tinyurl.com/lionessatama

Free parking



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www.armenianmuseum.org