

(OC Media photo)

Thousands Rally in Armenia

Warn Against Karabakh Concessions

YEREVAN (AFP) — Thousands of opposition supporters have rallied in Yerevan to warn the government against concessions to Azerbaijan regarding Karabakh.

Opposition parties have accused Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of plans to give away all of Karabakh to Azerbaijan after he told lawmakers last month that the “international community calls on Armenia to scale down demands on Karabakh.”

On Sunday, May 1, several thousand opposition supporters gathered in the capital’s central Square of France, blocking traffic throughout central Yerevan.

Protesters shouted demands for Pashinyan to resign, with many holding placards that read “Karabakh.”

Opposition leader and National Assembly Vice Speaker Ishkhan Saghatelian said: “Any political status of Karabakh within Azerbaijan is unacceptable to us.”

“Pashinyan had betrayed people’s trust and must go,” he told journalists at the rally, adding that the protest movement “will lead to the overthrow of the government in the nearest future.”



Thousands rally in Yerevan on Sunday, May 1

Addressing the crowd, the opposition leader announced that a “large-scale campaign of civil disobedience” will begin this coming week.

“I call on everyone to begin strikes. I call on students not to attend classes. Traffic will be fully blocked in central Yerevan,” he said.

On Saturday, Armenia’s National Security Service warned of “a real threat of mass unrest in the country.”

see OPPOSITION, page 2



Police arrest some of the protestors. (AP photo)

Khachkar in Brussels Desecrated

By Jean Eckian
 Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BRUSSELS, Belgium — On April 26, the Armenian community of Brussels in Belgium woke up in amazement after discovering that the monument dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide had been spray-painted with crescent moon drawings and a sentence insulting the Armenian parliamentarian Garo Paylan. Paylan asked the Grand Assembly of Turkey on April 23 to recognize the Armenian Genocide, much to the chagrin of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The *khachkar* (cross-stone) was inscribed: “F--k Paylan.”

see DESECRATION, page 4



The desecrated khachkar in Brussels

PopUp E-Learning Aims to Bring Out Best in All Young Learners

By Alin K. Gregorian
 Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Suren Aloyan, a serial tech entrepreneur from Armenia, is a busy man. In fact, the day of our interview in early April, the Yerevan native and San Francisco resident was taking part in a Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education program.

He is not only a learner but also a proponent of online learning, first launching Dasar Educational Forum in Armenia in 2009, and more recently, PopUp School in the US, a sort of tailored online tutoring for students.

Aloyan said that with PopUp, the end goal is giving young students the help he wished he had received as a student. Amazingly, this successful entrepreneur, had a hard time learning in the tradition vein.

PopUp offers help in four different styles of learning — visual, audio, reading writing, and kinesthetic. The latter group includes young people who need to needs to learn by tactile means. Students who want to take classes, take an online test to see which style of learning is best suited for them.

see E-LEARNING, page 20



Suren Aloyan

Officer in Pashinyan Motorcade Charged Over Fatal Crash Involving Pregnant Woman

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — An Armenian law-enforcement agency formally indicted on Friday, April 29, a police officer whose car hit and killed a young woman while escorting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s motorcade in Yerevan on Tuesday, April 26.

The 28-year-old pregnant woman, Sona Mnatsakanyan, was struck by a police SUV while crossing a street in the city center. The vehicle did not stop after the collision that sparked more opposition calls for Pashinyan’s resignation. Its driver, Major Aram Navasardyan, was arrested a few hours later.

Navasardyan was charged with violating traffic rules. It was not immediately clear whether the Investigative Committee would seek a court permission to hold him in

see CRASH, page 4



YEREVAN
 Blinken Lauds Pashinyan’s ‘Flexible’ Karabakh Policy

Page 2



PARIS
 Genocide Anniversary Commemorated In Paris

Page 5



OAKLAND
 Armenian Community Day With the Oakland Athletics

Page 11





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Citizenship Applications Triple, Police Say

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — People of Armenian descent will be able to obtain Armenian citizenship on the basis of a baptism certificate in the Armenian Church, according to amendments to the law submitted Deputy Chief of Police Ara Fidanyan to the parliament.

Although the law stipulated that certificates of baptism could serve as a basis for granting citizenship, it wasn't clear in what cases these documents were considered and from which churches: some Armenians may follow the Armenian Catholic or Evangelical churches.

Yezidi lawmaker Rustam Bakoyan noted that under a simplified procedure, Armenian passports should be issued not only to Armenians, but also to representatives of other national communities of Armenia.

Many Yezidis, Assyrians, Greeks and Jews currently live in Ukraine, and many initially used to reside in Armenia. However, some left during the Soviet era, which means they never had Armenian citizenship in the first place. Now if these people want to obtain Armenian citizenship, they must do so on general grounds.

Fidanyan noted that since the end of February, the number of citizenship applicants has tripled. There were 8,591 applications for citizenship in 2021 compared to 3,278 applications submitted from February 24 to April 20, 2022 alone.

Three Ex-Foreign Ministers Join Karabakh Declaration

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Three ex-foreign ministers have joined a declaration on Karabakh (Artsakh), the Armenian-Azerbaijani and the Armenian-Turkish relations.

The document, supported by Raffi Hovannisian, Vartan Oskanian and Ara Ayyvazyan, notes that the Artsakh issue, which is based on the internationally enshrined right of nations to self-determination, can never be a "subject of bargaining."

People behind the initiative also argue that the effectiveness of the Armenian-Turkish dialogue cannot be conditioned by the final settlement of the status of Karabakh.

"The status of the Artsakh Republic, including the regions of Hadrut and Shushi, the uninterrupted free communication between Armenia and Artsakh, the return of Armenians to their places of permanent residence, the security of the Armenians of Artsakh, and permanent work with the Russian peacekeeping mission should become our foreign policy priorities," the declaration says.

"Only the modern, efficient Defense Army of Artsakh and the Armenian Armed Forces can guarantee Artsakh's security. Armenia's security is directly linked to Artsakh's security."

The document also mentioned that the issue of the Armenian Genocide is indisputable in the negotiation process with Turkey.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan

Blinken Lauds Pashinyan's 'Flexible' Karabakh Policy

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken praised Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's conciliatory position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after holding talks with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in Washington on Monday, May 2.

He also said that the United States and Armenia are now working to "strengthen and deepen" their relations through a "strategic dialogue" that was launched in 2019 but subsequently suspended due to the pandemic coronavirus.

Blinken and Mirzoyan signed after their meeting a memorandum of understanding on "strategic civil nuclear cooperation" between their countries.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Blinken welcomed "democratic reforms" implemented by the Armenian government as well as its ongoing dialogue with Azerbaijan. In that regard, he expressed "real appreciation for the vision and the courage and the flexibility that the prime minister and Armenia have been showing in this process."

Addressing the Armenian parliament on April 13, Pashinyan said the international community is pressing Armenia to scale back its demands on the status of

Nagorno-Karabakh and recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. He signaled Yerevan's intention to make such concessions to Baku.

The European Union praised the "forward-looking" speech delivered by Pashinyan one week after he met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels for talks hosted by the EU's top official, Charles Michel. Blinken spoke with the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders by phone on the eve of the talks.

Pashinyan's discourse stoked Armenian opposition that he has agreed to restore Azerbaijani control over Karabakh. Armenia's leading opposition groups launched late last week daily street protests aimed at toppling the prime minister.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan and Blinken discussed, among other things, planned negotiations on an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty and the upcoming creation of a commission tasked with demarcating the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

These issues were also on the agenda of Mirzoyan's separate meeting with US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland held in Washington earlier on Monday.

"In this context, the Foreign Minister of

Armenia stressed the importance of resuming the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship," read a statement issued by Mirozyan's press office.

The group dealing with the Karabakh conflict has long been led by the United States, Russia and France. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on April 8 that Washington and Paris stopped cooperating with Moscow in that format following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. US and French officials have not denied that.

Lavrov also accused the West of trying to hijack Russian efforts to broker peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan as part of the ongoing geopolitical standoff over Ukraine.

Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed Russia key role in the peace process in a joint declaration issued after their face-to-face talks held on April 19.

In a further sign that Moscow wants to wrest back the initiative in that process, Lavrov has reportedly offered to hold a trilateral meeting with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts next week. Mirzoyan accepted the proposal in an April 29 phone call with Russia top diplomat.

Thousands Rally in Armenia

OPPOSITION, from page 1

Yerevan and Baku have been locked in a territorial dispute since the 1990s over Karabakh, the mountainous region of Azerbaijan predominantly populated by ethnic Armenians. Karabakh was at the centre of a six-week war in 2020 that claimed more than 6,500 lives before it ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement.

Under the deal, Armenia ceded swathes of territories it had controlled for decades and Russia deployed some 2,000 peace-

keepers to oversee the truce.

In April, Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met for rare European Union-mediated talks in Brussels, after which they tasked their foreign ministers to "begin preparatory work for peace talks."

The meeting came after a flare-up in Karabakh on March 25 that saw Azerbaijan capture a strategic village in the area under the Russian peacekeepers' responsibility, killing three separatist troops.

Baku tabled in mid-March a set of framework proposals for the peace agreement that includes both sides' mutual recognition of territorial integrity, meaning Yerevan should agree on Karabakh being part of Azerbaijan.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan sparked controversy at home when he said – commenting on the Azerbaijani proposal – that for Yerevan "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights" of the local ethnic-Armenian population.



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Meets Karabakh Leaders, Defends 'Peace Agenda'

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan defended his conciliatory policy towards Azerbaijan as he met with Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership in Yerevan on Friday, April 29.

"I want to say that the agenda of peace is not an agenda of defeat," he told Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, and other senior Karabakh officials. "The agenda of peace is an agenda of overcoming the horrors of war and the difficulties that followed the war and guaranteeing the security, rights and future of the people."

It was Pashinyan's first face-to-face meeting with the Karabakh leaders since his

April 13 speech in the Armenian parliament which caused an outcry in Armenia and Karabakh.

Addressing the parliament, Pashinyan said that the international community is pressing Armenia to "lower a bit the bar on the question of Nagorno-Karabakh's status" and recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. He signaled Yerevan's intention to make such concessions to Baku.

Armenian opposition leaders portrayed the speech as further proof that Pashinyan has agreed to Azerbaijani control over Karabakh.

The authorities in Stepanakert also deplored it. In a resolution, the Karabakh parliament requested that the Armenian authorities "abandon their current disastrous

position."

Earlier this week, Harutyunyan claimed to have received assurances from Pashinyan that Yerevan will not return any agreements on the territory's unacceptable status to the Karabakh Armenians.

Pashinyan said in this regard on Thursday that he will not cut any peace deals with Azerbaijan without consulting with the Karabakh leadership.

Harutyunyan confirmed his support for the "agenda of peace." But he also stressed: "On the other hand, I want to make it clear that we see no way of deviating from our right to self-determination."

Pashinyan made no mention of that right in his opening remarks publicized by his

press office. He again did not specify Karabakh's future status acceptable to Yerevan. He reiterated instead that the people of Karabakh must be able to continue to live in the disputed territory and "consider themselves Armenians."

"This is the agenda which we must jointly advance. I am convinced that we are moving in the right direction, and I am happy when the Artsakh authorities share that conviction," added the Armenian premier.

The meeting with Harutyunyan and other Karabakh officials came amid intensifying opposition demonstrations in Yerevan sparked by Pashinyan's Karabakh discourse. Armenia's leading opposition groups are trying to force Pashinyan to resign.

Armenia Tree Project Continues Border Aid Programs

YEREVAN — Armenia Tree Project's (ATP) work at Armenia's borders is active as ever. The organization supports the residents in these communities by providing them trees as well as engaging the local youth via the Environmental Education (EE) programs.

In Armenia's Northeastern province of Tavush, the Community Tree Planting (CTP) program has contributed trees to several border villages, including Ayrum, Bagratashen, Dovegh, Kirants, Koti, Paravakar, Voskepar, Aygepar, Chinari, Movses, and Nerkin Karmir. Our EE team visit the schools in many of these villages several times a year teaching classes about Armenia's water resources, waste management, climate change and biodiversity.

Tatev Khachikyan, a principal from a border village (whose name we omit for safety,) shares that the school is under direct view of an Azerbaijani military post on the hillside above, although for the time being there is peace. "Living in constant danger has made our people even more resilient and fearless...we want to live in



Boy in Vaghatour Syunik takes fruit trees home to plant

peace in our mountains," he said.

Another border village of Tavush pro-

jects their schoolyard with thick perimeter walls. This April, in addition to providing

barrier trees for more security, ATP provided decorative trees to contribute to greening of the barren yard, creating a verdant and uplifting environment. We also provided fruit trees that produce nutritious and profitable bounties to support the schoolchildren in multiple ways. What is not eaten fresh can be dried or made into jams becoming a source of income to the school.

In a neighboring border village (again, whose name we omit for safety,) the leadership requested trees for the community cemetery located on the slope of a hill. Currently, villagers bury their dead under cover of darkness because the daytime is too dangerous, too exposed. The trees ATP provides for perimeter use grow quickly to form natural barriers masking the daily life of the community from nefarious scopes and binoculars (and bullets.) Our trees shield the residents and protect the community.

This week ATP teams distributed apple, pear and cherry trees to families in Vaghatour and Khoznavar villages located on the border in the southern region of Syunik. Among the 110 beneficiaries who received the fruit trees were also a handful of families who relocated from Artsakh after the war. Artur of Vaghatour commented that our visit to the village and gifts of fruit trees were very encouraging, as they showed they are not alone. Pointing to the majestic mountains, he said, "Our families remain proudly, steadfast on OUR land."

ATP also distributed fruit trees in Artsakh last week. 50 Backyard Greenhouse Program beneficiaries from Herher, Karmir Shuka, Taghavard villages, and Martuni City, as well as villagers who showed interest, received 1,200 fruit trees for their personal gardens. The trees will provide nourishment and sources of income to the villagers for years to come.

This July, our EE team will host a camp for the children and youth of the border villages from Tavush, Gegharkunik, Ararat and Syunik regions. There are plans underway for the children of Artsakh as well, including a summer camp for the children of Stepanakert, Askeran and Martuni.

The Eco-Clubs put ATP's environmental education into action. We have Eco Clubs in the villages that have unfortunately feel the constant presence of danger, in Baryr Sevag and Armash of Ararat region, which are at the corner where Armenia meets Nakhichevan and Turkey, and a club in Gegharkunik community, which borders Azerbaijan. The Eco Club programs strengthen the environmental spirit of our youth while teaching leadership skills. The environmental friendly projects also build their self-esteem and pride in their communities, which affect their will to remain in their village.

Armenian Government Vague on How It Got Copper Mine Shares

YEREVAN (Panorama) — Azatutyun, RFE/RL's Armenian service, has reflected on the transfer of 15 percent of shares of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC) to the Armenian government, saying the latter refuses to clarify how it became the recipient of the stake.

"The government does not clarify whether it became the recipient of 15 percent of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine due to donation or, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said a few weeks ago, as a result of recovering the stolen funds," Azatutyun says.

Earlier in April, Pashinyan said 15 billion drams were paid to the state budget during the investigation of the ZCMC case.

"The Republic of Armenia, the people, are the owner of the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine. Doesn't this mean that we are bringing back what's been looted? This too is the return of the stolen assets," Pashinyan said.

However, the government provided a different explanation for several months before Pashinyan's statement. It was officially announced that Armenia's mining giant had been sold and the new owner decided to donate its 15 percent stake to the Armenian government immediately after the deal.

Azatutyun submitted an inquiry to the government in a bid to reveal how it gained 15 percent ZCMC stake — through donation or the recovery of stolen assets as Pashinyan

claimed. However, the prime minister's office didn't give a straight answer to the question, only stating that the question is related to the criminal case being investigated by the State Revenue Committee and data on ZCMC is confidential, thus it cannot be shared.

Azatutyun also sent an inquiry to the State Revenue Committee, but no response has been received to date.

Earlier in March, Chairman of the State Revenue Committee Rustam Badasyan announced at the cabinet meeting that unprecedented 15 billion drams were returned to the state budget as part of the case into the mining company's failure to fulfill its tax obligations. Badasyan, however, said nothing about the return of shares.

On the basis of the evidence obtained during the criminal probe, the former director of ZCMC was charged and the latter confessed to the crime. The company was obliged to pay 15 billion drams, which it made no objections to, he said.

The 15 billion drams were paid by former ZCMC Director Mher Poloskov, after which the criminal case against him was dropped.

"The following question arises: if the issue of tax evasion is settled, what is the criminal case based on which the prime minister's office refers to, refusing to provide data on the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine?" RFE/RL's Armenian service wrote.

"The main question why the new ZCMC owner — Russian billionaire Roman Trotsenko's GeoProMining Armenia — decided to make a lavish donation and transfer 15 percent of its shares to the Armenian government also remains unanswered," it added.

Azatutyun also submitted a request to GeoProMining Armenia to find out whether the company has any expectations from the government in exchange for the donation. The company has not yet responded.

CivilNet journalist Mkrtych Karapetyan, who has sent three requests to the prime minister's office to see the donation document, has also been denied access to it. The government has denied his requests, arguing that it is a trade secret. The journalist has sued the government over the case.

"Since everything is confidential and the government has persistently refused to provide any information for six months, this should already raise doubts. Now they say a lot of things, for example, some unconfirmed reports suggest that the state may give up its dividends in the combine or as compensation at all," the journalist told Azatutyun in an interview.

"Nikol Pashinyan promised to act transparently when he came to power in the 2018 Velvet Revolution. One of the key provisions of the election manifesto of the ruling Civil Agreement party was institutionalization of the fight against corruption, transparency and accountability of the government," Azatutyun noted.



ARMENIA

Yerevan Denies Plans For Armenia-Turkey Border Demarcation

By Tatevik Sargsyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia on May 2 denied Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu's claims that Ankara and Yerevan have agreed to re-demarcate their closed border.

Cavusoglu said over the weekend that the issue will be on the agenda of the next round of Turkish-Armenian normalization talks which will be held in Vienna on Tuesday. Turkish and Armenian negotiators will discuss practical modalities of the demarcation process, he said, adding that the two neighboring states may set up a bilateral commission for that purpose.

"There have been no discussions or agreements between Armenia and Turkey regarding the border re-demarcation," said Vahan Hunanyan, the Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman.

"There is no such issue on the agenda," Hunanyan added in written comments.

Cavusoglu said last month that sections of the Turkish-Armenian border marked by the Arax river need to be demarcated again because over the past few decades the river has changed its course as a result of floods.

Ruben Galchyan, an Armenian cartographer, insisted on Monday that the changes cited by Cavusoglu are insignificant. He suggested that Ankara simply hopes to use a re-demarcation process to get Yerevan to formally and explicitly recognize the existing frontier.

"I think those minor border changes are simply a pretext [for the Turks,]" Galchyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Turkey has for decades kept the border closed and made its opening conditional on a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict acceptable to Azerbaijan. Cavusoglu has repeatedly made it clear that Ankara is coordinating its ongoing dialogue with Yerevan with Baku.

At their two meetings held earlier this year, Armenian and Turkish envoys discussed prospects for normalizing bilateral relations. According to the foreign ministries of the two countries, they agreed to "continue the process without preconditions."

Armenian Labor Migrants Reassess Work in Collapsing Russian Economy

By Ani Mejlumyan

Marine Khachatryan and her husband moved to Russia after the war with Azerbaijan in 2020. Despairing of her economic options in her home country, she found work at a flower shop in Moscow's outskirts, while her husband got work in construction.

But then came another war: the invasion of Ukraine, which has resulted in punishing sanctions and a crisis in Russia's economy.

"We came here to make money and up until the war, we were fine. Now, nobody wants to buy flowers and the owner [of the shop] keeps losing money," Khachatryan told Eurasianet from Russia. "I thought about trying to get another job, but Russia is getting more expensive." So instead she has decided to move back to Armenia. "It's a nightmare. I can go back to working in beauty salons, but I don't know what my husband will do."

Every year, tens of thousands of Armenians — especially men from smaller towns and villages — travel to Russia for seasonal labor, particularly in construction. Estimates vary widely. Armenia itself reports that about 80,000 go to Russia for seasonal work every year. But Russian data puts the figure at 300,000, which would be more than 10 percent of Armenia's population.

Unknown numbers of other recent migrants from Armenia live in Russia more permanently, some even gaining Russian citizenship, but still send money back to family in Armenia, a critical part of the country's economy.

In 2021, remittances from Russia amounted to \$865 million, according to Armenia's central bank. That was equivalent to nearly 5 percent of the country's GDP.

That figure is now set to drop dramatically. "It could be up to a 40 percent decrease," Finance Minister Tigran Khachatryan told the Armenian state news agency on March 28.

Armenian labor migrants say that many jobs in Russia are disappearing, and in the ones that remain, the salaries — once converted to Armenian drams — are unpre-

dictable. In the early days of Russia's invasion and the sanctions that were swiftly imposed in retaliation, the ruble lost half its value, though it has since recovered.

"Salaries have shrunk, and it's possible that employers are not going to be able to pay at all," said Tatevik Bezhanyan, an expert on migration at the charity group Armenian Caritas. "For now they can still pay, but if the situation doesn't get better there definitely are going to be issues," she told Eurasianet.

Remittances "are likely to decline with weaker economic activity in Russia, the depreciating ruble, and restrictions on financial flows from Russia," the World Bank said in a report last month. "Under a more severe contraction in Russia, many migrants may be forced to return to Armenia putting pressure on labor markets and fiscal spending."

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the World Bank had projected Armenian GDP growth of 5.3 percent in 2022. Now it's revised that down to 1.2 percent.

Russia has not released figures so far this year measuring migrant flows and how they might have changed. Usually the Ministry of Internal Affairs publishes data by April, but this year the release is late, Bezhanyan said. "My Russian colleagues say that there is just a big outflow out of Russia and so maybe they are being cautious about this," she said.

Seasonal migrant laborers typically start arriving in Russia in March, when the weather begins to allow construction work. So it is still early to judge the impact of the new situation on labor migration, but Bezhanyan said that initial indications are not good.

"We have already received notices that employers are having difficulties paying," she said. One practice employers have been trying, in order to save money, is to ask workers to work off the books. "But we always advise not to agree to that, since it can result in getting deported. And if there is no contract specifying the amount of the salary, they can forget about getting paid. We have already been seeing problems like this."

Arsen, a construction worker (who asked that his last name not be used), has

been working in Russia's Urals region since February.

"When the ruble collapsed we talked to our foreman, since we would be making half of what we were getting before," he said. "After two weeks, they told us that we could get higher pay if we terminated our contracts and worked off the books. We did it, and now we haven't been paid in two months."

Because of international financial sanctions against Russia, transferring money back home also is more difficult, with the Russian Zolotaya Korona service now the only option for sending money to Armenia and new restrictions on the amounts that can leave Russia.

As a result, many regular migrants are staying home this year. "Some found jobs here and are not complaining about the pay, given the costs in Russia. They can live in their houses in Armenia and see no reason to go to Russia," Bezhanyan said.

So far, the Armenian government has only come up with an indirect way to address the issue. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has introduced a proposal to boost the construction sector by offering subsidized loans for home renovations that include improving energy efficiency.

"Due to well-known circumstances, uncertainties have arisen regarding our citizens going abroad for work," he said at an April 15 cabinet meeting. "We have decided to launch a state program, within the framework of which we offer citizens to take subsidized loans to rebuild their apartments. [...] We hope that with this we will make a significant contribution to housing, the economy, small business, and poverty alleviation."

Bezhanyan is skeptical. "This is definitely an indirect approach," she said. "It's clear that these people see the danger [in staying in Russia] and they are creating a foundation for themselves to be able to move to Armenia, but we need to take steps so they don't come back to Armenia and then leave for another country. There has to be a more systematic approach."

(Ani Mejlumyan is a reporter based in Yerevan. This column originally appeared in Eurasianet.org on April 29.)

Officer in Pashinyan Motorcade Charged Over Fatal Crash Involving Pregnant Woman

CRASH, from page 1

detention pending investigation. The law-enforcement body did not identify any other suspects in the high-profile case.

Navasardyan's lawyer, Ruben Baloyan, said his client is not accused of fleeing the scene and not helping the victim who later died from her severe injuries.

"He came back to the scene of the accident and took part in its examination," Baloyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

According to the Investigative Committee, the traffic policeman showed up only two hours after the crash.

Pashinyan's limousine and the six other cars making up his motorcade also drove past the dying woman without offering help. The prime minister has not yet publicly commented on the unprecedented accident.

His deputy chief staff, Taron Chakhoyan, said that the Prime Minister had a telephone conversation with Sona Mnatsakanyan's father, expressed his condolences to him and his family members, expressed his sorrow and regret over the incident, and assured that an objective investigation will be

carried out.

Chakhoyan also claimed the day after the crash that the motorcade would have caused a traffic jam and made it harder for an ambulance to reach the victim had it stopped right after the crash.

Chakhoyan also said that "international-ly accepted rules" stipulate that the motorcades of government leaders "have no right to stop in unauthorized places."

Narek Martirosyan, a reporter with the fact-checking website fip.am, dismissed the official's claim. He said that both Armenian law and an international convention on road safety signed by Armenia require everyone to stop at the scene of an accident caused by them.

Opposition Responds

Opposition figures have been even more critical of Pashinyan's failure to halt his motorcade. Some of them have blamed him for the woman's death and demanded his resignation.

"Would the [arrested] police major have stopped right after the collision had he not escorted Nikol Pashinyan?" said Ar-

tur Ghazinyan, a parliament deputy from the main opposition Hayastan alliance. "He would have definitely stopped... and quickly taken [the victim] to the hospital located 300 meters away."

"Now who is more to blame, the car driver or Nikol Pashinyan?" Ghazinyan asked, clearly putting the blame on the prime minister.

The accident came as Hayastan and other opposition groups geared up for mass protests aimed at toppling Pashinyan over what they see as sweeping concessions to Azerbaijan planned by him.

"What else should [Pashinyan] do to get people to take to the streets?" Ishkhan Saghatelyan, a senior Hayastan figure, said, commenting on the young woman's death.

"This citizen must be our last victim," Saghatelyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "He [Pashinyan] must simply resign."

Gevorg Papoyan, a parliament deputy from the ruling Civil Contract party, responded by accusing the opposition of dishonestly exploiting the accident for political purposes. Papoyan also said Pashinyan

"did not know that an accident occurred" when his motorcade raced through Yerevan.

Navasardyan was [released](#) later on April 29 from detention.

Desecration of a Khachkar in Brussels

DESECRATION, from page 1

This *khachkar* had been inaugurated in 1997.

According to the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) and Committee for the Defense of the Armenian Cause (CDCA Belgium), this desecration is the work of the "Gray Wolves" movement.

Christos Doukeridis, the mayor of Ixelles (Elsene), a municipality within the Brussels capital region, who dispatched a team to clean up the monument, said: "I will never be able to tolerate this kind of behavior. The police have opened a case and a repair will be carried out immediately."



INTERNATIONAL

Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian Visits Armenian Democratic Liberal Party of Greece

ATHENS — Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), visited Athens recently to hold special meetings with the members of the ADL in Greece on issues of concern to the party, Armenia and Artsakh.

New executive members of the ADL District Committee of Greece were elected by the general membership, with Hagop Fesjian chosen as chairman and Sevag Panosian as vice chairman. The remaining executive members include Zaven Krikorian, Lucy Berberian, Eleni Oganof, Peruz Izmirlian, Kristian Oganof, Aris Khachadourian and Hagop Arakelian.



Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian (third from left, front row) with the members of the newly elected Armenian Democratic Liberal Party District Committee of Greece



Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian, at left, with Ambassador Tigran Mkrtchyan of Armenia

A visit was made to Tigran Mkrtchyan, the newly appointed ambassador to Greece from the Republic of Armenia, to congratulate him on his new post. The ambassador provided information about conditions in Armenia and the activities of the embassy, while Dr. Kouyoumjian informed the former about the activities of the ADL in the diaspora, Armenia and Artsakh.

On Sunday, April 10, Dr. Kouyoumjian and local party members attended the church service on the first anniversary of ADL member Dikran Kachigian's death. Dr. Kouyoumjian at this occasion also met with Very Rev. Fr. Khoren Arakelian, locum tenens of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Greece, in the presence of the members of the Greek-Armenian Diocesan Council.

Dr. Kouyoumjian paid a special visit to the Armenian General Benevolent Union

(AGBU) Artaki Kalpakian School, meeting with students, teachers and administration. The school principal and teaching staff, in honor of this visit, organized a performance at which the students recited and sang.

The director of the Greek department, Khristina Spiropoulou, delivered a welcoming speech, and in turn, Dr. Kouyoumjian gave his thanks and appreciation. In particular, he urged the students not to forget the Armenian language and concluded his speech with the poet Silva Kaputikyan's lines, "And look, my son, wherever you are, do not forget your mother tongue."

Kouyoumjian held fruitful official meetings with the AGBU Central Committee, as well as with members of the Ararat Cultural and Athletic Union and its Ladies Auxiliary Body, and the *Nor Ashkharh* ADL newspaper's editorial staff and trustees, during his trip.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Third Round of Turkish-Armenian Talks Take Place

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On May 3, Special Representatives for the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey, respectively, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia Ruben Rubinyan and Ambassador Serdar Kılıç held their third meeting in Vienna, the Armenian Foreign Ministry reports.

"The Special Representatives reaffirmed the declared goal of achieving full normalization between their respective countries through this process. In this sense, they had sincere and productive exchange of concrete views and discussed possible steps that can be undertaken for tangible progress in this direction.

Paylan Says He Is Subject To Threats

ISTANBUL (News.am) — Garo Paylan, an ethnic Armenian member of the Turkish parliament, is receiving many threats after submitting a bill recognizing the Armenian Genocide to the Turkish parliament.

Paylan told Diken news agency on May 3 that the leader of the Turkish nationalist Good Party, Meral Aksener, has targeted him and brought him to the attention of Turkish ultranationalists on Twitter.

"Meral Aksener threw me to the wolves," said Garo Paylan, stressing that Aksener could simply have criticized his bill, but is instead making him a target.

Before April 24, Paylan had tabled a bill recognizing the Armenian Genocide to the Turkish parliament.

Weightlifter Cholakyan Crowned World Champion

HERAKLION, Greece (Panorama) — Twenty-year-old weightlifter Garnik Cholakyan won gold at the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships that began in Heraklion, Crete, on May 2.

A European youth and junior champion, Cholakyan lifted a total of 240 kilograms in the men's 55-kilogram category.

Iran Reaffirms Inviolability Of Armenia Borders

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Iran's ambassador to Yerevan Abbas Badakhshan Zohouri on April 30 reiterated his country's stance on the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Armenia and urged all countries to respect its sovereignty.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly spoken about a "corridor" through Syunik, however, has repeatedly denied.

"We do not accept statements about corridors around the communication channels, we think that Armenia should preserve its territorial integrity," Zohouri said during a discussion about the Consulate of the Islamic Republic set to be opened in the province of Syunik.

The ambassador also noted that despite close cultural ties, economic relations between the two countries are not at the desired high level, and efforts should be made in this direction.

Genocide Anniversary Commemorated in Paris

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Alfortville, Issy-les-Moulineaux, Avignon, Valence, Clichy, Meudon, Antony and other towns in France with Armenian inhabitants, such as the city of Lusignan, commemorated the 107th year of the denied Armenian genocide by Turkey on April 24.

This particular day, despite the election for the presidency of the French Republic, brought together more than 20,000 supporters of the Armenian cause. In particular, the fourth-generation youth came out in large numbers.

Three days were needed for the tribute paid to the victims of 1915 after two years without commemoration due to the Covid health crisis. Thus, in Paris, on April 22, Mayor Anne Hidalgo received in the halls of the Hôtel de Ville, the Armenians of the Paris region. She told the

Ambassador of Armenia in France, Hasmik Tolmajian and the representatives of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF), represented by Ara Toranian and Mourad Papazian, that she wanted to pass a law on criminalization of genocide denial, because, she said, "we can't pretend this story didn't exist."

On April 23, a delegation of 30 em-

inent French and Armenian personalities marched up the famous Avenue des Champs Élysées to lay wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe in tribute to the Armenians who died for France during the two world wars of the twentieth century and for the victims of the massacres of 1895, 1909 and the genocide of 1915. This ceremony, observed by Parisians and tourists, was organized by the



A procession of 5,000 participants marched to the Jardins du Trocadéro, facing the famous Eiffel Tower (photo Jean Eckian)

National Association of Armenian Veterans and Resistants (ANACRA), led by Antoine Bagdikian and with the participation of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF).

On April 24, 5,000 young Franco-Armenians gathered at the Parisian nerve center of the community, Esplanade d'Arménie, in the presence of many personalities and elect-

ed officials of the French Republic, including government spokesman Gabriel Attal. Once again the co-presidents of the CCAF, thanking the personalities present for their presence, castigated the Erdogan-Aliyev tandem, denouncing "This unbearable historical cycle, of which we are undergoing the endless repetition which is based, among its multiple causes, on an aggravating factor that will have to be dealt with

one day," in the words of Toranian. Papazian pointed to a Turkey which cheerfully assumes its denialist activities, he said, "because Erdogan is the heir of Talaat. Erdogan is the proponent of neo-Ottomanism. He wants to restore the omnipotence of Turkey."

Valérie Pécresse, president of the Ile-de-France region, recalled that the Regional Council has recognized the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh and will work to "expand its cooperation with Yerevan and launch a program to protect historical and religious heritage with partnership of UNESCO."

Hidalgo announced an upcoming trip to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, as Pécresse did last December.

After the speeches, a procession of 5,000 participants formed for a march that ended in front of the Jardins du Trocadéro, facing the famous Eiffel Tower.



Community News

More American Schools Expected To Teach about Armenian Genocide

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — On April 24, Cammi Rood from Chevy Chase, MD, was among the protestors at Sheridan Circle, Washington, D.C., demanding that the Turkish government recognizes the Armenian Genocide. Though with no Armenian roots, she wore an Armenian T-shirt depicting the forget-me-not flower as a symbol of remembrance.

“It’s just something we never learn about in school,” said Cammi when we talked at the event organized by the Armenian Youth Federation. Cammi thinks the Armenian Genocide should be part of the curriculum.

California, Virginia, Michigan, Rhode Island, and some other states have already introduced the Armenian Genocide into their curricula. South Carolina, New Hampshire, and Missouri might follow. Resolution H5245 at South Carolina’s House of Representatives suggests amending the code of the state’s laws to make sure the schoolchildren study how Martin Luther King was struggling against the notorious Jim Crow laws, and also learn about other acts of discriminatory injustice, including “the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, Rohingya in Myanmar and others.” This is a bipartisan bill with Republican Garry Smith as a primary sponsor. The document has been referred to the state legislature’s Committee on Education and Public Works.

South Carolina recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1999. Five years ago, coastal Myrtle Beach’s mayor John Rhodes, signed a proclamation commemorating the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, citing the massacres against the Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian Christians.

In New Hampshire, the Armenian Genocide Resolution was adopted in 1967, when an Armenian-American Rep. Sarkis Maloomian drafted a resolution paying tribute to the slaughter of “one and half million Armenian men, women and children in Turkish Armenia.” During the following decades, both the Senate (1990) and the governor (2005) of the Granite state favored other formal acknowledgments.

House Bill 1632 that Republican Jordan Ulery proposed in March of this year was supported by five other Republicans, including Alicia and Tony Lekas, a husband and wife representing the Hudson and Pelham areas of New Hampshire. The resolution was similar to the one pending in South Carolina and calls for studying the acts of discriminatory injustice, “such as genocide, elsewhere around the globe.” “This unit shall include, but not be limited to, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, Chinese coolie labor in Cuba, the Uighurs in China, the Rohingya of Burma, and others,” is recorded in the Bill. The document was adopted by voice vote in late March.

see EDUCATION, page 9



Artur Kasumyan (top right) and Artin Kasumyan (top, second from left), pictured with Yale Armenian Network: Yale University Class of 2020

Mixing Education with The Homeland Is More Important than Ever

By Christopher Patvakian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BOSTON — Members of the Armenian diaspora often face questions about how they will engage with their heritage, if at all. Research has shown that a specific generation (first, second, third etc.) has a huge impact on the attitudes of diasporan Armenians and how, if at all, they engage with their heritage (ADS Pilot Project, 2018). When it comes to young adults, specifically university students, many find balancing time with Armenian and non-Armenian priorities challenging. As a recent graduate and leader of several Armenian university organizations myself, I would also add that engagement in Armenian affairs as a student is heavily influenced by the “value” of and personal gain from those experiences, and unfortunately is overlooked by many Armenian-Americans in college.

However, there are numerous examples of students dedicating their skillset and university platform to benefit Armenia — and significantly developing their own academic, professional, and interpersonal skills. Below, I will present the stories of several Armenian-Americans alumni of America’s top universities, who despite having among the most lucrative and exclusive opportunities in the world, chose to engage with the Armenian community in some form as students.

Arthur and Artin Kasumyan - Yale University

Artin and Arthur Kasumyan are recent graduates of Yale University’s Class of 2020, both with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in computer science. The Kasumyans are twin brothers from Los Angeles, first generation Armenian Americans, and among the cofounders of the Yale Armenian Network (YAN).

Artin recalls his experience at New Haven, Conn., being his first time in an environment without Armenians and he stated that he “[d]efinitely felt that void, and without question wanted to be involved with the Armenian community.” Thus, it was through YAN that the brothers began to engage and unite with the other students of Armenian heritage at Yale University.

During their four years there, they organized many events, including a panel discussion on Artsakh with Armenian and American diplomats and twice hosting the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) Norian Youth Connect program on campus, a weekend-long Armenian students’ educational, social and networking event. Outside of Yale, the Kasumyan brothers taught computer science workshops at TUMO during their 2019-2020 winter break and were even featured on Armenian television. They were also able to convince other (non-Armenian) Yale students to join them, and each taught more than 20 students per workshop.

Armenian Heritage Park Celebrates Decade with Gala Benefit Honoring Journalist Stephen Kurkjian

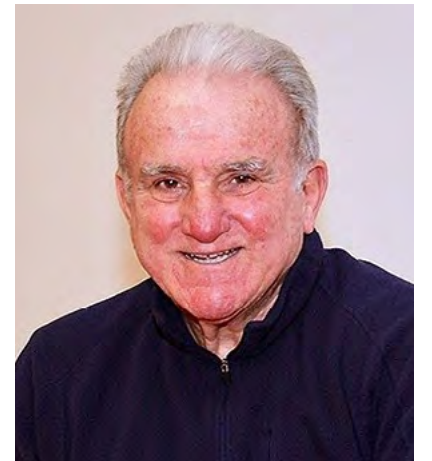
BOSTON — The 10th anniversary of the Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway is being celebrated with a series of events.

The Armenian Heritage Park is a place that brings pride to all Armenians and celebrates the strength and resiliency of not only generations of Armenians who have immigrated to the U.S. but of immigrants and refugees from throughout the world who have come here and contributed much to American life and culture.

In the heart of downtown Boston, Armenian Heritage Park is where the Armenian-American community gathers, and where all gather on common ground.

It is among the select few gathering sites on public land in the United States that commemorates the Armenian Genocide, celebrates the immigrant journey and contributions made to American life and culture and welcomes all in celebration of what unites and connects us.

On the occasion of the park’s 10th anniversary, a gala benefit, with the titled “Celebrating Contributions of Our Nation’s Immigrants,” will be held on Wednesday, September 21, at the InterContinental Hotel. Stephen



Stephen Kurkjian

Kurkjian, Pulitzer Prize journalist, author and leader is the distinguished honoree. In addition, organizations serving immigrants and refugees will be recognized. Funds raised at the event will benefit the Park’s Legacy Fund, the endowed fund to support the annual care for and maintain of the Park year-round for many years to come.

“The park has been a brilliant addition to the new Boston with its giant modern sculpture that gets reshaped every spring into a new form, as the *Boston Globe* stated. It celebrates ‘how public art becomes a part of the city, both permanent and alive’... measuring up to the promise each of us makes in living or working in Boston — you are part of this city’s great history and expected to honor and contribute to it...And this is the kind of pledge that I see that the Armenian Heritage Park made to itself and to those who supported its drive from

see CELEBRATION, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Mixing Education with the Homeland Is More Important than Ever

“Our students were incredible, and it was a really good experience for us...we still keep in touch with them,” Arthur said.

When asked why they chose to do Armenian activities among the many opportunities at Yale, Arthur said “I didn’t think I had to do them, or it was some kind of debt... it was just a genuine feeling that only grew stronger the more we became involved.”

Arthur also noted the important network and friendships that emerged from YAN. “I got to interact with pretty important people I never would have met otherwise, people who are so deeply and actively leading Armenian affairs.”

The twins both emphasized that being involved in Armenian activities on campus was not a huge commitment, and they were still able to do the other clubs they were interested in.

Danielle Mikaelian - Columbia University

Danielle Mikaelian is a recent graduate of Columbia University’s Class of 2021, with a major in English literature. Her ancestors originally came to the Midwest during the Armenian Genocide, and she herself is from Thousand Oakes, Calif.

While at Columbia, Mikaelian was active in many Armenian organizations, such as the Armenian Society of Columbia (serving as president) and the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) Manhattan Moush Chapter. She’s also a recipient of the Gold Medal from the Armenian Students Association of America and a scholarship from the Huys Foundation.

On her own initiative, Danielle creat-



Danielle Mikaelian: Columbia University Class of 2021

ed “Armenian Accepted” to provide free college application consulting services to Armenians in Armenia and the diaspora as well. Among many reasons Danielle engaged in Armenian affairs, she highlighted that “[Armenians] are a minority group, and we have to keep our culture alive... unfortunately we are still facing existential threats to our nation.”

Furthermore, Mikaelian became fully immersed in the Armenian community through coursework on Armenia and attending Armenian professional events hosted by the Armenian Bar Association and AGBU Young Professionals. Mikaelian also worked with Columbia University’s Armenian Center and helped coordinate efforts to identify hate crimes committed in Artsakh through Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights. Danielle proudly stated that “[b]eing involved with the Armenian community made me grow in many different ways... working together toward collective goals is extremely gratifying.”

Mikaelian said she finds that the Armenian community gives back to those who are committed to it, and for her, being involved in it as an undergraduate was a very rewarding experience.

Levon Brunson - Brown University

Levon Brunson is a 2021 graduate of Brown University with a bachelor’s degree in computer science. Originally from Colorado, Levon now calls Boston his home.

During his undergraduate years, Brown University did not have an active Armenian Students’ Association (ASA) chapter, and therefore Levon and other Armenians on campus decided to restart the organization. On why he decided to even get involved, Brunson stated that “It’s deeply rewarding and fun to be around people who share the same culture, food, dances, etc. ... You feel understood.”

Beyond social gatherings, Brown’s ASA did have plans to partner with wider Rhode Island universities’ ASAs, which unfortunately were canceled due to the pandemic. However, that didn’t stop Levon from thinking big.

During the July 2020 Armenian–Azer-



Levon Brunson: Brown University Class of 2021

baijani clashes, Brunson, and other ASA leaders co-founded ASA United, a united coalition of Armenian American students from 60+ universities across the United States and Canada. Initially, they focused on fundraising for the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund and fighting disinformation during those skirmishes and the 2020 Artsakh War. Furthermore, he actively participated in an Armenian dance group and was a Division I Fencer for Brown University.

Since graduating, Brunson has continued working to establish an ASA United Alumni network and mentorship program.

Through Armenian activities Brunson said, “I found something that’s my calling, which is participating and contributing to the Armenian cause.”

Currently, Levon is the founder of his own startup, Flexibly, an AI-driven personal assistant and workspace. He believes that being a leader of and participating in various Armenian organizations prepared for that role; “In terms of organizational skills, speaking, leadership and confidence, I’m really happy I participated in these sorts of things through ASA.”

Armine Kalbakian - Cornell University

Armine Kalbakian is a member of Cornell University’s Class of 2020 and hails from “Little Armenia” in California. Her family is from various Western Armenian

diasporas (Lebanon, Syria, and Ethiopia) and Kalbakian herself is fluent in reading, writing, and speaking Western Armenian.

As an undergraduate, she double majored in anthropology and archeology, with minors in business, global health, and Near Eastern studies. Through academic interests and coursework, Kalbakian said she was “[a]lways looking for ways to study or incorporate Armenia,” whether it was writing comparative papers on ethnic communities in anthropology, Near Eastern Studies courses on the Caucasus, or archeology courses which also included Armenian history.

In addition to academia, Kalbakian was extremely active in engaging with the Cornell Armenian community, hosting informal language classes, lectures on Armenian topics, and community socials. Additionally, Kalbakian dedicated her summers to working on the Armenian cause, often in ways that intersected with her own interests. This included volunteering in Armenia and Artsakh as an AYF Youth Corps



Armine Kalbakian: Cornell University Class of 2020

counselor teaching day camps to children and teenagers and interning at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C for their Armenia: Creating Home program at the 2018 Folklife Festival.

Her motivation and drive to be involved came, in her words, “naturally... I was raised by a very հայրենասուրբ [patriotic] (family) and grew up in a strong Armenian community.” In addition to personal fulfillment, Kalbakian mentioned that being a part of such a tight-knit community allows for more genuine connections and opportunities and amplifies the impact that someone can have.

As exemplified by the above personal narratives, involvement in Armenian affairs as an undergraduate provides many benefits, whether they be social, academic, or professional. It goes without saying, the relationship is two ways. In many aspects, Armenia and Artsakh also stand to benefit from the diaspora, as the diaspora acts as a bridge between Armenia and the outside world (among many roles). Whether it’s furthering research in America about underrepresented Artsakh, filling voids in academic fields not fully developed in Armenia or increasing awareness of Armenian issues to non-Armenians on campus, the support students can provide to the homeland while abroad is priceless. The war in Artsakh was devastating and exposed just how unprepared and disorganized we were as a people, both in Armenia and abroad (a topic which merits its own entire discussion). The war and subsequent events also highlighted the indifference of the world, urgency for Armenians to defend themselves, and need for the global Armenian community to be proactive and unified for future crises. In my view, being involved in Armenian affairs as a student (no matter how big or small), is a great way to contribute to the development of both a stronger, smarter, self and nation.



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OBITUARY

Maral Serce Dechkounian

Longtime Diocese Staffer

NEW YORK — For nearly 30 years she was the beautiful face that greeted visitors to the St. Vartan Cathedral complex; the sweet, Armenian voice callers would hear when they telephoned.

This week, our dear colleague on the Diocesan staff, Maral Serce Dechkounian, passed away after a long, patient battle with cancer. Her longtime co-workers will smile to remember the shy, slightly nervous



young woman who first took up the receptionist's role at the cathedral, so many years ago. Very quickly, though, we discovered to our delight Maral's multi-faceted nature: her warmhearted generosity and hard-won wisdom; the mischievous sense of humor she shared with her friend Nouné Sukiasian; her unassuming style that could suddenly blossom into cosmopolitan glamour.

She would be the most ardent cheerleader during the little triumphs of our lives. But she was also a confidant who listened to private cares. And Maral was a fearless advocate, whenever an injustice needed correcting, or a hard truth needed to be expressed. Over the years, her beautiful qualities became fixtures in our lives: we thought her presence would always be with us — ready to welcome us as we opened the door to a new day.

She was blessed with a profound spiritual fortitude that sustained her through life's blessings and travails, from her native Beirut to New York. It was never more evident than during the last, years-long battle of her life.

She leaves her mother, Jaqueline; her children Tamar and Jack and their families.

The funeral was on Saturday, April 30, at St. Vartan Cathedral (630 Second Ave., New York City). Interment followed at All Saints Cemetery in Great Neck, NY.

Russell Barton Adams

WWII Vet, Dedicated to Knights of Vartan

FRESNO — Russell Barton Adams was born May 7, 1927 and passed away on April 21, 2022.

He joined the U.S. Maritime Service to serve his country in WWII. On his return home in 1947, he joined the family grocery business, Adams Market, and worked alongside his father and mother.

In 1950, when the Korean War started, he once again went to sea to serve his country. However, Uncle Sam also sent his "Greetings" and Russell was inducted into the Army in 1951. During his time in the Army, Russell served as an instructor at the Counter Intelligence Corp School in Baltimore, MD until his discharge in 1953, achieving the rank of Sergeant.

Also in 1951, he married the former Nina Chalukian and they were blessed with three children and six grandchildren.

He was a lifelong member of Saint Paul Armenian Church, serving on the Parish Council many times. He was also a member of the Knights of Vartan for 32 years.

He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Nina Adams; children Avak Sbarabed Steven Adams and his wife Salpy; Thomas Adams and his wife Sister Donna; and Roberta Hairabedian; grandchildren Jennifer Adams, Laura Adams Gonzalez and her husband Alvaro, Dirouhi Rakel Hairabedian, Daniel Hairabedian and his wife Mikelle, Jason Adams and his wife Lea, and Asbed Ari Adams.

Knights of Vartan services were held on Sunday, May 1, at Wallin Funeral Home, and Funeral services was held at St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St., Fresno CA, on Monday, May 2.

Colonel Armen Sargsyan

Career Ambassador, Military attaché, Musician

CHEVY CHASE, Md. — Colonel Armen Sargsyan, former military attaché at the Armenian Embassy in Washington, DC, passed away on April 27, after a long



chronic illness.

He served as ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in China, Vietnam, Singapore, Mongolia and Bulgaria.

He was also a musician and played with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Bulgaria as violinist.

His brother, former Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Sargsyan, announced the death of his brother in a statement on social media.

"My dear brother, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia, passed away from a chronic illness," Tigran Sargsyan said.

He is survived by his wife Susanna and children Suren, Narine and Lilit and brothers Ashot Sargsyan and Tigran Sargsyan.

The funeral service took place on Monday, May 2, at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church of Washington, DC, officiated by Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan. Former Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan flew from Moscow to attend the services.



Նոր Տաղանդներ New Talents

ԹԵՔԵԱՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ՄԻՈՒԹԵԱՆ
Փաստադիմա ԿԻՆՈՒՆԵՅԻ Մասնաճիղ
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Հիւր արունեստագետ Արցախէն

Արթիւր Խաչէնց



Տեղի կ'ունենայ Կիրակի, Մայիս 15, 2022 ին երեկոյեան
ժամը 6:00 ին, Պէշկետիւրեան Կեդրոնին մէջ, Ալթադենայ:

An evening of musical and cultural performances by young
talents on Sunday, May 15, 2022 at 6:00 PM at the TCA
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COMMUNITY NEWS

In Remembrance of Nora Ipekian-Azadian

By Gerald Papsian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

A year ago, today, my mother Nora Ipekian-Azadian passed away. Managing Editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* Aram Arkun had asked me at the time to write my feelings about my mother, but I was unable to come up with words for how I felt. I promised him I'd write on the first anniversary. One of the reasons I was unable to gather my thoughts was that I was stuck in Yerevan for a student's production of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," which opened at the very moment when the funeral service was taking place in Detroit. The curtain went up exactly at the same time as the ceremony started – 7 p.m. Yerevan time, 11 a.m. Detroit time!

It seemed impossible then to bring together my thoughts about the strange fate of not being able to attend the funeral. I consoled myself by thinking how dearly my mother loved her own students throughout her long teaching career, and how she adored the world of theatre. She wouldn't have been happy to know that I had abandoned my students and ignored the old theatre saying, "the show must go on."

I have never been a very religious person as far as celebrating annual masses in churches for the departed. My temple is the theatre. So, I did what would have pleased my mother more than anything else.

Almost exactly a year later, about 15 days ago, I produced a new play at the Yerevan Theatre Institute, called "The Boat without a Fisherman," by Alexandro Casona. I never told anyone the reason for my choice, but I knew deep down that it was my way of paying my

tribute to my mother. Back in the old days, in Cairo, she had triumphed in the title role of the abovementioned play. I was too small to attend the performance, but she used to recall her memories of that beautiful play and fondly describe her interpretation of the role. I later read the play and, in my mind, imagined her playing the part, dreaming about the whole thing. The way my mother used to define her experiences and her "favorite things," especially as far as the French theatrical school was concerned, was so vivid, so expressive, that it became an inspiration for me and real education, parallel to my drama school days in Armenia in the 1970s.

Now, so many years later, I will have yet another opportunity to honor her memory by producing one more beloved play of hers, Corneille's "Le Cid," one of the masterpieces of French classical literature, at the Youth Theatre of Yerevan. I remember my mother reciting monologues of that play in French, as she had learned it back when she was a student at the Lycée Français of Egypt.

The future also holds a surprise for her (as I know she sees all this from above!); hopefully a production of Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" at the National Theatre which was my first great success in Cairo's Opera House back when I was 17 years old! I had staged my mother for the first time in that wonderful play in the role of Ftata-teeta, Cleopatra's threatening nurse.

I wish she could see all this! I'm sure she will! Say hi to your beloved grandpa Mihran Damadian, your dad Aghasi Ipekian and your darling mother and aunt Chaké and Nevart for me, mom!



Nora Azadian, far right, as Estelle in "The Boat without a Fisherman," Cairo, circa 1957, with Krikor Partamian and Aydzemnik Boyadjian



A freeze-frame from the video of the 2022 diploma performance of "The Boat without a Fisherman" at the Yerevan Theatre Institute with the same exact scene as in the photo with Nora Azadian

Armenian Heritage Park Celebrates Decade with Gala Honoring Journalist Stephen Kurkjian

CELEBRATION, from page 6
the outset," shared Kurkjian during the virtual Gathering for Park Benefactors on December 2, 2021.

The son of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, Kurkjian was born and raised in Dorchester. He is a product of the Boston public school system, and a graduate of Boston University and Suffolk University Law School.

An editor and reporter for the *Bos-*

ton Globe for 40 years, Kurkjian was a founding member of the paper's investigative Spotlight Team. As a member of the team, Kurkjian was awarded the Pulitzer Prize on three occasions and about 25 other regional and national reporting awards. Between 1986 and 1991, Kurkjian headed the *Globe's* Washington Bureau.

Following his retirement from the *Boston Globe* in 2007, he researched and wrote *Master Thieves: The Boston Gangsters*

Who Pulled Off the World's Greatest Art Heist (Perseus Books), on the historic theft from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, which was published to critical acclaim in 2015. In his retirement, he has also taught journalism as an adjunct professor at Northeastern, Boston University and Boston College.

And he has continued to write extensively about the Armenian Genocide of 1915, a horrific massacre by the Ottoman empire which killed more than a million Armenians, including his paternal grandfather, and drove countless others from their ancestral home. Stephen has long been a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and NAASR has assisted him immensely in his reporting on the Genocide.

He has two adult children — Erica Kurkjian Parrell, a public school teacher, and Adam, teaching assistant with the Needham Public Schools — and three grandchildren, Theodore, Jillian and Emily Parrell.

Over ten years ago, because of the generosity of the park's benefactors and supporters, funds were raised to both construct the park and endow funds. Each endowed fund supports a designated purpose. These endowed funds support the Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, the Park's Care and Maintenance, Public Programs that include Genocide Remembrance and

a Welcome Reception for New Citizens at the Park following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall and the Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall. The annual lecture series was inaugurated prior to the park being constructed.

The Park's Endowment, a collection of endowed funds, is managed by the Armenian Heritage Foundation's Investment Committee, a team of professionals. The Board of Directors of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsor of Armenian Heritage Park, is composed of representatives from organizations throughout Massachusetts.

Many programs are offered in collaboration with civic, arts, cultural and educational organizations. Programs Partners include the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools (BPS), Museum of Fine Arts, Armenian Museum of America, Boston Pops, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at MGH, Berklee College of Music as well as organizations serving immigrants and refugees.

All are invited to Celebrate the Park's 10th Anniversary over the next many months during Programs at the Park culminating with the September 18 Sunday Afternoon at the Park program at 2 p.m.

For schedule of Programs at the Park, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org. For information about the Gala Benefit, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org.

More American Schools Expected To Teach About Armenian Genocide

EDUCATION, from page 6

Chair of Missouri's Legislative Assembly's Education Committee Charles Basye doesn't anticipate that the resolution he drafted will be adopted before the state legislature adjourns in the first half of May. With many pending bills, the elected officials might simply not be able to squeeze the House Bill 1933 into their voting agenda. The Congressman cannot run again, as Missouri's legislation has term limits, however, he hopes the following state parliament will pick up his draft.

"My grandfather fought in World War I. If he was still around, I would love to get his insight," noted Congressman Basye.

Please follow the Mirror-Spectator's YouTube channel for video comments.





COMMUNITY NEWS

City of Smile to Hold Chess Fundraiser with Sam Sevia

WATERTOWN — The City of Smile pediatric cancer hospital mimics St. Jude's Hospital in Memphis, TN, where all children are treated free of charge.

Every year approximately a 100 children in Armenia are diagnosed with cancer. Available cancer treatments are expensive and most of the middle to lower income families can't afford quality treatment for their child. Given the social and economic crisis in Armenia due to the war and COVID 19 pandemic, the families are struggling to support the treatment of these children. If we don't help these patients, they will be forced to abandon the treatment, and many will not be able to start any new treatments.

To raise money, a chess tournament featuring Sam Sevia, an American chess prodigy who shattered the Historical American record of the youngest ever-Grand Master by a whole year at age 13, in 2014, will take place on Sunday, May 15, at 3 p.m., at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC), 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown.



Sam Sevia

Everyone is welcome.

Tickets can be reserved on line by making a \$50 tax-deductible donation to City of Smile USA: (Please indicate

CHES in comments to keep track of the number of tickets. (<https://us-donate.cityofsmile.org/>)

In 2012 Sevia became World U12 Champion and in 2017 the youngest winner of the Continental Championship in Medellin, Colombia. He is currently the TOP 50 Player in the World Ranking. Just recently Sevia shared the Top 3 spots with World#2 Fabiano Caruana and World#8 Wesley So in the highly competitive US Championship, taking 3rd place on tiebreaks.

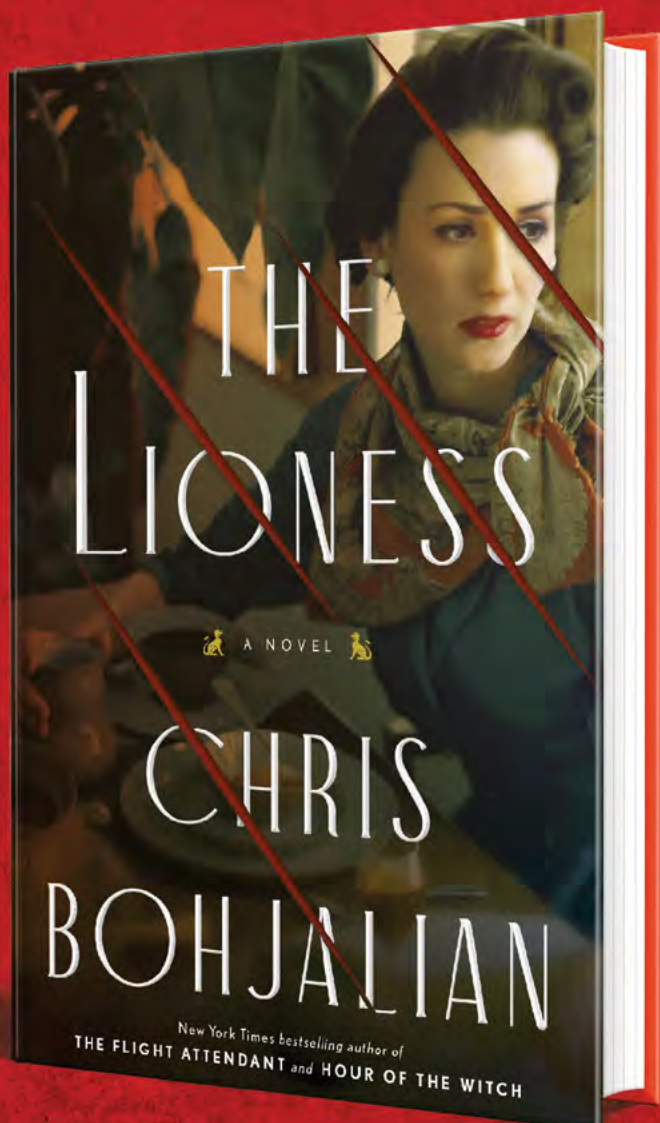


Meeting with Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hagop Vartivarian

Meeting with Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan In New Jersey

MAHWAH, N.J. — On April 10, a meeting of active local Armenians connected to the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America took place with Very Rev. Fr. Mesrob Parsamyan, Director of Ministries at the Eastern Diocese in New York, at the Mahwah, NJ home of Hagop and Maria Vartivarian.

Parsamyan has held important posts in the church in Belgium, France and Switzerland. He has served as the director of Echmiadzin's Kevorkian Theological Seminary and has been Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral. Earlier, he was pastor of Holy Shoghagat Church in Belleville, Ill. Nerses Babayan spoke on behalf of the assembled Armenians about their respect for Parsamyan, and after dinner they continued their discussions.



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



65 Main Street, Watertown, MA
www.armenianmuseum.org



COMMUNITY NEWS

Inaugural Bay Area Armenian Community Day with The Oakland Athletics Proves Huge Success

By Kim Bardakian

OAKLAND, Calif. — On Saturday, April 30, close to two hundred Armenians gathered for the inaugural Bay Area Armenian Community Day with the Oakland Athletics. Guests drove as far away as Los Angeles, Fresno and Sacramento to join together and cheer along with Bay Area Armenians.

Two hours prior to the start of the ballgame, a “Kef-style” tailgate was sponsored and prepared by members of St. Vartan Armenian Church in Oakland. Delicious tri-tip sandwiches along with Armenian owned companies including Caspers hot-dogs, ZaZa Chips, Haig’s Deli dips and Kareen Wines were prepared and served with love for all. Armenian music played throughout while guests enjoyed catching up with new and old friends alike.

A highlight of the tailgate was when James Kaprielian, pitcher with the Oakland Athletics and the only Armenian player in Major League Baseball stopped by. Guests had a chance to take photos with him and some even brought him Armenian-related gifts. One young boy asked James how to throw a knuckleball and he took the time to show him. Kaprielian was appreciative of the ongoing support from his Armenian fans in Oakland and around the US when he plays in other ballparks.

(KIM BARDAKIAN PHOTO)



The Armenian section cheering all day!



(KIM BARDAKIAN PHOTO)

After lunch, guests made their way into RingCentral Coliseum, home of the Oakland A’s. Nobody wanted to miss Very Rev. Smpad Saboundjian, parish priest of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco, throw out the ceremonial first pitch. After weeks of training, he threw an impressive ball over home plate!

Following the first pitch, ninth-grade student from Piedmont High School and Krozian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan Armenian School alumna, Danielle Zaroukian, sang a beautiful rendition of the US national anthem. She was cheered on by all.

Throughout the game, Armenians cheered together, waved their Armenian flags and their rally towels which read, “Can’t Spell Armenian Without the A’s.” Two foul balls were even caught in our section. It was clear that this event will become an annual

(KIM BARDAKIAN PHOTO)



Fr. Smpad Saboundjian throwing out the ceremonial first pitch

(KIM BARDAKIAN PHOTO)



High school student Danielle Zaroukian singing the US national anthem

event given the resounding success of the day’s activities!

A portion of all game ticket sales supported Mt. Davidson Cross, one of the oldest and tallest landmarks in San Francisco. It serves as a memorial to the 1.5 million

Armenians who perished during the 1915-1923 Armenian Genocide.

To learn more about future Armenian Community Days or how to become an event sponsor, please email armenianheritagenight@gmail.com.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

The Use of Robots in Medical Surgery

By Kevork Keushkerian

PASADENA, Calif. — St. Gregory Church Deacon Andy Ylitalo was the guest speaker at St. Gregory's Men's Forum and presented a talk titled "The Future of Operating Rooms and Surgeries" on Thursday, April 28.

Ylitalo is from Minnesota. He graduated from Stanford with a degree in engineering physics. He will receive his doctorate in chemical engineering from Caltech in June.

Upon graduating, Ylitalo will join Start-Up Company Ceevra, developing advanced visualization software for surgeons for more successful outcomes in cancer surgery.

After dinner was served, Chairman of

the Men's Forum Berj Gourdikian introduced Ylitalo.

Ylitalo's presentation was augmented with a very enlightening slide show. He began his presentation by reciting a verse from the Gospel of Mark. Mark, chapter 8, verse 25, which says: "Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."

He spoke about the processes of medical care and also dwelled upon the ways conventional surgery have changed and will evolve.

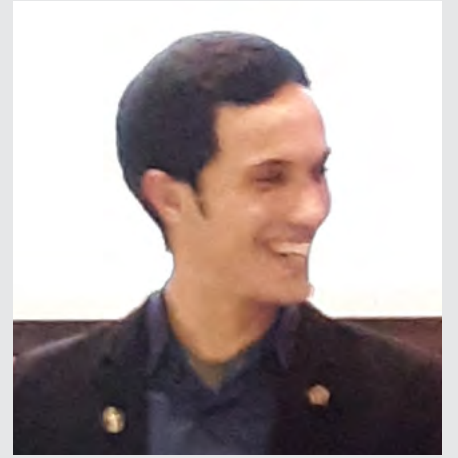
Instead of colonoscopy, for example, in the near future, the patient will take a pill which has a camera, to take pictures, he said.

Laparoscopic surgery will mostly replace lengthy and more invasive surgeries, he added.

He then spoke about the Da Vinci surgical system, where the surgeon sits in a console and works with robotic arms and views the procedure on a screen.

However, Ylitalo said, the Da Vinci system is very expensive, to the tune of 2 million dollars. Hence, many companies are working on this procedure to reduce the cost and make it available to everyone in the near future.

In conclusion, Ylitalo reiterated that the future operating room will still have surgeons, doctors, and nurses. In a word, it will have the same people as before, but it will also have better procedures and better results.



Andy Ylitalo

Questions and answers followed the presentation and at the end, Deacon Vahe Charkhoudian presented Ylitalo with a pin of the Armenian cross, which was put on his lapel by Rev. Sarkis Pe-toyan.

Los Angeles Sheriff, Accused of Cover-Up, Opens Investigation Into Reporter

By Katie Robertson

LOS ANGELES (*New York Times*) — The Los Angeles County sheriff said on Tuesday, April 26, that he was investigating a reporter at the *Los Angeles Times* who had reported allegations that he was involved in covering up a case of inmate abuse, an announcement that drew accusations that he was violating the reporter's First Amendment rights.

The reporter, Alene Tchekmedyan, published an article on April 25 detailing a legal claim filed by an officer who accused Sheriff Alex Villanueva of blocking an investigation into the alleged abuse and retaliating against whistle-blowers.

Tchekmedyan also published security video footage of a police deputy handcuffing the inmate, who had punched him in

the face. Once the inmate was on the floor, the officer kept his knee on the inmate's head for three minutes.

At a news conference on Tuesday, the sheriff said he was investigating "all parties" involved in the leaked video, which he said was "stolen property that was removed illegally." He stood next to large photos of Tchekmedyan and two other people.

"What she receives illegally and the *L.A. Times* uses it, I'm pretty sure that's a huge, complex area of law and freedom of the press and all that," Sheriff Villanueva said. "However, when it's stolen material, at some point you actually become part of the story."

Kevin Merida, the executive editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, said in a statement that "Sheriff Alex Villanueva's attack on

Alene Tchekmedyan's First Amendment rights for doing newsworthy reporting on a video that showed a deputy kneeling on a handcuffed inmate's head is outrageous."

"His attempt to criminalize news reporting goes against well-established constitutional law," Merida continued. "We will vigorously defend Tchekmedyan's and the *Los Angeles Times*'s rights in any proceeding or investigation brought by authorities."

Katie Townsend, the deputy executive director for the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, said the investigation of a journalist because of her reporting violated the First Amendment.

"Publishing newsworthy information about an alleged law enforcement cover-up that sought to block an investigation into the use of excessive force is constitutionally protected activity, and is clearly in the public interest," Ms. Townsend said. "We condemn the department's actions in the strongest terms, and urge it to immediately drop this purported investigation."

Tchekmedyan, who covers the Sheriff's Department, broke the story on March 25 that Los Angeles County officials didn't charge the inmate because, the article said,

they were worried the deputy's action would generate negative publicity for its resemblance to the murder of George Floyd, a Black man who died in May 2020 in police custody after an officer knelt on his neck.

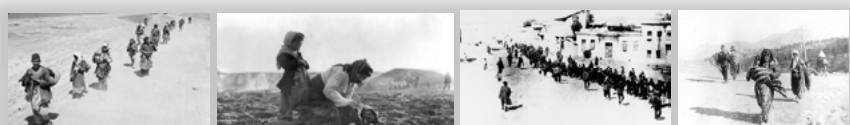
Tchekmedyan's article on Monday implicated Sheriff Villanueva as the one directing the cover-up.

At the news conference on Tuesday, Sheriff Villanueva denied the cover-up claims and said he was investigating the leak of the video.

"We will not be the only party investigating this," Villanueva said. "There will be other agencies who will also be thoroughly investigating this and monitoring what we are doing. And it will be handed over to the appropriate prosecutorial agencies so they make a determination."

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said in an email on Tuesday that it was "unable to comment any further due to several active ongoing investigations, pending litigation, including a criminal investigation."

"What we can say is Sheriff Alex Villanueva is committed to transparency and accountability," the department said.



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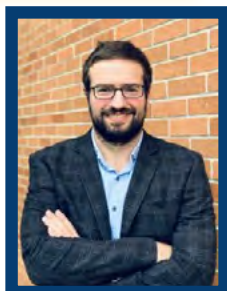
AGBU School Library

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. Şekeryan 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 Şekeryan 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. Şekeryan 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 Manoogian 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....



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Մեծազոյն Նիւ Եորքի Մասնաճիւղ

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Saturday, October 15, 2022

Details to follow



Arts & Culture

Marc Hairapetian

A True Devotee of Film

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/HANOVER – Marc Hairapetian was born in 1968 in Frankfurt am Main to Armenian father and German mother. At the age of 16 Hairapetian founded *Spirit - Ein Lächeln Im Sturm* [Spirit - A Smile in the Storm; <https://spirit-fanzine.de>], a magazine for film, theatre, music, literature and audio drama. He has often been a jury member for German and international film festivals and has worked for newspapers and magazines in Germany (for example *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Der Spiegel*), Austria (*Ray Filmmagazin*), Switzerland (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*) and the US (*Factsheet Five*, *Traffic News To Go*)

The co-writer of the biography *Oskar Werner - Das Filmbuch* (Vienna 2002), Hairapetian has conducted exclusive interviews with renowned personalities like Elia Kazan, Charles Aznavour, Billy Wilder, Gregory Peck, Sir Peter Ustinov, Christiane Kubrick, Quentin Tarantino, Ennio Morricone, Anne Hathaway, Kim Novak, Sophia Loren, Claudia Cardinale, Richard Gere, Tom Cruise, Felix Werner (son of Oskar Werner), Atom Egoyan, as well as Henry Kissinger. Europe's highest-circulation daily newspaper, *Bild*, called Marc Hairapetian "Germany's best film journalist."

Since 2011, Hairapetian has served as a board member of Kinomuseum Berlin (Cinema Museum Berlin) and his film screenings of 70mm and 35mm prints of film classics are well known in Germany. In 2021 he opened the "Kinomuseum" Berlin pop-up store at the huge shopping center, Alexa. Since 1996, Hairapetian has also worked as an actor on television ("Tatort: Der zweite Mann," "36 Stunden Angst," "Verliebt in Berlin") and cinema ("Nachtgestalten," "True Love Ways").

(Photo by Frank Seehausen / <https://spirit-fanzine.de>)



Marc, a Russian animation film song says: "There are lots of professions, But the best one is film; whoever appeared in that world, becomes happy for God." Are you happy?

My absolute favorite actor, Oskar Werner, asks in the role of ship doctor Dr. Schumann in Stanley Kramer's masterpiece, "Ship of Fools," from Captain Thiele, played see HAIRAPETIAN, page 15



Garush Ghazaryan (photo courtesy of the Armenian director)

Ghazaryan Accompanies Film 'My Black Heart' to Egypt's Ismailia International Film Festival

By Maydaa Nadar

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

CAIRO — The Ismailia-Armenian community is one of the few that has succeeded in preserving its rich culture, coupled with integration into Egyptian society. This time, an Armenian creative work was shown on Egyptian soil, with the participation of the 16-minute film "My Black Heart," by Armenian director Garush Ghazaryan, in the Ismailia International Film Festival (IIFF) that concluded recently.

The film is about a 50-year-old resident of Yerevan called Poghos. He faces many financial problems and has been waiting for a certain occasion to get from the government a Niva car, which he wants to sell in order to pay his bills. Nevertheless, everything later dramatically changes.

It is the first time that "My Black Heart" is shown as part of a film festival in Egypt and it is the Armenian director's first time in the country as well. Garush commented: "It was very enjoyable. The festival organized a very good and an interesting trip through Egypt. We visited the National Museum of Egypt, after which we went to the Giza Pyramids, then the Sphinx, and with all of that, it was a great pleasure to spend eight days on the shores of the Suez Canal."

He is also the second director of the feature film "Zulali" produced in 2021 in Armenia and selected to be screened at the Port Said International Film Festival in Egypt in June.

"For me Egypt is a very interesting country and I have heard about it and its ancient history since forever. So out of curiosity, I searched and found about the IIFF and became interested in participating in the event, I liked its story very much and without thinking for a second, I sent my film to the festival. When I found out that 'My Black Heart' was selected, I was sincerely very happy. I didn't believe it for a moment and then eventually I started to believe it," he adds.

Circumstances surrounding starting the 16-minute work were not easy. The shooting was supposed to take place in 2020, but the Armenian-Azerbaijani war started, due to which filming was postponed to 2021. During that time, as Armenia was in the difficult post-war period, there were serious financial problems. Ghazaryan had to solve those difficulties before he was able to complete the shoot for "My Black Heart."

On the other hand, he said that he was lucky with the people working on the film, and he believes that the most important thing in filmmaking is to have a good team. He declared: "You can be a genius, the absolute best even; however, if you do not have a good and a strong team, the film will not be of a good quality. We communicated very well together, solving issues and it resulted in a collaborative interesting work. The cameraman is one of my best friends. We can talk freely with each other. We resolve issues quickly. We work and get ideas well and easily together. We have already collaborated on three short films. Of course, I must mention our producer Sofya Hovhannisyan – hopefully my future wife. 'My Black Heart' was our second project together and I realized on the first day of filming that I couldn't do anything without her. I feel very grateful to have had such a creative team and I am proud to have their names appear in the credits."

In addition to the IIFF, the 24-year-old director has taken part in various film festivals around the world. The first one was in 2019 in Moldova. He said, "I remember it very vividly. It was with my first short film called 'The One'."

see FILM, page 15

ACF Presents Syldason, Percussion-Voice Duo Of Sylvie Zakarian and Daniela Tošić

ARLINGTON, Mass. — "At the end of the day, it isn't where I come from. Maybe home is somewhere I'm going and never have been before." These words of the British writer, poet, Warsan Shire of Somali parents from Kenya certainly applies to millions who have chosen these shores as the place where they call home.

On Sunday, May 15 at 3 p.m., the Armenian Cultural Foundation presents a concert by Syldason, the percussion (marimba)-voice duo of Sylvie Zakarian and Daniela Tošić, dedicated to the immigrant experience.

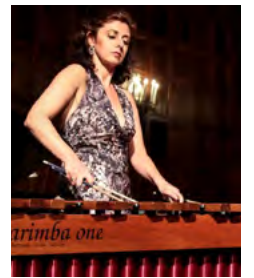
Taking inspiration from their shared cultural heritage from various cultures, Syldason will present many common elements of our human experience that help bridge the space between us. The duo grew up on the Balkan Peninsula in an era of relative political stability yet overshadowed by the heavy cloud of the Cold War. They extend a musical welcome to a wide range of folk and classical traditions.

Zakarian, an acclaimed marimba player, has played in prestigious venues in England, such as The Royal Overseas League and The Chelsea Festival; her native Bulgaria; and the United States, including the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Berklee Performing Center, and Wilshire Ebell Theater in Los Angeles. She is a Conservatory Faculty of the Longy School of Music of Bard College, Chair of Woodwind, Brass and Percussion at the Winchester Community Music School and is an affiliate instructor at the Office for the Arts at Harvard University.

Tošić is a soloist and chamber musician who specializes in early, contemporary, and world music. She is a founding member of the internationally renowned vocal ensemble Tapestry, Hourglass, Telltale and recently the marimba-voice duo Syldason. She has recorded for major labels such as Talerc, MDG, Kalan and several independent labels.

The program will include works by renowned composer and son of Arlington, Alan Hovhaness (1911-2000); Armenian ethnomusicologist, Komitas Vartabed (1869-1935) known as the founder of the Armenian national school of music; Japanese virtuoso marimba player Keiko Abe (b. 1937); traditional, Eastern Serbian pieces and premieres of *Variations on a Bulgarian Folk Song*, by Bulgarian percussionist, composer and conductor George Tantchev (b. 1969); three Neapolitan Folk Songs by composer and conductor Pasquale Tassone (b. 1949) of Arlington; as well as works by flutist, composer and songwriter Nikola Radan (b.1967) a native of the former Yugoslavia.

The concert is free and open to the public. For further detail contact the Cultural Foundation office.





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian



Pam Dayinian's Red Lentil Vegetable Soup

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield looked for ways to stay connected while staying apart. Normally, the Women's Guild's calendar is filled with activities and events through the year. Maintaining connections to each other while remaining homebound meant thinking in creative new ways. The group divided up their church phone directory and took turns calling each member to check in regularly.

A suggestion by Fr. Aren Jebjian led to the creation of Guild Gatherings, a series of instructional videos recorded by volunteers in their homes and posted on YouTube. The Guild has posted 33 homemade videos that have been viewed over 8,000 times, covering a variety of subjects and topics. "Millions of people go to YouTube to be educated, informed, motivated, or just plain delighted. Our members demonstrated how to make souboreg, katah, dolma, and comfort foods like soup, breads, yogurt, manti, and choreg.

One special recipe featured at the Guild Gatherings YouTube page is the late Pam Dayinian's Red Lentil Vegetable Soup. Though Pam passed away in 2015, she was instrumental in the creation of the *Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook* by the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church (she served as co-chair with Dolly Matoian). Pam was recognized for being an outstanding home cook, baker, planner, and church organizer who worked tirelessly in support of the Women's Guild for many years. (The cookbook's fourth printing was in 2019.)

Pam's recipe (it makes about 11 cups) is listed on page 37 of the cookbook. In the YouTube video, Guild member Susan Reizian demonstrates an updated version of Pam's recipe that can be made in an Instant Pot, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vzfyhIX5JI&list=PLgaajJ5B015V_fCalkqdiHwLZU3q-TyV71&index=4

Note: Instant Pots are a brand of electric pressure cookers or multicookers. Pressure cookers work by creating heat under a tight seal, so the temperature is much higher than the boiling point of water and the steam can't escape. The steam cooks food much more quickly than traditional stovetop or oven cooking.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 carrots, chopped
- 2-3 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups red lentils, rinsed and drained
- 8-10 cups broth (vegetable, chicken, beef or lamb or bouillon)
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper (to taste)
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste or 14 oz. can crushed or diced tomatoes (optional)

PREPARATION:

Sauté lentils, onions, carrots and celery in olive oil in a 6-8 quart pot until softened. (These vegetables may be chopped in a food processor).

Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add bay leaves, seasonings, and tomato. Stir and simmer for 45 minutes to one hour. Remove bay leaves and adjust seasonings. Add more broth or water if soup is too thick. Serve as is or cool slightly and puree using a wand mixer or in a blender.

Serves 8.

Note: In addition to presenting Pam's original recipe, Susan added the following ingredients to her version, these are optional:

- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1-1/2 teaspoons curry
- 1 teaspoon pepper

Pam was the cherished wife of Jerry Dayinian, and the mother of Olivia (George) Andonyan and Margaret-Ann (Brian) Yessian. She was the grandmother of Evan, Gia, Lula, Felix and Beau. She was sister to Edwin Neffian. Pam's daughter Olivia shares some fond family memories about her mother's life:

"Our mom served as the Chairperson of the Women's Guild for three terms during the 1980s and 1990s, and spent 3-4 days a week at church working in the kitchen and making various foods. We lived in a two-story colonial home and most nights while we were upstairs, we would listen to her on the telephone downstairs until the late hours calling members of the Women's Guild about upcoming meetings and events. Her specialty was making 30 trays of spinach pie for the annual food festival. She would recruit 10-15 women and a few capable men to help with the preparation and planning duties. She would send dad to Babylon Market to buy the phyllo dough. And to GFS to buy 20 bags of spinach and six 5 lb. blocks of Wisconsin brick cheese, feta, onions, and the eggs. Together, they would defrost the spinach and wring out the liquid in large cheese cloth towels."

"This recipe was passed down to mom from her gifted mother, Lucy Neffian. Lucy's mother's name was Olombion Sahagian. Lucy was born in Gesaria, Turkey. She had two sisters. Miraculously, my great-grandmother, grandmother and great-aunts were spared from the Armenian Genocide and survived to immigrate to Detroit. Our mother's father's name was Charles Boghos Neffian. He was also a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. He was rescued from an orphanage in Istanbul, Turkey, by one of his uncles and immigrated to the United States at age 18. Our grandmother Lucy was not only an expert at creating many traditional Armenian dishes, she made contemporary American foods like standing rib roast, pizza and homemade French fries. She had a reputation in the family and the church community for being the ultimate Armenian-American cook. Her specialty was Kharpert kufte. She made everything unbelievably good and from scratch. The best khalka (simit), shekerlemeh, manti, individual cheese boregs, spicy meatballs, and wedding pilaf. Our grandmother hosted family gatherings at the holidays, preparing each of the food and setting the centerpieces and tables to perfection."

"Mom carried on her family's tradition of outstanding Armenian cuisine, cooking and food preparation. In her lifetime, mom lived and breathed all things cooking and baking in order to nourish her family with love and attention. She created a library in our home devoted to her cookbooks, magazines and newspaper clippings of many recipes. One of her favorite celebrity chefs was Ina Garten."

"Her love for her church and the Women's Guild became her lifelong passion. She was a Sunday School teacher for 25 years, and served as Women's Guild Chairperson in 1984, 1985 and 1994. She was Co-Chair of the Women's Guild Cookbook, *Armenian Cuisine Preserving Our Heritage*. She served on nominating committees, and made khadayiff and spinach boregs for church bazaars. She was always there for her lifelong friends. She took great care of her family, nurturing and visiting her elderly relatives. And made sure they got to their hair appointments, doctor appointments, and picking up their medication from the pharmacy. She embodied Christian values and believed in serving others. She also found time to organize family reunions, parties, and holiday celebrations. She raised her daughters to value a Christian education, academics at school, music, piano lessons, dance and creative arts."

"I am honored to own one of mom's cookbooks with her hand-written notes in the margins. And I am honored to own the *Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook* she took so much pride in and helped publish with her committee. It is inscribed, 'May you enjoy cooking some delicious Armenian recipes from your family tradition. My Love Always, Mom 2010.' Once a month for three years, the cookbook committee met at our home to finalize the cookbook before publication. Each recipe was tested to ensure it was the best version to publish. The committee included multiple variations of ingredients to account for different tastes, recipes, techniques, and family traditions. This cookbook is still an invaluable resource in our kitchens today."

ORDER TODAY:

Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook

Over 450 tested recipes from the Detroit metropolitan Armenian community, updated using modern techniques and equipment. Detailed description of cooking and baking methods including tips for preparation. \$35 with free shipping.

Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church

22001 Northwestern Highway

Southfield, Michigan 48075

Tel: (248) 569-3405

Fax: (248) 569-0716

sjacwg@gmail.com

<https://stjohnwomensguild.square.site/>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Ghazaryan Accompanies Film 'My Black Heart' to Egypt's Ismailia International Film Festival

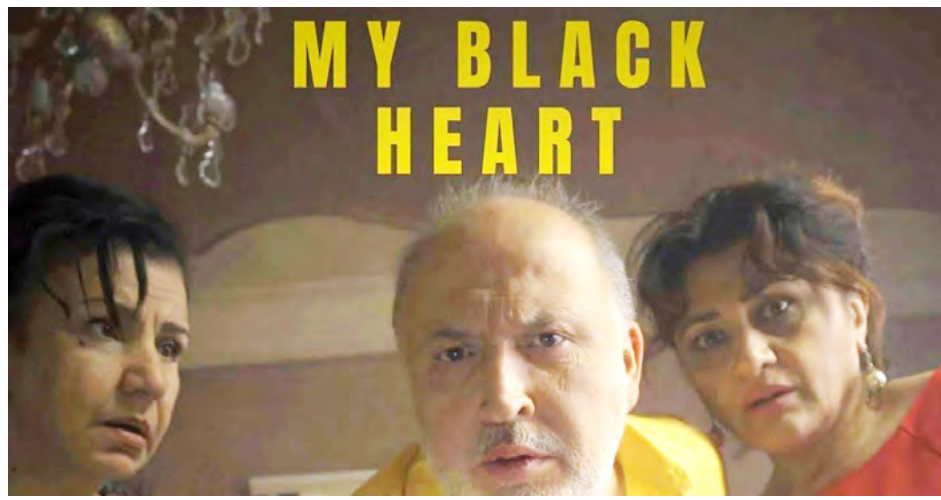
FILM, from page 13

His next film was "Black Home White Home," which appeared in nine international festivals. Its story is a little similar to that of "My Black Heart."

The third one is called "Cycle," which is an Armenian-Uzbek production. The shooting took place in 2021 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. There was a program within the framework of the Tashkent International Film Festival (TIFF), "Cinema in 5 Days." The cameraman Vahe Terteryan and Ghazaryan went to Uzbekistan to shoot this film which was also included in the TIFF competition. [DO YOU MEAN there is a second film they had in this festival? Called "Cinema in 5 Days"?]

Ghazaryan was born in Lanjizat, but lives in Yerevan. "For me, it is the best place in the world and wherever I go, I always miss it. Yerevan is a wonderful whirlpool of creativity, dreams and great people," he said.

He studied and graduated from the Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema, majoring in feature film directing. Currently, this is his second year working on his master's degree there. He said: "The Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema is a very essential place in my life. This is where I first got to know the film industry, thanks to good teachers. Since the very first day, I have loved going to the Institute. I even sometimes go there on the weekends just to breathe the air around there. So far, I am very happy with my education. I am thinking about continuing my studies abroad, but still unsure about it."



He specialized in filmmaking and he sees that for any director, short films are the best way to start, in order to gain experience and practical knowledge before taking on feature films. He declared: "Regardless, I do like short films very much. The time constraint makes it very interesting as it has to be to the point."

As a film director and a production supervisor, he has been working at Order Film Production in Yerevan for three years. He directed four full-length documentaries, four short films, as well as several commercials. "I am very happy with the film industry in general, not only with that of the short films, which has started to develop in Armenia," he adds.

He has a favorite film director. He said: "I am eager to single out my favorite film director, Serbian Emir Kusturica. I like all his films and I don't want to pick out any

of these, because each one is better than the other. Let me briefly explain why I admire him. I value highly such silent and subtle humor in his films. There are interesting layers in his works: humor, joy, sadness and life, which develop in different yet parallel lines. You can watch his film 'Life is a Miracle' and you will understand what I am talking about. It represents war and depicts how people, with their persistence, live happily during these circumstances."

As far as Armenian musicians, composer Tigran Mansuryan is his favorite. When asked why, Garush commented: "All old Armenian films are full of his creations. The sounds in his compositions are so harmonious, so aesthetic so much that even if you hear the same articulation ten times a day, your body will tremble 100 times. The world-famous composer is a very smart and cultured person whose way of thinking

is interesting. Each of his notes breathes and soars in the air."

Music for Ghazaryan is such of a great importance that, he said, "a person without music is like a fish without water. Music gives us the opportunity to think, to experience, to dream. It is inseparable especially from the life of a creative person."

Moreover, he utilizes music in his work and thinks that it mainly helps the film and fills in the gaps of the director. Yet, he observed, "for me, it is difficult to choose music. Even before the filming of 'My Black Heart,' I tried for months to find music that would be similar to what I had imagined, but it was very difficult. All your ideas and solutions change after finding them."

As to whether short films can be a tool in the preservation of the Armenian language and heritage and promotion of Armenian culture worldwide, the Armenian director opines "surely they are. In this regard, there is no difference between a short and a long film. What I can present in ten minutes can also be depicted in one hour. You can even share your culture and heritage in a short film of two or three minutes."

When asked about inscribing elements of the Armenian heritage on UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ghazaryan replied: "It is definitely a very good opportunity for Armenia to show our culture more profoundly. We have interesting treasures and creators who have remained in the shadows due to some problems. I think this attracts the world's attention to the richness of the country, allowing people to study our culture in depth."

Marc Hairapetian: A True Devotee of Film

HAIRAPETIAN, from page 13

by Charles Korvin: "Who's happy?" Happiness only exists in moments. But so far I've been able to enjoy a lot of them, which I owe to the practice of these two professions — (film) journalist and actor.

You are in the film world writing and acting. While acting, do you "write" also in your mind about directing and acting that is going around you?

How do you know that!?! (*laughs*) But I'd like to specify it a bit: Right before shooting, when I observe the scenery on the set and absorb it, it's like this. And also afterwards, when the scene is in the can. However, if it says "Record please! Camera roles" something really magical usually happens: I melt into the character I'm supposed to embody. And this fictional world is then my reality, if only for a few minutes. Just as long as it takes to record a film take. Otherwise, I actually get my best ideas for writing while running with my Siberian wolfdog husky mix, Felix, or while taking a shower!

You met many legendary people from the film world. Please share some of the stories.

The wonderful thing is that friendships have developed from many encounters during interviews or on the set. So let's start with Antje Weisgerber, the big love of my idol Oskar Werner. She was the greatest Gretchen in theatre history ("Faust"). I met her in 1993 in my early 20s when she invited me to her house in Bavaria for an interview. That was the beginning of a wonderful friendship. Antje was graceful, warm, helpful, unpretentious and like a second mother to me. She was very interested in my Armenian origins and read many books about the first Christian people such as *My Armenian Children* by Lois Fisher-Ruge. She died in 2004. On May 17 she would have been 100. Not a day goes by that

I don't think of Antje. But also the encounters with many Hollywood stars were great. So with Tom Cruise, whom I met several times, and who always turns the tables and asks me a lot of questions. When I showed him a photo of my then almost four-year-old daughter Laetitia-Ribana Orsini Siranoush when we first met in 2004, he held it in his hands for a few minutes and said to me: "I can't believe it! She's so beautiful!" You don't forget something like that!

For whom did you have the greatest admiration among the celebrities you met?

That's difficult with so many positive experiences: In addition to Antje Weisgerber, Tom Cruise, the actor and audio play maker Konrad Halver, who unfortunately died in 2012 — my best human friend ever, my paternal friend Maximilian Schell, film composer Ennio Morricone, painter Christiane Kubrick, widow of the genius director Stanley Kubrick, who invited me to her property, Childwickbury Manor in the English county of Hertfordshire. I have to single out the French star Alain Delon. At the Berlinale press conference in the Congress Hall, I asked him a question: "You once said: in friendship there is no disappointment, only betrayal. Have you ever felt betrayed professionally or privately?" In front of hundreds of journalists and many television cameras in the crowded congress hall, he answered: "Yes, it's true. In both cases. I'll explain the background to you later in private!" And he kept his word!

You acted in the erotic thriller "True Love Ways." Were you involved in erotic scenes? If yes, how was that experience?

Although it's a stylish black and white erotic thriller with horror elements, I didn't have any nudity or erotic scenes. I basically played myself here, a host who is on a talk show discussing a horrific series of snuff murders with a detective. The scantily clad leading actress Anna Hausburg, who falls into the clutches of the cruel psychopathic killer a little later, has switched on her television and watches us spellbound.

Marc, your father was the founder of the Armenian Cultural Association in Frankfurt am Main.

I owe a lot to my father, Ardavas Hairapetian, especially his love for film, music, literature, photography and painting. Although he was actually an engineer, he painted a lot, both in the Expressionist and Impressionist styles. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Vincent van Gogh were his role models. But he also made beautiful icons, all of which are on the walls of my German mother Mago's living room in Hanover. He also taught me to take photos. When he came to Germany from Iran in the mid-1960s, in 1968 he became a co-founder of the Armenian Cultural Association (Armenischer KulturVerein) in Frankfurt am Main. He was very handsome and could have become an actor himself. He looked like a mix of Omar Sharif, George Clooney and Joachim Fuchsberger. But he preferred to play chess and won a number of titles in Iran. My father was more than an idealist: he was an altruist. The well-being of others was always more important to him than his own. At the time of the Islamic Revolution, he helped many friends and their friends to settle abroad. He was generous, never lending money but giving it away. A deep friendship connected him with Aram Khachaturian, to whom he showed Germany in the 1970s, where they partied together from time to time at Frankfurt nightclubs. Smoking was his only vice: he died of lung cancer in 2006 at the age of 65. When I was a member of the jury at the Yerevan International Film Festival in 2013 and was able to award the FIPRESCI Prize to an Iranian film in the sold-out opera in the presence of Charles Aznavour, I told on stage about my father and his friendship with Aram Khachaturian. There was applause and standing ovations. That was the greatest moment of my life in memory of my beloved father.

We met in 2013 and 2018 during your visits to Armenia. Even without knowing the language, it was obvious you were feeling yourself in your own country.

I have already mentioned the wonderful award ceremony for the tenth anniversary of Golden Apricot, which was also broadcast live on Armenian television. I felt at home when I first came to Yerevan in the hot summer of 2013! At the Grand Hotel, in that time called the Royal Tulip, I was amazed that I could talk to the young ladies at reception about the films and actors of the 1960s and 1970s. General education and cultural knowledge are very high in Armenia. And that fills me with pride. I will also never forget that I got to know the greatest Armenian of all, our Charles Aznavour, personally on the very first day. He was staying in the same hotel as me and was introduced to me by my good friend Atom Egoyan. A day later, Charles and I did an interview for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and my own culture magazine, *Spirit - A Smile in the Storm* after a reception at his own museum. Our acquaintance became so strong that almost a year later he invited my Vietnamese girlfriend and me to celebrate his 90th birthday after his concert in Berlin!

When I attended a concert in Yerevan in the Khachaturian house, I cried. There were also tears of joy! The "Yerevan Nights" were wonderful and how we all — filmmakers, journalists, organizers, tourists and beautiful Armenian girls — celebrated together and danced to live music. Three years later, at the Marc Cain Fashion Show, where I as a guest of honor met you again, dear Artsvi, we also celebrated frenetically together again in a club and it was said: dance, dance, dance until dawn! Armenian hospitality and food - we also went to the famous "Dolmama" restaurant — are really unique. And the Armenian women — next to the Vietnamese — are the most beautiful in the world! Dear organizers of Golden Apricot, if you are reading this, you must know: your international film festival is one of the best ever and I would be honored to be one of your jury members again because - to quote my compatriot William Saroyan: my heart is always in the highlands of Hayastan!



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.aimhye.com/>

MASSACHUSETTS

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

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

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

MAY 15 — A Chess tournament to Benefit "City of Smile" children with Cancer in Armenia, featuring chess prodigy Sam Sevia. Sunday at 3 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/>

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

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

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. Tenafly, 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.

Chris Bohjalian to Discuss Latest Novel with Stephen Kurkjian

By Barbara Merguerian

WATERTOWN — Best-selling author Chris Bohjalian will mark the publication of his latest novel, *The Lioness*, in a conversation with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Stephen Kurkjian at the Armenian Museum of America on May 18 at 7 p.m.

Following the success of his last novel *Hour of the Witch* and the HBO Max's TV series based on his book *The Flight Attendant*, the Armenian-American author returns this year with his 23rd publication, described as "a riveting historical thriller."

Stephen Kurkjian, who will join in the program, is an acclaimed investigative reporter and a founder of the *Boston Globe's* famed Spotlight Team. The winner of countless national and regional awards, including three Pulitzer Prizes, he is the author of *Master Thieves*, the story of the 1990 theft from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

The May 18 event will celebrate the first public program at the Armenian Museum of America since the coronavirus struck two years ago. The museum has been re-opened since June and currently features a new exhibit on "Merchants and Maps" as well as new displays of weapons, fine Armenian jewelry, and contemporary art.

"We are delighted to host the two esteemed authors under the auspices of the museum's Library Committee, since books continue to be an integral part of our mission and our collection," explains Executive Director Jason Sohigian. "We are proud to share the re-launch of on-site events with Chris and Steve."

Bohjalian is no stranger to the Armenian Museum. His release for *The Sandcastle Girls* in 2012 drew a record

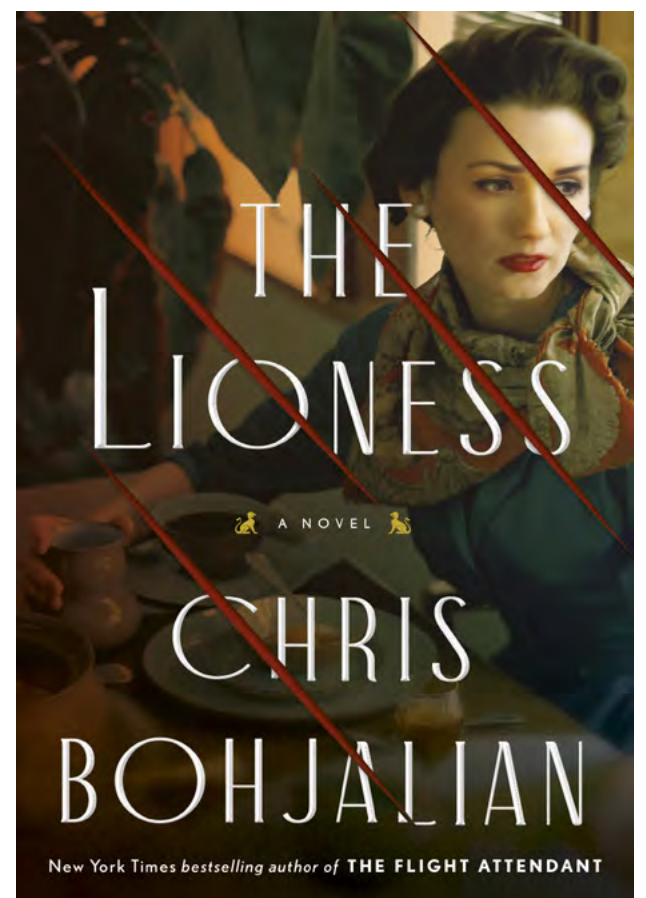
attendance. Considered his most personal novel, it deals with the Armenian Genocide and is based on considerable research by the author, some of it carried out at the Armenian Museum. In fact, the novel mentions in several places the wealth of resources to be found at the museum.

The Sandcastle Girls examines the Genocide through the eyes of the narrator who tries to understand the experiences of her Armenian grandparents and the reasons why they remained silent about the tragic events of their early life. It was an immediate sensation, declared by Oprah Winfrey as a "must-read" book.

Bohjalian's books often focus on issues such as homelessness, animal rights, and environmentalism. Many of his novels are historical, approaching past events as mysteries to be untangled and brought to life through strong and nuanced characters. Others are based on current events, exploring the complexities of modern existence in a variety of settings, often probing his characters' response to sudden, unexpected disaster.

The Lioness tells the story of a luxurious African safari that turns deadly for a Hollywood starlet and her entourage. It is set in 1964 in Tanzania, where actress Katie Barstow and her husband have invited a glittering entourage of co-stars, managers, and publicists for a safari adventure. Envisioning candlelit dinners and capturing wildlife on film, the group instead face a team of Russian mercenaries and a botched kidnapping as violence and rebellion rage next door in the eastern Congo. Part psychological drama and part survival thriller, the book deals with themes of race, fame, and love. The author spent time in Tanzania to assure the authenticity of the setting.

Signed copies of *The Lioness* will be available for purchase at the event, which is free and open to the public. Registration is required via Eventbrite at tinyurl.com/lionessatama.



Registration is required via Eventbrite at tinyurl.com/lionessatama.



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

Edmond Y. Azadian

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-
Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian,
Michelle Mkhlian

YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott

BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

PARIS: Jean Eckian

SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian

CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is
published weekly, except two weeks in
July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| U.S.A. | \$80 one year |
| Canada | \$125 one year |
| Other Countries | \$200 one year |

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address
changes to The Armenian
Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount
Auburn St.,
Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views
and opinions expressed in this
newspaper do not necessarily
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publisher.

EDITORIAL

Foreign Minister Mirzoyan's Landmark US Visit Caps Armenia's Diplomatic Offensive



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

Armenia's diplomatic isolation — with its deleterious consequences — has been ascribed to its longtime foreign policy that was solely oriented toward being in line with the Kremlin. Given the political determinants in the Caucasus, Yerevan could not shape and implement a multi-vector policy essential to countries its size.

But the recent tectonic shifts in the Caucasus and Russian periphery have afforded new vistas, along with some risks. With the Russian war launched against Ukraine, Turkey's influence has grown immensely, while the West has demonstrated renewed interest in the region, mainly to undermine Russia's influence and eventually cut it off altogether.

Credit was given to President Ronald Reagan and Premier Margaret Thatcher for bringing down the Soviet empire, duping its leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Today, it is a godsent political opportunity for the West to pursue, and perhaps, achieve another strategic agenda in weakening and dismembering Russia through a war of attrition in Ukraine.

It looks like the days of the Trump era are gone, when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo could cynically satirize Armenia's woes in the 44-day war launched by Azerbaijan against it and Karabakh, stating, "I hope Armenians can defend themselves." That page has turned, with President Biden having pledged to return to "perpetual diplomacy instead of perpetual war."

Armenia has become one of the beneficiaries of that policy, with its foreign minister, Ararat Mirzoyan, having been accorded a warm welcome by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, during his four-day working visit to Washington May 2-6.

This initiative comes on the heels of a new diplomatic venture by Armenia. Mirzoyan had just returned from a significant visit to India, exploring economic and defense avenues with that country. In addition to the connection of centuries-old relations between Armenia and India, both countries find themselves in the same situation, targeted by a fanatical Islamic country turned terrorist hub, Pakistan. In the case of Armenia, Pakistan joined forces with Azerbaijan during the 44-day war, while in the case of India, Pakistan plays a role like that of Azerbaijan by seeking a piece of Indian soil, Kashmir. Pakistan is one of the very few countries which still does not recognize Armenia.

While Mirzoyan is visiting the US, the head of Armenia's Security Council Armen Grigoryan met on May 2 with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Hikmet Hajiyev, to work out the details of setting up delineation and demarcation committees. In his turn, Armenia's negotiator, Ruben Rubinyan, met with Serdar Kılıç, in Vienna, for a third round of parleys to restore Armenian and Turkish relations.

There was general consensus that those negotiations would not take place without hiccups. Indeed, hurdles are piling up, such as when Ankara pledged to hold negotiations without preconditions and yet relegated its disguised conditions to Baku, which came up with a five-point set of conditions to sign a peace treaty with Armenia.

Right on the eve of the third round of talks between Armenia and Turkey, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu has come up with the idea that the borders separating the two countries have to be discussed. This is an oblique reference to the Treaty of Kars of 1921, which designated that border, and

which Armenia refuses to recognize and ratify.

As Armenia launches its diplomatic offensive to reach out to the West and to India, the window of opportunity is closing on the potential of tapping Middle Eastern countries, as Turkey has already mended its fences with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and is working actively to achieve the same with Egypt and Israel.

Mirzoyan's visit to Washington could be considered a breakthrough because it has already achieved its major goals; re-launching strategic dialogue between Armenia and the US and the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the civilian use of nuclear energy, which will diversify resources for Armenia's energy needs.

Besides all the diplomatic niceties, which looked extremely cordial, Mirzoyan highlighted the most crucial issues by underscoring "the important role the United States play as a co-chair of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group, which has a mandate from the international community to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

He also thanked Blinken for the Biden Administration's recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Exactly one week prior to this visit, Blinken had made the following remarks during a hearing in the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate:

"I have been very actively and directly engaged with the leadership in both Armenia and Azerbaijan trying to help advance prospects for a long-term political settlement in regard to Nagorno-Karabakh."

During the same session, he had also blamed Azerbaijan's unilateral actions which he said "in-flame" the situation.

This was a welcome change in the US position, given that past remarks were not targeting the guilty party, letting Azerbaijan off the hook despite its repeated provocations. These remarks are also highly significant in view of the fact that President Ilham Aliyev has been proclaiming that there is no longer a Karabakh conflict, as he has

already resolved the issue by force. This will also drop the ball in the West's court, since Moscow has already been claiming that Karabakh is Azerbaijani territory.

Mr. Mirzoyan also met Samantha Power, director of the US Agency for International Aid (USAID) and as of this writing, he was scheduled to meet Senior Director for Europe at the National Security Council Amanda Slot and other colleagues, to round up the visit delivering a speech at the Atlantic Council and meeting a few key US legislators.

Some people believe this breakthrough was made possible by Ambassador Lilit Makunts, vindicating those who had questioned her diplomatic skills.

Mirzoyan's visit apparently has created some nervousness in the Kremlin, as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has called him to hold a trilateral meeting with Russia and Azerbaijan on May 13, in Kyrgyzstan, on the sidelines of the meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). On the other hand, a pro-Kremlin TV station, Russia 24, has broadcast footage of the demonstrations in Armenia in the opposition, accompanied with clips from the May 1 demonstrations in Paris and Berlin, which have been much more violent than the ones in Armenia.

Incidentally, one would question the timing of the opposition rallies, when Armenia has been negotiating with its enemies and international partners, having existential issues on the agenda.

see OFFENSIVE, page 19





COMMENTARY

The Need For a New Conversation

By **Taner Akçam**

The question I would like to ask here is very simple: As we all know, President Biden has recognized the Armenian genocide. So...that's a good thing, you say? And now that he has acknowledged it...what of it? Has anything changed? And if, in fact, nothing has changed, *why* hasn't it changed? And if nothing has changed, why was so much effort put into making it happen? So then, what *does* have to be done?

We were all certain that “recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the US government” would be the end-all and be-all for diaspora Armenians. I would even go further and suggest that the outstanding issue of “recognition” was the central component of Armenian diaspora identity. For decades, the Armenian diaspora defined itself through this concern and the demand for recognition was like a glue holding it together. And now, with the attainment of the goal, what is to become of this central component, this element that has been so central in shaping Armenian diaspora identity? The most significant identity marker for the Armenian diaspora has now lost its energizing power, its *raison d'être*. What, if anything, will replace it as a rallying cry, as a definer of Armenian identity outside of Armenia? Frankly, I have no ready answers to these questions; thus, the title of my talk: “The Need for a New Conversation.”

The first issue that I would like to touch upon is that the lack of any substantive change in the wake of Biden's recognition pushes us to ask what exactly is “recognition.” Is it just lip service? A low-cost political sop? Does it have any more weight than simply saying that “Yes, some bad things happened in 1915,” if we continue, in the wake of our “never again” moment, to do such things in the future. If that is the case, then ‘recognition’ can be likened to attending church services. We may sincerely repent of our sins on Sunday, but nevertheless go back to sinning on Monday. But of course, things have to change; individual sins are not the same thing as great historic crimes; such practices cannot be allowed to continue if any semblance of civilized society is to survive. And a “recognition of an historic injustice” should be accompanied by consequences. But what are these consequences? And whence will come the impetus to move in this direction?

The question lends itself to a variety of answers. One of the possible responses lies in the complex logic of international relations. The Armenian Genocide and questions as to whether its recognition by enough other powers will ultimately pressure Turkey to acknowledge the genocide itself do not receive much attention in these complicated and changing relations. The Republic of Armenia may have been the only country with the ability to bring the subject to the public agenda, but it has little leverage to press its case.

There is a misconception regarding both denial and recognition, and we see this misconception manifest itself in international relations as well, one that I would refer to as *temporal compartmentalization*.

By *temporal compartmentalization* I mean a misperception in regard to genocide denial or in the acknowledgment of a historic wrongdoing. This misperception has two prongs; the first is that denial is often regarded as a mistaken but tolerable ideological attitude toward mass atrocities; second, it assumes that confronting denial is about establishing a “moral” attitude towards a single crime that remains forgotten in the pages of history. Any connection with the present is effectively walled off. The logical consequence of this misperception is the tendency to place the past and present into different boxes and to ignore their interconnectedness. Thus, once we abandon the idea of denial as referring to a single historical event, we can begin conceiving of it as something more than simply a “past event.” The truth is that it is impossible to detach the phenomenon of denial from contemporary political problems. Denial and recognition are not only about an ideological attitude towards the past, nor is the demand for recognition of historical crimes confined to a moral conviction regarding past events (that can be atoned for through admission and repentance).

Denialism is a structure, an intellectual framework that is not — cannot — be limited to past atrocities. Instead, it has produced and continues to foster policies in the present day. And correspondingly, the repercussions of recognition will not and must not be confined to our understanding of the past; it must have practical results in the present. In this sense, it would be appropriate and reasonable to compare Turkish denialism, for instance, with the racist apartheid regime of South Africa. The system, mindset and institutions of apartheid were constructed upon racial differences; denial of the Armenian genocide has similar roots. It was manufactured upon the discrimination and exclusion of ethnic-religious minorities and considered the democratic demands of these groups a national — even existential — security threat that had to be eliminated.

In the past, the so-called “Armenian question” was the result of Armenian requests for equality and social reform; demands which, if fulfilled, would have arguably led to a better and stronger Ottoman society. It is no different for Kurds today. Like the Armenians of the late Ottoman period, the Kurds are demanding social and political reforms. Granting these basic rights could well lay the foundation for a democratic Turkey. In the past, the Armenians' demands, and even the Armenians themselves, were considered security threats, an understanding that eventually transformed them, in the minds of the ruling Muslim elite, into legitimate targets for massacre and genocide. Today, Kurds are facing a similar fate. Denying the truth about the Armenian Genocide and suppressing the basic democratic rights of Kurds and other ethnic-religious minorities are two of the foundational components of the Turkish national security conception

What is valid in regard to the Kurdish population is equally valid for the Armenians and other religious minorities living in Turkey today, albeit in far smaller numbers. Alt-

hough officially and legally recognized as full citizens, these minorities are prevented by the “unwritten laws” of Turkish society from entering many careers. Non-Muslims and, to a lesser but still significant extent, non-ethnic Turks, can have no expectation of attaining high positions in either the military or civil bureaucracy. The connection between the current conditions for Turkish minorities and the genocide of the Armenian and other Christians is thus painfully evident.

A very clear picture emerges from all this: by denying what happened in 1915, Turkey reproduces the institutions, social relations, and mindset that originally created the events of 1915. Denial is not simply a defense of an old regime (Ottoman Empire). Denial also fuels the politics of continuing aggression, both inside against the ethnic-religious minorities and democratic opposition and outside against the neighbors of Turkey today. The bottomline is that there is a strong interconnectedness between the denial of past atrocities and policies that trample on basic democratic and human rights, and violence against civilians in the region today.

This brings me to my next point: Before, and even after Biden's recognition of the Armenian genocide the opinion was widely accepted that, while resisting denial and the acknowledgment of a historic crime *might be* a meaningful and positive moral stance, we must nevertheless be realistic and prioritize the more crucial and compelling security and national interests of contemporary states. Accordingly, it has often been and still is thought that, in situations where the recognition of an historic crime is in conflict with the national interests and security of today, it is meaningless and nonsensical to maintain the demand for recognition because the event in question has long passed. To insist on doing such, while fundamentally moral, is hopelessly unrealistic. The argument juxtaposes “national interest” to “morality” as two mutually exclusive positions.

Despite his recognition of the genocide, Biden's political approach has not changed in any way, and remains directed toward the logic of maintaining good relations with Turkey. The logic goes something like this: “We recognized the genocide, but this is a matter for the past; in foreign policy we must continue to follow a course that is in line with American national interest.” In other words, all of the arguments ever used for *not* recognizing the genocide remain valid. In my opinion, this is a logic that has to change.

But why should it? The reason is very simple. As I mentioned earlier, both internal developments in Turkey and those things experienced in Syria and by Azerbaijan during its recent war with Armenia serve to demonstrate the strong connection between security, democracy, and facing up to history in the Middle East and Caucasus. Even a passing glance at the region makes it clear that historical injustices and the persistent denial of the same by various states and ethno-religious groups remains a major obstacle, not only for the democratization of the region, but also for the establishment of stable relations between different ethnic and religious groups. You cannot solve any problem in the region today without first addressing historic wrongs that have been committed, because history is not something in the past; in the Middle East and Caucasus, the past *IS* the present.

I would argue that we must cease this senseless distinction and compartmentalization between the recognition of 1915 and contemporary *realpolitik*. When, in the past, the West had failed to recognize the events of 1915, whether for reasons of “security” or “national interest,” or, in the present day, has adopted some affectitious recognition of genocide, it has nevertheless continued to carry out policies based on this compartmentalization of past and present. And this practice has been performed solely for the purpose of giving support and political cover to Turkey. If democracy, peace, and security are truly the objectives, the end-goals of the West's policy towards Middle East and Caucasus, then the current approach toward foreign policy must change. For it is this attitude and behavior of the West that emboldens Turkey to continue its denial of 1915 and encourages it to persist in policies that threaten democracy, peace, and security in the region today.

My view on this issue is simple: as long as Turkey continues to fail to honestly face up to its history and its own role in historical wrongs, then security problems in the region will persist. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide is not something to be either ignored or simply ‘shelved’ when confronted with the seemingly more pressing issues of today.

Yet, if we are realistic, we will be forced to admit that, due to the core logic of international relations, it will not be possible to quickly free ourselves of this compartmentalization. As the Russia-Ukraine war has shown, Turkey is a country that is both a regional power and perceived as a source of advantage to the great powers. This is well confirmed by the current situation: Turkey is indirectly supporting Ukraine by selling it highly effective drones, but at the same time, Turkey has and wishes to maintain very good relations with Russia. And for this purpose it is violating the Western-imposed embargo on Russia.

In this sense, at least, it wouldn't be inaccurate to conclude that “genocide recognition” has now come to the end of its journey. Certainly, it is significant that the over 30 countries — including the United States — have now recognized the events of 1915 as the genocide, and this has indeed been a psychological and moral victory for the Armenians. But we must also admit that, aside from the act of “recognition” itself, it has not produced much, if anything, in the way of meaningful, “real world” effects.

The Need for a New Conversation

At this point, the question of “What now?” becomes important. There are two points that I would like to mention here. First, “recognition” politics have now largely come to an end. To be sure, the official recognition of the Armenian genocide by 30 countries is a significant development and a clear psychological and moral victory. Nevertheless, we must also acknowledge that this victory is largely symbolic. Second, the demands of international relations make highly unlikely the appearance of a foreign policy trend that would pressure Turkey to acknowledge the genocide.

And it is for this reason that I have titled my talk “The Need for a Conversation.” I have two brief observations in this regard. The first is that it is now necessary to replace the “politics of recognition” with a politics of “attaining justice”; the second is that, despite the relationship between “attaining justice” and foreign policy, any effort to “attain justice” should be considered within the sphere of American domestic politics. In this sense, the recent recognition can be meaningful and significant.

It should be pointed out that the American recognition of the Genocide does not resemble that of those countries that have preceded it. While other countries' recognition have been acts largely possessing symbolic value, the official recognition by the United States technically obliges the country — an obligation that may ultimately end up being honored in the breach — to act in ways that offer the possibility of attaining a certain

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Aliyev Accuses Armenians Of Barbarism While Talking About Making Peace

President Joe Biden issued a written statement on President Ilham Aliyev held an international conference titled, “South Caucasus: Development and Cooperation,” on April 29, 2022 in Baku, Azerbaijan, with 40 participants from 23 countries. The conference lasted over three hours, with a short introductory speech by President Aliyev, followed by lengthy replies to a dozen questions from the fawning foreign guests.

The welcoming remarks were made by Hafiz Pashayev, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan and Rector of the ADA University, which hosted the conference. He said that the conference was “dedicated to the Great Victory and liberation of Azerbaijani lands.” The day before the conference, the participants were taken on a tour of Fizuli and Shushi. Pashayev said: “our guests were also able to see some parts of the barbarian destruction which have been left after the Armenian occupation.”

Aliyev stated in his remarks that after “capitulating” in the 2020 war, Armenia recently accepted the “five basic principles for peace that Azerbaijan put forward.” He said that Azerbaijan lost the opportunity for peace “for thirty years because of separatism, and because of Armenian aggression.... Personally, I will never forget the atrocities and barbarism.”

Aliyev urged Armenians to “put an end to their territorial claims from Azerbaijan and Turkey.... It is important that the Armenian government and the country’s political spectrum fully understand this and stop trying to take revenge once and for all.... It is unproductive, because it will be more painful for Armenia than before.... It is absolutely irrational to put territorial claims to Turkey, which is one of the leading economies and one of the very few leading armies in the world.” Armenians must “put down all illusions.”

Aliyev even dared to warn Armenians to “put down all attempts to rebuild the army, become stronger, to have five million population which they announced as their state program, and then to take back their territories. That would be the end of their statehood officially.”

Aliyev accused Armenia of destroying “Azerbaijan’s cultural heritage and renaming all our cities, including Aghdam and Shusha.”

Aliyev disclosed how Azerbaijan blocked the delivery of weapons to Armenia during the 2020 war: “We publicly said many times that arms during the 44-day war regularly — they have several a day cargo planes carrying weapons from Russia to Armenia. We traced all the routes from Rostov and Mozdok. We asked our Georgian friends to block the airspace, and they did. Also, we

asked our Georgian friends to block the land route from Russia to Georgia to transport weapons to Armenia, and they did it also, and we are grateful. We sent letters to all Caspian littoral states not to allow Russian cargo planes carrying weapons to Armenia. We sent [letters] to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran. But unfortunately, these planes were using the territory of these countries entering Armenia.”

Aliyev also ridiculed Armenia and the Diaspora for thinking “that the whole world owes them everything, and someone will come and defend them, someone will come and fight for them, someone will come and give them money and everything, and they will sit and exploit their questionable and doubtful so-called tragedy.”

President Aliyev accused Armenians of planting mines right before evacuating the territories they had lost to Azerbaijan in the war, after Armenia “signed the act of capitulation” on Nov. 10, 2020: “We gave them 10-20 days to leave the territories they had to leave based on the agreement signed on November 10. But, they used it to plant mines, burn houses they did not build but settled in, cut trees, and [cause] other ecological disasters.” He said that during that same period, Armenians “destroyed 30 hydroelectric power plants.”

Aliyev falsely claimed that Azerbaijan is a tolerant, multicultural country. He cited as an example the existence of an Armenian Church in the center of Baku. “There are five thousand Armenian books” in the Church, he said, hiding the fact that the Church no longer functions as a house of worship, but a library.

Aliyev assured his guests that “Armenians who live in Karabagh, we consider them our citizens. We hope that they will also soon understand that living as citizens of Azerbaijan, they will have all rights, and their security will be protected. Azerbaijan, unlike Armenia, is a multi-ethnic country. All ethnic groups who live here, including Armenians, live in peace and dignity. We have an Armenian minority and they never had any issue in that respect.” Aliyev is hoping that everyone forgot about the repeated massacres of thousands of Armenians in Azerbaijan.

Aliyev claimed that Azerbaijan “is already getting some messages from Armenians in Karabagh — very positive messages. We already started some preliminary contacts on different levels. Don’t want to go into much details, but it already started, and this once again demonstrates our intention. They can be part of the rapid economic development, they can feel themselves much more safe, secure and comfortable within the unified Azerbaijani state, but they need to put down their separatist trends and separatist aspirations.”

Regarding the upcoming negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan to delimit and demarcate their mutual border, Aliyev claimed that there are maps that show Yerevan and Zangezur were “part of Azerbaijan.”

During his remarks, Aliyev also antagonized Russia when responding to a question about Ukraine. “We support the territorial integrity of Ukraine....

Finally, taking a dig at Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Aliyev recalled him saying, “‘Karabagh is Armenia.’ Now what [do] they say? Now they say that ‘Karabagh is Azerbaijan.’ And who says that? The same people who said ‘Karabagh is Armenia’ in 2019.”

from previous page

level of justice in the way of reparations and recompense. American law allows its citizens to sue foreign countries, companies, or institutions for damages and compensation. The significant point here is this: it is customary in international law for states to have a legal “immunity” that keeps them beyond the jurisdiction of other countries’ courts. The United States is bound by international understandings and the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1976 (FSIA) prevents foreign countries or their affiliated institutions from being taken to court and sued. These countries are thus theoretically under relevant legal protections. But some exceptions do exist — and they are of direct relevance to our topic at hand.

One of these exceptions relates to crimes against humanity. Countries (and their associated institutions) that are seen to have been involved in crimes against humanity, such as genocide, can be taken to trial in US courts. But in order for this to occur, it is necessary for the federal government to first recognize that such a crime has been committed. This fact has historically stood as a serious obstacle in cases concerning the Armenian Genocide and even resulted in their being thrown out of court. But now, with official Genocide recognition coming from both Congress and the White House, this obstacle may have been removed. I say “may” because it remains to be seen whether Congressional recognition alone can be legally binding.

Within the American legal system, the recognition of a crime as a “crime against humanity” is not in itself sufficient to open a case. Rather, two preconditions must first be met. In the case under discussion here, however, we can confidently say that they have been met. The first precondition is that it is necessary to show that the target of the suit, be it a state or institution, was both involved in the perpetration of a crime and obtained some economic or financial benefit therefrom. The second precondition is the necessity of showing that the institution in question had commercial relations with the United States. Both the Republic of Turkey and its affiliated institutions, such as the Ottoman Central Bank and Ziraat Bankası, fall into this category. Without a doubt, these institutions can be taken to trial.

While working to prepare such cases as I have suggested, it will be advantageous to replace the general demand of “recognition” to one of “attaining justice.” In this sense, the various cases from the Holocaust and the debate over reparations for slavery should be our guides.

Of course, the “attaining of justice” will take many paths and not be limited to that of litigation. Nor is there any guarantee of success. What is certain is that the path to litigation will be long and strewn with a great many legal and political obstacles. Nevertheless, we must always bear in mind that the campaign for recognition continued for decades before finally achieving success, and we should — nay, *must* — be prepared for a struggle no shorter and no less arduous.

(The above article is a slightly edited version of a talk by Professor Akçam in Cupertino, Calif. on April 23.)

Mirzoyan’s Visit Caps Diplomatic Offensive

OFFENSIVE, from page 17

These demonstrations may become a blessing in disguise if Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan can use them as a bargaining chip with Azerbaijan, indicating that he has a powerful domestic opposition to deal with on the issue of Karabakh, and thus buy time.

When Aliyev has been threatening the very existence of Armenia as a sovereign state, the only option the latter has at its disposal at this time are the tactics to delay signing any peace treaty until its diplomacy bears fruit and it can rebuild its armed forces.

At this time, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs are hopelessly divided. But with the renewed interest of the US and France, the issue may enter a competitive phase between Russia and its counterparts. Moscow has made its point on the issue and freezing the Karabakh settlement will ensure its military presence on Azerbaijan’s territory, as long as Moscow’s strategic interest require.

This is a major powerplay in which Armenia has no influence, although its destiny and the future of Karabakh’s people depend on the outcome of this tug-of-war.

The parliamentary opposition has organized rallies with slogans asking Pashinyan to stop delivering Karabakh to Azerbaijan, whereas control of that enclave is not in Pashinyan’s hands but in Russia’s. That is why, perhaps, the opposition rallies promised to culminate on May 1, did not gain momentum, despite the fact that they used a page out of Pashinyan’s own playbook to rouse the masses. The current demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience can hardly match the crowds that Pashinyan was able to galvanize in 2018. By the estimates of the Informed Citizens group, a pro-government party, the crowds did not number more than 12,500, while opposition claims put the number at 40,000 and more. The truth may be somewhere in between.

The opposition leadership seems divided, despite the fact that former Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serge Sargsyan have joined forces. A charismatic leader has not emerged yet. Their slogans are fuzzy, while Pashinyan, when he was rallying his supporters, created a bread-and-butter issue and slogan. Indeed, alongside the rhyming “Merjir Serjin,” translated into “reject Serge,” Pashinyan claimed that he would expropriate the wealth of the oligarchs repeatedly, to the point that people began to believe that the day after the Velvet Revolution, the privileged oligarch class would be stripped of their wealth, which would be returned to the nation — meaning back in the pockets of ordinary people.

At this time, Pashinyan’s inexperienced team needs internal support to be able to deal with the international challenges it faces and to take advantage of recent developments.

A house divided can only fall.



Editorial Notes

Armenia's Ambassador Assaulted In Congressional Building

We were among the skeptics who had reservations about Lilit Makunts' appointment as ambassador in Washington. But once she assumed her position she became the symbol of the Republic of Armenia in this nation's capital, and therefore deserving the requisite respect for her rank and position.

But an incident which took place on April 27 demonstrates the dark side of Armenian politics in this country. By now it is a tradition every year to hold a commemorative event in the Rayburn House Office Building of the US Congress in order to remember the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

The event is organized by the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) jointly and sponsored by the Armenian Caucus. This year again many legislators took part in the event, highlighting the power of Armenian advocacy in this country.

Lilit Makunts was featured as one of the speakers. But on her way out of the premises, she was confronted by two young people who apparently are adherents of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or "Tashnags"). They threw some kind of liquid at her (most likely water). The youth were apprehended, questioned and released by the authorities.

What could be the implication of this act in today's heated political atmosphere?

To begin with, it tarnishes the good work that ANCA performs as a visible advocacy group.

The incident also insults the memory of the martyrs of the Genocide, while the entire Armenian community is mobilized to make our voice heard by the world.

Turks and Azerbaijanis spent tremendous amounts of money to counter our efforts to have the Armenian Genocide recognized. This kind of senseless incident is a free gift to our enemies.

By exporting Armenia's political polarization overseas, we undermine our political claims throughout the world.

Unfortunately, this incident is not the only one of its kind. The ARF youth (Armenian Youth Federation) have demonstrated similarly disturbing conduct during the New York Times Square rally on April 24, through their boisterous intrusion into the ongoing program and the display of their political party's flag despite the general agreement against the use of such symbols at this event.

The ARF is reputed to be an organization exemplifying the rigorous application of discipline. In this light, such unruly behavior cannot be construed as coincidental outbursts of individual anger.

This is not the way to present our sorrow to the world and capitalize it for our cause.

PopUp E-Learning Aims to Bring Out Best in All Young Learners

E-LEARNING, from page 1

"We first diagnose their learning styles and then the algorithm goes and finds the teachers lessons which have been built matching with exactly this learning ability," he explained.

Aloyan explained, "One of the biggest problems that we identified is that there is no one teaching style that can feed every student, even if you are the best teacher ever. Just like there is no one diet that can fit everyone. We try to understand how we can make the teachers be more efficient and to bring a much bigger impact because whatever they're doing is not a job, it's a mission they have chosen. ... A major part of PopUp is the appreciation for teachers and allowing the number of hours in which they give of themselves to be recycled to help even more students.

PopUP is focused on the 8th grade students in math and English in the US, however, Aloyan said he hopes within five years, they will reach at least a quarter of US K-12 students in the US.

"As a visual learner I have grown up being told that I'm not the smartest kid in the room and I should try harder to be like anyone else. I've spent over 15 years trying to change this for everyone else, building a tech product that reached over 1.2 million users and at PopUp we are building the future of education starting with teachers," he added. "Teachers are the most in-demand, yet underserved category and also our goal is finally to have no student ever think that there is something they cannot learn or they cannot understand."

"My team and I spent five and a half years to meet with 34,000 teachers. We interviewed them in person and understood the real persona of the teachers, why they are becoming teachers, why they're choosing this profession, what kind of impact do they want to have and how to help them deliver this impact," he noted. "Imagine that in the United States out of 332 million people only one percent, 3.2 million, are teachers.... and this 1 percent is responsible for education the population."

Those who want can subscribe for a monthly fee of \$34.99. In addition, with PopUp, teachers are able to participate in revenue sharing.

Aloyan noted he hoped the program would help students whose schools are small or underfunded. In addition to subscription fees for the students, the schools themselves are given the platform free of charge to enhance their teaching capabilities.

PopUp is registered in the US, with members of the team in United States, Armenia, Germany and in Thailand.

To succeed in this venture, he said, he hoped to use "the knowledge of my team that we have gained within the last 14 years." At this point, he said, he is a proselytizer and not a businessman. "It stops being a job for us. This is already a mission and something that we love to do and the technology of the 21st century is giving us so many possibilities to create a new era of education," Aloyan added.

One of the major aspects of PopUp is to make sure that students are encouraged rather than blamed for poor performances.

"Imagine a classroom where there are two students and you're coming inside and saying alright Susan you had done a great job out of yesterday's test; out of 10 questions you gave 9 correct answers. Bravo. And then you turn to another kid, let's call him Mike, and then you say, Mike, shame on you. You have eight incorrect answers. When you do this, you immediately take the potential, the motivation of the student out because you don't know how hard Mike

tried to give those two correct answers and then if you come to the classroom and instead of focusing on what he couldn't do.... but instead you say, 'you know Mike, you have done a good job though you have answered only two questions. If we focus and help you, you'll give me a third correct answer then a 4th correct answer then a 5th correct answer," he explained. With motivation and proper help, he said, that child will succeed.

Earlier this spring, Aloyan was recognized by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as a Young Global Leader 2021, for his work with his previous startup, Dasaran Educational forum, the first-ever Armenian national to get this recognition.

Delivering Education

Aloyan has a diverse background. Prior to founding Dasaran in 2009, he served in Armenia's Ministry of Defense. He received a bachelor's degree from Yerevan State University in economics, a master's degree in marketing and management from Texas A&M University (Armenian Branch – ATC), and finally his PhD in Resource Management from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

Dasaran, which is being used across all schools in Armenia in grades K-12, offers tools for e-learning for students, in a variety of ways, including games. The program is especially beneficial in rural communities that have fewer resources and staff. It offers program management and data analysis to help students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

According to the literature on its site, Dasaran is in use by one-third of the country's population.

In 2016 Dasaran was recognized as one of the best five innovative enterprises in the world in the United Nations Development Program Accelerate2030 initiative, aimed at supporting impact-driven ventures that contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs.

"It gives an opportunity generally for every parent to monitor their student's daily activity and progress in the school, see the grades, homework, absences, and also in which direction their kids are generally going, whether they are data-driven, math oriented or humanities oriented," Aloyan explained. "We managed to cover 100 percent of the Armenian market, penetrating 1,434 schools, giving them equal access, with over 1.2 million registered users."

He added, "It is giving transparency of the school and their students daily learning process in the school and from the governmental approach it gives them data for data driven policymaking."

From years of competing, Aloyan has learned many lessons. He said, "So at the very beginning I used to be a professional gymnast for almost eight years. And the most important thing ... that I learned is to never give up and forget the phrase 'I cannot do it.'"

He added, "Going through different educational pipelines in my life, one thing that I finally understood is that education is at the core of everything in our life."

With COVID, Aloyan said, more people are interested in distance learning. "People are looking for the best possible online educational platforms in this regards," he said.

"At this point in United States we have approximately 3.4 million students doing home schooling out of 45 million students ... so online education can bring a lot of positive impact from the other side it also brings a negative impact not giving people an availability to be next to each other and you know use this social atmosphere," he noted. He stressed, however, the importance of socialization of in-person school.



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