

## US Says Ready to Work With Russia On Karabakh Peace

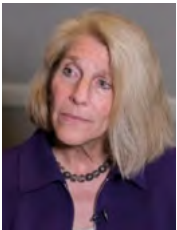
By Heghine Buniatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States is willing to continue to cooperate with Russia in facilitating a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, US Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried insisted over the weekend.

The US, Russia and France have for decades jointly tried to broker an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace accord in their capacity as the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. According to Russian officials, Washington and Paris stopped working with Moscow in the Minsk Group format following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Donfried denied this as she visited Armenia on the last leg of her tour of the three South Caucasus states.

“The US has continued to say that we support the Minsk Group co-chair process,” she told RFE / RL’s Armenian Service in an interview. “We continue to believe that it is a very important format, particularly on Nagorno-Karabakh, and it is essential that we keep various formats see KARABAKH, page 3



US Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried

## Aliyev Threatens Armenia For Bringing Up Karabakh Status Issue

BAKU (RFE/RL) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on June 16 warned Armenia against bringing up the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in peace talks with Azerbaijan and again demanded a land corridor passing through Armenian territory.

“Armenia’s leadership must give up attempts to rewrite history,” Aliyev told an international conference in Baku. “History has already been written and there is oral agreement that nobody will talk about the status. Unfortunately, there is talk about that, which could lead to very serious consequences.”

“If Armenia continues to call into question Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity then Azerbaijan will have no choice but do the same [against Armenia,]” he said.

In that context, Aliyev again described Armenia’s southeastern Syunik province as a “historically Azerbaijani territory.” see ALIYEV, page 6



## France’s Armenian Youth Org. Rebuilds Schools in Armenia

By Melanie Tuyssuzian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ALFORTVILLE, France — Mathilde is a 22-year-old French law student. Last year, Armenia was completely unknown for her when she decided to join the Armenian Youth Organization (AYO). Now, she’s going to participate for the second time in the program of this French-Armenian association.

Every July since 2007, the AYO organizes a three-week mission to rebuild schools and entertain children all around Armenia. Last year, the mission took place in Shenavan, a small village located in Lori’s region, for the renovation of a kindergarten.

For three weeks, Mathilde, the co-leader for this summer’s



Mathilde (at the left) and another volunteer during construction work, July 2021

AYO program, has been busy finalizing the organization of the 15th annual humanitarian trip. This French student discovered the association thanks to an Armenian friend, and she was so satisfied with her first experience last summer than she’s now a full-time member of the association. Next month, with 14 other youngsters, she will be back to Shenavan to continue last summer’s mission.

see YOUTH, page 4



## The Valley of Death A Journalist’s First Attempt at Making Sense of the 44-Day War

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

There are still many mysteries about what happened during the 2020 44-day Karabakh war, though the results of the war are clear. The collective mind of the Armenians is still digesting the significance and impact of the war and the defeat, with differing views often expressed in severe fashion. Journalist Tatul Hakobyan wrote frequently during and after the war from the front lines in the Armenian media, and has given many public talks,

including in the United States, after the war. His collected writings on this topic were published first in Armenian, and then, last year, in English under the title *The Valley of Death: 44-Day Catastrophe, September 27-November 10. War Diary* (Yerevan: Lusakn Publishing House, 2021). Arsen Kharatyan, founder of Aliq Media, translated the majority of the 335-page book from Armenian into English, with a small number of pieces having been translated by Vahe H. Apelian.

see HAKOBYAN, page 16

### LONDON

#### Armenian Wines Celebrated at UK Event



### DRESDEN

#### Dresden Hosts Photo Exhibition on Genocide



### Mirror-Spectator Annual Vacation

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will close for its annual two-week vacation in early July. The last issue of the Mirror before the vacation will be that of July 2. The first issue back will be that of July 23.

Enjoy a safe and healthy summer.





ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Oundjian Conducts National Phil in Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Canadian-Armenian violinist and conductor Peter Oundjian visited Armenia for the first time in 25 years and perform with the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

ANPO will gave concerts in Yerevan on June 17 and in Gyumri on June 18.

The soloist of the concert is famous American violinist Robert McDuffie. The concerts featured Dvorak's *9th Symphony* and Brahms' *Violin Concerto*.

### Official Does Not 'Recall' That Territories Were Ceded to Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (News.am) — The Armenian authorities deny that the some territories of Armenia have been ceded to Azerbaijan.

Suren Tovmasyan, head of the Cadastre Committee of Armenia, told reporters June 17 that he does not recall that in December 2020, some territories—i.e., Shumukh and Vorotan villages—of Syunik Province were ceded to Azerbaijan. (The Cadastre Committee maintains the state registry of real estate and geospatial information systems, among other tasks.)

"There was no such thing," the official said.

To note, this is about the changes that led to the loss of some sovereign territories of Armenia, including several sections of the Goris-Kapan interstate motorway and some settlements.

"There is a commission that works. Each body, including the Cadastre Committee, works within its powers. We have all the cadastral maps of the Republic of Armenia. ... Any issue must be resolved legally. The maps, which will be determined to have legal bases, the Cadastre Committee will carry out works on the basis of those maps, with relevant instructions, within the framework of its powers," Tovmasyan emphasized.

### At PACE, MP Draws Attention to Azerbaijan's State-Sponsored Hatred

STRASBOURG (Public Radio of Armenia) — Hatred is especially dangerous, when it is proliferated towards a neighbor, and even more dangerous, when there is an unresolved conflict in need of a robust peace process, Armenian MP Sona Ghazaryan said, addressing the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on June 20.

"This is a case in the context of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and systematic Armenophobia in Azerbaijan," she said.

"You know too well the case of the Trophy Park in Baku that glorifies war and depicts Armenian soldiers in captivity, degrading human dignity and dehumanizing Armenians. This was a case of state-sponsored hatred and racism. The mannequins of Armenian soldiers were taken down only after Armenia filed a case with the International Court of Justice based on the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," the MP noted.

# Armenia Again Asks Russian-Led Military Bloc For Help

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, June 17, renewed his calls for the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to help Armenia deal with what he called serious security threats emanating from Azerbaijan.

Citing continuing "aggressive statements" by Baku, Pashinyan said the military alliance of Russia, Armenia and four ex-Soviet states should specifically consider dispatching a monitoring mission to the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

The Armenian government appealed to the CSTO for help shortly after Azerbaijani troops reportedly crossed two sections of the border and advanced several into Armenian territory in May 2021. It asked the alliance to invoke Article 2 of its founding treatment which requires a collective response to grave security threats facing a CSTO member states.

Russia and other member states expressed concern over the border tensions

but did not issue joint statements in support of Armenia. Some of their representatives argued that the heavily militarized frontier has not been demarcated.

Pashinyan described that argument as "dangerous" when he met with the secretaries of the security councils of Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan who gathered for a regular session in Yerevan.

"As the holder of the [CSTO] presidency, I want to stress that this issue needs to be discussed in earnest," he said. "Why? Because we can see that aggressive statements by Azerbaijan are continuing."

Pashinyan cited a 2010 document that regulates the deployment of CSTO monitoring missions to crisis spots. The missions are required to recommend concrete joint actions to the member states.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Thursday implicitly threatened to resort to military action if the Armenian side continues to oppose the opening of a land corridor

connecting Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave.

The secretary of Armenia Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, ruled out such an extraterritorial corridor when he spoke at the meeting of the top CSTO security officials on Friday. He said that Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Russia call for only conventional transport links between the two South Caucasus states.

Grigoryan held a separate meeting with his powerful Russian counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev, late on Thursday. His office said he briefed Patrushev on the current station in the Karabakh conflict zone and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border in particular. It cited Patrushev as saying that "Moscow supports Armenia in the processes of ensuring regional security."

Russia Security Council reported, for its part, that the two men discussed Russian-Armenian cooperation "in the interests of stability in the South Caucasus region." It said they also spoke about Russian assistance to Armenia energy and cyber security.

## Armenian Opposition Leader Resigns From Parliament

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Opposition leader Artur Vanetsyan on Tuesday, June 21, announced his resignation from the Armenian parliament and the breakup of his Fatherland party's alliance with former President Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK).

Vanetsyan said he is resigning his seat because he believes the National Assembly has "ceased to be an effective platform" for challenging the Armenian government and its "ruinous" policies. For the same reason, Fatherland will operate only "outside the parliament" from now on, he said in a statement.

The decision, Vanetsyan went on, also means the demise of the Pativ Unem alliance formed by Fatherland and the former ruling HHK in the run-up to the June 2021 parliamentary elections.

Pativ Unem finished a distant third in those elections, becoming one of the two

Sargsyan's HHK did not immediately react to the decisions announced by its opposition ally.

Vanetsyan already promised in April that he will resign from parliament if the Armenian opposition fails to topple Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Pativ Unem and the other parliamentary opposition force, Hayastan, launched on May 1 daily demonstrations in Yerevan aimed at forcing Pashinyan to resign. They failed to achieve their goal.

In what they called a change of tactics, opposition leaders announced on June

14 that they will now hold antigovernment rallies in Yerevan on a weekly basis. Vanetsyan did not clarify whether he and his party would remain involved in the opposition's "resistance movement."

Vanetsyan, 42, is a former officer of the National Security Service (NSS) who was appointed as head of Armenia's most powerful security agency right after the 2018 "velvet revolution" that brought Pashinyan to power. He became one of the most influential members of Pashinyan's entourage before being unexpectedly sacked in 2019. Vanetsyan has since been a vocal critic of the prime minister.

### Two Killed in Aparan Shooting, Police Chief Sacked

YEREVAN (Azatutyun, Panorama.am) — The Armenian police sacked on June 21 the top police official of a small town where a gunman killed two local residents and wounded five others in disputed circumstances on Sunday, June 19.

Law-enforcement authorities said the shooting was provoked by a road rage incident on a highway passing through the town of Aparan, which degenerated the following day into a violent clash between two groups of young men.

The shooter, a 32-year-old resident of Yerevan, was arrested on June 20. The men killed and wounded by him reportedly lived in Nigavan, a village near Aparan in Aragatsotn Province.

Four of the wounded men were taken to a hospital in Yerevan. RFE / RL's Armenian Service tried to speak to their relatives there. But they refused to comment on the incident that shocked the community 55 kilometers north of Yerevan.

People randomly interviewed in Aparan were also reluctant to talk about its possible causes. "There has never been such a tragedy in Aparan before," said one of them.

No official reason was given for national police chief Vahe Ghazarian's decision to fire the head of the local police department.

Citing anonymous news sources, Ar-

menian opposition figures and some media outlets claimed that the Aparan men were attacked because of publicly swearing at Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The attackers, they allegedly, are related to a local government official and an Aparan-based parliamentarian affiliated with Pashinyan's Civil Contract party.

Both the officials and a Civil Contract spokesman angrily denied the allegations. The police likewise insisted that the shooting was not politically motivated.

Despite the denials, several hundred opposition members and supporters marched to the Civil Contract headquarters in Yerevan on Monday to condemn the killings. They accused Pashinyan of encouraging violent reprisals against his detractors.

Human rights activist Ruben Melikyan has denounced the "disgraceful" police report regarding the deadly shooting on Sunday evening.

Politik.am reported that the shooting took place following a conflict between relatives of a lawmaker from Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party as well as a cousin of Deputy Governor of Aragatsotn Edgar Parvanyan and a group of young men, who allegedly insulted Pashinyan.



Artur Vanetsyan (Armenpress photo)

opposition blocs represented in the new National Assembly. Four of its six parliament deputies are affiliated with the HHK.

Vanetsyan's party has been represented in the 107-seat parliament by its leader and former newspaper editor Taguhi Tovmasyan. Another Fatherland parliamentarian defected from Pativ Unem last fall.

Vanetsyan said that Tovmasyan and Martun Grigoryan, an election candidate who is next in line to take up his parliament seat, will be free to decide whether or not to follow his example.





ARMENIA

# Armenia Is Facing Teacher Crisis

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — In recent years, educational institutions in Armenia have been facing difficulties. Extremely low salaries are the main reason for the significant decrease in the number of teachers in Armenia today, and, in particular, the regular decline in the number of science teachers. Education specialist and pedagogue Serob Khachatryan recently declared a press conference that at this moment it is very important to prevent the reduction of the number of teachers, and immediately after that to start improving their quality and the conditions of the teaching environment.

“At this stage, the main problem of the education system is the lack of teachers. The solution to this problem is hard to imagine. The number of teachers decreased by 877 in one academic year. In the previous academic year, we had 31,300 teachers, and this year, 30,200,” said Khachatryan.

The specialist considers the reason for all this to be the so-called secondary status of the humanities in higher education institutions, due to which young people do not want to receive “secondary” education.

“In addition to this, it should be taken into account that specialists in the humanities are not well paid. Therefore, they avoid adopting professions through which they will not be able to arrange their lives in the future,” Khachatryan explains.



Serob Khachatryan

During the press conference, the specialist stressed sorrowfully that there are no applicants in the subject of mathematics in the universities of Shirak and Vanadzor, while at the pedagogical university, if there were 31 applicants in the pedagogical university last year, now their number is 11.

“Every year we need about 100-120 math specialists, but they do not exist, and chemistry and physics are in a worse condition. There are no transformations in terms of joint exams. Again the most popular professions are medicine, programming, law and international relations, that is, the traditionally well-known professions, where there are usually more applicants, so there is no change in choices. It is possible to restore the right of deferment, so that after graduation the boys go to the villages to work as teachers there, because we are going to have a situation where there is a shortage of teachers in many places. Therefore from now on we must pursue a prudent policy and motivate applicants,” he added.

Khachatryan also referred to the age of teachers, noting that at the moment 3,500 teachers, or 12 percent, are over 65 years old. Many of them want to retire but there is no one to replace them. It is a completely different picture among the youth because there are very few teachers under the age of 25 in Armenia.

“As for the voluntary certification of teachers, this issue is presented in a rather narrow and manipulative way. A number of deputies wrote that teachers can receive a salary of 400,000 drams, but for that the teacher must receive the best evaluations and possess the fourth category [the highest level of educational certification]. As far as I know, there have been no recipients of the fourth category in Armenia yet,” said Khachatryan.

He considers it unacceptable to increase teachers’ salaries through the voluntary system of certification, as there is no similar policy in the healthcare, legal or other systems.

Concluding the press conference, Khachatryan expressed the opinion that if we move at this pace, in a few years we will have a crisis of the teaching staff, which in turn will cause a crisis in other spheres of society.

## AUA Alumna Karine Sarkissian Appointed CEO of Insurance Foundation for Servicemen

YEREVAN — Karine Sarkissian (MBA ‘93), an alumna from the American University of Armenia’s (AUA) first graduating class of 1993, was recently hired as Chief Executive Officer of the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen, commonly known as the 1000plus.am organization. Sarkissian has enjoyed a rich career filled with notable milestones, all of which she attributes to her AUA education.

Born in Yerevan, Sarkissian is proud of her upbringing in her homeland, a place from which she can’t envision being far from, saying, “I am an Armenian from Armenia, and I will always be here.” Raised and educated in a Soviet society, she recalls being one of many who dreamt of traveling to the United States to explore the western lifestyle, culture, education, and work opportunities. After the collapse of the USSR, freedom and autonomy of decision-making were granted to citizens and many con-

straints were lifted. Soon after, AUA was founded, and Sarkissian was granted the opportunity to join the first cohort of graduates.

Speaking about her experiences at AUA in those early years, Sarkissian recalls admiring the faculty and appreciating the totally different educational style at the University, which she credits for shaping her as a professional. “The whole class [of 1993] demonstrated a great passion for learning and felt privileged to be studying in the American education system, which also came with its own challenges as it was totally new to us,” she says. After obtaining her MBA in 1993, she continued her studies in management at Northwestern University in Illinois as a recipient of the Edmund S. Muskie Scholarship Program, graduating in 1995 and returning back home to Armenia.

Since then, Sarkissian has held key leadership positions with reputable companies in both the private and public sectors, including Johnson & Johnson; the Coca-Cola Company; the United Nations; the Austrian Development Agency; and the American Chamber of Commerce in Armenia. In her most recent appointment as CEO of the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen — established to provide compensation for the well-being of fallen, missing, and disabled Armenian soldiers and their families — she feels greatly honored and a strong sense of responsibility. “We all owe a debt of gratitude to war victims and their families who sacrificed their lives for our country, and we will do our best to support them financially, as well as connect them with the proper resources so they may prosper and thrive,” she says.

As Armenia continues to recover and grow in a post-war and post-pandemic society, Sarkissian acknowledges the critical role education will play in Armenia’s economic growth and advancement. Noting AUA’s 30th anniversary, Sarkissian reiter-

ates the University’s tremendous contributions in setting and maintaining the highest standards of quality and globally competitive education, saying, “AUA plays a flagship role as a model for other educational institutions to replicate. AUA has successfully generated thousands of graduates who have impacted and will continue to impact Armenia. With a highly educated generation, we can build a better society and a powerful and globally competitive Armenian nation.”

As a successful alumna, Sarkissian imparts sound advice to current and future

AUA students and graduates, emphasizing the importance of clearly drawing their career objectives early on and working toward achieving them through volunteer or internship opportunities available to them as soon as possible. “Today’s job market is very dynamic. One needs to be in a continuous learning mode to develop the soft and technical skills necessary to stay competitive in the workplace and benefit one’s personal life,” she comments, reminding everyone to “be a proud graduate of AUA, the leading educational institution in Armenia.”



Karine Sarkissian

## US Says Ready to Work with Russia On Karabakh Peace

KARABAKH, from page 1

in play to try to advance peace. And we will continue to do that going forward. “

Asked whether Washington is ready for fresh contacts with Moscow for that purpose, Donfried said: “Yes. Russia is a Minsk Group co-chair. France, the US and Russia would continue in that format.”

In recent weeks, Armenian leaders have called for renewed joint activities of US, Russian and French co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reportedly discussed the matter with Russian President Vladimir Putin in a June 1 phone.

By contrast, Azerbaijani officials and President Ilham Aliyev in particular have repeatedly questioned the need for the Minsk Group’s continued existence. Aliyev has said that the war in Ukraine has effectively put an end to that joint mediation framework.

“Azerbaijan has not been supportive of the Minsk Group co-chair process, the United States is,” Donfried said. “We are a participant in that process and we will con-

tinue to do so.”

The US official met with Aliyev in Baku before proceeding to Yerevan for talks with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan held on Saturday, June 18. She said that in both capitals she “felt a desire for peaceful settlement.”

Aliyev on June 16 implicitly threatened to resort to military action if Armenia continues to oppose the opening of a land corridor connecting Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. Officials in Yerevan responded by reiterating that Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Russia call for only conventional transport links between the two South Caucasus states. (See related story on Page 1.)

Commenting on Aliyev’s bellicose rhetoric, Donfried said: “There is no question that words matter and so we need to be thoughtful about the words that we use. I think actions matter as well but if there is going to be forward progress towards reconciliation between Azerbaijan and Armenia there is no question that people need to be mindful about their words. “





## ARMENIA

# Armenian Genocide Documentary Premieres at Annecy International Animated Film Festival in France

YEREVAN — At only 14, in 1915, Aurora Mardiganian faced the horrors of the Armenian Genocide. Within a year, witnessing the deaths of everyone in her family, Aurora had lost everything, and was sold into a Turkish harem. But with extraordinary courage and luck, she escaped to America, where her story became a sensation. The Zoryan Institute's objective with this film is to bring to life the ZI's Oral History Testimonies onto the big screen, through animated documentary films, to relay the stories of the Genocide survivors to the younger generations, especially of girls and to empower them, and to represent their communities in the face of great adversity and violence.

In 2015, on 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Zoryan Institute, signed a partnership agreement with Bars Media of Armenia to produce the animated documentary based on the testimony of Mardiganian. "Aurora's Sunrise" was made possible with the academic contribution of the Zoryan Institute Armenia, based on its oral history archives (filmed by the Zoryan Institute on January 29, 1984).

The film is directed by Inna Sahakyan and produced by Bars Media, led by Vardan Hovhannisyan, Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion and Artbox Laisvalaikio Klubas, with the financial partnership of Eurimages, the Zoryan Institute Armenia and the National Cinema Center of Armenia, and with the contributions of the Lithuanian Film Center, ZDF/ARTE, Public TV Armenia, and LRT.

The Zoryan Institute is thrilled that 40 years after the launch of the Armenian Genocide Oral History Project, which collected testimonies of survivors of the



Aurora Mardiganian

1915 Genocide across 4 continents, the great-grandchildren of those who experienced the genocide are experiencing life before, during, and after the genocide through a film that seamlessly blends a mix of footage from the Zoryan Institute's original live interview with Aurora and the brilliant animation of Bars Media and their German and Lithuanian co-producers, along with scenes from the 1919 silent film "Auction of Souls" (starring Aurora Mardiganian prepared by Near East Relief).

"Great credit goes to the Zoryan Institute's founders and staff at the time (early 1980's), who contextualized and carried out the Armenian Genocide Oral History Project, collecting over 3000 hours of oral history testimony from over 780 survivors in their 70s to 90s. The project was a signif-

icant financial undertaking, with the audiovisual equipment alone costing the equivalent to nearly half a million US dollars in today's dollars employing a work force to conduct interviews, in cities across Europe, the Middle East, and North America," the Institute says.

Over 100 standardized questionnaires were utilized, developed by a multidisciplinary ZI team of experts, that allowed the Institute to extract information on social, economic, political, and cultural practices before, during, and after the genocide to capture commonalities and patterns. Since launching its Armenian Genocide Oral History Project, the Institute has worked continuously and systematically to protect, digitize, and index its archival collection of over 780 oral history testimonies, to ensure

the quality of the footage is maintained and usable for films like Aurora Sunrise.

The world premiere of "Aurora's Sunrise" took place at the prestigious Annecy International Animated Film Festival in France earlier in June. Annecy is a week-long global festival that brings together the biggest names in animation to celebrate creative and diverse animation styles and techniques. This year it took place June 12-18.

Now, 40 years later, the Institute's dream of utilizing the enormous power of film to connect future generations with their universal history and raise awareness about the phenomenon of genocide

has become a reality. With the generous support of the Friends of the Zoryan Institute, this dream has become a reality. In addition to initial cost of the Oral History testimonies, Aurora's Sunrise film had a budget of more than \$1,000,000.00, and is only the beginning of these invaluable stories of Armenian Genocide survivors.

Ongoing transcription and translation efforts currently underway in partnership with the American University of Armenia, will make these stories more accessible to scholars, filmmakers, authors, institutions, and schools around the globe who wish to use these stories, as source materials for education in edifying the tolerance and understanding needed in today's world, more than ever.

## France's Armenian Youth Org. Rebuilds Schools in Armenia

YOUTH, from page 1

### Shenavan's Revival

In July 2021, 15 volunteers came to renovate the kindergarten of Shenavan, a small village in Lori Province. During twenty days, they discovered and helped this village "which hasn't had parties or played music since the Artsakh war," according to its inhabitants. Moreover, the village is still affected by the damage left by the earthquake of December 1988. Shenavan's wrecked kindergarten has never been repaired. One of the most important targets for AYO was to make life easier for the village's families: "About twenty children under six years old weren't able to attend kindergarten. It was a real problem because it caused them to fall behind in their education. Their mothers were also affected because they needed to stay at home to take care of them," Mathilde explains. That's why AYO chose to go there, on the advice of the Armenian association "Shen." Shen aims to find places to renovate in Armenia thanks to volunteers who live in the country and know the land and its needs well.

### A Day with the Volunteers

During the trip, volunteers stayed in a host family's house next to the school. They spend the entire day together. It starts early, at 8 a.m., with an Armenian breakfast, lavash bread and apricot jam. Once at the kindergarten, they are divided into two teams: one group takes care of the children, with sports and lively games, while the other is in charge of the construction work. Every other day, they alternate their jobs to do different tasks. No need to be a

building expert – the volunteers were led by Amo, the site manager. "He taught us how to coat the wall with primer and to be efficient. He was really nice and even-tempered with us," Mathilde says. Then, they have lunch together at 12 p.m. with the children and teachers. Several activities are

them, each in turn, to thank the French group for their commitment: "It was great fun to discover new people and new customs every night. That's how I learnt my first word of Armenian, genats [toast], along with the subtlety of doing a proper genats," Mathilde exclaims, laughing.



Shenavan's kindergarten after its renovation, July 2021

offered to the children, like soccer, dance, painting, or card games. For the most motivated, French lessons are also organized every afternoon.

They keep working until 6 p.m. before spending the evening together. During the trip, the volunteers are used to dining with different Shenavan families. They invite

### July 2022: Back to Shenavan

But the mission in Shenavan isn't finished yet. This year, 15 volunteers from AYO are going back, this time to renovate the dojo (an Asian-style gymnasium), the dance studio of the school, changing or locker rooms and the sanitary facilities, which are not up to standards. Volunteers

will also provide preventative advice for dental and dietary health. This year, a special "dental bus" will be coming to the village, with toothbrushes and dental materials as gifts for children.

There are no traditional holidays for these 15 youngsters, who prefer spending their summer helping the village. Most of them don't have Armenian origins. Despite the language barrier, communication with the inhabitants has never been a problem. In the case of Mathilde, even if she wasn't able to speak Armenian, she easily succeeded to be understood by means of gestures. She even learnt some common sentences in order to communicate with the local children. Mathilde's commitment to the country is one of the reasons she's now the co-leader of this year mission. She declared, "I think Armenia is a 'concept' [standing for a way of life]. It is a beautiful country with people who always smile and welcome you very warmly, whatever they endure. Doing this trip and being committed all year long, is a growing lesson and a wonderful experience for us."

### How to Help

The AYO has set up fund-raising via the online platform Helloasso (<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/ayo>) for personal donations to finance the construction work equipment. Information about its activities is available on its website ([www.ayoasso.org](http://www.ayoasso.org)) or Facebook page (AYO | Facebook). Therefore, you will be able to follow this summer's Shenavan adventure through social media next month.





INTERNAYIONAL

Following War, Russian Jews Congregate in Yerevan

By Ani Mejlumyan

Since the start of Russia’s war in Ukraine, tens of thousands of Russians have fled to the Caucasus. Among them are members of one unexpected community: hundreds of Russian Jews who have relocated to Yerevan.

Nathaniel Trubkin, a 40-year-old Muscovite, moved to Yerevan on March 8, about two weeks after Russia launched its war in Ukraine, setting off a wave of repressions and international sanctions.

Like many Russians, he chose Armenia for its relative ease: It’s visa-free for Russians, most people speak Russian, and it’s simple to find a short-term apartment and set up a business. He also had some friends in Armenia who helped him get settled.

But still, it wasn’t easy. “I didn’t have a lot of money, whatever I had in my pocket when I arrived, and that was the case for many people,” Trubkin told Eurasianet. After a hasty search, he ended up in a “horrible” apartment.

The rough experience inspired him to set up Yerevan Jewish Home, which now assists other Russian Jews with their apartment searches, opening new bank accounts and setting up businesses. Since starting its work in April, the organization has helped about 200 Russian Jews relocate to Yerevan, he said.

Jews have a long history in Armenia. The 5th-century Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsi wrote that the 1st-century-B.C. King Tigranes the Great brought back 10,000 Jewish captives to Armenia after a war in the Levant.

“Greater Armenia historically has been a place where significant Jewish communities have lived,” Yerevan’s chief rabbi, Gershon Meir Burshtein, said in a recent interview. He said that in contrast to many other places where Jews have lived, in Armenia they never suffered from pogroms or other persecutions.

“In this context Armenia is not tainted with these kinds of memories, which

means it can be a hope for creating, uniting efforts on the spiritual and material bases.”

The large majority of Armenia’s Jewish population left for Israel in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period, and before this new wave of migrants, Armenia’s Jewish community was between 800 and 1,000 strong.

In the post-Soviet period, Israel has built close ties with Armenia’s rival Azerbaijan, and Armenians have frequent complaints about Israel’s arms sales to Azerbaijan or its failure to recognize the Armenian genocide.

But those tensions don’t spill over into how Armenians treat Jews, Trubkin said. “People here don’t treat me any differently when they find out I’m a Jew,” he said.

Now, Yerevan Jewish Home is helping the new arrivals form a new community together. It has funding from the charity American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which also helped set up similar efforts in the Georgian cities of Tbilisi and Batumi.

The organization has begun Hebrew-language classes and is working to set up Armenian lessons for new arrivals.

“Many [Russian Jews] came to Armenia and Georgia and were separated” from the Jewish community in Russia, Trubkin said. “It’s important to recreate that Jewish context for them, so what we can do now is to make them feel like they are among their own people.” He said that this “closeness” is one thing that Armenians and Jews, with long histories of persecutions and dispersals, have in common.

The new arrivals are not isolating, though, but rather integrating in and engaging with broader Armenian society.

Hidden in an alley just off central Yerevan’s busy Saryan Street sits a lively new restaurant, Hummus | Kimchi, offering a fusion of two cuisines relatively unknown to Armenian palates: Israeli and Korean.

“Since my wife is Korean and I’m a Russian Jew I thought it would be cool to mix two very different cuisines,” said Dmitry

Shangareov, the chef and owner.

Shangareov became familiar with Armenia when his sister married an Armenian and he moved to Yerevan before the war to set up the restaurant. “The plan before was to open a restaurant, hire some locals, teach them and move back to Moscow,” he told Eurasianet, taking a break from the kitchen and sporting a black T-shirt with the word “Ukraine.” But he was on a visit to Russia to pick up some equipment for the restaurant when the war started. He returned to Yerevan on February 28 and hasn’t left.

The restaurant opened in April and now has become a favorite of Yerevan’s many new Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, whether Jewish or not. It also has attracted a clientele of curious locals, especially at lunchtime. “We didn’t expect to turn a profit in the first month and a half, but we have exceeded our expectations,” he said.

Another popular hangout is Mama Jan, a Russian Jewish-owned cafe in central Yerevan. It opened in 2021 and has become popular with the diaspora crowd.

Now, in partnership with Yerevan Jewish Home it has recently become a cultural hub for Jewish-themed poetry readings, mixed stand-up comedy events and shabbat observances.

At an open mic event one recent evening, the jokes alternated between English and Russian. Much of the comedy relied on broad stereotypes, and more than one performer cracked that “Armenians are like the Jews without the money.”

After the second repetition of the joke, there was an uneasy reaction from much of the crowd, and Trubkin raised his eyebrows in dismay.

But another Russian-Armenian spectator tried to smooth things over. “There’s no need to get angry,” he said. “Let’s see it as a chance for us to learn about each other.”

(Ani Mejlumyan is a reporter based in Yerevan. This article originally appeared on June 15 in the Eurasianet.org website.)

INTERNATIONAL

Armenia in Favor of Developing Dialogue with China, PM tells EAEU

MINSK (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said that the development of dialogue and cooperation with China is important.

Pashinyan made the remarks at the session of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Intergovernmental Council in Minsk and spoke about logistics, which he said is another field that requires digital solutions on June 21.

“In this context, I would like to emphasize the need for the member states to work out agreed proposals for cooperation on creation and development of transport infrastructure, multi-module logistics centers and Eurasian transport corridors,” Pashinyan noted.

“The Armenian side attaches great importance to the development of dialogue and cooperation with the People’s Republic of China in the implementation of the ‘Belt and Road’ strategic initiative,” he said.AzerHR 6-25

Azerbaijani Elected Member of UN Human Rights Committee

BAKU (Trend) — On June 17, elections to the United Nations Human Rights Committee for 2023-2026 were held in New York as part of the 39th meeting of the states that acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Candidates from 17 countries applied for nine vacancies in the Committee, including Farid Ahmedov, Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In the voting, which was attended by 173 countries, the candidate from Azerbaijan was elected as a member of the Committee, with 94 votes.

The UN Human Rights Committee, established in 1993, monitors the implementation by states of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and is one of the main international mechanisms for the protection of human rights at the global level.

This was the first time a representative of Azerbaijan was elected to the HRC.

Putin Hails Armenia as ‘Strategic Ally’

ST. PETERSBURG (RFE/RL) — Russian President Vladimir Putin has described Armenia as Russia “strategic ally” and said Moscow is interested in political stability in the South Caucasus nation.

“Armenia is not just our partner, it’s our strategic ally, and we value that,” Putin told Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan late on June 17 during a meeting held on the sidelines of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum.

“We understand what is happening today in Armenia and around Armenia,” he said. “We are intent on developing our partnership relations. We are interested in a stable situation in the country which will guarantee progressive development.”

Armenian Wines Celebrated at UK Event

LONDON — Life in the British Armenian community is returning back to the pre-Covid tempo. The latest manifestation of this was the Evening of Armenian wine organized by the Armenian Embassy in the UK on June 10. The backdrop of this was the London Wine Festival to which a consortium of Armenian wine producers were participating, exhibition their wines.

The reception was accompanied by live Armenian jazz presented by Sipan Olah and his band. The reception was held in the prestigious Travellers Club, Pall Mall.

In his opening speech Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan welcomed all and thanked the organizers and the promoters of the reception. He said wine historically has been part of Armenian hospitality. Next, a well prepared documentary about Armenian wine was shown. Guests were introduced to the various types of wine and the different terroirs. It was mentioned that wine cultivation in Armenia goes back 6,000 years and that there are hundreds of endemic grape varieties that inspire local wine producers.

A number of new vintages were exhibited. The representatives of the consortium were all available to provide interested parties with additional quality details of their produce. Over 100 guests enjoyed the evening while tasting the Armenian wines.

The reception was organized in partnership with Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia, USAID funded-RED-NEO project and implemented by the CARD Foundation. Attendees were mostly representatives of the local wine industry and members of diplomatic corps in addition to representatives of major British Armenian organizations.

H.K.  
London, 10.6.2022



Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan



# Dresden Hosts Photo Exhibition on Genocide

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

DRESDEN — A picture is worth a thousand words. The saying has become a cliché, and for good reason: it holds true. Nothing could prove this more convincingly than an exhibition that opened on June 16 in Dresden, Germany. Organized by the “Haytun” Armenian Cultural Association in Dresden together with the Armenian Information and Documentation Center (IZDA, Berlin), the vernissage took place in the Martin Luther Church.

Introduced by Prof. Tessa Hofmann of the IZDA, who spoke via video link, it is not a new collection. In fact, it was first presented to the public in 1999, and since then has been displayed in several venues both in Germany and abroad, among them, the German Sinti and Roma Documentation Center in Heidelberg, the Progressive Synagogue in the London districts of Harrow and Wembley, the Peace Church in Bremen and the St. Catherine’s Church in Frankfurt, the Leer town hall in East Friesland and Anti-War Museum in Berlin-Wedding. This new version appearing in Dresden represents an important contribution to the continuing campaign to educate the German public, especially its younger generation, on the history of the genocide against the Armenians and other Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

The exhibition is entitled, “Deportation,



Visiting the exhibition (Gülsen Aytan photo)

Hofmann summarized the historical process leading to the genocide perpetrated by the Young Turk regime, in the course of the World War and thereafter, a process that saw the collapse of the Ottoman as well as the Russian and Hapsburg empires. Clearly, she explained, it was impossible to record on film the complete unfolding of the genocide through slave labor, massacres and deportations, for many reasons; “to be sure the First

Legal prohibition by the Turkish authorities as well as fear of epidemic disease such as typhus prevented photographers from documenting the atrocities.

One exception was the work of German medical orderly Dr. Armin T. Wegner, who managed to take pictures of concentration camps near Aleppo, in the company of Swiss missionary nurse Beatrice Rohner; another was Danish missionary Karen Jeppe, who photographed the remains of starved victims in Urfa.

The exhibition documents the massacres under the despotic Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1894-96 as well as in 1909, to the capture of Smyrna, whose Christian quarter was set afire in 1922 by the Kemalist cavalry.

The photographic material displayed serves to illustrate the phases as well as the methods deployed by the perpetrators, from Interior and War ministers Talaat and Enver, through their party leaders and down to the criminal gangs known as çeteler. Not only photos but also newspaper clippings, as well as illustrations and graphics from the European and American press of the period bear witness to events. Hofmann noted that this material perhaps says more about the “image of the Orient” that the illustrators had than about the actual criminal acts, due to logistical and political measures taken by the perpetrators. For example, Ahmed Çemal, then commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ottoman army in Syria, banned photos in 1915 for the entire district, which was the location of the mass deportations, death marches and massacres in the desert. Swiss, German and Italian engineers working on the Baghdad railway were forced to hand over any and all photographic or film material they had. Only when British forces took Syria in 1917 did this policy change, and persons engaged with the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (later called Near East Relief) were able to

document the condition of Armenian and Syrian Christian survivors. Thus, it is largely the pictures assembled in the Wegner collection and those of Near East Relief, in the Library of Congress since 1987, that represent the bulk of documentary materials.

## The Multiple Images of Genocide

The exhibition in Dresden includes 51 photographic documents on the persecution of the Armenians (1894-1922), and a smaller group of 14 color photos titled, “At the Foot of Dormant Volcanoes: Armenia’s Landscapes and Culture.”

Hofmann illustrated a sampling of the exhibits in a power point presentation, telling the stories behind them: the role of workers on the Baghdad railway project, the plight of children, the death marches and later refugee flows out of Cilicia, up through the conflagration of Smyrna in September 1922. A few of the images are familiar, as they have been reproduced in standard works on the genocide. Yet, even familiarity does not, cannot lessen the impact. Among the many pictures encountered for the first time, the most excruciating to witness (in the view of this writer) are those of the children: emaciated, naked, traumatized, dying or dead, and no one seems to notice.

## Educating the Public

The importance of such exhibitions in Germany cannot be overstated. To people living in places where there are genocide museums, where universities that have genocide studies centers are not a rarity but in Germany, the situation is different. For example: although a resolution on the genocide passed by the Bundestag (Parliament) in 2016 foresaw inclusion of the subject in secondary education and textbooks, little has been accomplished. It is the federal states that regulate curricula. Just a month ago in Cologne, city authorities removed a sculpture commemorating the victims of the genocide from a public place. The civil society association “Remember Genocide” had placed it there during an April 24 remembrance event. The city authorities of Cologne, a sister city of Istanbul, were intervening against the monument for the fourth time since 2018, and were acting also “in consideration of the large number” of citizens of Turkish background, according to press accounts.

The collection now on display in Dresden, will be open to the public until June 30, and it may be curated there and elsewhere on loan. On June 23 a reading was held of texts by Armenian authors who were murdered in the course of the genocide. Those who cannot visit the exhibition may see the items displayed online at <http://www.aga-online.org/genocide/armenians.php?locale=de>.

The exhibits are also available in a book edited by Gerayer Koutcharian and Tessa Hofmann, *Verfolgung, Vertreibung, Vernichtung. Bilder und Texte zum Genozid an den Armeniern 1915/1916*, Donat-Verlag 2017.



Starving children (Gülsen Aytan photo)

Persecution, Annihilation.” Father Eckehard Möller of the Dresden-Neustadt parish greeted guests and told them how he had first become acquainted with the Armenian question and the genocide. It was during a visit to Jerusalem that he received a leaflet from someone on the street. The leaflet showed a map of the genocide, with deportations routes and sites of massacres. It was a map that would lead him to learn about the events of over a century ago. The chairman of the Haytun cultural group, founded just a year ago, said a few words about the open wound which cannot heal, due to continued denial of the genocide, and expressed the hope that both communities here in Germany might find the way to work through the past and approach reconciliation, without political pressure from the current Turkish government.

## World War I and the Camera

The items on display come largely from a collection of the Armenian Information and Documentation Center, which covers the genocide as well as Armenian life and culture in the period prior to the catastrophe.

World War marked the birth of photographic war reportage and the use of photos for propaganda purposes.... But the medium remained limited,” as cameras at that time were extremely costly, not easily transportable items. “Above all, those committing genocide certainly don’t want to be photographed while committing mass murder.”

ALIYEV, from page 1

Aliyev already ruled out any discussions on Karabakh’s status and threatened to lay claim to Armenian territory late last month. The Armenian Foreign Ministry deplored his “bellicose” statements. It said that “negotiations on the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be held on the basis of proposals of both sides.”

Aliyev on Thursday also reiterated his demands for a corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Syunik. He said it should be similar

to the existing Russian-controlled Lachin corridor connecting Karabakh and Armenia.

Aliyev implicitly threatened to resort to military action if the Armenian side continues to oppose such an overland link for Nakhichevan.

“If they don’t ensure that link for us it will be very hard to speak about peace,” he warned.

Armenian leaders have repeatedly rejected such demands. They maintain that Armenian-Azerbaijani agreements brokered by Russia and the European Union call for

only conventional transport links between the two South Caucasus states.

In response to a similar statement by Aliyev on May 27, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said that “ambitions for the sovereign territory of the neighboring state, the use of force to achieve these goals call into question the sincerity of Azerbaijan’s intentions to achieve peace in the region.”

“Moreover, the Armenian side believes that the security of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot be taken separately from the peace talks,” the Foreign Ministry said.

## Aliyev Threatens Armenia for Bringing Up Karabakh Status Issue





# Community News

## Prelate Tanielian Marks 50 Years Of Priesthood at Celebration

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — It was a family event, as more than 175 people enthusiastically packed the Pashalian Hall of the St. Illuminator's Armenian Cathedral on Sunday, June 12, to congratulate Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy, on the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, and to show their love, gratitude, and admiration for his decades-long service.

Eight priests from different parishes were also in attendance, taking seats with attendees at different tables, showing their closeness to the people.

As Tanielian, characteristically humble, entered the hall and proceeded to the front, a long and thunderous ovation erupted. It took some time before quiet was instituted. The Prelate shared the opening prayer, wishing all "peace, joy, good health and bon appétit."

A warm welcome was voiced by master of ceremonies Tamar Haroutunian, Esq., who noted: "As a spiritual leader, he has led by inspiring example while also showing gentleness



Prelate Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian

and comfort to the faithful whom he has served with humility that can only come from following the Lord."

On behalf of St. Illuminator's Cathedral Board of Trustees, Chairman Armen Morian, Esq., congratulated the Prelate on the celebration of this milestone in his life of service. "It's an honor to host this particular event, at this particular time, and for this particular man," he said. "We are with you, and we are grateful you are with us."

Several speakers enumerated the archbishop's many gifts and qualities, including humility, being a devoted teacher, a passionate preacher; compassionate and gentle, comforting his flock. He has been also an extraordinary advocate of issues to aid Armenia and Artsakh, and a developer of numerous programs for the Prelacy and for the Armenian diaspora at large, especially the community of Lebanon in the last years.

see ANNIVERSARY, page 10



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate

## Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan Takes His Place as Primate of the Eastern Diocese

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

NEW YORK — In a spiritually moving and significant milestone in the life of the Eastern Diocese, clergy and faithful laity gathered as one Christian body at St. Vartan Cathedral on June 9, to bear witness as Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan took his place as the 13th Diocesan Primate.

Several hundred faithful filled the cathedral sanctuary to take part in the special "service of enthronement." In addition, the event was broadcast live on the Diocese Facebook and YouTube media channels, providing the global Armenian community with the opportunity to join in the beginning of a new chapter in the Diocese's 124-year history.

As the service commenced, deeply rooted traditions of our Armenian Christian faith were unmistakably visible. Incense wafted from the poorvar (censer) and swirled about the clergy entered the sanctuary in procession, filling the cathedral with the sweet smell of God's Kingdom. Fr. Mesrop bestowed blessings among the faithful as he made his way towards the altar, and the expressions of joy and reverence on the faces of all who interacted with him reflected how deeply they were moved by the emotional experience.

Among the high clergy in the procession were Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Diocesan Legate, and Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Fr. Parsamyan's predecessor as Primate, who stood abreast with him at the foot of the altar in a gesture of unity and grace.

"The most tangible symbol of the Primate's authority is the assa, the ceremonial walking staff, which I have the great honor of placing into the hands of our new Primate, Hayr Mesrop Vartabed," said Findikyan as he passed the staff into Parsamyan's hand.

see ENTHRONEMENT, page 11



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, left, with the previous Primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan

## Mouradian to Offer Online Seminar on Science of Denial and False Beliefs

NEW YORK — Dr. Khatchig Mouradian will offer an online seminar in July on the science of denial through St. Leon Armenian Church in Fair Lawn, N.J. The four-week multimedia seminar, titled "Grey Wolves and Pink Elephants: The Science of Denial and False Beliefs," will be held every Tuesday from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in July.

Relying on scientific research in various fields of study, each session will survey research on aspects of false beliefs and their propagation, and then delves into case studies, primarily from the United States, Turkey and Armenia.

The course is open to adults and high school students alike.

This is the fourth in a series of online seminars offered by Mouradian since the beginning of the pandemic. In July 2020, more than 50 people from across the U.S. and a few from Europe attended the online course titled "Monuments, Names,



Dr. Khatchig Mouradian

and Racism." The success prompted two courses in subsequent months: "Apologies, Non-Apologies, and Reparations: A Global Perspective" (August 2020) and "Artsakh: History, Culture, and Conflict" (November 2020).

Mouradian is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. He also serves as co-principal investigator of the project on Armenian Genocide Denial at the Global Institute for Advanced Studies, New York University.

Class time is 90 minutes. Tuition is \$75 donation per household to St. Leon Armenian Church. For questions, contact Ara N. Araz at [ara@edrcorp.net](mailto:ara@edrcorp.net). To register, go to: <https://bit.ly/Pink-Elephants>





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Tekeyan Cultural Association 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *Nor Or* and ADL Centennial Commemorated by Fresno Tekeyan Chapter

FRESNO — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Fresno Chapter organized an event on Sunday, June 5 in the hall of St. Paul Armenian Apostolic Church in Fresno. The occasion was to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the 100<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the *Nor Or* newspaper and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL).

TCA West Coast Executive Secretary Mayda Kuredjian was invited to be the master of ceremonies for this event. TCA committee members greeted guests, including representatives of various community organizations. Fr. Yessai Bedros blessed the food after which the chairman of Fresno TCA Zohrab Attarian spoke words of welcome and invited Kuredjian to begin the program.

Kuredjian delivered a congratulatory message on behalf of the Central Board of TCA of the United States and Canada. It noted the significance of celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, an organization founded by young leaders who believed in preserving the Armenian



Organizers and participants in the Fresno program

heritage and identity through cultural and educational activities. They established centers in Beirut and later in other parts of the Armenian diaspora and conducted various cultural activities. Kuredjian mentioned that currently the TCA of the US and Canada

maintains four centers, in Boston, Montreal, Altadena and Englewood Cliffs, N.J., and has additional chapters in the US.

The TCA Central Board provides financial assistance to the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut and four TCA Schools in Armenia,

as well as a school in Artsakh until the recent war led to its loss. The Central Board assisted teachers and staff of its schools in Armenia and Artsakh through the Sponsor a Teacher program, as well as renovations of the aforementioned schools. It contributed financially and raised money to help renovate the Vahan Tekeyan School of Beirut after the port explosion recently, and supported Armenia during the 2020 war.

Kuredjian said that she had come to ex-



## Tekeyan Cultural Association

# 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary

### Sponsor a Teacher

in Armenia and Five Artsakh Villages



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2001, THE TCA SPONSOR A TEACHER PROGRAM HAS RAISED \$793,560 AND REACHED OUT TO 7,163 TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKH.

☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

☐ \$200   ☐ \$400   ☐ \$600   ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Make check payable to:*  
Tekeyan Cultural Association—Memo: Sponsor a Teacher

*Mail your check to:*  
TCA Sponsor a Teacher  
5326 Val Verde, Houston, TX 77056

*Your donation is Tax Deductable*



Khachig Janoyan, Mayda Kuredjian



Noune Avedissian, Dr. Barlow Der Mugrdechian

tend a hand of support and tell the Fresno community now that the pandemic is almost over that TCA was ready to collaborate with all to help revive Armenian cultural activities in Fresno. TCA stands willing to hear all suggestions and work together towards this goal, especially for the new generations.

Kuredjian invited Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno, to present the historic path ADL, *Nor Or* and TCA had taken in Fresno and the vision of their leaders to serve the local Armenian community.

Afterwards, Khachig Janoyan, a member of the ADL West Coast District Committee, conveyed the message of this committee and spoke about upcoming plans.

Soprano Anahit Nersisyan accompanied by Naira Shahsuvarian and poetry reciter Noune Avedissian, who were especially invited from Los Angeles, presented many Armenian classical songs and recited poems of Vahan Tekeyan, Hamo Sahyan and other famous writers.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# ATP Backyard Greenhouse Constructions Underway in Artsakh

WOBBURN, Mass. — Armenia Tree Project (ATP) distributed the greenhouse materials to the first 25 beneficiary families of Artsakh's Martuni Town, and the villages of Taghavard, Karmir Shuka and Herher in Martuni Region.

All 50 families participating in ATP's backyard greenhouse program were severely affected by the recent 44-day war having lost family members and/or homes, businesses and belongings. ATP's program will provide some economic stability, access to produce as so much agricultural land was lost in the war, and most importantly, hope for their future.

In a few days, under the supervision of the greenhouse installation team, the beneficiaries were able to prepare the ground and assemble the 30 meter square greenhouses.

The greenhouses are designed by students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to be small, durable, and made of locally available and affordable materials.

Earlier this April, ATP provided families with 10 fruit trees for their personal use. In addition, our partners at Green Lane NGO provided the families with berry bushes and vegetable seeds. The beneficiaries are invited to participate in a two-day training at Green Lane NGO's Learning Center in Armenia's Kotayk region. The course will focus on crop production, greenhouse operation, the plant environment and pest control.

Masis Zargaryan, the Deputy Head of Martuni District Administration supervises the distribution and implementation of the backyard greenhouse program in Martuni.

Mardi and Rusanna Harutyunyan, a couple from Karmir Shuka, who lost one of their sons during the 44-day war, are currently busy preparing the greenhouse. Their other son Nver helps in the construction work.

"Assembling the greenhouse went rather fast and it took only 2 days to finish it. Before sowing seeds and planting seedlings, I

want to improve the quality of the soil, to enable the plants to grow better. I have also installed drip irrigation, so during hot summer days I can use it as well," noted Mardi Harutyunyan.

Davit Avanesyan from Martuni town is busy with preparing the soil for planting. "Since the area of the greenhouse is rather small, the vegetables and the greenery we

"The greenhouse is ready to plant the seeds provided by Green Lane NGO hopefully we will have a harvest this year. The renovations to the house are almost complete for my family to return. I have 10 grandchildren, who all live in this village. We have nowhere else to live but our birthplace."

Although the situation in Karmir Shuka

she thinks but it also reduced her life to the very basics.

"All I want from life is to be able to help my daughter raise her kids, since she lost her husband several years ago. My husband has always worked outside of the house, so I was the one to take care of the kids, house and the farmland. I know how to farm, grow vegetables and greens, so hopefully I



A backyard greenhouse

will grow will be enough to feed my family year-round" says Davit.

Yuri is overseeing the reconstruction of a house in Karmir Shuka village severely damaged during the 44-day war. The house Yuri is rebuilding is for his daughter-in-law, Irina and her four children—the youngest of which is only 4 years old. Irina (35), a beneficiary of our backyard greenhouse program, lost her husband, Yuri's son during the 44-day war. Originally from Karmir Shuka, she moved her young family to Stepanakert until the renovations are complete. They anticipate being returning in a month or two.

ka remains troubling, Irina shares that she can't wait to return because her husband is buried there and also the children miss their school, friends and grandfather very much.

Goharik Adamyan of Herher Village heads a large household of nine and shares the responsibility of her daughter's five children who currently live with her. In 2020, the Adamyan family lost their son during the 44 day war and are still in the process of coping with their loss.

During a recent conversation with Goharik, she recounts that before the war she had big plans and dreams about the future. Now, the war not only has changed the way

will be able to grow "food" from the greenhouse as well. Even a bundle of greens that you can put on the table for my big family is a plus and I am grateful to the organizers and implementers of this Program", added Goharik.

Armenia Tree Project, established in 1994, is a non-profit organization that revitalizes Armenia's and Artsakh's most vulnerable communities through tree-planting initiatives, and provides socio-economic support and growth. It is based in Yerevan, Armenia and has an office in Woburn, Massachusetts. For more information, please visit [ArmeniaTree.org](http://ArmeniaTree.org)

## THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

### Paid Internship through ASA

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August, though it is possible to start earlier). The intern will receive a \$150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.

The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Internet skills are a plus. The internship may be done in person or long distance, via electronic communications. Native speaker knowledge of English is important. If interested, please email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com) or [mirror-spectator1975@gmail.com](mailto:mirror-spectator1975@gmail.com) with your resume.

## Nardolillo Funeral Home

Est. 1906

**John K. Najarian, Jr.**

Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director

1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 (401) 942-1220  
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300

[www.nardolillo.com](http://www.nardolillo.com)

Telephone (617) 924-7400

## Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET  
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN  
PAUL BEDROSIAN  
LARRY BEDROSIAN

## Giragosian

FUNERAL

HOME

**James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC**  
**Mark J. Giragosian**  
Funeral Counselors

576 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA 02472, TEL: 617-924-0606  
[www.giragosianfuneralhome.com](http://www.giragosianfuneralhome.com)

ADVERTIZE IN THE MIRROR





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Prelate Tanielian Marks 50 Years Of Priesthood at Celebration

ANNIVERSARY, from page 7

The many speakers who extolled Tanielian's deep faith and unique warmth shown to people included Very Rev. Sahag Yemishian, Vicar; keynote speaker Rev. Nerses Manoogian, pastor emeritus of St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Philadelphia, and Executive Council Chairman Hagop Khatchadourian.

Rev. Fr. Nareg Terterian, Pastor of St. Sarkis Church (Douglaston, NY) read messages sent from the Prelates of the Western and Canadian Prelacies. Rev. Fr. Mesrob Lakissian, Pastor of St. Illuminator's Cathedral, read a letter sent by writer Vehanoush Tekian.

A group of young award-winning and musical talents, encouraged by the Prelate who has always supported young artists, presented numerous selections. They included violinist Arpi Bakhshian, whose offering of Sayat Novas's *Chega Kizi Nman* was an appropriate tribute to the Prelate. Other performers included singers Siran Tchorbajian, Karina Vartanian, and Anahit Indzhigulyan. They presented several Gomidas songs with organ accompaniment by St. Illuminator's Church organist Ara Dinkjian. Their rendition of Edgar Hovannisian's *Erevan-Erebuni* was especially powerful, as was the violin selection, *Azk Parabantz*.

With narration in Armenian by Prelacy Executive Director Vartan Matiossian, a professionally prepared video, subtitled in English, enumerated the various chapters of Archbishop Anoushavan's outstanding service. "A shy, quiet, 12-year old youngster," Torkom Tanielian, at the Forty Martyrs School in Beirut, inspired by future Prelacy leader Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, started his 50-year journey to become a dedicated priest, preacher, Vicar, and Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy.

The sixth child of a religious family, his mother played a central role in introducing him to God. He was ordained a deacon in 1968 by Bishop Karekin Sarkissian, who later became Catholicos. On November 26, 1972, Archbishop Ardak Manougian, Prelate of Iran, ordained young Deacon Torkom a celibate priest, and renamed him Anoushavan.

Catholicos Khoren I bestowed on him the four ranks of Vartabed of the Armenian Church in 1974, which began a decade of the young priest translating into modern Armenian the works of Church Fathers. He also participated in an Armenian translation of legendary writer and philosopher Khalil Gibran's masterpiece, *The Prophet*.

During this time, Fr. Anoushavan also attended Haigazian College, earning a Master of Divinity degree from the Near East School of Theology. When the civil war broke out in Lebanon from 1975, he exclaimed: "During this time, I felt how mighty prayer is. Not only it is a daily necessity, but it is the main source of vitality."

He traveled to India, Canada, and South Korea, participating in assemblies of the World Council of Churches. He also made many visits to Armenia, where he was a guest of Catholicos Vazken I, during the preparation of the catalogue of manuscripts of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. He stated, "During my repeated visits to Armenia, I came closer and closer to my roots. Every monastery that I visited, brought me the living memory of past generations who had lived and created our history."



From left, Taleen Babayan, Barkev Kalayjian, Primate Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Hilda Hartounian, Serge Panossian

## TCA Greater New York Members Meet with Primate

NEW YORK — Members of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York (TCA) met with the newly elected Primate of the Eastern Diocese, Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, to congratulate him on his role and to discuss ways for the Eastern Diocese and the TCA to collaborate for the benefit of the homeland and the Diaspora.

During the meeting, chair Hilda Hartounian, who was accompanied by fellow chapter board members Barkev Kalayjian, Serge Panossian and Taleen Babayan, presented the Primate with a symbolic gift of Hrair Hawk Khatcherian's *Artsakh* photography book. She also informed the Primate of the organization's upcoming programming, and extended a special invitation for the TCA's 75th diamond anniversary gala on Saturday, October 15.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from each institution to assist the other and create a vibrant new chapter in the New York Armenian American community.

In 1984, he attended Princeton University, receiving a Master of Theology degree. He earned another master's degree in Philosophy from Columbia University in 1992, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree, also from Columbia in 2003, graduating with "high distinction."

During his studies, he served at St. Gregory the Illuminator Church in Pennsylvania and Sts. Vartanantz Church in New Jersey as preacher, and at St. Sarkis Church in Douglaston, NY, as pastor. While serving at these churches, he organized Bible studies, youth seminars, lecture series, choir conferences, and started the St. Gregory of Datev Institute and the Lenten Lecture series. His focus has always been on programs for the youth and senior citizens.

On June 4, 2006, Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, performed the Episcopal consecration of Very Rev. Fr. Anoushavan Tanielian in Antelias, and on September 8, 2018, at St. Illuminator's Cathedral in New York, he was elected as the fifth Prelate of the Eastern United States. He was elevated to the rank of Archbishop by Catholicos Aram I on November 4, 2018, and was reelected Prelate for a second term on May 14, 2022.



Musical performance

Legendary Armenian folk singer Onnig Dinkjian, in voicing the feelings of many said, "In the 93 years of my life, I have known many Prelates, but I feel honored

to be here for one of the greatest Srpazans, Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian for his down-to-earth qualities, his honesty, his humanity."





COMMUNITY NEWS

Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan Takes His Place as Primate of the Eastern Diocese

ENTHRONEMENT, from page 7

He added, “I will pray fervently that our Lord God may bestow upon you every grace, gift, and virtue that you will need to successfully pastor our people and lead our parishes and clergy, for the building up of our Diocese and church, and for the glory of Almighty God.”

Our Apostolic Mission

After taking up the staff, and expressing his mutual gratitude to the outgoing Primate, Parsamyan addressed the flock in his new position. “I am humbled by this honor bestowed upon me, and blessed by the opportunities that lie ahead,” he began.

After offering words of thanks to the faithful, the Catholicos, and his parents, Fr. Mesrop spoke about the importance of the word arakelagan—“apostolic”—as it pertains to the Armenian Church. “Our ancestors received the Gospel from Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew, who actually lived with Christ,” he explained. “Apostolic also means that our church upholds



The Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, at the enthronement ceremony, with Archbishop Vicken Aykazian behind him.

the true teachings of the apostles of Jesus: clear and pure, ancient yet always new, unchanged yet sensitive to present conditions, so that each generation can receive our Lord’s teachings.”

Above all, though, Parsamyan affirmed the Apostolic nature of the Armenian Church as a mission to “draw people closer to God.” He spoke of the urgency of the Apostolic call “to go forth” among the people, “carrying the light of our Lord Jesus Christ and the deep wisdom of our ancient, holy church into the world.”

He briefly referenced the

distressing state of the world in recent years, but then continued: “Our Lord has better plans for his children, to bring them help and hope for the future.... Upon the strong foundation of our church, and by God’s will, we will grow in faith together.”

“The church needs you,” he said, in a call to action directed to people both in the sanctuary and watching from home. “But more important than that,” he added: “We all need the church.”

The public reception that followed was a welcome occasion for people in the community —including visitors and clergy from parishes across the breadth of the Diocese — to gather together and express their warmhearted good wishes to the new Primate, in the elegant atmosphere of the

Diocesan Center’s Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium.

The viewing audience for the Enthronement Service included thousands of people from across the Diocese and around the world, sharing in the service as it was broadcast over the Internet. The dedicated production team included director Yervant Keshishian, narrator Christopher Zakian, and Artur Petrosyan. Diran Jebejian photographed the event.

A native of Yerevan, the Primate received his Archimandrite (Vardapet) rank (the doctoral degree of the Armenian Church) and holds a Bachelor’s degree in theology from Gevorgian Theological Seminary of Holy Etchmiadzin, as well as a Master’s degree in Theology and Religious Sciences from the University of Strasbourg, France.

After being ordained into the holy priesthood in 2003, he served as the staff-bearer for His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians. Bishop Mesrop was also a professor (and later became Dean) at Gevorgian Theological Seminary, as well as deputy-chancellor of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Fr. Mesrop arrived in the United States in 2015, where he became pastor of Holy Shoghagat Church in Belleville, IL. He subsequently became Director of Ministries at the Diocesan Center in New York City, and was appointed Vicar of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral in 2018.

With the blessing and confirmation of Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, Fr. Parsamyan assumed the office of the 13th Diocesan Primate on May 17, 2022, following his election to that office during the 120th Diocesan Assembly session of May 6.



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate, flanked by Saro and Hilda Hartounian of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York

Our Staff is 100% Vaccinated

CARE

COMPASSION

COMMUNITY

THE ARMENIAN NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER

- LONG TERM
- SHORT TERM
- RESPIRE CARE
- SHORT TERM REHABILITATION

With physician coverage from Brigham and Women’s Physicians.

We’re proud to be ★★★★★ rated.

Please contact our Admissions Coordinator, Stephanie at 617.522.2600 to learn more or schedule a tour of our facility.

431 Pond Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

sponsored by

ARMENIAN WOMEN’S WELFARE ASSOCIATION

awwainc.org





# Arts & Culture

## Karen Nikgol

*‘My Art Is Open to Interpretation!’*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN / OSLO — Painter, curator, performance artist, actor, director and choreographer Karen Nikgol was born in Teheran in 1983. Her mother Odette Nikgol is a painter, animator and translator (see my interview with her in Armenian Mirror-Spectator, November 19, 2019). Karen studied at the Arts University College at Bournemouth, England and Fine Arts University in Oslo; he also studied religion and philosophy. His work mixes cultural expressions and identities, combining contemporary dance, choreography, raves, street cultures, new age and occultism, creating direction and choreography on stage and in galleries that involve artists, dancers, martial arts practitioners, amateurs and writers. Karen has participated in more than 25 group exhibitions around the world, and his solo exhibitions have opened in Spain, Denmark, Italy, Norway and the United States. Karen works at the Oslo Museum of Contemporary Art, observing Norwegian cultural life. He shot a short film, Empowerment (2017) and acted in two films in Norway and UK. In 2017 Karen Nikgol won Oslo Prize for art of the year for his exhibition “Empowerment.” He is the co-founder of the artist run space Noplace, in Oslo.



**Karen, I have watched videos of some of your performances online. I think they belong to those types of art that people can interpret in different ways and they all will be right and wrong. Your works can be characterized as being erotic, mystical, eccentric. What is the main message you send through your art?**

Yes, my art is often open to interpretation. In stage productions, I see ART, page 15



Helena Grigorian (Brandon Balayan photo)

## Interpreting Fortunes at The Bottom of a Cup

By Brandon Balayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — The sounds and smells of Armenian coffee are part and parcel of gatherings at traditional households. The long introductions reverberate as people fill up your home. After introductions the question of who wants coffee is posed, and the host, or the person who makes it the best, proceeds to the kitchen and sets up each cup on a tray. Conversation is often distracting, and can cause the coffee to boil over the jezve — spilling on the flames and engulfing the room with the smell of burnt coffee.

Once ready, the coffee is eagerly drunk as one topic of conversation leads to another, until everybody’s cups are empty and turned over on their saucers. Next comes the question: Who is going to read the cup?

As Armenians know, the coffee grounds in the traditional coffee do not dissolve and once the cup with the dregs are turned over, patterns form which can be interpreted by cup readers.

Artist Helena Grigorian was fascinated by this process and as a result she created the “My Life From the Grounds Up,” a display about Armenian coffee and the ritual of tasseography (the divination method that interprets patterns in coffee grounds, or tea leaves) at the Glendale Library, Arts and Culture. The display consists of 300 coffee cups that Grigorian hand painted with real coffee grounds, clear glue, polyurethane and other materials, as well as large photographs of coffee grounds from Grigorian’s personal cups.

Grigorian recalls being captivated by the readings when she observed the tradition with her mother and her friends.

“I couldn’t wait till I got older to have my cup read because it was something that would bring all the women together,” Grigorian said.

Other artists have been inspired by tasseography as well. Artist Anush Movsisyan Avejic recreated the fortune inside one’s cup, but on a six foot long canvas back in 2018 at the Roslin Art Gallery. Aramazi Kalayjian, a multidisciplinary artist based in Yerevan, had his “If walls could talk” exhibition in 2018. As people enter the exhibit, they notice sculptures featuring haiku poems on one wall, and Kalayjian at a desk with his Armenian typewriter. Here he would make coffee for people, read their fortune and write them an Armenian haiku on his typewriter. More recently, in 2021, the Arab American National Museum held a Zoom session with artist Levon Kafafian

*continued on next page*

## Inaugural Arev Short Film Festival In Lexington To Benefit TUMO

LEXINGTON, Mass. — How do you combine a lifelong love of helping others with a career in film? When writer and filmmaker Sharisse Zeroonian asked herself this question recently, the Arev Film Festival was born.

The festival will showcase short films (under fifteen minutes long) created by filmmakers of Armenian origin living and working across the global Armenian communities and the Republic itself. All screenings will take place on Saturday, July 9, at the Lexington Venue, 1795 Mass. Ave., Lexington, noon to 3 p.m.

“Since I was a child, I’ve always been interested in philanthropic work, so I’ve been looking for a way to serve others while also parlaying my own creative interests into it,” says Zeroonian. “This is a lovely opportunity for artists to show their work, and for everyone to come support a worthy cause.”

The cause, in this case, is the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. TUMO is “a free-of-charge educational program that puts teens in charge of their own learning” per their mission statement. The center — which has sites in Yerevan, Armenia and throughout the Republic — offers classes in filmmaking, robotics, com-



Sharisse Zeroonian

puter programming, music production, creative writing, and more.

After joining forces with Amaras Art Alliance of Watertown, whose mission is to support creative individuals to achieve their goals, Zeroonian decided to organize the Arev film festival to raise funds for the TUMO Center in Armenia and to encourage Armenian filmmakers in their pursuit of creative endeavors.

Among the films that will be shown will be those by directors Ryan Ebrahmanian, Lisa Hagopian and Eric Harabadian and Roger Hagopian.

Tickets are \$25 for general admission and \$15 for students and available online at AmarasOnline.com. Tickets may also be available at the door.





ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

– where he taught attendees how to make coffee for readings and discussed the ancestral tradition of speculative storytelling. Each artist is influenced by their Armenian background, and seeing the custom being performed in their homes.

Grigorian credits her upbringing in Iran for introducing her to the custom. Her father is from Tehran and her mother is from Abadan, but they immigrated to Germany before the Iranian revolution. Helena was born in Germany before her family moved to the States in 1975. Grigorian recalls her mother’s friends from Abadan gathering monthly for coffee and conversation. It was a community that, one way or another, found themselves sharing stories and drinking coffee with each other once again long after leaving their native city.

Today, Grigorian is a Los Angeles based graphic designer and photographer and has over 15 years of professional experience – devoting years to gathering material for this display. The display is set up in the Glendale Library’s ReflectSpace Gallery. A Yemeni artist, Yasmine Nasser Diaz, also has a project on display that involves playing family cassette tapes in a display that looks like her family kitchen.

Anahid Oshagan, the co-curator of ReflectSpace, explains how art displayed in this gallery is meant to address social justice issues.

“You’re wondering, what about the coffee grounds addresses social justice? Well, it’s about displacement. It’s about community. It’s about narratives, stories and histories of people who bring these traditions and things with them,” Oshagan said.

As Armenians were displaced from places such as Western Armenia or parts of the Middle East, they brought this tradition



The cups at the Helena Grigorian exhibit (Brandon Balayan photos)

ceed to the display. On the right wall are 300 cups painted by Grigorian, and on the left are the pictures of grounds she took from her personal cups. Grigorian explains how when people are looking at the photos of the cups they are essentially looking at selfies of her.

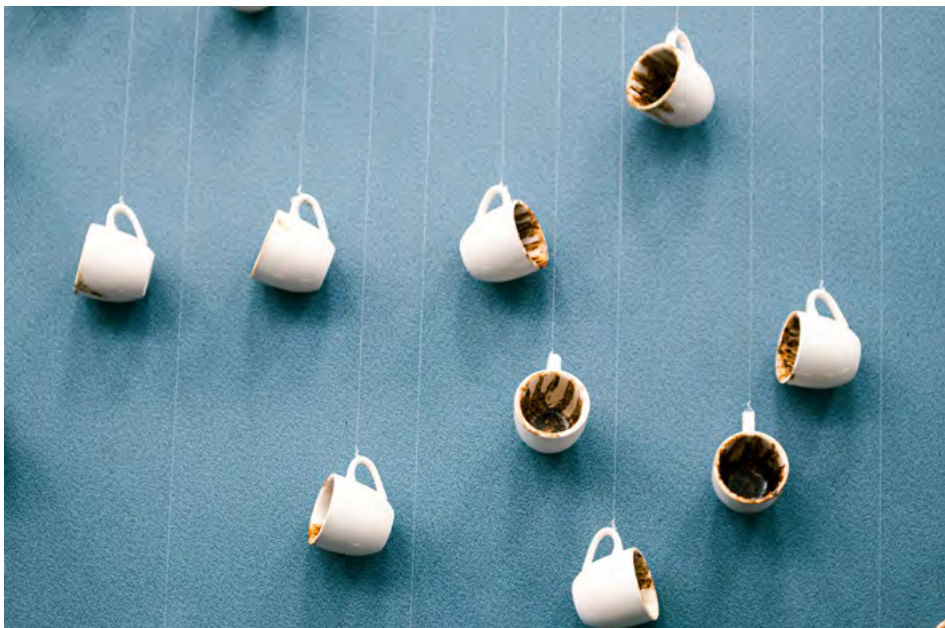
“Now you can weave a path to my life story that nobody else can see,” Grigorian said.

The question of who is able to read cups is another topic often debated. For Grigorian, it is anybody who can tell a story. It is not simply reading individual images but connecting those images into a narrative about the person’s life. Grigorian cited her good friend Vahe Berberian, a comedian and author, as an example of someone who creates a narrative based on the scattered grounds.

The anticipation of waiting for the reader to interpret a cup can be agonizing for the coffee drinker, but it is worth the wait. Grigorian talks about how when her family gathered and the cup reading took place, it took the form of a group therapy session and provided catharticism.

“I always see their faces like the women, they would just stare at the reader, focus on them, and focus on the stories — it was almost therapeutic,” Grigorian said. “There’s a level of anxiety that would fall once their cup was read.”

This is not the first time Girogorian has focused on coffee cups as art. In 2017 she had a project displayed at She Loves Collective, a group of women artists who believe in making social change through art. Helena’s project consisted of a suspended coffee table with coffee cups attached to the bottom. Grigorian explained that it was intended to make the observer feel like they were walking under their



grandmother’s table.

Fast forward today, and Grigorian is continuing her art and said this was an ongoing project. She hopes to take the display to other places where she can turn it into

an interactive piece – where people can be enveloped by images, video, and sound of tasseography.

“My Life From the Grounds Up,” at the Glendale, Arts and Culture, opened May 31



Some of the patterns formed by coffee grounds at the Helena Grigorian exhibit (Brandon Balayan photo)

with them. Therefore the space shows an ancient Eastern tradition to people who are not familiar with the custom who must interpret it through their Western lens. To help others understand the art, Grigorian placed a two-minute video in front of the display that shows her cup being read by Ani Kalafian and Meline Melikian.

After watching the video, people pro-



ԹԵՔԵԱՆ Մշակութային Միություն  
Մեծագույն Նիւ Եորքի Մասնաճիւղ

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
GREATER NEW YORK CHAPTER

# Save the Date

Celebrating 75 years of cultural excellence

## The Diamond Anniversary Gala

Saturday, October 15, 2022

Details to follow





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



The St. Gregory Ladies Society was founded in 1949 by Rose Kandarian, Edna Ahronian, and Nan Mirigian. This organization flourished with members that were dedicated to aiding different aspects of the church such as the church choir, Sunday school, and maintenance of the Markarian Hall. Photo courtesy of Ladies Society of St. Gregory Church in Fowler

## Recipes from Fowler's St. Gregory Church

### *Collections from the Grapevine Cookbook*

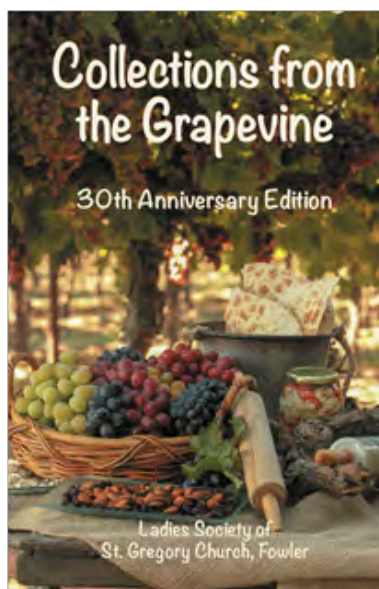
FOWLER, Calif. — Located about 10 miles south of downtown Fresno in the quiet farming community of Fowler, St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church parishioners have met and held church services in the original structure since 1910, making it the second oldest Armenian Church still in use today in America (the oldest is located in Union City, NJ, consecrated in 1907). St. Gregory Church has the distinction of being the fourth oldest established Armenian Apostolic parish in the country.

These recipes are featured in *Collections from the Grapevine*, 30th Anniversary Edition, an indispensable Armenian (and American) cookbook written by the Ladies Society of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church.

As the preface of the cookbook states, "As the Ladies Society of St. Gregory the Illuminator, our objective is to study, practice, and to propagate the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines, and rites of the Armenian church. 2020 found us adapting to a global pandemic by changing our daily routines and spending more time at home – especially in our kitchens. Creating a home-cooked meal became more than an infrequent endeavor. It stood as a means for younger generations to quiet the rush of their busy lives and bond over food and family. Older generations found comfort in revisiting past routines filled with sweet memories."

"In revising this cookbook, we have retained nearly all of the original recipes and have added almost 100 new ones. We have reorganized sections to make them more user-friendly, and have added an index to assist in finding foods you might like to prepare. We hope you will enjoy this new edition and use it regularly. As you knead the dough, or roll the yalanchi, may your hearts be fed."

"Collections from the Grapevine is dedicated to the hard-working and devoted women who loved and supported this church from its early beginnings over 110 years ago. These women worked tirelessly to prepare countless meals for church dinners, food bazaars, picnics, and other events. Through the years, their many culinary talents and efforts received accolades from both Armenians and non-Armenians alike. The first edition of the cookbook (1990) aimed at keeping our heritage alive by transmitting and preserving favorite, well-tested recipes to future generations. We hope this edition will meet the same goals."



### Imam Bayeldi (Eggplant Appetizer) From Mary Krikorian

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 large eggplant  
2 to 3 medium onions  
2 medium green bell peppers  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1/4 cup Armenian parsley, chopped  
1 large tomato, sliced  
Salt, pepper, and Accent to taste  
1 can or a little less tomato sauce  
Olive oil

#### PREPARATION:

Slice the eggplant into 1/4-inch slices. You want uniform pieces so they will bake evenly. Sprinkle each slice with salt and let stand at least 30 minutes to expel water. Drain and dry with paper towels.

Brush eggplant slices with olive oil and bake on a cookie sheet in a hot oven (450°) until lightly browned.

In a frying pan, heat olive oil and sauté the onions, bell pepper, garlic, and spices. Do not overcook, just until wilted. Add the parsley and tomato sauce and cook for a few minutes longer. Arrange eggplant slices in a prepared baking pan and pour tomato sauce over all. Bake in a 375° oven for about 30 minutes. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Serves 4.

### Lenten Kuftha – from Marge Esraelian

A meatless kuftha with a unique blend of flavors.

#### FILLING:

1 18 oz. jar chunky peanut butter  
6 medium onions, chopped  
1/2 to 3/4 jar (16 oz.) tahini  
2 1/2 cups walnuts, ground  
1 large bunch Armenian parsley, chopped  
Olive oil

#### OUTSIDE SHELL:

6 cans garbanzo beans, washed, drained, ground  
2 1/2 cups fine bulgur  
1 1/4 cups regular Cream of Wheat  
3 eggs  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Seasonings:  
Lemon juice  
Paprika or cayenne pepper  
Salt and pepper

Filling: Fry the onions in 1/4 cup of oil until wilted; remove from stove and cool. Squeeze liquid from the onions with paper towels. Combine the peanut butter, tahini, walnuts, parsley, onions, and seasonings in a large bowl. If mixture is too dry, add a little hot water. Mix or knead filling gently for a few minutes and make the balls for the filling (about the size of a walnut). Place them on a tray and cool in the refrigerator.

Outside: Combine and knead the outside shell ingredients; use a little hot water to make a workable dough. Press down in center and sides, rotating until you get a thin shell. Make an indentation in the center with your thumb and keep opening and shaping with your index and middle finger. Place one walnut-size ball of filling in the center, gently encase the filling with the outer shell. Finally, smooth the surface with wet fingers, making sure the kuftha is flat on the bottom and slightly rounded on the top.

Place shaped kuftha on a waxed paper-lined tray or plate, and refrigerate for 20-30 minutes. Bring a large pot of water to a full boil, adding some salt and about 1/4 cup lemon juice. Remove kuftha from the refrigerator; boil in small batches for about 10 minutes until all kuftha are cooked and rise to the top. Cool kuftha for a few minutes; rub with a little oil and sprinkle with paprika or cayenne pepper on top and serve.

Also see: Peanut Butter Kufteh – a Unique Lenten Recipe from the Women's Guild of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina at: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/peanut-butter-kufteh-unique-lenten/>

#### ORDER TODAY:

Published in 2020, the fourth printing of *Collections from the Grapevine* is available for \$25.00 each plus mailing costs. Please send check to: St. Gregory Ladies Society, P.O. Box 246, Fowler, CA 93625.

For information or to contribute, contact:

St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church  
P.O. Box 246  
Fowler, CA 93625  
Office: (559) 834-2919  
Fax: (559) 834-1960  
<http://www.stgregoryfowler.com/>  
© 2022 by St. Gregory Armenian Church Fowler





ARTS & CULTURE

# Karen Nikgol: ‘My Art Is Open to Interpretation!’



“THE GHOST OF MIKE DENNIS TYSON RODMAN (Wesley Snipes5000 and The Destruction of Chicago Bulls Stadium)»” by Karen Nikgol (oil and spray paint on canvas, 2021).

ART, from page 12  
have a general narrative that is often told, but not necessarily as an understandable narrative, like a dream open source for analysis. Hence I like to give the view more of an experience, than anything. That might be the message.

**When the Norwegian royal family visited the Museum of Modern Art, you were entrusted to explain the exhibition. How was it to be guide for a king and queen?**

It was ok - more police guards than normal, but besides that it was fun.

**Recently a Russian dance specialist said that everybody with ideas is able to direct a choreographic play.**

Yes, that specialist is right. We must remember how many great plays Kandinsky, a painter, wrote.

Being a fan of modern choreography, for me it was not a problem to watch your “Satyricon” performance, lasting 2.5 hours, set to minimalistic music, monotonous sound and conversation in a language many do not understand. Isn’t it too ambitious after “Fellini Satyricon” to have “Karen Nikgol Satyricon”?

Ha-ha, it was irony towards Fellini who included himself into the title. I also wanted to mark a difference between them, so the audience would not expect the visual language of Fellini into my work.

**You also authored an operetta, “The Silent Song of the Sphinx.” Do you have musical education?**

No, I do not. I work with composers, musicians and choreographers that can realize my aesthetic ideas.

I assume you have funny stories when

people has been confused about your gender because of your name Karen.

Indeed, job interviews are most fun! They expect a woman, not a bald Persian Armenian! (laughs).

**You were born to Iranian father and Armenian mother. How and in what extent do such rich heritages affect your character and style?**

In the way that it affects coming from different places can change one mentally. It breaks down our personality being Norwegian, Armenian, Persian, a synthesis of dualities.

When in 1997 I telephoned your mother, it was you or your brother Armin who answered. I was pleased to hear that Odette’s son talked Armenian with her.

Ok, pleased to hear that. Of course I do speak Armenian and I write a little too!

**You have visited Armenia in 2017. Did you have any chance to get acquainted with Armenian modern art scene?**

Yes, I went to see some galleries, shops and art dealers. Yerevan has a vibrant art scene!

**What would you like to see more in Armenia?**

I would like to see even more art and even more fashion industry, even though there is a lot now. I would like to see a good future for the country and its independence from countries that are bothering it. And also more happiness!

**Many artists of Armenian origin think about Armenian-related projects. Are you an exception?**

Yes, I might be. I do not want my work to be understood as coming from one specific origin, or place.

## Saryan Meets Gorky in Art of students at St. Stephen’s Armenian School

WATERTOWN — At the end of each academic year, St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) arranges an exhibition to showcase the artwork that their students have created. This year’s show,

on Friday, June 17, displayed works from students in kindergarten through fifth grade with themes and styles chosen under the guidance of their teacher, interdisciplinary artist from Armenia Arevik Tserunyan.

Tserunyan’s mission as an art teacher is to be an “ambassador” of Armenian culture for the students, who are far from their homeland and roots. She believes that skills and traditions that get passed down to the next generation are the vital components that form a national identity.

“Visual arts and crafts as well as handmade creations that beautify our world are in the DNA of all Armenians. There is nothing more rewarding than keeping these traditions alive among the young generations in the Armenian diaspora,” said Tserunyan.

The themes from this year’s show varied dramatically from illustrating scenes in nature to designing Armenian carpet patterns.

The highlights of the show were Armenian nature and colors inspired by Martiros Saryan, Armenian dances, carpets, abstract paintings inspired by Arshile Gorky, and clay works inspired by the traditions of Armenian pottery making. In the curriculum, students learned about the importance of colors in Armenian painting and landscape, various drawing styles, as well as painting and mixed-media techniques. They were also introduced to several art movements like Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism.

Students were fascinated and immensely inspired by the abundance of ideas, techniques and changes these movements brought to this world.



5th grader work, Armenian dance, Mount Ararat



Works of 4th graders. Armenian carpet, Water lilies, Aquarium.



# The Valley of Death

## *A Journalist's First Attempt at Making Sense of the 44-Day War*

HAKOBYAN, from page 1

This volume is not a monographic study. Instead, it is an anthology of news articles, interviews and opinion pieces by Hakobyan, who after graduating Yerevan State University's Department of Journalism and the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs in Tbilisi, wrote as a correspondent for the Armenian and diasporan newspapers *Ankakhutyun* (1991-95), *Yerkir* (1998-2000), *Azg* (2000-2005), *Aztag* (2005-2016) and *Armenian Reporter* (2008-9), a columnist or political observer for the Radiolur news program of the Public Radio of Armenia (2004-2008), the online Aliq Media (currently), and CivilNet online television (for the Civiltas Foundation) (2009-2022). Since 2014, he has been a coordinator of the Ani Armenian Research Center.

Kharatyan in his preface notes that "This work shows how the official information provided to the public by Armenian and Karabakh officials during the war misled and confused our nation, when the realities on the ground were far worse from [sic] what we were being told." In his "Author's Note," Hakobyan writes that he was unable to publish many of his reports in real time as a result of martial law in Armenia, especially as they contradicted the "official line" of the government. He published them only after the November 10, 2020 trilateral ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia.

Around half the articles in the book are about the developments of the war, and the other half provide historical information and broader context. A number of pieces pay special attention to the 2016 April four-day war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the newest pieces cover developments up through February 2021. The articles are presented in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent. Five texts of negotiation proposals and agreements on Karabakh are appended at the end of the volume.

Hakobyan raises important questions on many topics. Most pressingly, what will the long-term fate of the population and remaining territories be of the Artsakh Republic? He finds three possible ways to ensure the security of the Armenian population there. The Russian peacekeeping force might stay for 50 years instead of five, and make Karabakh a Russian territory, as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Armenia may become powerful enough to provide Karabakh with security guarantees. An agreement might also be reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan giving Karabakh an in-between ambiguous status which allows it de facto independence.

If Azerbaijan fully controls the territory, Hakobyan can only picture a nightmare scenario of depopulation or massacre of the local Armenians. He mentions the possibility of Armenia regaining full control of Artsakh, and without directly commenting on its likelihood, notes that Armenia is unable to defend its own borders at present.

He emphasizes that Armenia can never rely on any third party to ensure its security. Russia has historically left the region and abandoned the Armenians a number of times, for example. Hakobyan is a critic of grand nationalistic territorial claims. Instead, he recommends reaching an understanding with Armenia's Turkish and Azerbaijan neighbors directly and notes "today, regardless of Karabakh's status, the highest priority should be making sure that Armenians continue to live in Artsakh."

Any agreement must be acceptable to Armenians as well as Azerbaijanis, he writes, otherwise a new war to rectify the situation is inevitable.

### Responsibility for 2020 Defeat

Hakobyan does not shy away from speaking his mind. Hakobyan is hard on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government and calls them "malefactors" for not stopping the war when there was an opportunity in October 2020. He writes about this topic in multiple articles. He

accuses the ruling elite directly in one piece: "You don't seem to realize that it was you who sent to a deathtrap a whole generation of our nation born in 2000 and 2001." He blames the leadership also for the loss of Shushi, declaring "Armenia's current government has made fatal mistakes, which in some instances can be qualified as criminal."

He is referring to Pashinyan refusing the Russian offer to stop the fighting on October 19-20, if Armenia would allow Azerbaijani refugees to return to Shushi. While it appears after the fact that Pashinyan was preferring a Shushi under Azerbaijani control to a Shushi under Karabakh/Armenian control populated by a large majority of Azerbaijanis, Hakobyan speculates that Pashinyan in fact miscalculated that the Armenians could regain Shushi militarily.

He also writes that the military and political leadership of the Artsakh Republic bear an important share of responsibility.

Hakobyan notes that Onik Gasparyan, head of Armenia's joint chiefs of staff during the war, declared as ear-

his predecessor regimes in order to plant the idea that the war was inevitable. Hakobyan points out that Pashinyan, unlike his predecessors, was insisting that the only solution to the conflict was the independence of Artsakh, with the latter participating again directly in negotiations, and Russia had offered a plan which would have avoided war and left Armenians in a better position than they are now.

Hakobyan includes himself in the list of those responsible, declaring: "What about the author of these lines, who was afraid to write about the possibility of peace every day, because the ultra-nationalists would accuse him of pacifism, defeatism, even betrayal and Turkism?"

### Why Is Pashinyan Still in Power?

Hakobyan speculates in one article that the public is supporting Pashinyan largely due to a lack of a credible alternative political force in Armenia, while it rejects the representatives of the prior regimes. The shock of the defeat causes despair, while Hakobyan feels the large protest movements of 2018 in a way discharged the accumulated collective anger of the masses and they are not ready for new mass movements. Finally, Hakobyan writes that Russia wishes to keep Pashinyan in power in order to carry out the agreements it has brokered with Armenia and Azerbaijan, even if against the interests of the Armenian people, and it did not look kindly on the street protests immediately after the war.

In another article, he observes that Pashinyan was not able to make good use of his historic opportunity after coming to power, and the first signs of that were his approach to politics based on personal affiliation and his abandonment of institutional reform. His calls on the populace to block the entrance to the courts or blockade the National Assembly, Hakobyan said, indicated "he was rejecting the opportunity to transform from a populist politician to a state leader."

### Turkish-Armenian Relations

Hakobyan is the author of a book on Turkish-Armenian relations called *View from Ararat: Armenians and Turks* (2012). Some of his articles in his new book also examine this topic. He is a proponent of normalizing direct relations without the mediation of Russia or other third parties. He gives historical examples of how not talking with Turkish Nationalists in the first republic was with hindsight considered an error by leaders like Aleksandr Khatisyan. Hakobyan writes, however, that in recent times, during two prior attempts at the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, Turkey brought up three preconditions: Armenia's recognition of Turkey's current borders and territorial integrity, abandonment of support for international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and withdrawal from territories in the Karabakh conflict zone. If the latter issue has largely been resolved by the war, Hakobyan questions whether Armenia is ready to act on the other two, since frank public discussion is not possible on these issues.

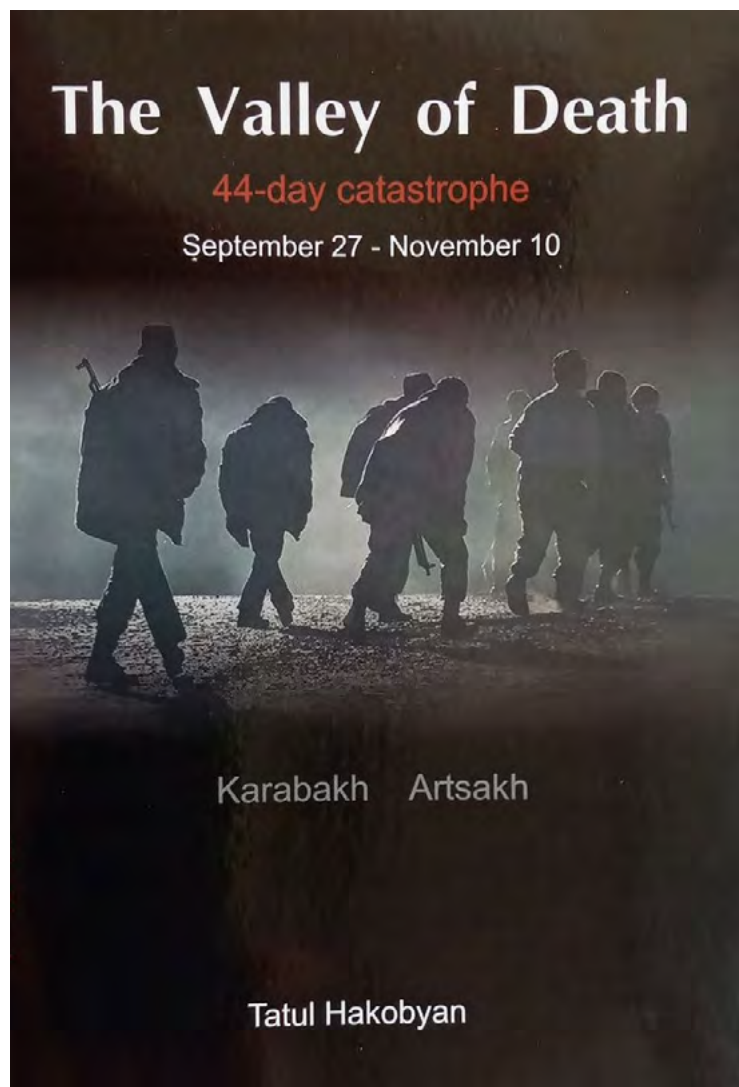
Hakobyan wonders whether Armenia will passively allow Turkey and Russia to continue to divide up the region together in a cooperative manner, and fears ending up with a capitulation like that of November 10, 2020, or a disastrous treaty like that of Alexandropol 100 years ago.

### War Coverage

Hakobyan wrote many of the pieces during the recent war; those are composed with an immediacy conveying his emotions. For example, when exposed to rocket attacks, he writes, "When attacks like these start, your knees start to shake, and the only thing you can do is stay in a shelter waiting for the next rocket, and the next one, until it stops." At the end of every day, he and other journalists in Stepanakert would see minivans bringing in the dead bodies of soldiers, while in the mornings they could see the bloodstained barrows leaning over the walls of the morgue.

He sadly wonders about the fate of many of the people he encountered during the war, especially in places like Hadrut that were lost to the Azerbaijanis. He writes that the voices of wounded soldiers, being brought in such large numbers to a Hadrut hospital that often first aid had to be given by nurses in the yard while the dead would be taken to an adjacent building, ring in his ears to this day, and certain images remain seared in his mind, like that of a soldier who died with his AK-47 on his chest containing one last bullet.

As noted above, he uses his notes to write after the war what he could not write in real time. While official Yerevan



ly as the fourth day of the Artsakh war at the Armenian National Security Council meeting that the war needed to be stopped within 2-3 days because losses will otherwise continue and the basis for a diplomatic solution will progressively get weaker. In other words, Pashinyan was told by the military that Armenia could not win this war militarily, so he should have sought alternative solutions.

On a broader scale, Hakobyan finds that Armenians tend to want to find culprits responsible for their defeats instead of taking responsibility for their own errors. For the most recent war, Nikol Pashinyan's regime is being blamed by many, along with a Russian-Turkish conspiracy. However, every Armenian bears a share in the defeat, Hakobyan writes, including the previous Armenian regimes, and maximalists in the diaspora dreaming of Hay Tad (the Armenian Cause) as embodied in the Treaty of Sevres.

Pashinyan himself has attempted in speeches and writings such as "The Origin of the 44-Day War" to blame





ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

**JUNE 26 - Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Join us for **LABYRINTH WALKING WELLNESS** Sunday at 2 p.m. Introduction to the health benefits Kristin Asadourian and Katrina Piehler, co-facilitators

**JULY 6 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Join us for **TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Wednesday at 4 p.m. Meet & Greet

**JULY 9 — First annual Arev Short Film Festival,** featuring short films by talented filmmakers including Ryan Ebrahmanian, Lisa Hagopian and Eric Harabadian and Roger Hagopian. Saturday, Lexington Venue, 1794 Mass. Ave., Lexington. 12 noon to 3 p.m. General admission \$25, Students \$15. All ticket sales will benefit the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies. Organized and sponsored by local filmmaker Sharisse Zeroonian and Amaras Arts Alliance. For information, visit [www.amarasonline.com](http://www.amarasonline.com) or call 617-331-0426.

**JULY 14 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Join us for **UNDER THE RASPBERRY MOON.** Thursday at 8pm. Featuring the Hye Guys Ensemble

**AUGUST 3 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Join us for **TEA & TRANQUILITY.** Wednesday at 4 p.m. Meet & Greet

**AUGUST 14 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** Join us for **UNDER THE RASPBERRY MOON.** Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Featuring the Black Sea Salsa Combo

**SEPTEMBER 9 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter** invites everyone to a cultural event honoring author, editor, philologist, educator and public figure, Jirair Tanielian from Beirut, Lebanon, for his 60 years of

service and dedication to Armenian culture and the community. Friday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn, Watertown. Details to follow. For more information, please contact us at [bostontca@gmail.com](mailto:bostontca@gmail.com)

**SEPTEMBER 18 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston.** **LET’S CELEBRATE THE PARK’S 10th ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE PARK!** Sunday at 3 p.m. Featuring the Leon Janikian Ensemble.

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

NEW JERSEY

**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.

WISCONSIN

**JUNE 26 — St. Hagop Armenian Church Annual Madagh 2022 Picnic, Racine, Sunday.** On the Johnson Park grounds. Open to the community/public with free admission, offering traditional Armenian food for purchase. For information, contact Zohrab Khaligian @ (262) 818-6437 or [khaligian@netzero.net](mailto:khaligian@netzero.net) or [https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Madagh-Picnic-St-Hagop-Church-Racine-Wisconsin-250610052493495/?tn-str=k\\*F](https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Madagh-Picnic-St-Hagop-Church-Racine-Wisconsin-250610052493495/?tn-str=k*F)

spoke about victory and destroying the enemy, Hakobyan saw signs of chaos and retreat but was unable to write publicly of the panic evacuation of Shushi and even of people from Stepanakert. On November 7, at Azat Village of Vardenis past the Armenian border, Hakobyan wrote, “For 10-15 minutes I was standing under the rain and snow looking at people running away. Who ordered this evacuation? How and why should people escape at a time when around 30,000 of our servicemen are on the frontline? Why are we leaving our boys alone, whose mothers are waiting for news from their children in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Tashir and elsewhere? Those 10-15 minutes were unbearable, filled with countless thoughts.”

Hakobyan with hindsight expresses his regret at not speaking up openly to combat fake Armenian government propaganda, in particular about Armenian forces taking back Jebrayil and the Khodafarin bridge, the prevention of an Azerbaijani offensive near Kubatlu, and the fall of Shushi.

Hakobyan also provides important information on prior clashes. He went to Talish and southern Artsakh and attempted to ascertain how much territory had been lost to Azerbaijan during the April 2016 four-day war. While his estimates were not precise, they served a useful purpose because the actual figures became politicized. Then President Serzh Sargsyan, for example, gave varying figures, decreasing over time after the event, from 800 to 400 hectares. After Pashinyan came to power, Hakobyan correctly writes, his proponents presented the war as a defeat, while Sargsyan’s supporters presented it as a victory.

History

Hakobyan frequently makes historical comparisons of the current situation with that of Armenia in previous eras, particularly during Tsarist rule, the Soviet period, and the first republic. Miscalculations similar to those

committed during the first republic were among the causes of the 2020 defeat, he observes, including overestimating Armenian strength, hoping for third party support and underestimating the adversary.

There is much relevant historical information for non-specialists, such as, for example, the changes in the borders of Armenia during the Soviet period, largely in favor of the Soviet neighboring states of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Such historical comparisons and background information are particularly useful when attempting to understand issues such as the disputes over the borders of the current Republic of Armenia.

Several articles in this volume discuss various aspects of the negotiations from the end of the first Karabakh war in 1994 until the present, both conducted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Minsk Group and by individual powers like Russia.

Some of the most moving parts of the book concern Hakobyan’s reminiscences about his native village of Dovegh, nearby Noyemberyan, and the surrounding areas of Tavush Province. The first Karabakh war began there, not actually in Karabakh, in 1990. Hakobyan relates the sad story of his cousin, taken captive by Azerbaijanis while driving to work in his car, whose fate remains unknown to this day. Another cousin was killed in his vineyard in Dovegh after the active phase of the war had ended. Twenty villages of Tavush remained within reach of Azerbaijani snipers even after the first war and continued to suffer losses through three decades of a liminal situation, neither war, nor peace. Hakobyan also describes the military escalation of July 2020 which took place in Tavush.

Clashes took place between Azerbaijanis and Armenians there even in the Soviet period. As a child, Hakobyan witnessed a dispute over the use of forest and water at the border in 1984 or 1985 that led to fighting and the

intervention of Moscow.

There are some articles dealing with general themes like demography. Hakobyan notes that when President Serzh Sargsyan spoke about increasing the Armenian population to four million by 2040, it sounded unrealistic and like a joke to many, whereas Prime Minister Pashinyan’s announcement twice that Armenia will have a population of five million by 2050 appeared even more unfounded due to an aging population, declining birthrates, and no major process of repatriation. Hakobyan remarks moreover that Armenia and its diaspora failed in repopulating Artsakh, which is one of the least densely populated areas among both recognized and unrecognized states.

The Journalist as Participant

We learn from the book that when Hakobyan traveled to Artsakh during the war, he not only carried out his journalistic duties, but also tried to be helpful to the local population in other ways. Sometimes, he would be given small presents like packets of cigarettes to distribute to soldiers. When individuals asked him for help in finding their relatives who had been serving as soldiers, he would put them in touch with various relevant officials. Other times, he served as an intermediary for arranging assistance on a larger scale. In early October, for example, after returning from Artsakh, he went to his birthplace of Noyemberyan and spoke with the mayor and other leaders about the difficulties facing Martuni (in Artsakh), including loss of all electrical power. The latter decided to send 12 electricians to Martuni, as this was a field, so Hakobyan called Artsakh Foreign Minister Masis Mayilyan, who in turn connected Hakobyan with the head of the Artsakh Energy department to facilitate the work of the 12 electricians. Within five days electricity was restored in Martuni, and they also renovated the Martuni Cultural Center and cleaned up the surroundings of the local Monte Melkonyan statue.

The book contains powerful photos, many of which were taken by Hakobyan, but they deserve better quality reproduction. The translation into English is readable but with plentiful minor grammatical and stylistic flaws and typographical errors which a good editor with native mastery of English could have fixed. In such a collection of articles, naturally there is some repetition of information, but beyond this, an entire chapter or article was repeated in whole (pp. 287-97 and 298-306). Furthermore, in another chapter, five paragraphs from pp. 219-220 are repeated verbatim on pages 221-222.

Notwithstanding these flaws, Hakobyan’s volume is a good starting point for understanding the 2020 war and its aftermath.

Donations

Dikran Ekizian and Meline Ekizian donated \$200 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and \$200 to *Baikar* weekly.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada gratefully acknowledges two donations, \$500 during the TCA fundraising campaign of 2020, and \$800 this May, totaling \$1300, sent thanks to Mher Panossian through the McKinsey Company with matching funds, in aid of the Tekeyan School of Beirut.





ARMENIA

# 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  
reflect the policies of the  
publisher.**

**EDITORIAL**

## Zangezur Corridor: Pathway to Armenia's Destiny



**By Edmond Y.  
Azadian**

The November 9, 2020 declaration did not end the second Karabakh war, also known as the 44-Day War; the war continues for Azerbaijan. Indeed, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's rhetoric remains so incendiary that it may spark a new war at any moment. As a result, Armenia remains on edge, anticipating the next salvo from Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's increasingly bellicose language needs to be observed and analyzed within the context of unfolding regional and global developments.

Certainly the war in Ukraine is a factor to be considered. It was presumed that because of the standoff between Russia and the West, many conflicts in different regions would be placed on the backburner. As it turns out, that presumption is no longer true, as major powers seem to have a tacit understanding to micromanage other regional issues, despite the overarching war in Ukraine. And that can work to Armenia's advantage if the leadership can find loopholes in the big picture and capitalize on them.

Armenia and Turkey have been negotiating to restore diplomatic relations without any preconditions. While Armenia is proceeding with good faith and abiding by that principle, the Turkish side has been coordinating its steps with Azerbaijan, which throws in its demands, namely signing a peace treaty sealing its five-point proposal, which calls for mutual recognition of territorial integrity, forgoing the status issue of Karabakh and opening the Zangezur Corridor, thus encroaching on Armenia's sovereignty.

Armenia is facing winds that blow hot and cold as stakeholders make contradictory statements. Russia, for one, has changed its interpretation many times, driven by its interests and conflicts with Azerbaijan.

Last week, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov flew in from Baku to attend the annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) countries, held in Yerevan. On the sidelines of that meeting, Mr. Lavrov gave a press conference, clarifying Russia's position on the issue of the corridor. He indicated that "the roads and communication lines will be unblocked and transportation between the countries will move without compromising the sovereignty of the country through which those roads pass."

"There could be no equivocation on this issue," he emphasized, although adding a phrase which threw a monkey wrench in the works: "Transport will move in a simplified mode."

It has yet to be interpreted what kind of "simplification" to which he was referring, but Armenia was reassured that despite the opening of the rail and highway linking Azerbaijan's mainland to the Nakhichevan exclave, Armenian sovereignty would not be compromised. This reassurance comes on the heels of Mr. Lavrov's visits to Ankara and Baku, where it was presumed, a consensus had been reached.

In a broader perspective, Lavrov's statement was part of Moscow's reasserting itself on the global scene; with Russia's war in Ukraine, there was a forgone conclusion that Moscow will not be able to tend to its regional issues and policies. To dispel that perception, Mr. Lavrov took two firm steps. The first was discouraging Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from executing his plan of extending its territorial occupation of Syria and slaughtering the Kurds there friendly to the West. The second step was convincing Aliyev to refrain from

infringing on Armenia's sovereignty in the corridor issue.

The Armenian political establishment had hardly begun to breathe more easily when the Azerbaijani response arrived. This time around it was Ramil Ubasov, the secretary of the National Security Council, who announced that his government had decided to build a railway and a six-lane highway five kilometers south of Armenia's border, through Iran, connecting Azerbaijan's mainland with Nakhichevan. He added, "We have enough with Armenia's bickering."

Indeed, the Iranian side had earlier proposed such a project to Baku and had warned that Tehran would consider any territorial encroachment of Armenia a red line.

The proposal was very intriguing in the sense that the corridor issue was being relegated to the south and thus Zangezur would be safe. But these plans did not last long, as Mr. Aliyev changed the narrative yet again and reverted to his old plan, raising the tone of his rhetoric.

Aliyev called on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group to retire because it has not solved the Karabakh issue for 28 years, while Azerbaijan took care of it through the 44-Day War. In addition, Mr. Aliyev has been asking for a sliver of Armenian territory in the form of the Zangezur Corridor, as war booty. As if those were not enough, Aliyev is threatening to occupy the entire province of Syunik, which he says is part of historic Azerbaijan.



Speaking at the ninth Global Baku Forum, with the theme "Challenge to the Global World Order," Aliyev stated, "If Armenia continues to question the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan will have no other choice and will question the territorial integrity of Armenia. ... Armenia's leadership must give up attempts to rewrite history. History has already been written and there is verbal agreement that nobody will talk about the status [of Karabakh]. Unfortunately, there is talk about that, which could lead to very serious consequences."

As he continued his speech, the language got even more bellicose, as he proclaimed, "a speedy decision to open the Zangezur Corridor is one of the basic elements of the future peace in the region. If we are not allowed to enter and leave, it will be very difficult to talk about peace and all the efforts of Azerbaijan aimed at normal coexistence with Armenia, normal neighborly relations, will be in vain. This is an important issue. Azerbaijan has the right to demand it. The Armenian government has signed a corresponding statement. Second, Azerbaijan, as a country that won the war and suffered from the occupation, has moral rights to demand it."

Deep down, Mr. Aliyev recognizes that Azerbaijan did not win the war. It was Turkey, which used Turkish and Israeli drones, and Pakistani pilots to win the war, at the expense of

*continued on next page*





## ARMENIA

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Gallup Poll Shows 89 percent Of Armenians Oppose Placing Artsakh Under Azeri Rule

In a May 26-28, 2022 Gallup International Association poll, 89.3 percent of Armenia's surveyed citizens said it was unacceptable for them "if the population of Artsakh will be granted the status of a national minority within Azerbaijan." Only 4.4 percent of those surveyed found it to be acceptable.

51 percent of the survey respondents were negatively inclined toward the results of the May 22 trilateral meeting of Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azerbaijan's Pres. Ilham Aliyev and European Union President Charles Michel in Brussels. Only 34.7 percent of the respondents positively assessed the meeting. The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed to unblock transport links between the two countries and establish a road between mainland Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan crossing Armenia's territory.

Those who were surveyed thought that Armenia could receive weapons from: Russia (48.1 percent), France (13.9 percent), United States (6.4 percent), Iran (1.7 percent), CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] (1.1 percent), NATO (0.5 percent), and UN Security Council (0.1 percent).

In an earlier poll conducted on April 2-6, 2022 by Gallup International Association, 57.2 percent of the respondents did not believe that "the current Armenian authorities will be able to sign a peace agreement with Azerbaijan on acceptable terms in the interests of Artsakh and Armenia." 30.4 percent thought it would be possible.

In response to the question as to who is responsible for the tension created in and around Artsakh, 43.8 percent said it was Azerbaijan, 27 percent held Armenia's authorities responsible, 14.1 percent said the Russian peacekeepers, 6.1 percent said the Artsakh authorities, and 3.5 percent put the blame on Turkey.

Of those surveyed, 47.7 percent gave a negative evaluation of Prime Minister Pashinyan's work, while 38.8 percent thought it was positive.

The survey respondents were almost evenly divided between those who said Pashinyan should resign (41.7 percent), and those who said he should not (38.7 percent).

When asked which political party they would vote for if the elections were held nowadays, 20.4 percent said they would support the ruling "Civil Contract" party, 12 percent expressed support for the two opposition parliamentary parties, and 1.7 percent for "Prosperous Armenia." However, 28.8 percent

of those surveyed said they would not vote for any party. The ruling party's rating has declined precipitously from 70.4 percent when Pashinyan first came to power in 2018, and decreased even more from the 53.9 percent of the votes his party received in the June 20, 2021 parliamentary elections.

When asked how they "assessed the current political situation in Armenia," 66.5 percent (two-thirds) of those surveyed gave a negative reply, while only 22.3 percent had a positive opinion.

When asked for their solution to the current political situation in the country, 27.6 percent saw no need for a change, 26.6 percent suggested that new parliamentary elections be held, 21.8 percent favored the formation of a transitional government, and 11.4 percent wanted more pressure exerted on the opposition.

In addition, 45.6 percent were against the recent street protests by the opposition, while 32.5 percent said they were supportive.

46.1 percent supported the confrontational conduct of the Armenian police with the protesters, while 37.2 percent were critical.

In response to a question as to whether the survey respondents were "for establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey without preconditions and opening the borders," 68 percent said they were against it, while only 26.3 percent were in favor.

In conclusion, the Armenian society is sharply divided regarding the country's internal problems. There are those who support Prime Minister Pashinyan and those who prefer that he be replaced. Nevertheless, Pashinyan's popularity has deteriorated significantly in Armenia and most probably in the Diaspora compared to his initial extraordinary popularity in 2018.

On critical issues facing Armenia vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and Turkey, most Armenians are very negatively disposed toward any concessions in order to improve relations with their two hostile neighboring countries.

Respondents to several of the above questions have left no doubt that the Prime Minister's frequent claim that he has "the people's mandate" is no longer true. Pashinyan's and his political party's ratings have diminished substantially, particularly after Armenia's devastating defeat in the 2020 war. His political party won last year's parliamentary elections with around 25 percent of the registered voters, which is a small percentage of Armenia's total population.

Since no such polls are conducted throughout the Diaspora, no one knows Pashinyan's exact rating among Diaspora Armenians. All indications are that his rating in the Diaspora has suffered a precipitous plunge just as in Armenia. Therefore, despite the Prime Minister's extremely high rating when he first came to power in 2018, his followers now form a much smaller portion of Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora.

# Zangezur Corridor: Pathway to Armenia's Destiny

from previous page

12,000 Azerbaijani casualties and the destruction of 75 percent of its military hardware. Aliyev himself has confided that had it not been for Russian mediation, it could not continue the war.

Mr. Aliyev's treatment of the Minsk Group was no less cavalier. "We have already been informed that the Minsk Group co-chairs will not function anymore. It is time for them to retire," he said.

He also added that any mention of the Minsk Group makes Azerbaijan angry. "The reports about my death are greatly exaggerated," Mark Twain famously said. Mr. Aliyev may soon learn that lesson about the Minsk Group from the developments in the region.

As to the fate of the Karabakh Armenians, Mr. Aliyev believes that they can be left to the tender mercies of Azerbaijan's government. He tries to convince the world that Azerbaijan is a multiethnic country and the security and rights of Armenians will be respected. In a country where hate against Armenians is taught to children from kindergarten, where a museum of hate has been built, no Armenian in his right mind can believe he can live there safely. Before the Karabakh war for independence, there were 500,000 Armenians living in Baku and Sumgait (700,000 according to Samuel Babayan) and they were expelled and slaughtered through pogroms in the early stages of that war, which goes to show the benevolence and tolerance of the Azerbaijani government.

Although it is believed that Mr. Lavrov has convinced Aliyev about the status of the Zangezur Corridor, an acrimonious backstabbing continues between Baku and Moscow, as Azerbaijan has blocked the Ria Novosti and Sputnik Russian websites because they have aired an interview by the State Minister of Karabakh Artak Beglaryan. Moscow has retaliated in kind by blocking Azerbaijan's official news site, Trend.

While Azerbaijan threatens Armenia's territorial integrity, its friends and allies are keeping complete silence. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan raised the issue at the last CSTO foreign ministers' meeting in Yerevan, requesting an answer to the protest lodged by Armenia to that body a year ago when Azerbaijan occupied 45 kilometers of Armenian territory, but the CSTO leadership kept dead silent. That was no surprise because all the members of CSTO, a defense partnership of which Armenia is a member and Azerbaijan is not, congratulated the latter upon winning the war. Some members, like Belarus, even supplied deadly weapons to Azerbaijan, making a mockery of that alliance.

But all is not lost yet. By compiling the news about recent developments, we can build block by block a more optimistic scenario. Mr. Lavrov's assertive statement about the

corridor is one such positive step forward.

On the other hand, the demise of the OSCE format has been proven wrong recently. That group is the last and best hope for Karabakh Armenians, because it represents the only forum which keeps insisting that the status of Karabakh has not been resolved yet and has to be resolved peacefully. That insistence is an indirect reprimand to Azerbaijan, which claims to have resolved the issue through military force.

It is understandable why Azerbaijan's leaders "get angry" when they hear about the Minsk Group, because that format may undo what they claim they have achieved.

A parallel format had been floated by Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia to resolve regional conflicts, namely the 3+3 Format, led by Russia, Turkey and Iran, which would be complemented by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

That format at first had potential for supporting Turkish and Azerbaijani positions and deep down, it was proposed as a counterweight to the West in the Caucasus, which was represented in the OSCE format. Fortunately, the 3+3 Format was dead on arrival.

The next positive development is the visit to the region by US Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried, who met with President Aliyev and the leadership in Armenia this past week. In an interview with RFE/RL in Yerevan, she stated that the US is willing to continue to

cooperate with Russia in facilitating a settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

This is bad news for Mr. Aliyev and others who have assumed that because of the Ukraine war, the US would not cooperate with Russia on any issues. When asked whether Washington is ready for a fresh contact with Moscow for that purpose, Donfried answered, "Yes, Russia is a Minsk Group co-chair. France, the US and Russia would continue in that format."

When asked about Aliyev's warlike rhetoric, she answered, "People need to be mindful about their words."

These are delicate times and developing trends may eventually bring about a favorable outcome for Armenia, if the leadership there can demonstrate a correct reading of the situation.

The enemy is one threat to Armenia while the incompetence of the government and the opposition is another handicap. The opposition is out to oust Pashinyan and the government is retaliating with a witch hunt while the country is facing fierce enemies just beyond the border. If both factions can get their acts together, all hope will not be lost.

If the Zangezur Corridor issue is resolved in Armenia's favor, war will be averted and Armenia's survival would be guaranteed. If, however, it is resolved in Azerbaijan's favor, Armenia's existential struggle may not last very long.

IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE WHY AZERBAIJAN'S LEADERS  
"GET ANGRY" WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT THE MINSK  
GROUP, BECAUSE THAT FORMAT MAY UNDO WHAT  
THEY CLAIM THEY HAVE ACHIEVED.





# Growing Up Armenian-Cypriot: Caught Between Two Fronts

By Angelina Der Arakelian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“So, where are you from?” This is a common question to which an Armenian born and raised in Cyprus cannot articulate a simple answer.

Armenians in Cyprus today date back from the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide in 1915, when thousands had migrated from the Ottoman Empire to the small Mediterranean island close by. But the history of Armenians present in Cyprus originated much earlier than that, with the first links between Armenia and Cyprus being formed in 578 AD. Following that, during the Middle Ages, Cyprus formed an extensive connection with the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

At present, Armenians in Cyprus make up a small minority of about 3,500 out of the total population of 1.2 million. While a majority of Armenians are Cypriot born, about 1,000 have immigrated from the Republic of Armenia as well as other countries in the Armenian diaspora, such as Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

## Mislabeled as a Religious Group

Despite Armenians having been present on the island for centuries, the way they have been perceived has altered over time.

Before 1960, Armenians co-existed with two other primary nationalities, Greeks and Turks, under British rule. Following the independence of Cyprus, when Greeks governed the island, Armenians were asked which side they would like to live on; the area designated to Greeks, or the area that was allocated to Turks. Today, Armenian Cypriots co-exist with Greek Cypriots, living in the southern side of Cyprus despite the existence of the Saint Magar Monastery located on the northern Turkish side, which indicates of course that they once lived there too.

Armenians have maintained strong relations with Greeks, particularly as they were



than a people with its own nation, language and culture.

## Armenian Identity after Invasion of 1974

After the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974, the distinctions between Greeks and Turks became even stronger. Each possessing land of their own, Greeks and Turks have since defined their share of the island.

With two dominant nations clashing over a communal problem, the Armenians, forming a minority community, have been forced to assimilate into the majority – in this case, the Greeks, as mentioned by Andrekos Varnavas in his study in *The Cyprus Review* (Vol. 22.2, Fall 2010).

In this context, Armenians have had to deal with multiple questions regarding the status of their nationality, and to some extent, their culture. As an Armenian Cypriot myself, I have faced multiple episodes of questioning, both from myself and others.

*Where am I from?* My name, language and culture tell me I’m Armenian. My birthplace and location tell me I’m Cypriot. How do I distinguish between the two?

If the idea of being Cypriot is based on belonging to one of the mainstream communities - Greek or Turkish - then what happens when I declare that I am neither?

## Maintaining Armenian Identity in Cyprus

Following the closure of the Melkonian boarding school, Cyprus’ only remaining Armenian school is Nareg, which operates in the cities of Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol.

I am grateful to have been able to attend an Armenian elementary school that taught me the Armenian language from the very beginning of my education, and for having the chance to immerse myself in an Armenian community, no matter how small in size.

Most Armenians are trilingual, speaking English, Armenian and Greek; some speak four languages (with the older generation still speaking Turkish). Some may also learn French or another foreign language at a private secondary school.

Outside of school, clubs run by organizations such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) function to keep the Armenian community together.

Armenians have been present in Cyprus for as long as Greeks and Turks have, along with numerous other communities. The fact that Armenians have been grouped as a religious minority gives the impression that their main distinguishing factor is their religion.

As with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, Cyprus’ Constitution has yet to recognize Armenian Cypriots as an ethnic people, with their own country, language and culture. Instead, they are perceived as a “religious group” which has resulted in the unequal footing of Armenians in terms of having their voice heard as Cypriots.

Since the choice that was made in 1960, Armenians have lived with Greeks, setting their ethnicity and culture aside to foster a smooth transition from British to Greek and Turkish rule.

Still, to this day, Armenian Cypriots, born and raised in Cyprus, don’t have their voice heard fully. Despite being able to vote in elections, they don’t have a vote in Parliament through their elected representative, and an Armenian-Cypriot cannot qualify as a presidential candidate, which leads me to wonder, *Where am I from?*

*Angelina Der Arakelian is a published author and poet born in Cyprus. She is currently studying film and English at the University of Southampton as an aspiring filmmaker. She is also a freelance writer and journalist, with a passion for exploring history and its effects on society today.*

## LETTERS

### Organizations That Solicit Donations Need to Show Accountability

To the Editor:

I think that everyone will agree that the most important qualities that charitable organizations have are transparency, accountability and fulfilling their fiduciary duty to their donors by administering funds according to legal and ethical guidelines. My numerous experiences with several organizations in the community makes me comfortable stating that the Armenian General Benevolent Union is the gold standard amongst these organizations. My experience is that they don’t take their donors for granted and provide financial information and answers before questions need to be asked. The Armenian Diocese also fosters transparency via the Diocesan Council, yearly Assemblies and real elections which also help to foster confidence in the organization as well.

However, there are organizations that don’t go to the aforementioned lengths to be transparent. Their financials aren’t made easily public and questions/critiques by donors are ignored and sidestepped and information spun for the sake of expediency. Arrogance and selective ethics exhibited by the hierarchy which is exacerbated by a lack of oversight as well as the mindset that the organization is doing the donors a favor by accepting their money, is promoted and protected by a cult like mentality exhibited by their backers. Subjective decisions and actions in the name of the organization go unchallenged and sometimes loyalty to the organization and its leaders by the expanded hierarchy/ backers replaces acceptable ethical and sometimes even legal protocols ... another example of a cult-like mentality. They depend upon the community’s apathy, naivety or need to be part of a so-called “select group.”

This mentality is detrimental to the growth of the organization despite whatever good they seem to be doing. You would think that falling membership and diminished revenue might be a red flag but unfortunately it’s not the case. As long as an organization doesn’t have broad based/grass roots financial support and depends upon a handful of donors for that support, its foundation is weak.

Unfortunately, the exuberance to donate money to such organizations in an effort to support our people replaces objectively scrutinizing them beforehand and results in exacerbating the aforementioned negatives. Speaking from personal experience it’s important to do due diligence and prioritized objectivity over blind support and socially active involvement in such an organization.

I’m intentionally not pointing a finger at any one organization. My purpose in writing this opinion letter to the editor is to raise a red flag. It’s up to others to look and actually objectively see and listen and objectively hear. “It takes a village” to bring about change.

Adrienne G. Alexanian  
New York City



Angelina Der Arakelian

united by a common Christian religion, and both face a common rival, Turkey, so, naturally, the decision was to co-exist with Greeks, rather than Turks.

Upon that decision, Armenians were categorized as a special group of people. Today Armenian Cypriots are recognized as a “religious group,” one of three along with Latins and Maronites.

The use of this term has been subject to misunderstanding and confusion. It has confused the identity of Armenian Cypriots because by definition, a religious group implies a group of people defined by their religion, and not their nation or nationality.

As such, Armenian Cypriots can easily be misjudged as a religious group, rather