

Turkey Warns
Armenia against
'New Provocations'

By Armen Koloyan

ANKARA (RFE/RL) — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu has called on Armenia to “refrain from new provocations” several days after Yerevan and Baku traded accusations over an escalation of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh that left at least three people dead.



Foreign Minister of Turkey Mevlut Çavusoglu

Speaking at a gathering of Turkish diplomats in Ankara on Monday, August 8, Çavusoglu reportedly also reiterated his country’s vision of peace in the South Caucasus region.

“After the end of the war [in Karabakh], Turkey is making efforts to ensure peace in the region. Now we are talking not about Azerbaijan’s occupied territories, displaced people, refugees and a conflict that can start again at any moment, but about regional peace and cooperation. We again call on Armenia to refrain from participating in new provocations [against Azerbaijan in Karabakh],” Çavusoglu said.

On August 3, ethnic Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh said that two Armenian soldiers were killed and nearly two dozen others wounded in what they described as an attack by Azerbaijani forces against their military positions along the Lachin corridor conducted with the use of drones, mortars and grenade launchers.

Baku, for its part, said that an operation codenamed “Retribution” was launched by its forces after one Azerbaijani soldier was killed by Armenian forces in the area on August 1.

Azerbaijan also claimed to have captured some strategic heights in the mountainous region overlooking the corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh with see WARNING, page 20

Azerbaijan Accused of Seeking to Scrap Ceasefire

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday, August 4, accused Azerbaijan of trying to walk away from the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement that stopped the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh in November 2020.

Speaking the day after two Karabakh Armenian soldiers were killed and 19 others wounded in fighting with Azerbaijani forces, Pashinyan also urged Russia to do more to prevent further ceasefire violations. He said that Baku has been stepping up such violations despite the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in Karabakh.

“In these circumstances, it is becoming imperative to adjust details of the [Russian] peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh,” Pashinyan told a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan.

“We expect that any attempt to cross the line of contact will be stopped by the peacekeeping troops of the Russian Federation,” he said.



Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh (Foreign Policy photo)

The Russian Defense Ministry effectively blamed the Azerbaijani side for Wednesday’s hostilities in Karabakh that reportedly involved Azerbaijani drone attacks and

mortar fire. Its peacekeeping contingent intervened to halt the fighting.

The Azerbaijani army admitted striking see CEASEFIRE, page 5

Karabakh to Evacuate Settlers from Corridor to Armenia
Amid Rising Tensions, Sustained Attacks by Azerbaijan

STEPANAKERT (Combined Sources) — Bowing to strong pressure from Azerbaijan, authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh have ordered ethnic Armenian residents of the Lachin corridor connecting the territory to Armenia to leave their homes before the end of this month.

The five-kilometer-wide corridor became Karabakh’s sole overland link to Armenia following the 2020 war. Armenian forces pulled out of the rest of the wider Lachin district under the terms of the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the six-week hostilities.

The truce accord calls for the con-



Aghavno village

struction of a new Armenia-Karabakh highway that will bypass the town of Lachin and two Armenian-populated villages located within the current see EVACUATION, page 2

Pashinyan Ally Downplays
'Differences' Over Russian
Peacekeepers

By Naira Nalbandian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — An Armenian pro-government lawmaker has denied any major differences between Yerevan and Moscow over the activities of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh after last week’s deadly fighting in the disputed region.

Vigen Khachatryan, a member of the ruling Civil Contract faction, said on Monday, August 8, that the situation is far from being described as “tensions” or “differences”, but rather it is a result of a lack of understanding.

Following clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces along the Lachin corridor near Nagorno-Karabakh early last week that reportedly left two Armenian and see PEACEKEEPERS, page 6



Dr. Raymond Damadian, Inventor of the MRI, Dies

NEW YORK — Raymond Vahan Damadian, MD, died on August 3. He was 86.

Dr. Damadian was an AAHPO member, physician, medical practitioner, and inventor of the first MR (magnetic resonance) scanning machine, a method now well known as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Dr. Damadian was a distinguished speaker at the Armenian Medical World Congress in New York in 2009, hosted by AAHPO.

Damadian was born on March 16, 1936 in New York City to Vahan and Odette (Yazedjian) Damadian. He earned his

bachelor’s degree in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1956, and an M.D. degree from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City in 1960.

A multi-talented individual, he studied the violin at Juilliard for 8 years, and played in Junior Davis Cup tennis competitions. Dr. Damadian met his future wife, Donna Terry, while he had a job as a tennis coach. The two married a year after he finished medical school, and they had three children.

see DAMADIAN, page 9

LONDON
Shia Muslims Storm the
Embassy of Azerbaijan
in London



INDIA
Armenia Wins
Silver at Chess
Olympiad in
India



PENNSYLVANIA
Hank Mardigian:
A Life in Music





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Tourism Going Strong in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — As of August 1, the number of tourists visiting Armenia reached 770,000, Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan wrote on his Facebook page. In July alone, the number of tourists was 188,856.

A few days ago, at the press conference held in the press hall of Armenpress, Chairman of the Tourism Committee of Armenia Sisian Boghosyan stated that the most tourists — almost 56 percent — come to Armenia from Russia, followed by Iran, Germany, Georgia and the US.

In terms of attracting tourists to Armenia, the Tourism Committee has identified France and the UAE as new source markets.

Azerbaijan to Turn Berdzor Church into Mosque

STEPANAKERT (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijan is planning to turn the Armenian church of the Holy Resurrection in Berdzor into a mosque, the Council for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh said on August 9.

According to the Azerbaijani project, the belfry of the dome and the spire will be dismantled, and two minarets will be built onto the structure instead.

“Azerbaijan is going to great lengths to destroy, desecrate and ruin Armenian monuments, and in order not to avoid new such scenes after August 25, evacuation of historical and cultural heritage from Berdzor, Aghavno and Nerkin Sus is underway,” said Lernik Hovhannisyan, Karabakh’s Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

Church Commemorates Council of Ephesus

ECHMIADZIN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian Apostolic Church commemorated 200 pontiffs participating in the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus on Saturday, August 6, Qahana.am reports.

The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus was convened in A.D. 431, during the reign of Roman Emperor Theodosius II. 200 pontiffs participated in the Council with the goal to criticize the false teaching of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople. According to his teaching there were two independent — divine and human natures in Christ, contrasting each other. Nestorius preached that Christ was born as a simple man and only later divinity was settled in His Person, and therefore, the Holy Virgin Mary was not Godmother, but the mother of a simple man.

The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus condemned the teaching of Nestorius and adopted the teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria, according to which the divine and human natures of Christ do not exist separately, but are united.

Karabakh to Evacuate Settlers from Corridor to Armenia Amid Rising Tensions, Sustained Attacks by Azerbaijan

EVACUATION, from page 1

corridor protected by Russian peacekeeping troops.

Karabakh’s leadership revealed on August 2 that Azerbaijan has demanded through the peacekeepers the quick closure of the existing corridor and suggested that the Armenian side use a bypass road which has yet to be constructed. Armenia’s government dismissed the demands as “not legitimate” before two Karabakh Armenian soldiers were killed and 19 others wounded on August 3 in heavy fighting with Azerbaijani forces.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan argued on August 4 that the truce accord requires Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia to work out before 2024 a joint “plan” for the construction of a new Armenia-Karabakh road. No such plan has been drawn up yet, he said.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said, however, that the three sides agreed on the “route” of the new corridor earlier this year and accused Yerevan of dragging out work on its Armenian sections.

Later that day, the few remaining residents of the town of Lachin said local officials told them to evacuate the town for good. A senior official from Stepanakert, Hayk Khanumyan, communicated the same order to some 200 people living in the nearby village of Aghavno at a meeting on Friday.

“He said that the Azerbaijanis will come and the Russians will leave [the current corridor] on August 25,” Mariam Hakobyan, an Aghavno resident, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

“The people [of Aghavno] look like they are hypnotized,” she said. “We don’t know what to do.”

Hakobyan said that the Karabakh government promised that each Aghavno family will receive 10 million drams (\$24,000) for buying a new home in Karabakh or Armenia. He dismissed the promised aid, saying that it is well below the current housing prices.

“We have nowhere to go,” said Anna Margaryan, who lives in the town of Lachin with her family.

Officials in Yerevan and Stepanakert did not publicly comment on the planned evacuation.

It is also unclear how traffic between Armenia and Karabakh will be carried out if the existing Lachin corridor is handed over to Baku by the end of this month.

More than a dozen kilometers south of the corridor, Azerbaijani and Turkish firms are reportedly completing the construction of a 32-kilometer-long highway that should link up to new road sections in Armenia and Karabakh. Work on those sections has yet to start in earnest.

US, Europe Call for ‘De-escalation’

The Ministry of Defense of Russia this week confirmed that the Azerbaijani military breached the ceasefire in the Sotk section of Gegharkunik Province, which led to an Armenian serviceman being wounded. However, many other nations still do not ascribe blame to that country.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for continued dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan late on Friday, August 5, when he phoned the leaders of the two states to discuss the latest upsurge in violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

“I urged continued restraint and direct dialogue with Azerbaijan to resolve these issues,” Blinken tweeted after his phone call with Pashinyan.

In a separate tweet, he said he assured Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that the United States is ready to facilitate such dialogue.

According to the US State Department spokesman, Ned Price, Blinken also “called for de-escalation” during his conversation with Aliyev. He told Pashinyan that Washington is “watching the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh closely,” said Price.

Pashinyan was cited by his office as accusing Azerbaijan of “deviating” from key terms of the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 war in Karabakh.

“Secretary of State Blinken expressed concern about the tension and willingness to assist in stabilizing the situation,” added the office.

The State Department urged “immediate steps to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation” on Wednesday hours after two Karabakh Armenian soldiers were killed and 19 others wounded in fighting with Azerbaijani forces.

“The recent increase in tensions underscores the need for a negotiated, comprehensive, and sustainable settlement of all remaining issues related to or resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,” said Price.

Blinken already held phone calls with Pashinyan and Aliyev on July 25. He said afterwards that he sees a “historic opportunity to achieve peace in the region.”

European Council President Charles Michel also spoke with the Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders by phone. Michel indicated on Friday night that he is poised to host fresh negotiations between them in Brussels.

“Ahead of our next leaders’ meeting in Brussels, pursuing dialogue and achieving concrete progress on all items on the agenda

is key,” he wrote on Twitter.

President of France Emmanuel Macron is closely following the developments in the South Caucasus, the French presidency said in a statement.

According to the statement, Macron talked over the phone with Aliyev and “called for everything to be done to avoid an escalation and to give full scope to negotiations with Armenia.”

“[President Macron] expressed his concern over the serious incidents that have occurred in recent days, particularly in the area of the Lachin corridor. He called for everything to be done to avoid an escalation and to give full scope to negotiations with Armenia. He stressed the importance of respecting the commitments made under the ceasefire agreement of November 9, 2020,” the French presidency said.

“France remains in close contact with the parties and with its partners in order to continue to support and contribute to efforts in favor of dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan and for stability in the region.”

The Elysee Palace also noted that Macron had a phone conversation with Pashinyan the day before as well.

The President of the European Council Charles Michel held phone conversations with Pashinyan and Aliyev regarding the latest developments in the region, he wrote on his Facebook page.

“We are working together to ensure de-escalation and open communication. Ahead of the next meeting of the leaders in Brussels, the continuation of the dialogue and the achievement of clear progress on all issues on the agenda are of key importance. The EU remains committed,” Michel wrote.

US Members of Congress Speak out

US Rep. Brenda Lawrence strongly condemned Azerbaijan’s use of military pressure against Artsakh along the Lachin Corridor, on her Twitter page.

“I urge the Department of State to use any diplomatic tool at our disposal to prevent such an attack,” she wrote.

The US Department of State should use all its diplomatic tools to hold Azerbaijan’s leadership accountable for the attacks against Artsakh, US Rep. Jan Schakowsky said.

“Azerbaijan should be held accountable for once again violating the ceasefire agreement with Armenia. I call on the Department of State to use all its diplomatic tools to hold Aliyev’s regime accountable for the attacks against Artsakh and to prevent further massacres,” Schakowsky wrote on her Twitter page.

US Rep. Lori Trehan called on the United States and allied countries to condemn the latest violence against Artsakh by Azerbaijan, on her Twitter page.

“I’ve heard from many Armenian Americans in Massachusetts who are rightly outraged by Azerbaijan’s latest violent attack that has led to tragic and unnecessary loss of life. The U.S. and our allies must condemn this violence and work diplomatically to prevent future escalation,” she wrote.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) condemned Azerbaijan’s latest attack against Artsakh, calling for the immediate withdrawal of Aliyev’s troops.

Chairman Menendez’s tweet reads: “Azerbaijan’s deadly attacks in Nagorno-Karabakh are not only in violation of the ceasefire but also an unacceptable continuation of its recent pattern of aggression. Azerbaijani forces must withdraw from the region & end hostilities against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.”

House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff (D-CA) condemned Azerbaijan’s latest attack against Artsakh, and calls for an end to U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan, the immediate return of Armenian POWs, and expansion of aid to Artsakh.

Schiff issued the following statement after Azerbaijan’s attack:

“I am deeply disturbed by reports of casualties, including two Armenian soldiers, in Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Artsakh — the result of Azerbaijan’s direct violation of its ceasefire agreement with Armenia. This is hardly the first time Azerbaijan has attacked Armenian forces unprovoked, and unless the United States takes immediate action to hold the Aliyev regime accountable, it will not be the last. It is imperative the State Department use all of its diplomatic channels and levers to reduce tensions and show America’s unwavering support for Armenian sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Artsakh.

“In this year’s national defense funding legislation and for years past, I have repeatedly called for the immediate release of all Armenian prisoners of war and captured civilians, tens of millions in humanitarian aid and economic assistance for Artsakh, a full prohibition on U.S. security assistance to Azerbaijan, and renewed American engagement through the OSCE Minsk Group to reinvigorate the peace process. Each of these actions is critical to defending the Armenian people, and sending a resolute message that America can and will defend democracy around the world.

“I will always stand with the people of Armenia and Artsakh.”

(Reports from Azatutyun and Armenpress were used to compile this report.)



ARMENIA

Russian Border Guards Set Up Road Checkpoints in Southern Armenia

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Citing increased drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities, Russian border guards controlling Armenia’s border with Iran have set up checkpoints along several roads in the country’s southern Syunik province.

Images of such checkpoints along the road linking Meghri to other towns appeared on the internet earlier this week, raising speculations about possible preparations for the opening of transit routes for Azerbaijan via the strategic mountainous region.

Syunik is the Armenian province through which Azerbaijan expects to get a highway and railroad connection with its western exclave of Nakhichevan under the terms of the Russia-brokered 2020 ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. Under the document, Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) is to ensure the security of traffic along the transport routes in Armenia for Azerbaijan.

Yerevan insists that it should maintain sovereignty over the roads, while Baku is seeking an extraterritorial status for them

amounting to a corridor similar to the Russia-controlled Lachin corridor that connects Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh.

At a government session on August 4, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again implicitly rejected the corridor logic for the unblocking of regional transport routes, saying that Azerbaijan even today can use all parts of Armenia, and not only Syunik, for transit purposes in accordance with Armenian legislation.

“We have been saying all the while that we are ready to provide this connection between the western districts of Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. We are ready to ensure this connection even today, but it is Azerbaijan that does not use these opportunities offered by us. Even today we say: come, cross the border of Armenia, go to Nakhichevan in the manner prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia,” Pashinyan said.

Pashinyan spoke after the latest escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh in which at least two Armenian and one Azerbaijani soldiers were killed in fresh fighting near the Lachin corridor where Russian peacekeepers are deployed under the terms of the 2020

ceasefire.

Amid the escalation ethnic Armenian authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh announced that several Armenian villages along the current corridor would be evacuated until September when Armenians are to start using an alternative road connecting Armenia and the Armenian-populated region.

Bagrat Zakaryan, mayor of Meghri, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Tuesday that the Russian checkpoints recently spotted in Syunik were actually set up several months ago. In total, he said, five such checkpoints were placed at roads leading from Meghri to several towns and villages in Syunik.

After media reports about the installation of new Russian checkpoints near Meghri, the FSB Border Guards Department in Armenia explained that it was done in coordination with Armenian authorities to prevent illegal cross-border activities.

“In order to expose, prevent and thwart cases of smuggling, illegal migration and other offenses, in accordance with the law of the Republic of Armenia ‘On the State Border’ and in coordination with the Government, the National Security Service and

other competent bodies of the Republic of Armenia, a number of equipped positions were formed earlier this year for the implementation of the border control service,” it said.

According to the FSB, a tense situation has been observed recently at the Meghri section of the Armenian-Iranian state border due to increased attempts of illegally smuggling drugs and psychoactive substances from Iran to Armenia. Moreover, according to the Russian side, violations of the border by representatives of extremist and terrorist groups were also recorded.

“Last year, in the area of the border guard detachment of Meghri, Russian border guards arrested two armed persons who had a large amount of weapons and ammunition with them,” the FSB said.

Armenian government officials have not yet commented on the presence of Russian checkpoints along the roads in Syunik.

Meanwhile, Meghri’s mayor acknowledged that the checkpoints create certain problems for local tourism.

“Tourists have to go through passport control procedures before they can visit several rural areas here,” Zakaryan said.

Hand in Hand Repairs Mobile Dental Vehicle Reaching Artsakh’s Rural Residents

YEREVAN — Hand In Hand is dedicated to delivering free dental services to the people of Artsakh. The clinics are located in Stepanakert, Martuni, Martakert, Karmir Shuka and Yerevan. Run by a team of 23 full-time local staff dedicated to the service of the Artsakh population. In total, the clinics see on average more than 11,000 visits every year for free.

A casualty of the 2020 Artsakh war was one of the two mobile clinics lost in the occupied territory. This winter, Hand in Hand finished a \$9,000 renovation of the remaining mobile vehicle making access to the rural villagers possible again this spring once the snow and ice melted off the alpine roads. It will run March-April through October-November, weather permitting.

The vehicle allows for village children and some displaced adults to get checked by a dentist for preventive care instead of letting dental problems continue. Offering comprehensive care including, complete exams, cleaning, x-rays, fillings, extractions, sealants, and space maintainers.

The Mobile Clinic provides therapeutic, minor surgical and oral cavity disease prevention services to the population villages of Artsakh. The vehicle has full facilities for comprehensive dental treatment, including a chair, light, handpiece delivery unit, compressor, suction and digital x-rays, computer and dental software and sterilization equipment and supplies.

In addition to providing care, the staff also share knowledge about nutrition as



Providing care in the mobile clinic

well as oral hygiene instruction in each village, which will serve people for their entire lives.

Presently, the mobile clinic is being stationed in Stepanakert, outside of our office, to care for the displaced children.

Hand in Hand’s vision is for all the children and people of Artsakh to have strong oral health that will save them pain, money, poor health and set them up for confidence and well-being throughout their life.

All services provided are made possible by the support of donors making them absolutely free to the people of Artsakh. Consider visiting our website, handinhand.am to contribute to this important mission.



The mobile dental clinic



Mary next to the picture of her husband

FASF Awards \$50,000 Grant to Fund

YEREVAN — Friends of the Armenian Soldier and Family (FASF) has issued a grant to the Insurance Foundation for Servicemen (IFS) for \$50,000.

FASF was founded in 2021 in response to the distressing humanitarian crisis affecting Armenian soldiers and their families following the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

FASF aims to create a continuous culture of giving and continued monthly donations that will be used to support each veteran and his family in rebuilding their lives and regaining stability.

Donations and grants enable 1000Plus, the official first grant recipient of FASF, to make compensation and ensure the dignity of the families of fallen heroes and soldiers who acquired a disability of 1st and 2nd grade or are deceased due to war.

The compensated funds can be used by beneficiaries of 1000Plus for items such as health care, medical expenses, rehabilitation, food, clothing, career training, continuing education programs, etc.

Over the past year, FASF has raised over \$150 000 USD for humanitarian support to the families of the injured and diseased Armenian soldiers. FASF allows its donors to make tax-deductible donations and invite their friends and families to join their circle and get notified once they join.

To contact FASF (EIN #: 86-2191892), visit Website: www.fasf.org, email: info@fasf.org or Donate: www.donations.fasf.org



Aghabek and Geghec



ARMENIA

Family Who Lost Their Home in War in 2020 Gets New House through Tufenkian Foundation

HERHER, Artsakh — The Hayrapetyan family of Herher, whose house was destroyed in the 2020 War, received the keys to their new home on July 28.

The Hayrapetyan's home was hit twice by Azerbaijani fire in October 2020. "Our house was completely destroyed in the war and no longer habitable," Mher Hayrapetyan, who was born in the village and raised in that home, explained. "We are thankful for the Tufenkian Foundation and all its donors, as well as to the construction team renovating our home and allowing us to stay in our village," he added.

Mher and his wife Arina's two sons, who participated in the 2020 War, continue to serve in Artsakh's Armed Forces. All four members of the Grigoryan family actively participated in building their new home, lending a helping hand to the construction crew. "We couldn't idly watch as they worked. We're able-bodied and wanted to do our part to help. My sons would come on their days off and work with the crew," Mher explained.

An intimate ceremony to mark the house's handover was attended by the extended Hayrapetyan family, Herher Mayor Arman Aleksanyan, and the Tufenkian Foundation's Stepanakert and Yerevan offices.

"Many organizations have come to Art-



The Hayrapetyan's new home in Herher (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

sakh over the years and done their part to help our people in our time of need. The Tufenkian Foundation's continued work is unparalleled, though. Their professionalism, attention to detail, and approach to the families are greatly appreciated," Aleksanyan said in his toast to the Hayrapetyan family and the Tufenkian Foundation.



The Hayrapetyan family during construction (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)



Herher Mayor Arman Aleksanyan (far R) drinks a toast to the Hayrapetyan family and the Tufenkian Foundation (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)



A part of the damage to the roof of the Hayrapetyan home. The house was hit by Azerbaijani fire in Oct. 2020. (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

After consultations with Artsakh authorities following the 2020 War, the Tufenkian Foundation decided that it would carry out its work in the Herher cluster Martuni region of Artsakh: in Herher and its surrounding villages, including Tsovategh, Kherkhan, and Machkalashen. The Hayrapetyan home is one of several in the region that the Foundation has renovated or rebuilt since the Nov. 2020 ceasefire agreement.

The Tufenkian Foundation has also assembled an integrated plan composed of complementary initiatives that contribute to meeting the educational, health, economic, and other needs in Artsakh's Martuni region.



Mher Hayrapetyan (R) drinks a toast at the ceremony held on July 28 (Photo: Tufenkian Foundation)

'We Lack Teachers': Serob Khachatryan

By **Gevorg Gyulumyan**
Special for Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Serob Khachatryan, a specialist in education who teaches at Yerevan State University in the Department of Philosophy and Psychology and served as executive director of the Children of Armenia Fund from 2010 to 2013, recently spoke about the dearth of teachers in the country.

He summarized university admission results for the 2022-2023 academic year: "The Republic of Armenia needs about 150 teachers every year, according to the data. This year, for example, at the Pedagogical University, about forty applicants were admitted in the field of elementary pedagogy, in the history, social studies, Armenian language and literature, English, Russian, and German departments. The science departments are in a more tragic situation, where only seven people were admitted."

He added that he had predicted this un-

fortunate situation earlier.

He explained, "For example, the biology major is in the 'best' shape among natural science subjects, as there are fifteen applicants. However, all fifteen applicants failed their examinations. Applicants to geography, information science and chemistry majors also recorded similar results. Only one person passed the exam in physics, and six in mathematics."

The expert noted with sorrow that the professions which schools rely on to progress are in decline — that is, today we are facing the danger of losing the essence of the schools, because this trend is constantly accelerating.

He said: "It's sad, but if in the near future, the vacant places of students are not filled, at least with applications for distant places, then in addition to pedagogical problems, we will also see serious financial problems of the Pedagogical University, which you can understand what they can lead to."

Speaking about the reasons and solu-

tions, Khachatryan said he believed that the ministry responsible for education needs to develop simple, accessible, high-quality printed and electronic resources for subjects, through which students without a teacher can learn independently under the guidance of a non-specialist. This option will make it possible to save capable children. He said that if these and other steps are not taken, then in just four years a shameful situation will exist, which will end the development of Armenian pedagogical thought.

"One of the options, despite being problematic, is the enlargement of schools, or the ministry should ask private companies to send their employees to teach schools for a while (1-2 years) while maintaining their salaries," he said.

The specialist also suggested supporting the Teach for Armenia program, which has provided significant help to schools in Armenia and Artsakh in recent years.

"Like the Pedagogical University, the



Serob Khachatryan

Agrarian University is also in bad shape this year," Khachatryan concluded, adding that although these two universities are the ones in the worst condition, others are not free from the abovementioned dangers, which may be caused in the coming years if appropriate measures are not taken.



INTERNAYIONAL

International Medal Bestowed by Cyprus's President On Former Australian Official Kerkyasharian

NICOSIA — The former long-standing leader of the major multicultural agencies of the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW), Stepan Kerkyasharian, has been awarded the Medal of Outstanding Contribution by the president of Cyprus. The medal was presented on July 28 in Nicosia at the World Conference of the Cyprus Diaspora by President of the Republic of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades.

The presidential citation of the medal to Kerkyasharian (AO, Hon.D.Litt.), who was born and raised in Cyprus, states: “You make us in Cyprus feel extremely proud of you.”

It continued: “You have worked tirelessly, with perseverance and determination and you have achieved an important career path, as an outstanding leader, recognized for your pivotal role in fostering multiculturalism in Australia.

“You have championed debate and policy change to improve the well-being of under-represented communities on issues like religious practices, immigration law, refugee settlement, migrant qualifications and community relationships thus becoming a major influence in shaping community harmony.

“Through your work, your exceptional achievements, the core values and principles that you exemplify as a person, and most notably your long-standing contribution to the Cypriot Community in Australia, you became a pioneer in giving migrant voices a national platform.”

Speaking from Nicosia, Kerkyasharian who was the foundation head of the Special Broadcasting Service's Radio Division from 1979 to 1988 and chair of the NSW



Stepan Kerkyasharian speaking, with Cyprus's President Nicos Anastasiades to the right

Community Relations Commission (formerly Ethnic Affairs Commission) from 1989 to 2014 said, “It is a privilege and at the same time greatly humbling to be honoured by the country, the people and the president of the country which has given me life and which opened its arms and accepted my orphaned parents who had survived the Armenian Genocide.”

“In the 1950's I went to school across the road from this presidential palace when I witnessed the struggle for independence, for the right of a people to be masters of their own destiny and to practice their own culture and language. That has guided me throughout my life, to support the basic human right of people to freely practice their language, religion and culture.”

Kerkyasharian went on to say that the honor he had received “recognises the con-

tribution of all those I've worked with over those years.”

“I was very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to make a contribution to the development of our great multicultural society which is today not only a reality but is accurately reflected in the new parliament in Canberra.

Michael Christodoulou, president of the Federation of Cypriot Communities of Australia and New Zealand said in turn: “We are deeply honored that one of ours has been recognised in his birthplace with this rare acknowledgment of his international achievements.”

Present at the awarding ceremony was High Commissioner of Australia to Cyprus Fiona McKergow, who congratulated Kerkyasharian on behalf of the Australian government.

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey to Pay in Rubles for Gas

MOSCOW (Armenpress) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have agreed to start payment in rubles for Russian gas supplies to Turkey, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Alexander Novak announced this week, according to Ria Novosti.

“Gas supplies to the Republic of Turkey were discussed, which are supplied in a rather large volume, 26 billion cubic meters per year. During the negotiations, the presidents agreed that we will start partial payment in rubles,” Novak told reporters.

He noted that they talked about the transition to national currencies gradually, and in the first stage, part of the supplies will be paid in Russian rubles.

EU Approves 14 Million Euro Grant

STRASBOURG (Public Radio of Armenia) — The European Union has approved disbursements of 14.2 million euros in grants for two budget programs, for justice reform and Covid relief. This decision follows a positive assessment on progress in the selected sector reform areas, macroeconomic stability, public financial management and state budget transparency.

“These disbursements are a result of successful collaboration between the European Union and the Government of Armenia, and reflect the Government's commitment to a recovery from the pandemic, and to the implementation of the CEPA agreement,” stated Andrea Wiktoria, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia this week.

“The Government of Armenia highly appreciates the fruitful partnership with the European Union in improving the economic resilience of Armenia and implementing key reforms to strengthen democracy and rule of law in the country, as stipulated in the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement,” noted Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan.

Azerbaijani MPs Admit Ethnic Cleansing Policy In Artsakh, Armenia's Ombudsperson Reveals

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijani MP Gudrat Hasanguliyev admitted the Azerbaijani state policy aimed at the ethnic cleansing of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian Human Rights Defender Kristinne Grigoryan revealed this week.

In particular, the lawmaker stated that “Armenia should put an end to its territorial ambitions towards Azerbaijan and stop supporting the bloody separatism of Karabakh. Unless this is done, we should not recognize their (the population of Nagorno-Karabakh) right to life in peace.” Subsequently, the MP stated that in the current situation it is not possible for Armenians to live in Azerbaijan.

Shiite Muslims Storm Azerbaijan Embassy in London

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

LONDON — On Thursday, August 4, Shia Muslim groups attacked the Embassy of Azerbaijan in London. The English newspaper the Daily Mail reported that members of a group called the Mahdi Servants' Union appeared on the balcony of the Azerbaijani Embassy, which is in Kensington, the central area of London. The Shia activists pulled out and threw the Azerbaijani flag from the balcony and waved their blue banner. They also wrote messages on the wall in Arabic with white paint.

The members of the Servants Union cited “persecution” by the Azerbaijani government of some Shia Muslims in the country. The metropolitan police were put on alert immediately. After arriving, they arrested eight people. According to the information that is available, the Mahdi Servants did not enter inside the embassy building, but remained on the balcony.

The leader of the Mahdi Servants' Union, Islamic activist and writer Yasser Al-Habib, found refuge in Great Britain “after coming into conflict with the authorities in his native



The Azerbaijani embassy in London

Kuwait,” another British source reported. In 2001, he founded the Mahdi Servants Union. Al-Habib runs a mosque in the suburbs of London.

In 2018, a group led by Al-Habib's relative Ayatollah Sadegh Shirazi similarly stormed the Embassy of Iran in London. The attack occurred after the government of Iran arrested one of Shirazi's sons, who lived in Iran.

On Friday, August 5, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan summoned the United Kingdom's chargé d'affaires in Baku over the attack in London.

A “resolute protest” was expressed to the British diplomat, the statement by the Foreign Ministry said.

A video accompanying this report is available at www.mirrormirror.com

Azerbaijan Accused of Seeking to Scrap Ceasefire

CEASEFIRE, from page 1

Karabakh Armenian positions as well as a military base. It claimed that the attacks were launched in retaliation for the killing of one of its soldiers. The authorities in Yerevan and Stepanakert insist that the Azerbaijani “aggression” was unprovoked.

“Azerbaijan's recourse to the escalation

serves one purpose. to scrap the regulations set by the [Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani] statement of November 9, 2020,” charged Pashinyan. Baku, he said, is unwilling to recognize the current “line of contact” in Karabakh and the Lachin corridor connecting the disputed territory to Armenia.

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry insist-

ed that Baku has fully complied with the terms of the agreement and expects the same from Yerevan. It claimed that Armenia has not yet withdrawn its troops from Karabakh.

“There are no servicemen of the Republic of Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh,” stressed Pashinyan.

INTERNAYIONAL

Armenia Wins Silver at Chess Olympiad in India

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

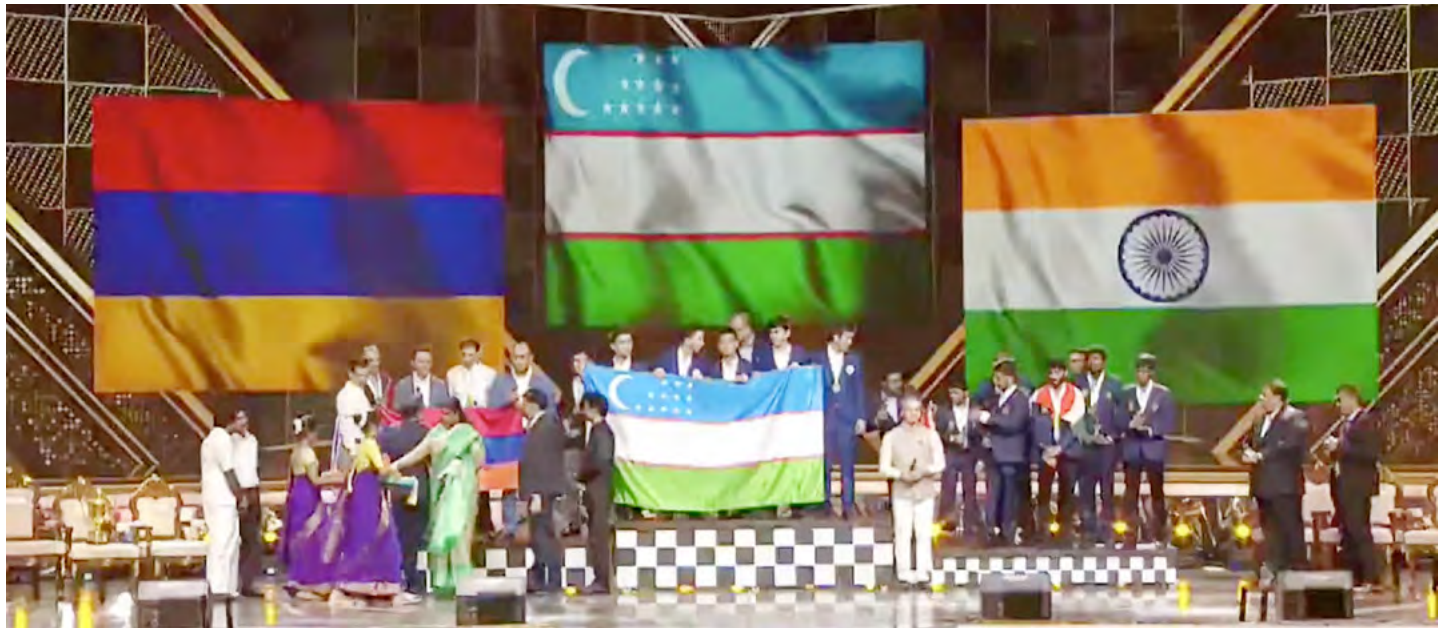
Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Before the Chess Olympiad started in Chennai, India, on July 28, the Armenian grandmaster (GM) Tigran Petrossian, who happened to share the same name as the 9th world chess champion, wasn't expecting the Armenian squad to end up in the top three teams and return to Yerevan with any medals.

"I am glad I was wrong," he said in an interview with *News.am*. "Without Aronian, our squad is less strong. I am glad that we can still fight for medals," added Petrossian.

Armenia won the silver in the Chess Olympiad with an equal number of points, while the Uzbek team won the gold.

Years ago, the Armenian chess squad won three Chess Olympiads: Torino, 2006; Dresden, 2008 and Istanbul, 2012. This international tournament is considered one of the most (if not the most) prestigious international chess competition in the world, and the Yerevan squad was performing ex-



The three winning teams with their national flags above

the Armenian team was ranked only 10th by FIDE (International Chess Federation), behind China, Hungary, Spain, and others.

Especially after star team member Levon Aronian, the top GM of Armenia, started playing for the US, the forecast seemed even less promising. However, the 2022 Olympiad in Chennai suddenly marked Armenia's return to the very top of the most potent national teams.

In the first eight rounds, Armenia gained seven victories and one draw only, defeating Madagascar, Andorra, Egypt, Austria, England, and India's first and second teams (three squads represented the hosts). The Armenian squad tied with the United States in

round seven. Armenia's fourth board, Robert Hovhannisyan, collected 6.5 scores in the first eight games with five victories, three draws, and no defeats. Eventually, he would be declared the second most productive final-board player of the tournament. It is noteworthy that Hovhannisyan recovered from Covid shortly before the Olympiad.

In the seventh round, Armenia drew with the United States thanks to Sam Shankland's dramatic mistake, which helped Hovhannisyan to win and level the round 2:2 (Gabriel Sargsyan had defeated Caruana, Samvel Ter-Sahakyan and Hrant Melkumyan lost to So Wesley and Dominguez Perez, respectively.)

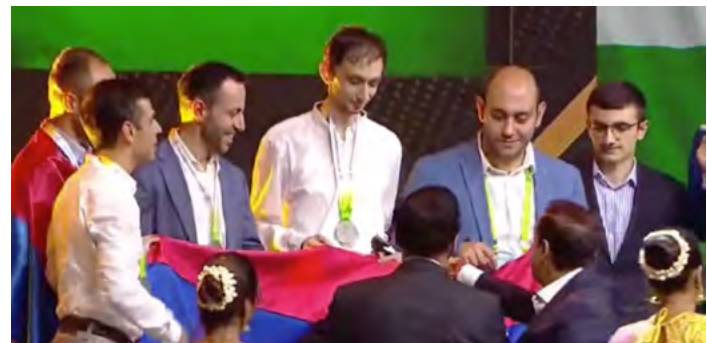
By this time, Armenia was the sole leader of the tournament.

Armenia's only defeat was against Uzbekistan, a team that performed surprisingly well this time. Before the tournament started, Uzbekistan was placed on 19th place, according to FIDE's ranking.

A dramatic match against Azerbaijan

followed the next day and ended up with another Armenian victory of 3:1. After a retreat to the third horizontal, the Armenian GMs were back to second only after Uzbekistan. In fact, before the final round, the Armenian and Uzbek GM's had an equal number of 18th points, but the Uzbeks performed better in terms of tiebreaks. The final matches played didn't change this setting: Armenia won against Spain and Uzbekistan defeated Holland. As a result, because of somewhat complicated tiebreak calculations, Armenia won the silver in the Chess Olympiad with an equal number of points while Uzbekistan got the gold. Two Indian teams ended up on the third and fourth horizontal and the United States occupied the fifth horizontal. The Armenian female squad finished on the 12th horizontal.

On a historical note, in 2012, Armenia won the Chess Olympiad in Turkey because of tiebreakers that were in Armenia's favor.



The Armenian team bedecked with medals holding the Armenian flag, with coach Arman Pashikyan

ceptionally well. Then there was a pause in success stories in addition to Covid, because of which, the 2020 competition was held online on *chess.com*'s platforms. As a result, there was a setback. By early 2022,

Pashinyan Ally Downplays 'Differences' Over Russian Peacekeepers

PEACEKEEPERS, from page 1
one Azerbaijani soldier dead, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called for "adjusting details" of the Russian peacekeeping operation in the region. He, in particular, suggested giving the Russian contingent a "broader international mandate."

"If we see that solutions are not possible in a trilateral [Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani] format, we will have to think about activating additional international mechanisms," Pashinyan warned on Thursday without elaborating.

Moscow effectively dismissed Armenian criticism as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the following day that they had not received any concrete proposals which the Armenian prime minister wants to discuss in the context of the Russian peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"So I can't guess now," the top Russian diplomat said, stressing at the same time that the Russian peacekeepers are "making every effort to stabilize the situation on the ground."

Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman Vahan Hunanyan said later on Friday that it was still in February 2021 that the Armenian side put in writing and submitted to the top Russian leadership its concerns about the activities of the Russian peacekeeping contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh in order to raise their efficiency and avoid problems in the future.

The exchange between the Armenian and Russian officials gave rise to speculations about growing differences between Yerevan and Moscow regarding the matter.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry has not yet disclosed details of the 2021 document that it says was submitted to Russia.

"I suppose the two countries' foreign ministries will meet to talk it over and will come to an understanding," Civil Contract's Khachatryan said.

"I don't think that the Foreign Ministry should publish the contents of every document. What was said is as much as could be said," he added.

Meanwhile, a phone call between Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin was reported on Monday.

The Armenian prime minister's office did not specifically mention the issue of peacekeepers as being discussed by the two leaders. It only said that "issues related to the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as ensuring security on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border were discussed."

"In this context, the importance of the full implementation of all the agreements of the leaders of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan of November 9, 2020, January 11, and November 26, 2021 was reaffirmed," the brief statement said.

Talking to RFE/RL's Armenian Service last week, political analyst Tatul Hakobyan, referring to Pashinyan's statements made during a cabinet meeting on August

4, described the language used by the Armenian side as "primitive blackmail." But blackmail, he warned, is far from being the best tool in dealing with Russia. "We want to get rid of one thing, but have nothing to replace it with," he said.

Gegham Manukyan, a member of the opposition Hayastan parliamentary faction, said it was not clear to him how the Armenian side sees the way of raising the effectiveness of the Russian peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. But he outlined his faction's vision for that. "We should first discuss the issue of raising the number of Russian peacekeepers [deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh]. Secondly, we should reconsider the way the Russian force is deployed in separate directions. The Armenian side's initiative of mirrored withdrawals, even if implemented, should be done in conditions of full control so as to avoid situations similar to what happened in the village of Parukh [in March] and in the northwestern part of Artsakh [Nagorno-Karabakh – ed.] in recent days."

Manukyan would not comment on Pashinyan's statement regarding the possibility of considering "additional international mechanisms" if solutions within the Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani format fail. He said that the statement was not clearly formulated and could be just a "word game", while there is no official information to suggest this is a realistic plan.

A multinational international peacekeep-

ing operation was discussed as part of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process before the 2020 war. But after Russia brokered a ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan to put an end to six weeks of bloodshed in the conflict zone, the other two Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs – the United States and France – welcomed Moscow's peacekeeping operation, although US President Donald Trump talked about the possibility of deploying 'Scandinavian peacekeepers' in the region during the war itself.

Swedish journalists recently revealed that one week before the Moscow-brokered ceasefire was signed, on November 2, 2020, the US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Andrew Schofer, discussed such a possibility with Swedish officials. Although, according to the media investigation, that proposal was rejected by Stockholm.

In the wake of the recent escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh, a small group of Armenians displaced from the region by the 2020 war and its consequences picketed the Russian embassy in Yerevan demanding that Russian peacekeepers "properly carry out" their mission. They also staged rallies in front of the embassies of France and the United States as well as the United Nations office in Yerevan, calling for an international peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Community News

Sheriff Koutoujian Accepted into National Association of Counties' Familiar Faces Leadership Network

BOSTON — The Middlesex Sheriff's Office announced recently that Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian is joining a select group of local officials as the inaugural cohort of the National Association of Counties' Familiar Faces Leadership Network for their commitment to improving life outcomes for high-needs residents with complex behavioral health conditions.

The Familiar Faces Initiative (FFI): Improving Outcomes through Coordinated Health and Justice Systems was launched in May by the National Association of Counties to support communities to share data between health and justice systems and coordinate care options for individuals with complex health and behavioral health conditions. The primary focus is on individuals who frequently cycle through jails, homeless shelters, emergency departments and other crisis services.

Koutoujian has led Middlesex County in efforts to improve life outcomes for residents who have become familiar faces to local services and providers and has joined this Network to strengthen and expand Middlesex County's ability to share cross-system data to identify the highest-need residents.

"The Middlesex Sheriff's Office, local law enforcement partners and behavioral health providers work each day to provide critical supports and services to those most in need," said Koutoujian. "By working across systems — as we have done with our nationally-recognized Medication Assisted Treatment And Directed Opioid Recovery (MATADOR) program — we have proven we can help improve outcomes for individuals with complex behavioral health needs. Through our participation in the Familiar Faces Leadership Network, I believe we will be able to expand and enhance the incredible efforts that are already underway across Middlesex County."

Koutoujian will engage with fellow elected officials from across the country and participate in peer site visits to communities with model data-sharing practices and receive technical assistance from FFI Advisory Board members.



Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian



Perry Minasian

Angels' Minasian: 'I Always Feel a Sense of Urgency' to Win

By Rhett Bollinger

ANAHEIM (mlb.com) — The Angels were busy at the Trade Deadline on Tuesday, August 2, making three separate deals that saw them trade outfielder Brandon Marsh, right-hander Noah Syndergaard and closer Raisel Iglesias for a group of prospects led by catcher Logan O'Hoppe, outfielders Mickey Moniak and Jadel Sanchez and left-hander Tucker Davidson.

Notably, the Angels did not trade two-way star Shohei Ohtani, who is set to be a free agent after next season. They also saved nearly \$60 million in their deals, as the Phillies are picking up the \$7.6 million owed to Syndergaard the rest of this year and the Braves are taking on \$51.6 million of Iglesias' contract, including \$16 million each year from 2023-25.

Angels general manager Perry Minasian was asked about the decision to hold onto Ohtani this Trade Deadline and whether he believed the team has a chance to sign him to an extension, especially with the money saved from the trades.

"I'm not going to get into contract negotiations about any player, but we love Shohei and I think Shohei really enjoys being here," Minasian said. "And Shohei's a guy that shows up every day prepared. He's obviously excellent on the field and excellent off the field. He's the type of guy we want to be about. So, we'll see where it goes in the future."



The Angels did listen in on offers for Ohtani, but were never serious about trading last year's AL MVP because of what he means to the organization both on and off the field. The White Sox, Padres and Yankees were reportedly among the club's that made offers for Ohtani, while the Dodgers also tried to engage the Angels on a potential trade.

But Minasian wouldn't talk specifics about the kind of offers he was getting for Ohtani.

"It's all subjective, right," Minasian said. "Teams are going to call on great players. I'm not going to get into negotiations with anybody, but there are multiple players in that locker room that teams wanted and threw concepts at. And I do the same thing. I'll call a team on somebody that might not necessarily seem like they are available and throw out an idea. Nobody hangs up the phone. But with that being said, Shohei is here and we're excited about that."

Ohtani has indicated in the past that he wants to play for a winning team. So, Minasian was asked why Ohtani would want to stay with the Angels, who haven't had a winning season since 2015 and haven't made the postseason since '14.

"I think that's a question for him on why he'd want to stay here," Minasian said. "But I always feel a sense of urgency. We want to win here. But again, I have to build a better roster. No doubt about it. We just need to build a better supporting cast. I think this is a great organization and I think if you asked the three guys who are leaving, they really enjoyed their time here. It's a great place to play."

Minasian added that he believes the Angels can contend in 2023. He says the Trade Deadline helped them in that sense, because they were able to acquire some young talent while also freeing up money to use in free agency or trades.

"I still think there's talent here," Minasian said. "I mean, health is a big part of it. We have to find a way to stay healthy. And it's on me, we've got to find more depth. I've got to build a better roster. That's something we're going to attack this off-season and we still have two months to go."

Former Farmington Salon Owner Accused Of Sexually Assaulting Teens, Free on More Than \$1M Bond

By Ted Glanzer

FARMINGTON, Conn. (Hartford Courant) — The former owner of a popular Unionville salon accused of holding drug-fueled parties for children during the height of the pandemic, sexually assaulting two teenagers and tampering with teenage witnesses, will face a judge again next month.

David Olivo, 41, who once ran David Salon out of his Plainville Avenue home, had his nine criminal matters continued in Superior Court in Hartford Wednesday and his next court date is September 28.

Olivo, who is free on bonds totaling more than \$1 million, has not yet entered pleas in any of the matters, some of which stem from at least six alleged parties that took place between August and December 2020 that Farmington police allege he held for teenagers, records show.

During those parties, police say in court records, Olivo and his then-girlfriend Megan Boyajian, allegedly provided or made available alcohol, marijuana, cocaine or MDMA — commonly known as ecstasy — to children under the age of 16.

Olivo also is accused of sexually assaulting two teenage girls — one at his home and in his vehicle in July 2020 during and following a party, another in his home in February 2021 after an outing in West Hartford, records show.

Police also say Olivo, while in jail following his arrest in April 2021, allegedly attempted to tamper with teen witnesses by persuading another teen into pressuring the witnesses into having the charges against Olivo dropped.

From the alleged incidents, Olivo is charged with 14 counts of risk of injury to a minor, two counts of second-degree sexual assault, one count of fourth-degree sexual assault, three counts of illegal sexual contact where the victim is under the age of 14, two counts of permitting a minor to possess alcohol, and one count of tampering with a witness.

Boyajian is charged with 10 counts of risk of injury to a minor. She is free on bonds totaling \$140,000.

Bristol-based attorney Forest Green, who represents Olivo in eight of the nine criminal matters, said Wednesday outside of the courtroom that he was not clear whether he was authorized to speak to the media on behalf of his client.

Olivo also faces two counts of assaulting a public safety officer/EMS personnel, possession of a controlled substance, possession of less than a half ounce of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, tampering with evidence, operating a motor vehicle while using a cellphone, operating an unregistered motor vehicle and operating a motor vehicle with no insurance, following a traffic incident in February 2021.

see ASSAULT, page 10

COMMUNITY NEWS

Hank Mardigian: A Life In Music

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

PHILADELPHIA — On June 21, the Armenian kef music world bid a farewell to pioneering bandleader and multi-instrumentalist Henry “Hank” Mardigian. He was 93.

Born in Philadelphia on July 19, 1928, Mardigian was a bandleader and arranger who played saxophone, mandolin, banjo, and oud, as well as sang. Freely admitting that he was no virtuoso at any instrument, he was best known as the frontman of the Gomidas Band, one of the original Armenian-American dance bands of the 1950s and 60s, in which virtuoso oudist George Mgrdichian got his start.

Mardigian was a warm and genial figure who nurtured talents, highlighted his bandmates, and always gave tribute to those who had introduced him to the music scene, namely Sam Vosbikian and the Vosbikian Band, while always striving to differentiate his own music as well as pay it forward. As for George Mgrdichian, when asked who taught him to play the oud, the virtuoso used to joke that “Hank did!” It was an exaggeration, but the truth was that without Mardigian and his band, Mgrdichian may have never had the chance for his talents to flourish.

Mardigian led a life in music that touched on nearly every aspect of the mid-20th-century Armenian-American dance music scene and community life.

Philadelphia Kef Time

Mardigian’s early family life gave him a solid background in folk music. His father Nishan was a native of Malatia, while his mother Angeline (nee Ajemian) hailed from an “aristocratic family” from Constantinople.

Nishan’s father, Mardig Khantzian, had owned a metal factory in Malatia and was well-off. Two brothers named Bedros and Thomas Vosbikian worked for him, learning the tools they would later parlay into their Philadelphia manufacturing firm, which became Quickie Corporation. The close friendship between the Vosbikian and Mardigian families would later prove decisive for Hank Mardigian’s music career.

Nishan took the name “Mardigian” upon arriving with Angeline in the US in 1921 and settling in Philadelphia, alongside a large community of Malatia Armenians which included Bedros and Thomas Vosbikian and other family friends who had survived the Armenian Genocide. Along with Henry (Hank), the Mardigians had two other children, Charles and Elizabeth.

It was growing up in the 1930s in Philadelphia that Mardigian’s relationship with music began.

“Every Saturday, they would come over our house,” he related in our 2018 interview, “my father, Bedros *Papi* [Vosbikian], Tomas *Papi* [Vosbikian] and Hapet *Papi* [Hovnanian] – I loved him, he was my favorite man – they would sit there, and they would have *mezza* and they drink and they would play...Tomas *Papi* played violin, Bedros *Papi* played clarinet, another one played dumbeg, and they sang and they drank...”

“And me and Jimmy [Vosbikian, whose father was Thomas] were there every Sunday. They would have *rakhi*. My father and Hapet *Papi* made the best *rakhi* in the city of Philadelphia. And they would stink

the whole house up for 3-4 days, and you couldn’t take a bath because they’d have the bathtub tied up.”

Training with the Original Vosbikian Band

In 1939, Bedros Vosbikian’s three sons, Sam, Mike and Joe started the original Vosbikian Band with Hank Mardigian’s brother, Charlie, and one or two other family friends. This pioneering band set the stage for all the other Armenian-American bands of the 1950s and 1960s. Sons of immigrants, the first American-born generation carried forward the roots music their parents had brought with them from Anatolia into a dance-oriented genre that later became known as “kef music.”

At the age of 14, just after World War II broke out, Mardigian and his best friend, Jimmy Vosbikian, got their first musical instruments at school. Jimmy was first in line and grabbed a clarinet. Hank wanted a clarinet too, but there were none left. He took a saxophone instead. The boys quickly became interested in the jazz music popular in the 1940s. But Jimmy’s older first cousin Sam Vosbikian had other plans. “We all lived a block away from each other, and Sam used to bring his mother over, and the banjo over, and say ‘forget about that, you’re Armenian, you’re going to play Armenian music, that’s not for you.’” Banjo? At the time of the Great Depression, the oud was scarce, and the banjo was a common substitute for pickup bands. This would become Hank Mardigian’s first in-



years.

Birth of the Gomidas Band

Mardigian, whose family attended St. Mark’s Armenian Catholic Church in West Philadelphia, was a member of the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) growing up. In 1949 a friend named Johnny Kitabjian and a group of fellow AYF members were trying to start a new band, and they invited Mardigian to their practice session at the old St. Gregory’s Armenian Church in North Philadelphia.

“I told them to wrap it up,” Mardigian laughed. The group was unwieldy, had too many instrumentalists, and one fellow was even trying to follow along on a trombone. But with Mardigian’s help, the band got a little more organized and by 1950 adopted the name “Gomidas Band,” which was suggested by Kitabjian’s mother. The original band included two clarinets (George Mgrdichian and Roupen Gureghian), two saxophones (Kitabjian and Mardigian), Johnny Mukhalian on oud, Roger Mgrdichian on dumbeg, and apparently had as many as 8 members at one point.

When the Korean war started, oudist Mukhalian and founder-saxophonist

Kitabjian were both drafted, and so was Mardigian. The latter was injured and returned to the States in 1951. By this time he had obtained a rather expensive oud and was itching to play. With Mukhalian and Kitabjian out of the band, it was Mardigian’s turn not only assume leadership of the band, but also to become the star oudist, like his mentor Sam Vosbikian. As far as Mardigian was concerned, he was the only one in the band who knew how to play the instrument. But George Mgrdichian, at the time known as a 16-year-old clarinet prodigy, had other ideas.

“You can’t lead the band sitting down,” Mgrdichian objected. He had a point. Mardigian had positioned himself as the bandleader, but oudists traditionally played sitting down at the time. Mgrdichian begged the older musician to show him how to tune the instrument and some basic technique, and Mardigian complied. But when he refused to allow his teenage bandmate to take the expensive instrument home with him, the defiant Mgrdichian went out and

bought a ukulele to practice on! Mardigian assumed that by the next band practice they could move on from this little escapade, but when Mgrdichian showed up, picked up the oud, and started playing melodies, the bandleader relented. “Go ahead, take it,” he said. In six months, “he was playing chords and things, he was a natural,” Mardigian recalled.

The Peak of Armenian Band Music

“The 1950s and 60s were the peak of Armenian band music in the United States,” Mardigian stated. “Who could imagine that you could get thousands of Armenian kids to hear a band play. Not hundreds, thousands!”

“New England was the best,” he added, also commenting that “the Vosbikian Band were the innovators, everyone else copied them.”

The Gomidas Band had a long way to go to get out of the shadow of the Vosbikians, however. The success they had was due to the oud virtuosity of George Mgrdichian and the organizational skills and musical ideas of Hank Mardigian.

In addition to Mgrdichian on oud and Mardigian on saxophone, the band included George’s brother Roger Mgrdichian on dumbeg, George Terkanian on dumbeg and as primary vocalist, and Roupen Gureghian on clarinet. Since the band had members from all the Armenian churches and groups in Philadelphia, Mardigian went to each church and told them the group would play one free job a year for their community. Although most of the musicians were AYF members, their first New Year’s Eve job was actually a party for the Armenian Democratic League (ADL), Mardigian recalled. They also played often for the Greek Orthodox Youth Association (GOYA) as well as Assyrian conventions and weddings.

The band was gaining popularity up and down the East Coast – they headlined the ACYOA’s annual convention, in 1954 in Troy, NY – but Mardigian was still itching to differentiate their sound from the popular Vosbikians. The breaking point was a 1956 gig in New York.

“Mike Vosbikian used to book the jobs, he booked two on the same day. Called me up and said, ‘can you help us out.’ One was in New York City, the other in North Jersey. We’ll each play half of the job. We [the Gomidas Band] got to play the original one in Audubon Hall.” The two bands switched events halfway through the night and passed each other in the Holland Tunnel, according to Mardigian. Apparently they sounded so much alike that no one was the wiser.

In 1957 Armenian music started to make some small appearances on the pop charts, starting with the 45 single *Harem Dance*. That track, originally recorded in Detroit, had been entitled *Arax Bar* but was renamed when New York’s Kapp Records bought it, in keeping with the exoticism of the era’s marketing. Mardigian wanted to jump on the recording trend and he faced the same issues of record companies who wanted to sell Armenian kef music through exoticism, sexploitation, and orientalism. He had an appointment with the infamous Morris Levy of Roulette Records, which was owned by the mafia. Levy asked him the meaning of the name “Gomidas Band.”

The ensuing record, “Oriental Delight,” which was released in early 1958, was one of the earliest LPs of Armenian-American kef music.

In order to differentiate their sound, Mardigian played mandolin on several tracks on the album. The record also marked George Mgrdichian’s breakthrough into oud solo pieces.

The band continued to grow in popularity as gigs opened up at the Jersey Shore resort town of Asbury Park, which was exceedingly popular with Armenians in that

continued on next page



The Gomidas Band: L to R, Ray Mirijanian, Roger Mgrdichian, George Mgrdichian, George Terkanian, Hank Mardigian

strument on which he learned to play Armenian music.

Instead of the banjo, though, Mardigian would play saxophone when Sam Vosbikian recruited the two younger boys to fill the spots of his brothers, Mike and Joe Vosbikian, who had been drafted and shipped out to Europe. Mike Vosbikian had played sax, so Mardigian was needed on that instrument while Sam switched to playing an oud which he had recently obtained, and Jimmy took Sam’s old spot as clarinetist.

The lineup of oud, clarinet, saxophone, and two dumbegs which was established during those years would become standard for most Armenian-American dance bands in the 1950s and early 60s. But when the older boys came home from the war, Mardigian became “expendable” as Mike Vosbikian resumed saxophone duties and newcomer pianist/vocalist Steve Ajdaharian, ironically introduced to the band by Mardigian, was added to the roster. The bandstand was too crowded and Hank Mardigian was out of the music for several



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

era, as well as the similar resort areas of the Catskill Mountains in Upstate New York.

Udi Hrant in particular approached Mardigian and asked them about his fantastic young oudist. “We played in the Catskills one summer. And Udi Hrant hears George play and he comes over and says, ‘Who is this, I’d like him to stay with me.’ He stayed the whole summer and Udi Hrant played violin and George played the oud.” Hrant mentored Mgrdichian and even invited him to come to Istanbul, which did not come to pass. The famed New York-born oudist Chick Ganimian of the “Nor-Ikes” band was a rival who became a friend. Altercations between Ganimian and his rivals, the Gomidas Band and the Vosbikians, sometimes got to the level of fisticuffs. But at the end of his life, Ganimian, who struggled with alcoholism and died young, was taken care of by Mardigian, who took charge of his finances until his ex-wife stepped in.

Finally on Top

By the early 1960s, George Mgrdichian was attending Curtis Institute of Music, and Mardigian wanted his second shot at making an album. By this time, the band had a new clarinet player, Ray Mirijanian. Mardigian didn’t want to involve Roulette Records with the new recording, though he was still under contract.

The resulting album, “Portraits of the Near East,” (1961), “put us over the top,” Mardigian said. He clearly viewed it as his crowning achievement. Because they used their original name of “Gomidas Band,” the record company was apparently none the wiser having originally contracted with them as “the Hank Mardigian Sextet.” In addition, the cover art featured historic photos of Western Armenia, including images of everyday people and village life, which was not part of the typical marketing for Middle Eastern music at the time.

Soon after the album was released, Mardigian received a call for a booking that he couldn’t meet. “I said ‘we’re booked that day, why don’t you call the Vosbikian Band.’ They said, ‘we don’t want the

Vosbikian Band, we want the Gomidas Band.’ The phone almost dropped out of my hand.” Mardigian had made it – the public considered him on the same level as his mentors, the Vosbikian Band, who were the most popular group in the community at the time. “I never told anyone in the band that, I didn’t want anyone to get swell heads,” he stated.

In 1962 the 5-year contract with Roulette Records was set to run out. The company decided to exercise their contractual option to force Mardigian to record three more full albums. Mardigian decided to make one album of Armenian, one of Greek, and one of Turkish songs. “Back in those days, an Armenian band was forbidden to play Turkish music,” Mardigian remembered. “But I noticed in New England some were playing Greek. And in New York, there was a band, the Nor-Ikes, who played 90-percent Turkish.” The three albums that were made were entitled “Rendezvous in Armenia,” “Rendezvous in Greece,” and “Rendezvous in Istanbul.” In particular, “Rendezvous in Armenia” stands out as one of the band’s achievements in terms of Armenian folkloric music, and one of the easiest to track down today from a used record dealer. Some of the songs, such as the Western Armenian folk dance *Ousge Gou Kas*, owe their preservation and continued popularity to the efforts of the Gomidas Band.

The End of an Era

The tumultuous days of the late 1960s were also a turning point for Armenian bands. By 1967, George Mgrdichian was set to graduate Juilliard. He and Mardigian clashed when the latter wanted to add a guitarist, Skippy Krepelka, to the lineup. Mgrdichian complained that another string instrument would interfere with his oud playing. Robert Afarian, a Syrian-born singer who was popular with kef groups at the time as a specialist in singing Turkish and who had a slightly shady reputation, approached the Mgrdichian brothers with a plot to take over the band.

George played a few more jobs in the summer of 1967, but his career in kef mu-

sic seemed finished. George Mgrdichian, rather than teaming up with Afarian, pursued his now-lauded solo career, with his first concert at Town Hall in New York City that year. He was said to have “brought the oud out of the cabarets and onto the concert stage.” Of course, he couldn’t have done it without Mardigian. New stars like Onnik Dinkjian, John Berberian, Hachig Kazarian, and Richard Hagopian dominated the Armenian kef music scene. The era of the 1950s-style “name bands” was over, and nobody wanted saxophone in Armenian folk music anymore.

But Mardigian’s friends didn’t forget him. In 1976 he received a call for an event in Atlantic City. The promoters wanted him to form a “Hank Mardigian All-Stars” group. Since George Mgrdichian was busy doing a concert in Lincoln Center, Mardigian recruited New York’s John Tarpinian on oud, with old friends Haig Hagopian on clarinet, Albert Santerian and Joe Vosbikian on dumbbells. Seven hundred and fifty people attended the affair even though Mardigian had been out of the business for nearly ten years. Mardigian even ended up forming a group in his later years that played strictly in Philadelphia, with Greg Vosbikian on oud, Souren Baronian on clarinet, and World Music figure Rowan Storm on percussion and vocals. The group booked 28 jobs in one year without leaving Philadelphia.

A Consummate Musician and Gentleman

Hank Mardigian was married as a young man to Eugenie Jihanshah, from a New

York Armenian family, with whom he had two daughters. After his wife’s passing, he remarried to her good friend Juanita Arce, of Puerto Rican heritage, who wholeheartedly embraced the Armenian community and culture. This author remains indebted to Juanita for her hospitality and her facilitation of our interview with her beloved Hank in 2018.

As Hank’s Armenian name was Hampartzoum, he used the song “Hampartzoum Yayla” as the Gomidas Band’s theme song. The strains of this sprightly tune recalling Armenian folklore originated in the opera “Anoush,” composed by Armen Tigranian, but Mardigian and the other kef musicians have long been fond of playing it in the rhythm of a joyful Western Armenian *shourchbar* (line dance). It is hard to imagine another way to celebrate the life of Hank Mardigian than to send him off with *hampartzoum yayla, yayla jan yayla, serorer yayla, yayla jan yayla....*

Hank Mardigian was predeceased by his first wife Jeannie, and survived by his wife Juanita, his daughters Dawn Semola (Vince) and Lisa Nercesian (Michael Kallitzi); grandchildren Valeri Bradley (Matt Keim), Keith Nercesian (Celeste DiBenedetto), Adrina Bradley and Scott Bradley, Jr., great-grandchildren Ani, Henry, and Blaise, and 5 nieces. In lieu of flowers, donations to Hank’s memory may be made to Holy Trinity Armenian Church (Cheltenham, Pennsylvania), or the Disabled American Veterans, 5000 Wissahickon Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19144.

Dr. Raymond Damadian Inventor of the MRI Dies

DAMADIAN, from page 1

Raymond said that he first became interested in detecting cancer when, as a boy of 10, he saw his maternal grandmother, with whom he was very close, die painfully of breast cancer.

Damadian’s research into sodium and potassium in living cells led him to his first experiments with nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) which caused him to first propose the MR body scanner in 1969. Damadian discovered that tumors and normal tissue can be distinguished in vivo by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) because of their prolonged relaxation times. Dr. Damadian was the first to perform a full-body scan of a human being in 1977 to diagnose cancer. He invented an apparatus and method to use NMR safely and accurately to scan the human body.

Dr. Damadian was widely recognized for his groundbreaking inventions. In 2001, the Lemelson-MIT Prize Program bestowed its \$100,000 Lifetime Achievement Award on Dr. Damadian as “the man who invented the MRI scanner.” He went on to collaborate with Wilson Greatbach, one early developer of the implantable pacemaker, to develop an MRI-compatible pacemaker. The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia gave its recognition of Dr. Damadian’s work on MRI with the Bower Award in Business Leadership. He was also named Knights of Vartan 2003 “Man of the Year”. Dr. Damadian received a National Medal of Technology in 1988 and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1989.

In 2003, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Paul Lauterbur and Sir Peter Mansfield for their discoveries related to MRI. Although Nobel rules allow for the award to be shared by up to three recipients, Damadian was not given the prize. The controversy over who played what part in the development of the MRI had gone on for years prior to the Nobel announcement, and many in the scientific community felt that the Nobel had not been awarded for the MRI for so long due to debate over Damadian’s role in its development.

Damadian said that credit should go to “me, and then Lauterbur,” and Lauterbur felt that only he should get credit. In 1997 the National Academy of Sciences commissioned a timeline of MRI milestones, and four of the 12 in an initial draft were attributed to Damadian. At the final publication in 2001, longer than any other publication in the series had ever been taken, none of the milestones was attributed to Damadian. The text said that Damadian’s methods had “not proved clinically reliable in detecting or diagnosing cancer.”[22] After Damadian’s lawyers sent the NAS a threatening letter, the text on the NAS website was revised, but not to Damadian’s satisfaction. Damadian said in 2002, “If I had not been born, would MRI have existed? I don’t think so. If Lauterbur had not been born? I would have gotten there. Eventually.”

Philosopher Michael Ruse writing for the Metanexus Institute suggested that Damadian might have been denied a Nobel prize because of his creationist views, saying:

I cringe at the thought that Raymond Damadian was refused his just honor because of his religious beliefs. Having silly ideas in one field is no good reason to deny merit for great ideas in another field. Apart from the fact that this time the Creation Scientists will think that there is good reason to think that they are the objects of unfair treatment at the hands of the scientific community.

Damadian himself said, “Before this happened, nobody ever said to me ‘They will not give you the Nobel Prize for Medicine because you are a creation scientist’. If people were actively campaigning against me because of that, I never knew it.”

Dr. Damadian is survived by his children, Timothy (Helen), Jevan (Victoria) and Keira (Markus) Reinmund. He was the grandfather to Caitlin (Mike), Brianna (Matt), Ben, Serena, Jesiah, Eliza, Kaia, Viki and Jonathan, and loving great grandfather of Jack, Elizabeth and Emma.

Funeral services were on August 8, at Dix Hills Evangelical Free Church in Dix Hills, NY.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

U.S. Lawmakers Demand Federal Scrutiny of Turkey’s Drones

by Umar Farooq

WASHINGTON (ProPublica) — As countries around the globe add armed drones to their arsenals, federal lawmakers are pressing the Biden administration to investigate how U.S. parts and technology ended up in what has fast become one of the most popular models on the world market: Turkey’s TB2.

Manufactured by the Turkish firm Baykar Technology, the TB2 can hover high above a battlefield and strike targets with laser-guided missiles. Baykar has maintained that the TB2s are domestically produced, with nearly all of the parts coming from within Turkey. But, as ProPublica reported this month, wreckage from downed drones in multiple conflicts has shown otherwise. A range of components were made by manufacturers in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

To learn more, Rep. Tony Cárdenas, D-Calif., in July introduced an amendment to the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act. The annual budgeting bill is often an opportunity for lawmakers to require reports from the administration on pressing issues, and Cárdenas focused on the TB2, highlighting Azerbaijan’s deployment of the weapon in its 2020 war against neighboring Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Images of drone wreckage published by local media outlets and the Armenian military at the time showed parts that matched those made by several U.S.-based companies. Some of those firms told ProPublica they had taken steps to stop direct sales to Turkey, but others continue to sell key parts.

Turkey has ramped up TB2 exports in recent years. At least 14 countries now own the drones, and 16 others are seeking to purchase them.

“We’ve been paying close attention to Turkey’s drone sales and how these weapons have been deployed around the world,” Cárdenas told ProPublica in a statement. “I’m troubled about the destabilizing effects we’re seeing and the human rights concerns that follow, especially in places like Nagorno Karabakh. We need a full accounting of the role U.S. manufactured parts are playing so that Congress can conduct proper oversight.”

If enacted, the legislation would require the Defense Department, in consultation with the State Department, to produce a report on U.S. parts in the TB2s used in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and any potential violations of export laws, sanctions or other regulations. Neither the Turkish

Embassy in Washington nor Baykar Technology returned requests for comment for this story. Previously, when asked about the source of key components in its drones, Baykar did not respond to specific questions and would only say those queries were based on unspecified “false accusations.”

At issue are U.S. export laws. Typically, military parts are strictly controlled, requiring licenses from the State Department detailing their buyers and end uses. But many of the key components in the TB2 are commercial-grade technologies, which are found in a variety of consumer products and not subject to arms laws. And as a member of key global anti-arms compacts, Turkey can easily import the off-the-shelf parts, avoiding a web of sanctions and restrictions intended to curb the efforts of countries like Iran and China, which also operate drone programs.

Some critics have called on the Biden administration to crack down on Turkey. Other countries, including Canada, have previously instituted export bans to keep key parts from flowing. But for the U.S., experts say, there are a number of diplomatic considerations. Turkey is a long-standing NATO ally. And, more recently, the TB2 has emerged as a critical tool in places like Ukraine, where the country’s military has used it to battle Russian forces — a fact that the drone maker, Baykar, has repeatedly emphasized in media coverage of the conflict. “I think it is one of the symbols of resistance,” Selçuk Bayraktar, the firm’s chief technology officer, told CNN. “It gives them hope.”

Elsewhere, however, the TB2 is far less revered. In fact, it has been used to kill not just soldiers but civilians, drawing the ire of various governments and human rights groups.

In 2019, for example, Turkey sent the drones to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord in Libya, despite a United Nations arms embargo. The U.N. said the weapon then helped transform a “low-intensity, low-technology” fight there into a bloody conflict. In Ethiopia, amid a war with rebels, the government used TB2s in airstrikes that have killed dozens of civilians, including those living in a camp for displaced people.

Biden administration officials raised concerns about drone use in the Ethiopia conflict with their Turkish counterparts but stopped short of taking action, despite an executive order authorizing them to impose sanctions against any party involved in the fighting.

This year’s National Defense Authorization Act reflects America’s tense relationship with Turkey. If signed into law, it would restrict the administration’s efforts to sell F-16 fighter jets to the country. Lawmakers cited a number of recent moves by Turkey, including its opposition to Finland and Sweden joining NATO. “How do you reward a nation that does all of those things,” Foreign Relations Committee Chair Sen. Robert

Menendez, D-N.J., told Politico.

The House amendment on TB2s, introduced by Cárdenas and co-sponsored by 19 others, represents the second attempt in the past year to put the Turkish drone program on the White House’s radar.

Last year, lawmakers sought a similar mandate for a report on U.S. parts and technology used in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. One version of the 2021 amendment, introduced by Menendez, called for a broad assessment of the TB2s, their sales since 2018 and U.S. parts used in them. The final version, however, was watered down. It did not name the Turkish drone or Turkey specifically, and it asked the Biden administration to look generally into American “weapon systems or controlled technology” used in the 2020 Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict. ProPublica found that the Turkish government had hired lobbyists to discuss the drones issue with lawmakers at the time.

Under the law, that report was due in June, but the Defense Department has yet

to release it. A spokesperson told ProPublica this month that it was “out for final review with pertinent stakeholders.” The department did not respond to subsequent requests for an update on when that review would be complete.

To some administration critics, the delay is another indication of Turkey’s clout in Washington.


“Taking something off the shelf and using it to patch together a weapon might not technically cross a legal line, but it should be of concern,” said Aram Hamparian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America. “It should be addressed as part of our general U.S.-Turkey relationship, and I’m not sure it is. I think they get a free pass on it.”

The Senate is expected to finalize its version of the National Defense Authorization Act in the coming months.

(Umar Farooq is an Ancil Payne Fellow with ProPublica.)



Rep. Tony Cárdenas (D-Calif.)



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

Dr. Nubar Berberian 2022 Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is September 15, 2022.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in October, 2022 based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in November, 2022
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 20, 2022

Former Farmington Salon Owner Accused of Sexually Assaulting Teens, Free on More Than \$1M Bond

ASSAULT, from page 7

Olivo is represented by Hartford-based attorney Matt Sorokin in that matter.

In addition to the criminal charges, Olivo faces a civil lawsuit filed in June 2021 by one of the alleged sexual assault victims.

The lawsuit, which was filed in Superior Court in Hartford and seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages, claims the alleged victim suffered, among other things, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and suicidal ideations, resulting in substantial medical bills.

Prior to his arrests, Olivo ran a successful salon, which was first located on Farmington Avenue, then at 118 Plainville Ave. before moving into Olivo’s home, also on Plainville Avenue. (Town property records show Olivo has since sold the home.)



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COMMUNITY NEWS

New Members Elected to Armenian Assembly Board

WASHINGTON — As the Armenian Assembly of America marks its 50th anniversary year, the organization welcomes its newest Board Members, including Valina Agbabian from California, Peter Mirijanian from Washington, DC, David Onanian from Texas, and Herman Purutyan from Massachusetts.

“We enthusiastically welcome our new Board Members to the Assembly family and team,” said Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian. “With our 50th anniversary upon us and the current challenges facing the people of Armenia and Artsakh, there is much work to do and we are confident that together we can ensure a bright future,” the Co-Chairs continued.

The Assembly’s current full Board of Trustees includes Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian, President Carolyn Mugar, Treasurer Oscar Tatosian, Secretary and Assistant Treasurer Bianka Kadian-Dodov, Assistant Secretary Lisa Kalustian, along with Valina Agbabian, Aram Gavoor, Alex Karapetian, Peter Mirijanian, Lu Ann Ohanian, David Onanian, Herman Purutyan, Ani Yeramyas Speirs, Annie Simonian Totah, and Talin Yacoubian, as well as emeritus members Robert A. Kaloosdian and Joyce Philibosian Stein.

In addition to the Board election, the Assembly also convened its biennial Board of Trustees meeting earlier this year, wherein a quorum was present and the activities and programs of the organization were discussed, including a review of developments in Washington, DC, and in Armenia and Artsakh.

During the meeting, Trustees approved a series of By-Law changes, including a new budgetary procedure, creating term limits for senior officers (three consecutive years); re-establishing term limits for Board Members (two consecutive four-year terms with a right to be re-elected after at least a one-year break); establishing emeritus positions for select individuals who have served more than 20 years; consolidating the voting process for Board Members; and establishing a separate endowment fund where Life Trustees would be represented, among other changes. At the outset of the meeting, a moment of silence was observed to honor former Assembly Members and friends who recently passed away.

“These By-Law changes reflect the confidence we all have in the Assembly as an established institution with participation by a wide cross-section of the community and a clear mission to provide the best possible, professional representation of Armenian issues in Washington, on a non-partisan and bipartisan basis, while recognizing the pluralistic nature of Armenian life and organizations in the United States,” noted Co-Chairs Barsamian and Krikorian. “We welcome the participation by more and more people, including in governance at the state and national levels, and these changes help to achieve that type of inclusion and broad participation as the need to care for our communities, genocide prevention, and a stronger US-Armenia/Artsakh relationship grow more challenging,” they concluded.

International Armenian Literary Alliance Launches Two \$2,500 Grants For Creative Writing And Translation

The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA) has launched two \$2,500 grants, one for a translation from Armenian into English, and one for contemporary creative writing. Applications for both grants will be accepted from September 1-30, 2022.

IALA’s Translation Grant will award \$2,500 to one translator working from Armenian source texts into English. In 2022, the grant will be awarded for any work of prose written in Western Armenian by a female author. Although preference will be given to more recent (post-20th century) works, we welcome works from any time period. The 2022 grant will be judged by Tatevik Ayvazyan, Gagik Stepan-Sarkissian, and Garen Torikian.

Given the traumatic history of the Armenian diaspora, many readers are unable to read works in the original Armenian, and therefore, have centuries of literature inaccessible to them. Translators working with Armenian texts have traditionally lacked resources in the publishing world, as well as access to other funding, due to the overwhelming influence of so-called “majority languages.” IALA’s Translation Grant is meant to foster the development of contemporary Armenian literature in English through a monetary award.

Additionally, in partnership with the Armenian Institute and Mashtots Press, and with funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation, IALA will support grant recipients in publishing and promoting the selected work. As Western Armenian is on UNESCO’s endangered languages list, we believe that it is imperative to bring more attention to Western Armenian literature. As female authors producing Armenian literature are a minority within a minority, it’s also necessary to highlight the works of these writers.

IALA’s Creative Writing Grant will award \$2,500 annually to one Armenian writer whose work-in-progress shows exceptional literary and creative ability. In 2022, the grant will be awarded for a work of fiction, and in the coming years, to works of poetry and creative nonfiction, as well as other mixed genre forms. The 2022 grant will be judged by Raffi Wartanian, Aline Ohanesian, Aida Zilelian and Nancy Agabian.

The application period for both in September 1-30.

The Creative Writing Grant is meant to foster the development of contemporary Armenian literature in English through an annual monetary award. Additionally, IALA will support grant recipients in promoting their publications through marketing on our website and social media channels, through book reviews and readings and discussions.

Both grants were made possible by a generous donation from the Armenian Allied Arts Association, an organization based in Southern California that discovered, encouraged and promoted new talent of Armenian descent for over eighty years.

For more information, visit IALA’s website, www.armenianliterary.org, or contact Olivia Katrandjian at olivia@armenianliterary.org.



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Arts & Culture

‘Hrant Dink: Here and Now’

NPAK Celebrates Armenian Hero

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Men of war form a commonplace, men of peace a rarity. Hrant Dink fought his entire and all-too-brief life to bring Armenians and Turks together and unite two people who have been at odds now for centuries. He had the vision to see them as brethren and not enemies — no matter how controversial his viewpoint was on either side of the ethnic divide.

Born in 1954 in Malatia, Dink urged Turks and Armenians to reconcile, starting with civil society. He once remarked: “There are two sick communities: Turks and Armenians. Armenians are experiencing great trauma, while Turks are experiencing great paranoia towards Armenians. Both are clinical cases. Who will treat us? The decision of the American or French Senates? Who will give the prescription? Who is our doctor? Armenians are the doctors of the Turks, and Turks are the doctors of the Armenians.”

For Dink, both communities adhered to stock narratives about each other. This he argued, made it impossible for either perpetrator or victim to move forward. Dink understood the complexities of history and saw the danger in stereotyping: “I challenge the accepted version of history because I do not write about things in black and white.” He explained: “People here are used to black and white. That’s why they’re astonished that there are other shades, too.” To Armenians who angered at his seeming conciliatory efforts, he answered simply: “There are Turks who don’t admit that their ancestors committed genocide. If you look at it though, they seem to be nice people. So why don’t they admit it? Because they think that genocide is a bad thing which they would never want to commit, and because they can’t believe their ancestors would do such a thing either.” In 2007 Dink paid for his brave words when he was gunned down in front of the Agos Newspaper offices where he served as Editor-in-Chief, an apparent victim of the so-called Turkish deep state or *derin devlet*.

From May 7 until September 11 at Yerevan’s premiere contemporary art space NPAK (the acronym stands for the Armenian equivalent of ACCEA or the Armenian Center for Contemporary and Experimental Art), both locals and tourists can enjoy a well-curated and thorough overview of the life and work of this Armenian Mandela. The exhibition “Hrant Dink: Here and Now” presents a selection from the Istanbul-based 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, successfully detailing the life and struggle of this intellectual who fought so hard to make the world a better, more compassionate place. The exhibition creates a digital bridge of sorts, as visitors in Istanbul can watch real time video of Yerevantsis at NPAK see DINK, page 15



Mashtots Hayrapet Church

Photographer Hopes to Popularize Lesser-Known Cultural Sites in Armenia

By Raffi Berberian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Many diasporan Armenians, including myself, grew up hearing about Armenia and seeing the occasional photo, video, or even painting.

Some of us were lucky enough to visit at some point as well. My first visit was in 2013 in the form of what I would call a typical “First Time Armenia Family Vacation.”

This was a two-week trip with plenty of down time in Yerevan and minibus tours to the list of top spots: Garni, Geghard, Noravank, Areni, Khor Virab, Sevanavank, Karahunj, Tatev, etc.

So what happens next? At the end of my trip, I remember thinking there was nothing left that was worth going back for.

But that is false. Why don’t we know about the many other amazing, beautiful, and important places to visit? One of the core reasons is the lack of accessible information. We simply do not know what else is out there and that is how my project, “Armenia: In Between,” came to be.

Several years after my family vacation I had the opportunity to participate in Birthright Armenia. Besides working as a volunteer, we also went on excursions to tourist sites. During this time, I started wondering what other places I could see and that was the unofficial beginning of the project.

see SITES, page 17



Garni. This was a two week trip with plenty of down time in Yerevan and minibus tours to the list of top spots: Garni, Geghard, Noravank, Areni, Khor Virab, Sevanavank, Karahunj, Tatev, etc. I think most of you reading this who have been to Armenia once can relate to this!

Project SAVE Photograph Archives Announces Artist and Research Residencies

WATERTOWN — As part of its ongoing new initiatives, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives (projectsave.org) is launching residencies for artists and researchers. The residencies will take place twice a year and are by invitation only, for the time being. The first residency is planned for this fall.

“The vast photographic wealth that Project SAVE has amassed since 1975 has been somewhat under the radar,” said Dr. Arto Vaun, who took the reins as executive director last year. “With over 80,000 hardcopy images from around the world, this archive is one of the most unique photography archives anywhere, yet it’s relatively unknown. My goal is to change that by expanding our reach through dynamic new initiatives that go beyond the Armenian community.”

Artists working in different mediums such as photography, painting, film, and music will spend anywhere from three weeks to three months at Project SAVE, exploring the archives and creating an original work that will then be shared with the public. They will also engage with the community through talks or workshops. Likewise, the research residency will include writers, curators, and scholars who will draw on the archives for their research projects.

“Project SAVE not only preserves the history and culture of Armenians but also provides a valuable photographic resource — one that has untold creative and academic possibilities,” said Kim Hoeckele, who serves on Project SAVE’s new advisory board and is an artist and professor of photography based in New York City. “This residency is an exciting opportunity to engage this rich archive in expansive ways.”

Along with the “Conversations on Photography” series, redesigned website, and new advisory board, the artist and research residencies are part of Project SAVE’s substantial transition and growth over the past year. According to Vaun, these changes are all leading to the 50th anniversary fundraising campaign in 2025 to secure a larger, permanent space for the archives. “After all these decades of pioneering work, it no longer makes sense for such an immense and valuable archive to not have a proper, permanent space to exhibit and share all these powerful and beautiful photographs.”

Elena Bulat, senior photograph conservator at Harvard University and Project SAVE advisory board member, believes the artist and researcher residencies are a wonderful initiative. “This will be a great chance for young or experienced professionals to learn and share through these collections. These residencies, in fact, will build a well-informed community which will be able to help shape long-term preservation goals for Project SAVE.”

Vaun is excited and optimistic that Project SAVE’s potential is about to see RESIDENCIES, page 15



ARTS & CULTURE

Alessandra Pompili Is on Astral Journey With Alan Hovhaness

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“My purpose is to create music not for snobs but for all people, music which is beautiful and healing.” These words of composer Alan Hovhaness appear in a short presentation of a recently released CD. It is the second recording that pianist Alessandra Pompili has produced of his piano works and it is clear that she shares the composer’s approach to music.

In her introduction, she explains that she had always incorporated contemporary music into her recitals, but Hovhaness appealed to her in particular because of her interest in the “relationship between music and silence.” His works, she finds, are conducive to this approach. “Performing, for me,” she explains, “is not only enjoying wonderful music but also presenting something that will make the audience want to go back to that experience again and again.”

It was Martin Berkofsky, an “advocate of Hovhaness’s music,” who introduced her to the Armenian composer. He would send her scores of the works from his home in Virginia, and she started incorporating them into her performances. Then, like Berkofsky, she too began premiering some of his compositions in Europe. Her first CD, “Alan Hovhaness: Piano Works,” appeared in 2014, and included *Shalimar* and *Cougar Mountain Sonata*.

The new recording is titled, “Alan Hovhaness, Piano Works vol. 2 – Journeying over Land and Through Space.” The five selections reflect, in fact, three countries (Ossetia, Japan, and Greece) and two spatial dimensions; the former include *Fantasy on an Ossetin Tune* Op. 85, *Komachi* Op. 240, No. 1-7, and *Greek Rhapsody* No. 1 Op. 63. In the voyage through conceptual/astronomical space the music takes us to *Hermes Stella* Op. 247 I, II, and on a *Journey to Arcturus* Op. 354 I-VI. “So this is a journey to very uncommon destinations,” the pianist noted in an understatement.

A Multilingual Musical Universe

Even for the non-specialist listener (like this writer), it becomes clear that we are moving from one musical culture to another, when, after hearing the *Fantasy* inspired by Ossetia, we know that with *Kamachi* we have entered a Japanese cultural realm, with its ancient sagas ascending steep mountains. The seven short pieces in this section, ranging from one to two minutes each, are sound images, distinct vignettes or cameos, reminiscent (like many of Hovhaness’s compositions) of the works of Komitas. Though uttered by the same compositional voice, the *Greek Rhapsody* that concludes the recording speaks another, different language. It moves from treble melodies and accelerating rhythms to the poignant, emotionally diverse “Farewell song of a boy who must go to war,” to a brief march-like conclusion, *Revolution*. As Kansas State University professor Dr. Craig Parker has put it, Hovhaness was “a musical polyglot,”

who was capable of composing in a wide variety of idioms, having become intimately familiar with the musical traditions (and instruments) of numerous countries.

The *Journey to Arcturus* takes the listener truly to a new universe, as if travelling from one celestial sphere to another. With an extraordinary economy of means, Hovhaness moves from the rhythms of *Lullaby* to an energetic *Fugue*, with penetrating, almost obsessive (and yet, perhaps, humorous) rhythms; a *Nocturne* with echoes of traditional Armenian folk themes, highly abstracted, leads to harmonic dissonances of *Jhala for Star Journey*, hammered out in insistent rhythms.

An International Artist

Alessandra Pompili’s profound study of the works of Hovhaness over years has rendered her fluent in the manifold musical languages in which he composed. With fine articulation and a technical mastery, she communicates the artistic diversity with insight and sensitivity. Pianist and composer Sergio Calligaris, with whom

she studied for 15 years, has said, “Miss Pompili is gifted with a notable technique, a fine sense for the structure of the works she performs and a fine musicianship which communicates with the audience successfully. She certainly deserves the highest attention.” Pompili graduated from L’Aquila Conservatoire and also studied with Amadeo Graziosi and Marcella Crudele at the École Normale de Musique de Paris A. Cortot. She has performed in many European countries and the USA,

and since 2006 has been a recording artist at Vatican Radio. For Martin Berkofsky, who supplied her with the scores of Hovhaness, she “is a pianist of eloquence and abiding honesty. Her playing speaks directly from the heart and touches me deeply. I confess that her music has brought me to tears.”

On April 17, 2021, Pompili was among the sponsors of a symposium held at the Armenian Cultural Foundation in Arlington, Mass., and performed there the first movement of

the *Greek Rhapsody* included on this new CD. In her remarks at that event, which commemorated the 110th anniversary of the composer’s birth, she had quoted the following from Hovhaness: “I propose to create a heroic, monumental style of composition simple enough to inspire all people... It is not my purpose to supply a few pseudo-intellectual musicians and critics with more food for brilliant argumentation, but rather to inspire all mankind with new heroism and spiritual nobility. This may appear to be sentimental and impossible to some, but it must be remembered that Palestrina, Handel and Beethoven would not consider it either sentimental or impossible. In fact, the worthiest creative art has been motivated consciously or unconsciously by the desire for the regeneration of mankind.”

The new CD, published by the Italian label Dynamic, has been made available in its entirety on YouTube by Naxos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxj3C-jbd6Y8&list=OLAK5uy_mHm7m4MjIV17sAnmDv1-DO3gWBSwbPbaCM



PBS Schedules More Airings of ‘Hidden Map’ as WGBH and Armenian Museum of America Team up for Broadcast

WATERTOWN — Following its popular nationwide premiere on PBS, the award-winning documentary, “The Hidden Map,” has been scheduled to air again in several cities from Los Angeles to Boston during the network’s August pledge drive.

Especially noteworthy is Boston WGBH’s novel approach to telling the Armenian story. Recognizing its vibrant Armenian community, WGBH made the important decision to spend an entire day recording studio breaks for the upcoming broadcasts of the documentary in the impressive Armenian Museum of America in Watertown. Collaborating with filmmaker Ani Hovannisian and museum director Jason Sohigian, the WGBH team created a program that celebrates Armenian heritage, history and resilience, featuring lively exchanges and museum treasures to accompany the film. They hope to engage their diverse viewership including Armenians with the 90-minute program which will premiere on the main channel GBH2 on August 15 at 7:30 p.m.

The next broadcast will be on Boston GBH2 Special-Event Premiere of “The Hidden Map” will take place Sunday, August 21, at 5 p.m.

If viewers miss the primary showings, they can also watch on GBH44: Thursday, August 18, at 12:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 20, at 6 p.m.

August airdates and times in other PBS markets including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, Cleveland, Arizona, New York, New Jersey, Washington, Seattle, Phoenix, Tucson, Tampa, Miami, Philadelphia, Lexington, Charleston, Louisville, Grand Rapids, Providence, Austin, Fort Wayne and more are available by checking local PBS schedules or thehiddenmap.com.

“The Hidden Map” takes viewers on a daring journey with Hovannisian, a granddaughter of Genocide survivors, as she ventures to the lost ancestral Armenian homeland to uncover the forbidden past. A chance meeting with a Scottish explorer leads to a joint odyssey beneath the surface of modern-day Turkey, where the duo discovers sacred relics, silenced voices and the hidden map. They also meet Turks, Kurds and ‘hidden’ Armenians who risk their safety by revealing long-buried truths.

This is among the only Armenian films ever to be nationally-distributed by PBS, giving the filmmaker and diasporan community the rare opportunity to help keep

the story on the air for millions more to discover.

“It’s a huge exhale,” said Hovannisian, “to know that PBS has taken the Armenian story and championed the truth by sharing ‘The Hidden Map’ with viewers over and over again. They also do it because viewers are responding. It’s a team effort, just as it is our collective story. So, it was especially exciting to film studio breaks with WGBH hosts in the awesome Armenian Museum of America where thousands of years of Armenian creation, destruction and rebirth go hand in hand with the film.”

Museum Director Jason Sohigian added, “It was an honor to host WGBH-TV again at the Armenian Museum of America for their annual pledge drive. We’ve watched Ani’s documentary every time it has aired on PBS, and look forward to these special broadcasts, especially as the museum and film reflect many of the same themes, namely the survival and resilience of the Armenian people. We are here to share that history and culture with the world.”

Viewers who pledge a nominal amount in support of PBS’s broadcasts of “The Hidden Map” will help ensure additional airings on a national stage, and receive



Filmmaker Ani Hovannisian in a hidden chapel of Hokeats Vank near Van, Historic Armenia

exclusive gifts, including hand-crocheted dolls made by women in Goris, Armenia, along with museum passes, DVD and Lavash cookbook.



ARTS & CULTURE

Books

The Other Side of Paradise: Solmaz Sharif’s *Customs*

by Arpi Sarafian

The United States of America has been portrayed as the land of freedom and opportunity, a refuge for the oppressed and the poor. Immigrants from all over the world come to America and struggle to create a new life. Stories of individual success abound. Dr. Dennis Papazian’s journey is a classic example. In his recently published memoir, *From My Life and Thought: Reflections on an Armenian-American Journey* (Fresno State Press, 2022), Papazian chronicles his struggles of “trying to fit in and be accepted,” first in the provincial town of Augusta, Georgia, where he was born less than two decades after the Armenian Genocide, and later in Detroit, Michigan. The “poor immigrant boy” is well-aware of his lack of privilege in a culture where ethnic minorities are marginalized. Yet, with hard work and perseverance, he overcomes obstacles and rises to key leadership positions in the Armenian American community.

The success stories of individuals do, nonetheless, raise questions about the many more who fail to realize their potential because of, in Papazian’s own words, “unofficial segregation” and legalized restrictions. The popular melting pot metaphor for a land where “all are created equal” is, in fact, perceived by many as being deceptive. Noted educational critic Jonathan Kozol writes of the “educational apartheid” of the “Still Separate, Still Unequal” school system in the United States. On a similar note, the late Mike Rose, professor in the School of Education at UCLA, writes of school administrators limiting educational opportunities to students in the vocational education track by instilling in them the “I just wanna be average” mentality.

The disparity between the promise and the reality of a land that advertises herself as the land of equality and harmony, has been exposed by Diaspora writers of all ethnic backgrounds. *The Book of Khalid* by Lebanese American writer Ameen Rihani, the story of two immigrants from the village of Baalbek in Lebanon, who at the turn of the century sail “West—to the paradise of the World—to America . . . the land of equal rights and freedom,” depicts



Solmaz Sharif

their disenchantment and the dehumanizing immigration process at the Bureau of Emigration in the “Juhannam of Ellis Island.” “Are you sure we are better off here?” Khalid asks his friend repeatedly.

Among the more recent voices desperately searching for the truth in “a counterfeit universe,” is the voice of poet/musician Alan Semerdjian. “Oh Truth where is your hide? Why must we seek you in the debris?” pleads Semerdjian. Solmaz Sharif, on the other hand, the thirty-nine-year-old, multiple-awards-winning Persian American poet, makes us question the very premise of America

as a land where all are welcome. “I am without the kingdom . . . even when inside the kingdom—/without . . . A without which/I have learned to be,” writes Sharif in “Without Which,” a poem in her newly released book of poems, *Customs* (Graywolf Press, 2022). Even immersion in English, believed by many to be the mark of success for a foreign-born, is seen by Sharif as capitulation to “A world polite/for their words,” to a world that thrives on control, language being an important part of that control: “To finally admit out loud then, *I want to go home*/ . . . To lament the fact of your lamentations in English, English being/your first defeat.”

For Sharif, being uprooted from one’s land and coming to America is not about being torn between two traditions. It is about leaving something behind for a culture where one is always alone, always excluded. The persona in the poems refuses to see “The Master’s House” as her source of support. At a time when it is fashionable to define identity as a process, in other words, as something that is continually changing and forming, and therefore as allowing the individual to always feel “included,” Sharif depicts the endless going from gate to gate at airports—“All my waiting at the railing”—as an experience that inevitably leaves one “without.” In “He, Too” she writes:

Upon my return to the US, he
Asks my occupation. Teacher.

What do you teach?
Poetry.

I hate poetry, the officer says,
I only like writing
Where you can make an argument.

Anything he asks, I must answer.
This, too, he likes.

I don’t tell him
He will be in a poem
Where the argument will be

anti-American.
.....
.....
I am let in

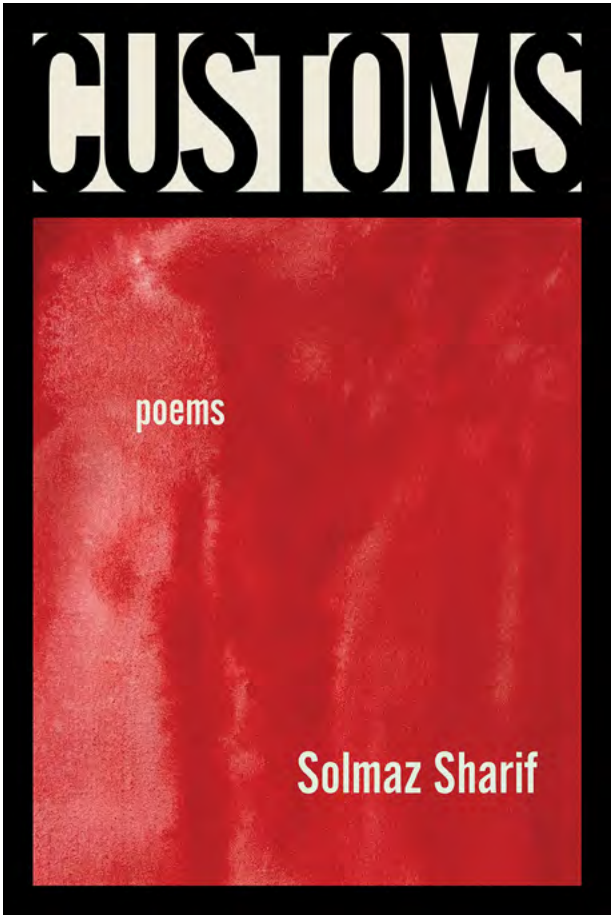
I am let in until

Ending the poem with “until” must imply the threat of yet another uprooting. The gates at the customs area open and the speaker is “let in,” only to stand at the railing of yet another gate built inside. “Domestic terminals do not have this railing at the exit,” she recalls as she waits. Unlike the tramps, who may have no consciousness of the fact that they are condemned to a routine of endless waiting in Samuel Beckett’s celebrated play *Waiting for Godot*, the speaker in Sharif’s poems is aware that she is doomed to stay with “This nowhere.” She also knows that if she doesn’t, she will “lose even the loss.”

Displacement is not a new phenomenon. Sharif’s poems do, however, make the dispossession palpable. The unfinished last line (for the reader to finish?)—“I pass through there so that”—of “An Otherwise,” the long fragmented poem that ends the slim volume of poems, touches the exile in all of us, and makes the feeling of exclusion, of having to exist “even when inside the kingdom—/without,” even more traumatic. The persona’s, “No crueler word than return./No greater lie,” evokes for us the destruction of our own homeland in Artsakh.

The poems provide an earthy “context” for Nothingness. The speaker “was dead before she died. . . . Homeland is where one’s wake was held,” writes Sharif. Nonetheless, I like to see the rhythmic repetition of, “To finally admit out loud then, *I want to go home* . . . though you’ve forgotten what it was,” as freeing. The speaker likes to be asked about her loss, about the things she left behind. Indeed,

We wanted



To be asked
Of these things.

To tell of them
Was to live

again,

tells us she is still alive, even as we wonder if living with a crushed soul is living.

The poems in the collection are not easy, yet their fragmented stanzas, broken lines, and shocking images compel us to share the speaker’s feeling of fragmentation and of “withoutness,” with not even a “something within” to fall back on to recover:

Would you have knocked for me?
I ask the neighbor.

I have been, he said.

Then I felt his knocking

Inside my chest.

Many writers from the Diaspora have written about the plight of the immigrant. Our own Hakob Karapents devotes his entire oeuvre to exploring the feelings of duality and alienation of the exiled. “an American to Mexicans/a Mexican to Americans,” writes American poet Pat Mora in “Legal Alien.” Solmaz Sharif explores the contradictions of the condition of exile and exposes the other side of “paradise,” with stunningly precise details. In “Now What” she writes:

And so I sat at a tall table
In an Ohio hotel,
Eating delivery:
Cheese spread

with garlic butter, only it was
not butter, but partially
hydrogenated soy-
bean oil

and regular soybean oil and it
Came in a little tub like
creamer that’s also not
Dairy.

America in this century
means a poem will have to
contain dairy that is,
in fact,

Not dairy.

The Truth has been uttered all too clearly.



ARTS & CULTURE

Karen Hamada

‘Nerses Shnorhali’s Words Worked as Therapy for Me’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

YEREVAN / TOKYO — Karen Hamada is Japanese theologian. She studied at the University of Tokyo, Department of Area Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, currently works at University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus. Being interested in theological and literary interactions in the Christian East, she studied Armenian, Syriac and Georgian. Recently Karen Hamada published “One Christ, one Church. The Theology of the Armenian Church between the Byzantines and the Crusaders”, which mostly refers to the Armenian church figure, theologian, poet, musicologist, composer, historian, Catholicos of All Armenians, St. Nerses Shnorhali (Nerses Klayetsi, 1102–1173).

Dear Karen, first let me congratulate you with publishing of your book about Nerses Shnorhali. It is the first book about the Armenian Apostolic Church to enter the Japanese-speaking world.

Thank you very much, Artsvi. Thankfully, since I posted the news about my publication to FB, I received a lot of kind messages from my friends and those I hadn’t known. Strictly speaking, a group of Japanese scholars who have been conducting surveys on the Armenian church architecture have already published some books with very beautiful photos of Armenian churches in 2019 (Shiro Sasano, *Armenia Junrei* (Pilgrimage to Armenia), Tokyo, Sairyusha, 2019). However, as far as I know, my book is the first Japanese book about the Armenian “Church” not as a building, but as the religious tradition of the Armenian people.

Do you have already some feedback about your study?

Yes, I had some feedback in SNS. Some

posted positive comments on my book. As they are just personal opinions, now I am waiting for critics and book reviews on academic journals, which takes time to appear. Though it is not a kind of best-seller, I can say that it has a certain impact that a book on this topic has been published in Japanese.

You focused on a topic that is not explored often: Nerses Shnorhali in Russian theological literature.

Yes, I worked on that topic when I studied at the Russian State University for Humanities in Moscow (2009-2010). Then I realized that Nerses Shnorhali is the first Armenian theologian whose work was fully translated into Russian. An Armenian diplomat and translator Alexander Khudabashvili translated his encyclical letters in 1847 and it had an important role to prove the orthodoxy of the faith of the Armenian Church, because at that time Russian theologians considered the Armenian Christianity as a heresy. Since then I became interested in Nerses Shnorhali and tried to

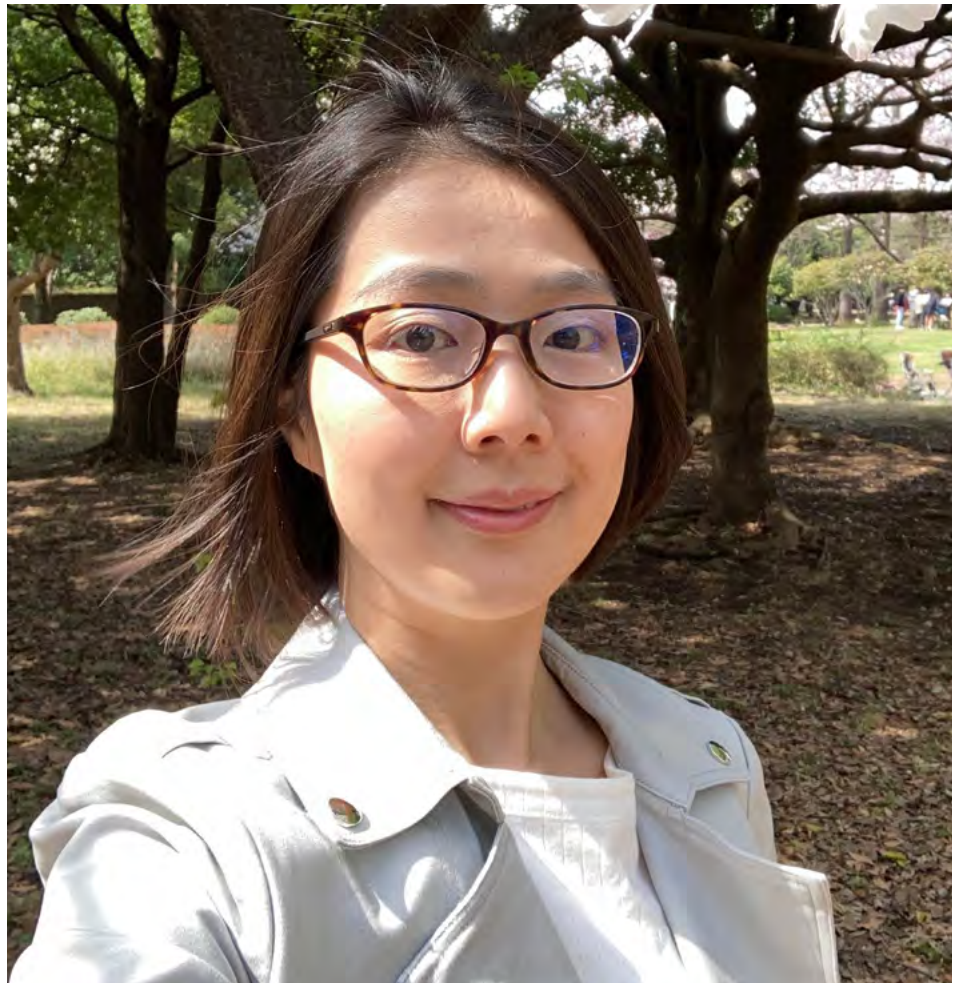
read his works, first in translation, then in original *grabar* (Classical Armenian) text. Especially I was impressed by his poem “On the Heaven and its Ornaments.” Only first some stanzas of this poem were translated into Russian during Soviet era and I found it accidentally in a library. Though the translation was not accurate, but I was fascinated by its unique style that the heaven talks about himself and explains how the world was made by God.

Do you intend to translate Shnorhali and other medieval Armenian authors into Japanese?

Yes, I do. Chisen Shokan, the publisher of my book, has already asked me to translate Nerses Shnorhali’s theological letters. I also intend to translate works of other medieval Armenian authors, such as Grigor



Cover of Karen Hamada’s new book



Narekatsi and Yovhannes Erznkatsi. It will be a long-term project.

What could a modern Japanese person find interesting in studying medieval Armenian literature?

It depends on people’s own concerns. Most of readers of my book are academics — Byzantinists or Medievalists. They are interested in medieval Armenian literature because they are rich sources of their own study. However, I think it will be interesting even for non-academic readers because it contains emotions and experiences that can be linked to current situation. For example, Nerses Shnorhali wrote “Lament on Edessa” to console people in deep grief when Edessa was seized by Muslim troops in 1144 and many citizens, including Armenians, were killed and captured. Moreover, Nerses himself was a refugee, who escaped from his own homeland to Hromkla because of war. When the war in Artsakh and later in Ukraine broke out, I was so deeply depressed and hurt, but Nerses Shnorhali’s words worked as therapy, at least for me.

What is the origin of your name?

It is complicated. My name was taken from a city in Taiwan, Hualien. Japanese use the same Chinese character as Taiwanese, but the pronunciation is different. Hualien is pronounced as Karen in Japanese. My father was in Hualien for business trip when I was born in Japan. He got a phone call that the baby was born, and

his Taiwanese colleagues held a grand party to celebrate my birth. My father was so impressed by their hospitality, and became a little bit drunk, promised them to give his daughter the name of the city. Maybe I have a special connection with welcoming people like Taiwanese and Armenians.

We met 10 years ago first in Yerevan, then in Venice where you participated in Armenian summer course. What are your most interesting memories?

I have a lot of interesting memories and it is difficult to choose the best one, but I have to say that what impressed me was an experience in San Lazzaro monastery in Venice. I asked a monk who works as a librarian to read some books in their library. They generously allowed me not only to read books, but also use a place in their garden of monastery for reading. It was very quiet and peaceful moment — there was only a sound of waves and a breathtaking view of the blue sea. And I imagined that many great Armenian scholars did the same here. It is unforgettable experience.

Do you see any prospect for further development of Armenian studies in Japan?

It is sad to say that humanities are now in very difficult situation in Japan. In many universities reduces budget for humanities and my university is not an exception. However, as I already mentioned, we can learn a lot from the long and uneasy history of the Armenian people. It is a long process that a research field flourishes, and it never can be done by effort of a few people. However, at least I have already sown a seed and will take care of it until it sprouts.

NPAK Celebrates Armenian Hero Hrant Dink

DINK, from page 12

and vice-versa. At both NPAK and the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, Dink narrates and tells his own life story. Watching video and hearing recordings of a man who fell victim to the millennial Armenian struggle for survival is chilling at times. Separate corners of the exhibition focus on themes such as memory, justice, and minority rights in Turkey. In the future, one might also like to see a similar corner devoted to the same issues in Armenia.

Started in 1992 by Sonia and Ed Balasanian, NPAK has grown into the premiere contemporary art space in Armenia. The curatorial team for this show is long but bears mentioning in full: Arat Dink, Sera Dink, Maral Dink, Nayat Karakösem, Neslihan Koyuncu and Talin Süzme. Visitors can

also experience their curatorial vision via a virtual tour of the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory. Although the virtual tour doesn’t precisely replicate the Armenian exhibition, its content overlaps enough with the Yerevan exhibition. The clips of Dink in the show come to us from Turkey’s mainstream media as well as his appearances in Armenia. The curators also intended that the visitor learn about Dink’s dreams and struggles as an Armenian born in Turkey in the post-Genocide period. The Hrant Dink Foundation, 23.5 and NPAK have also planned collateral events during the show’s run such as the upcoming Talk on Art and Memory, on July 29.

This multimedia exhibition is hopefully a harbinger of things to come in Yerevan’s increasingly sophisticated art and video

scene, as it extends the range of the performance space/gallery/museum to one of explicit social and historical engagement. It creates a much-needed bridge between Turks and Armenians, as well as to any other people who come to the show live or via internet. Armenians have many heroes over the centuries who made their reputation on the battlefield. Dink however was a soldier of peace, something the world needs today more than ever. If the arc of the moral universe does indeed bend toward justice as the great Martin Luther King once said, then this exhibition helps it bend a fraction more, one visitor at a time.

Visit “Hrant Dink: Here and Now”: <https://hrantdink.org/en/site-of-memory/announcements/3694-hrant-dink-here-and-now-exhibition-in-yerevan>

Project SAVE Announces Artist And Research Residencies

RESIDENCIES, from page 12 bloom. “We live in a highly visual age. With such a diverse and vast collection of photographs, Project SAVE is more than ready to become more of a living archive that engages with a broader demographic. By championing the universal power and art of photography through these upcoming residencies and other initiatives, we’re attracting more of the general public to engage with and learn about the global Armenian experience.”



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



For the Love of Apricots

Here are two refreshing and cool recipes for Chocolate Apricot Ice Cream and Apricot Sorbet from Lisa Prince Newman's indispensable cookbook, *For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley*. For true apricot lovers, this cookbook takes you on a sentimental journey with Lisa, an accomplished writer, home cook and city planner. Short essays throughout the cookbook evoke Santa Clara Valley's 100-year orchard era, affectionately known as the Valley of Heart's Delight, into the powerful and influential Silicon Valley, in one generation.

Through Newman's recipes, which range from appetizers to main dishes to a variety of cookies and desserts, you can taste the passion she has for the versatility apricots offer. Her book contains recipes for apricot almond coins, Swiss apricot mousse, apricot-strawberry tart and the ever-popular apricot bars, not to mention apricot liqueur.

"I have loved apricots for as long as I can remember. They color my fondest memories of growing up in Saratoga," says Lisa. Inspired by her memories of growing up in the Santa Clara Valley during the 1960s when fruit orchards spread out in every direction, this San Francisco Bay Area author focuses her passion for the freshest ingredients and pleasurable cooking on apricots. Once the top apricot producer in the world, California still produces apricots that have unparalleled flavor and a rich history.

Lisa tells the story of apricot farming history in the Santa Clara Valley while sharing her tested fruit-focused recipes. "The season for apricots is mainly from early May to August. Approximately 85 percent of the U.S. crop comes from California and 15 percent from Washington — so you can consider them a West Coast treat. Fresh apricots are petite, round fruits that are pale yellow to bright orange in color, depending on the variety and how ripe they are when picked," she says.

Apricots have even less sugar than berries. The USDA noted that one fresh apricot contains just over three grams of sugar. Apricots are a great choice when you're looking to switch up your fruit rou-

tine, while still snacking on something tasty and healthy. Apricots aren't simply for snacking on or including in desserts. You can easily include them in sweet and savory recipes in lots of different ways. What's more, if you can't source fresh apricots you can use them dried, canned, and frozen. Apricot jam and preserves are perfect for sauces, glazes, and drinks, too.

"Dried apricots are one of the healthiest and most beneficial of fruits," she says. "Apricots help improve not only anemia but also digestion through their high fiber content. Vision and skin problems are enhanced with their large concentration of vitamins A and C. The antioxidants in California apricots can also reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and stroke."

The world is definitely a much sweeter place with these cool dessert recipes from Lisa Prince Newman — both are creamy with the perfect burst of fresh apricot goodness that everyone will love.

Chocolate Apricot Ice Cream

INGREDIENTS:

- 1-1/2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 5 tablespoons unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2 cups fresh (or frozen) ripe apricots, pitted and chopped

PREPARATION:

Combine cream, cocoa powder and sugar in a large saucepan set over medium-high heat, whisking until mixture comes to full rolling boil and starts to foam. Remove from heat and stir in apricots. Cover and let stand 10 minutes to cool. Puree mixture in food processor or blender, working in batches if necessary (Lisa uses an immersion blender).

Refrigerate puree, covered, at least 4 hours or overnight. Freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions for your ice cream maker.

Makes 3 cups.

Apricot Sorbet

Apricots are in season. This sorbet is like biting into a frozen apricot, so refreshing and sweet.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound (about 8) fresh, ripe (or frozen) apricots, halved and pitted
- 3/4 cup water, divided
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice or Kirsch

PREPARATION:

Place apricots in a medium saucepan with 1/4 cup water. Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the fruit is tender and soft.

Working carefully with the hot mixture, puree the fruit in a blender or food processor. Strain the apricot mixture through a sieve to remove solids. There should be about 1 1/2 cups of puree.

Return puree to the saucepan and add 1/2 cup water and the sugar to the mixture, stirring over low heat, until the sugar dissolves. Taste puree and, if desired, add lemon juice, Kirsch, or both.

Refrigerate at least 4 hours or overnight. Freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions for your ice cream maker.

Makes 3 cups.

For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley is a cookbook that will satisfy your love of apricots through more than 60 kitchen-tested recipes beginning with breakfast and ending with cocktails. For the Love of Apricots is also a feast for the eyes as well as the mind. Beautiful food photography blends with images of California's apricot orchards; from today as well as not so long ago, when fruit orchards covered much of the Santa Clara Valley landscape. Reflections on what the famed Valley of Heart's Delight was like, how it changed, and what remains, add another dimension to the cookbook.

For the Love of Apricots: Recipes and Memories of the Santa Clara Valley is published by Prince of the Orchards Publications. 2020 Food Photography Copyright © 2018, 2020 by Jessica Yager Photography Orchard Photography Copyright © 2018, 2020 by Eric Larson.

ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 17 — The Orange County Trex Fraternity – Presents KEF TIME So Cal! Bagramian Hall• 900 W. Lincoln Ave, Montebello (within the church grounds of the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Cathedral). 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Semi Formal or Business Casual attire. Delicious Mezza Style / Armenian Specialties. Beautiful large outside lounge. Cigars by Dr. Garo. Music by Kef Time Legacy Band featuring: Andrew Hagopian, Phillip Hagopian, George Nigosian, Jim Karagozian, and Mal Barsamian. Ticket Prices: \$85 Adults, College-age students and under \$65.00. Table Sponsor. 10 Tickets for \$800.00. Tickets at www.ticketleap.com. Donations are tax deductible. The Orange County Chapter Charitable Trust is a 501 C3 entity: E.I.N. 56-668-3467. A portion of our proceeds from this event will go to the Armenian EyeCare Project and to the Ararat Home of Los Angeles, Inc. Contacts: Ralph Dergazarian 714.681.3013 • Brian Melkesian 626.827.8434 • Chuck Simonian 559.799.3949 • Ari Gulugian 949.701.8006. <https://octriplex.org/kef-time/> Local hotel rooms at the Doubletree by Hilton.

MASSACHUSETTS

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

AUGUST 28 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic, 12 – 5 p.m., 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. Live music with the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh & Chicken Kebab, Kheyma, Pastries and Beverages, including Beer and Wine. Cash raffles. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. For more info please visit www.hypointearmenianchurch.org or call (978) 372-9227. SEPTEMBER 9 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter invites everyone to a cultural event honoring author, editor, philologist, educator and public figure, Jirair Tanielian from Beirut, Lebanon, for his 60 years of service and dedication to Armenian culture and the community. Friday, 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn, Watertown. Details to follow. For more information, please contact us at bostontca@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 18 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. LET’S CELEBRATE THE PARK’S 10th Anniversary Sunday Afternoon at the Park! at 3pm. 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

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.

RHODE ISLAND

AUGUST 5 to SEPTEMBER 9 — The Cultural committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church of Providence continues programming the “Armenian Cultural Hour” programs, Fridays at 7:30 p.m. The program can be livestreamed on the church’s Facebook page by everyone at <https://www.facebook.com/armenianchurchprovidence>

August 19 - Ruben Matevosyan, Concert in Yerevan

September 9 – Dance Ensemble of Vanush Khanamiryan Academy

PENNSYLVANIA

SEPTEMBER 21 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father’s memoir Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Wednesday 7- 9 p.m., Armenian Martyrs’ Congregational Church, 100 N. Edmonds Avenue, Havertown. (610) 446-3330 office@amccpa.org. There are no other books in literature on this aspect of the Armenian Genocide. The book contains rare documents and pictures which will be shown during the presentation. Book signing during the reception. All proceeds will be donated to the AMCC.

Photographer Hopes to Popularize Lesser-Known Cultural Sites

SITES, from page 12

It started with the creation of a Google custom map and for the last 5 years I have been adding to the map and continuing my research. My background is photography, but I realized the importance of showing information along with the photos.

In my research I found that many places to visit were located in between typical tourist attractions and that is where the name of the project comes from. For example, every tourist has visited Garni temple, but did you know that 5 minutes away you can find the beautiful 12th-century Mashots Hayrapet Church?

Or let’s say you are visiting Tatev Monastery, 10 minutes off the main road you can stop and visit Vorotnavank, a 11th century monastic complex.

Or even for a day you are staying in Yerevan, there are some amazing sites such as the St. Astvatsatsin Katoghike Church in Avan, the oldest surviving church in Yerevan, built between the years 591 and 602.

So what can you expect from this project? Besides providing photos and information, there is also an interactive map that will help users visualize where these sites are in relation to places they have already visited and help them plan their next trip. Again this is all about creating a tool that provides accessible information. Research and descriptions with the photos come from mostly English, Armenian, and Russian online sources. A lot of the work was digging deep to find the information



Vorotovank



Vorotovank

and combining them all in one place!

I believe this is an important project for several reasons. The overlying reason is again, access to accessible information. By having this information in an easy to reach place with visuals and interactive maps, it will persuade people to visit Armenia more than once. Hopefully we can avoid having people feel the same way I did after my first trip because there are definitely more places worth visiting than just the typical tourist spots. This is one of the keys to future tourism in Armenia.

I also think that this project is an important step in increasing awareness of many sites that are in disrepair. Hopefully by sharing these places and people visiting them more often, there will be a push for preserving these historic sites.

To view my project, visit my pages on Facebook and Instagram: <https://www.facebook.com/raffiberberianphoto/> and https://www.instagram.com/raffi_berberian_photography/

For the best viewing experience and to access the interactive map, visit <https://www.raffiberberianphotography.com/armenia-in-between> or <https://www.raffiberberianphotography.com/the-map>



COMMENTARY

New Clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh Signal Ripple Effects From Ukraine

By Anatol Lieven

The latest clash between Azeri and Armenian forces in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh highlights the acute danger that the war in Ukraine will reignite other frozen and semi-frozen conflicts in Europe.

The United States and the West should do everything possible diplomatically to make sure that this does not happen. Apart from the human suffering involved, the results of new conflicts could in some cases be very unfavorable to the West.

The struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh — a largely Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan — began in the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union approached dissolution. For three years it was contained by Soviet troops, but with the end of the USSR it burst into a full-scale war, which Armenia won, with considerable help from the Armenian diaspora in the West. The resulting ceasefire mostly held from 1995 to 2020, when Azerbaijan — armed by Turkey and supported by plentiful energy revenues — launched an offensive that reconquered much of the territory held by Armenia.

The 2020 war was ended by a ceasefire brokered by Russia, and enforced by around 2,000 Russian peacekeeping troops. Armenia itself has a defense agreement with Russia, and Moscow maintains a military presence there. This agreement however does not extend to Nagorno-Karabakh, whose independence Russia does not recognize. Armenians regard the Russian alliance as crucial to ensuring that Turkey does not intervene directly in the Karabakh conflict on the side of the Azeris, with whom the Turks share a strong ethnic affinity.

Iran, too, has a stake in the Karabakh conflict. Tehran wants a continued Russian presence in the southern Caucasus to prevent NATO expansion to the region. It fears that Georgia and Azerbaijan might host U.S. military bases to threaten Iran, and that Azerbaijan might receive U.S. support to stir up separatism in Iranian Azerbaijan (the present Republic of Azerbaijan was part of Iran until conquered by Russia in the early 19th Century).

So far, Azerbaijan has held aloof from the war in Ukraine. It has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but abstained from the UN General Assembly vote that condemned Russia's invasion, and has refused to participate in Western

sanctions against Russia. However, with the Russian armed forces bogged down in Ukraine, an obvious temptation exists for Azerbaijan to disregard the Russian peacekeeping force and launch a new offensive with the aim of total victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. The latest clash was preceded by a series of moves by Azerbaijan to put increased pressure on Nagorno-Karabakh.

This temptation also exists in Georgia. As with Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnic minority territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia broke away from Georgia during the Soviet collapse, and were placed under the protection of Russian troops. A Georgian attempt to recover South Ossetia by force in 2008 resulted in crushing defeat by the Russian army. Once again, the war in Ukraine might seem to give Georgia the chance to redress this defeat and recover its lost territories.

Any such plans on the part of Georgians and Azeris should be strongly discouraged by the West. The Russian armed forces have fared poorly in Ukraine, but Russia remains vastly more powerful than Georgia and Azerbaijan. A war between Russia and Azerbaijan would bring with it the risk of Turkish and Iranian intervention and a general regional conflict.

In the case of Georgia, a fresh Georgian defeat at the hands of Russia would

IRAN, TOO, HAS A STAKE IN THE KARABAKH CONFLICT. TEHRAN WANTS A CONTINUED RUSSIAN PRESENCE IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS TO PREVENT NATO EXPANSION TO THE REGION.

face the United States and NATO with a choice between humiliation, if they failed to intervene to help a partner, and the risk of direct war with Russia if they did intervene.

In the case of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the European Union, in the person of European Council president Charles Michel, is acting as a mediator in an effort to reduce tensions and restore transport links. So far however, no progress at all appears to have been made on the central issue of Karabakh. In a very significant concession, the government of Armenia has made a gesture towards recognition of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity; but Azerbaijan for its part has declared that Nagorno-Karabakh no longer exists as a territorial entity, which hardly suggests a willingness to compromise. Nor has the EU or any Western government suggested a willingness to send its own peacekeepers to the Caucasus to replace those of Russia.

Nonetheless, the West should go on working to try to resolve these conflicts, while doing its utmost diplomatically to prevent their escalation. Condemnation of Russia's role in the southern Caucasus is easy. Replacing that role would be extremely hard. And bad though the existing situation is, absent wisdom and restraint it could easily get much worse for everyone involved.

(This commentary originally appeared on Qiosk on August 4.)

Assembly Calls on UN General Assembly President to Affirm Armenian Genocide after Deletion of Social Media Post

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America calls upon His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and current Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, to affirm the Armenian Genocide following the deletion of his original statement on Twitter about his visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial (Tsitsernakaberd) and Museum-Institute in Yerevan on July 27, 2022.

In response, Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) stated that “The UN should not be complicit in Turkey’s rejection of history. UN General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid was wrong for deleting his tweet and capitulating to pressure from Turkey.”

To date, 31 countries and dozens of international organizations recognize the genocide of the Armenian people committed by the Ottoman Turkish Empire from 1915-1923, which resulted in the loss of 1.5 million Armenians and the dispossession of a nation from its three millennia-old Western Armenian homeland. The UNGA codified the crime of genocide by adopting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the “Genocide Convention”) in December 1948, heeding many of distinguished international human rights lawyer Raphael Lemkin’s ideas, who

coined the term genocide in 1944 and referenced the 1915 Armenian Genocide as a seminal example of the act of genocide.

The UNGA President’s actions are demonstrative of genocide denial, which is the worst form of hate speech. To honor the 50th anniversary of the Genocide Convention in 1998, over 150 distinguished scholars and writers issued a [statement](#) to commemorate the Armenian Genocide and condemn the Turkish government’s denial of this crime against humanity. In the statement, the scholars emphasized that the “denial of genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide. It is what Elie Wiesel has called a ‘double killing.’ Denial murders the dignity of the survivors and seeks to destroy remembrance of the crime.”

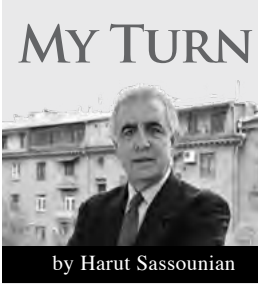
UNGA President Shahid’s action undermines the international community’s trust in and responsibilities towards upholding the letter and spirit of the UN Genocide Convention. The Armenian Assembly of America urges UNGA President Shahid to issue a public explanation and retraction with respect to his deleted tweet, and affirm his commitment to recognize the Armenian Genocide and condemn its denial.



The original tweet from His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), who deleted the post soon after.



COMMENTARY



MY TURN

US Publicizes Its Strategy on Armenia Based Obviously on America’s Interests

by Harut Sassounian

The United States Department of State posted on its website a lengthy document which described the American government’s strategy for relations with 175 countries, including, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, in the next four years. The 16-page section covering Armenia is dated May 4, 2022. The document is titled, “Integrated Country Strategy” (ICS).

The ICS sets goals and objectives through a coordinated and collaborative planning effort among Department of State, USAID, and other US Government agencies with programming in Armenia. The document indicated that the main objective is the furthering of US national interests. It made it clear that the goal of the United States government is to minimize the influence of Russia in Armenia, while maximizing US interests. This is not surprising, as all countries attempt to increase their influence in the world. Given Russia vs. the West confrontation in the Ukraine war, US antagonism to Russia has grown exponentially. This is confirmed by the document’s own statement: “The US role has become more important as regional tensions increase following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.”

In addition to its anti-Russia perspective, the United States drags Armenia into its hostility with China and Iran, further meddling in Armenia’s foreign relations. The document stated: “Strengthen the ability of partners and Allies to resist and counter influence operations and disinformation, particularly from Russia and the PRC [People’s Republic of China]; Counter Russian, PRC, Iranian, and other state, and non-state actors’ strategic, conventional, and hybrid threats and emerging disruptive technologies that threaten US and European security in Europe and beyond.”

The US document also disparaged Armenia’s membership in the Eurasian Economic Union since its other members are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. The document stated: “Armenia’s participation in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) may limit trade with non-EAEU members as it conforms with poorly planned or implemented EAEU standards or imposes unclear documentation requirements.” The US document concealed the fact that Armenia signed on March 1, 2021 “the European Union-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA)” to enhance trade and other relations with European countries.

Likewise, the US document disparaged Armenia’s membership in the military alliance of the Collective Security Treaty Organization since its other members are: Armenia, Belarus., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.

The first paragraph of the document stated: The US objective is to “advance American interests by helping Armenia succeed as a secure, prosperous and

democratic country, at peace with its neighbors, and more closely integrated with the Euro-Atlantic community. The document also stated that Armenia’s defeat in the Artsakh War of 2020 and continuing tensions along its border “highlight the importance of the US role as a Minsk Group Co-Chair and other diplomatic efforts to improve Armenia’s ties with its neighbors.” This is a misleading statement as the Minsk Group no longer exists, except on paper, since Russia, as one of the three co-chairs of the Minsk Group, does not acknowledge its viability and Azerbaijan totally rejects its mediating efforts. The United States is simply using the defunct Minsk Group as a tool to counter Russia’s unilateral actions in the Artsakh conflict. The second excuse the United States used to meddle in Armenia’s internal decisions is “to help Armenia normalize relations with its neighbors,” meaning Azerbaijan and Turkey, but not Iran. At this point, Armenia’s relations are much more critical with supportive Iran than with hostile Azerbaijan and Turkey.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I am just as opposed to the undue influence of Russia in the internal affairs of Armenia, which should not be under the thumb of any country and should be able to manage its foreign relations to maximize its own national interests. What Armenia needs is a multilateral foreign policy, developing friendly relations with most countries of the world, including the Middle East (Arab States, Iran, and Israel), Asia (China and India), Africa, Europe, North and South America, and Russia. Relying on only one power, no matter which one, can only lead to disappointment and undue influence on Armenia.

The US document repeated several times that “Armenia has strengthened its commitment to a democratic path that respects rule of law and human rights, though more progress is required.” Fortunately, the State Department recognized that “more progress is required.” Elsewhere in the document, the United States correctly acknowledged: “The Armenian government has taken some steps to ameliorate social and human rights concerns, but progress has been mixed.” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan came to power in 2018 espousing the ideals of democratic rule. Regrettably, he has strayed far from the principles of democracy, establishing one-man dictatorial rule, making all governmental decisions on behalf of the Cabinet of Ministers, Parliament, President, and Courts. Since Pashinyan has antagonized most Armenians, his popularity at home has suffered tremendously, decreasing from a high of 80 percent in 2018 to a low of around 30 percent. By ignoring the violations of human rights and decline of democracy in Armenia, the United States simply disappoints Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora, particularly, American Armenians, who question the US commitment to democracy beyond paying mere lip service.

When the US government and its embassy in Yerevan remain silent in the face of grave violations of human rights in Armenia, it shows that the United States, contrary to its statements, is not serious about improving democracy in the country. Similarly, when Azerbaijan regularly attacks and kills Armenians, while the United States calls on both sides to reduce tensions, the United States loses its credibility in the eyes of Armenians in and out of Armenia.

The Azerbaijani Gambit

By Dhanuka Dickwella
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

There is an unfinished business in the Caucasus for the Azerbaijanis. The grand expansion and conquest of the ancient Karabakh lands up to the state border of Armenia is not done as yet. There is however a brick wall that they have to come up against: the Russian peacekeeping mission. If the Azerbaijanis are good in one thing that is undoubtedly being the best geopolitical opportunists of all time. There was a reported buildup and an attempted incursion into Artsakh by the Azerbaijani state forces a couple of days back. What are they trying to achieve?

Is this a one-time random or accidental incident? Or is it a timely well-calculated beginning of a series of events to follow. Let’s do the math.

In the international arena, a tectonic plate shifting is happening. It is almost the moment for a collision of the continents. The war in Ukraine is heating up, with Russian forces decimating the Ukrainian army in the Don basin. Albanians in the breakaway Kosovo province are openly upping the ante against Serbs with a possible NATO intervention on the horizon. Nancy Pelosi’s much hyped and provocative state visit to Taipei is dominating the global news. The world is in utter chaos and the focus of the attention of the international community keeps changing from one theater of geopolitics to another. The focus is in disarray. So, who will have time for a small

incursion by the Azerbaijani forces into Artsakh?

The energy crisis that is devastating the European continent has made gas-rich countries more than ever important partners. Europe is not held hostage by the barrel but by pipelines. Europeans are pushed against the wall and they are desperate to find gas for their industries and the general population. Winter is coming and the empty gas storage facilities in Europe are worse than a nightmare. Algeria’s gas supply will be reduced with pre-planned maintenance of the pipeline. Neither Qatar nor Iran could accommodate the growing desperate demands. That makes the Gas King of the Caucasus Ilham Aliyev — the president of Azerbaijan, an untouchable, strategically important and valuable partner. No one in the right mind would want to antagonize Azerbaijan or to be in their bad books. That gives Azerbaijan a leverage way above its weight class.

Russians do not have the appetite for another hot front. It is unwise and could jeopardize their grand strategy for the Ukrainian and European theater. Of course, that does not give another state actor the right to harm the lives of the Russian servicemen nor their assets. More importantly, Russians will not want to undermine their strategic position. However, they could probably stomach a little incursion into non-Russian lands. In a worse-case scenario, they will make a strong statement and save face.

The sultan of our century, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, is in a unique position with unbelievable opportunities in hand. As a wise statesman or the

opportunist that he has always been, he did not board the anti-Russia sanctions ship. He is positioned in a way to help the sanctioned Russian and Iranian economies to circumvent the Western sanctions. The grain deal he helped broker between the Russians and Ukrainians is evidence for the leverage he obtained. His indispensability gives him a free rein in matters related to Azerbaijani-Armenian issues. In turn, this works as a life insurance for President Aliyev.

The first phase of this situation is the usual misinformation by Turkish-led media outlets reporting unprovoked attacks on the state border of Azerbaijan. This gets amplified across social media platforms, making

it appear as if Azerbaijan is in fact the victim and the Armenians are the aggressor. This method has been used time again with varied success. Then the world witnessed a military buildup of the Azerbaijani with trucks painted with a letter A. This would certainly bring the pre-war memory of Russian military columns painted with mystery signs closer to Ukraine.

Will an all-out eruption of hostilities take place? Well, not at this stage.

This is a probing of the reactions of all the stakeholders, calculating the risks, assessing the circumstances. These kinds of events could take place across Karabakh for the next foreseeable future until Azerbaijan sees the most opportune time to finish the business it started. Will the Russian strategy of making the Karabakh issue a deep frozen conflict until the time is ripe be tested sooner than later? This is only the first phase of a long game.

WILL THE RUSSIAN STRATEGY OF MAKING THE KARABAKH ISSUE A DEEP FROZEN CONFLICT UNTIL THE TIME IS RIPE BE TESTED SOONER THAN LATER?

Armenia Begins to Recover Stolen Millions

By Arshaluis Mgdesyan

Armenian authorities are working to seize the assets of a former Finance Minister Gagik Khachatryan, including this home in Los Angeles.

In Armenia’s 2018 Velvet Revolution, one of the key promises was that, after more than a decade of corrupt rule from the previous regime, the new authorities would “return the stolen money to the people and the state.”

Four years later, the government is starting to make good on the promise: The state prosecutor’s office has filed 13 lawsuits demanding the confiscation of property worth more than \$100 million in total that they say was acquired by corrupt means. The process started at the end of last year but is picking up steam; more than half of those 13 cases have been filed in the past three months.

The targets are for the most part senior officials from the previous regime. They include former Chief Prosecutor Aghvan Hovsepyan, the former Minister of Transport and Communications Gagik Beglaryan, the former head of presidential security Vachagan Ghazaryan, the former Minister of Defense – and current leader of the parliamentary opposition – Seyran Ohanyan, and even the former director of the Yerevan Metro, Paylak Yayloyan.

The fact that the prosecutions began during a politically sensitive time – when many former regime figures were leading protests against the government – has raised questions about the motivations of the campaign. And some worry that an overzealous effort to seize property could scare off foreign businesses from investing in Armenia. But for many others, it is a significant step in restoring justice after the plunder of the previous decade.

Looted Millions

In 2020, Armenia passed a law on unexplained wealth, allowing prosecutors to place a hold on any property worth more

than 50 million drams (about \$124,000) and acquired since independence in 1991. The prosecutor then has the opportunity to prove that the property was acquired via corruption and if the court agrees, the state can take possession.

But before the law could be put into effect, the state prosecutor’s office had to set up a Department for the Confiscation of Illegally Obtained Property and train new staff. The war with Azerbaijan in 2020 also set back the process.

Prosecutors opened their first case under the law, in September 2021, against Serob Harutyunyan, a former employee of the National Security Service. Prosecutors sought to seize an apartment on Yerevan’s central Northern Avenue valued at 187 million drams (\$460,000), as well as two BMWs and a Porsche, among other property. It is still waiting to be heard by a judge.

Another key case has been that of Ohanyan. On May 30, prosecutors filed a suit to seize land, a mansion, and a car valued at a total of \$2.5 million from the former defense minister. Ohanyan has denied that the property belongs to him.

But the prosecutions have often run into accusations that they have been politically motivated. Ohanyan’s case was filed just as anti-government protests – in which Ohanyan played a key role – were attracting thousands of government critics in Yerevan.

And to some, the Harutyunyan case appears connected with the fact that he had earlier been accused of leaking information about a previously unknown episode in which a government minister, Suren Papikyan, had stabbed his commanding officer as a conscript soldier 15 years earlier. Just months after Harutyunyan was acquitted for any wrongdoing in that episode, prosecutors filed the suit to seize his property.

While corruption was undoubtedly rampant under the previous regime, the current effort appears to be a political tool for punishing political opponents and redistribut-

ing property to benefit government supporters, said Avetik Ishkhanyan, the chairman of the Helsinki Committee of Armenia. The unexplained wealth law amounts to “revolutionary methods” which could lead to a dangerous schism in Armenian society, he told Eurasianet.

“Moreover, I’m sure this law will in no way affect those officials from the former government who now loyally serve the current authorities,” he said.

One of the most powerful, and apparently most corrupt, officials from the former regime has also been targeted: Gagik Khachatryan, a former finance minister who was arrested on embezzlement and abuse of power charges in 2019. Prosecutors say the Khachatryan’s corruption deprived the state of \$41 million, which he has denied. The investigation in that case is still ongoing.

Now, the Armenian authorities are working to seize his assets, even abroad. In May, the state of California announced that it was seeking to seize a mansion in Los Angeles which the Khachatryan family bought in 2011 for \$14 million, and then was put up for sale in April 2022 at an asking price of \$63.5 million. The Armenian prosecutor’s office said the American case was launched at Armenia’s request.

It is not yet clear whether Armenia will be able to recover the funds related to Khachatryan’s assets in the U.S., as the two countries don’t currently have an agreement on the return of assets. But there are efforts in that direction, said Srбуhi Galyan, Deputy Prosecutor General for the Recovery of Property of Illicit Origin. “There are many technical issues that need to be addressed and I think we will be able to do this in the future,” she told Eurasianet. “Although there are relevant international conventions, like the Warsaw Convention or the UN Convention against Corruption, and other documents, a lot here also depends on the goodwill of individual states,” she said.

Galyan described another case in which the Armenian authorities sought to recover a house in Austria worth 1.5 million euros and owned by a former high-ranking Armenian official, whom she declined to identify. But the authorities there would not cooperate. “The Austrian authorities refused us, considering the case to be political persecution, but it’s obvious that there is no political context,” Galyan said.

A Difficult Launch

Since its launch two years ago, the Department for Confiscation of Illegally Obtained Property has started 313 investigations. Of those, 24 have been completed and 13 have been submitted to the court. But officials say their work has been

slowed by the fact that the department does not have its own investigative capacity and instead must rely on cases already being pursued.

Courts have only accepted eight of the 13 cases filed so far, and of those that have been accepted “there is still no real judicial investigation due to the workload of the judicial system,” Galyan said. To help manage the caseload, the Ministry of Justice is working to set up new anti-corruption courts, which officials have said should start operating by the end of 2022.

Prosecutors also hope to start expanding their probes beyond senior officials and into lower-ranking figures. “This [former government officials] is too narrow a circle of people,” Galyan said. In May, the law was amended to expand the types of people whose property is subject to seizure to include a much broader group of bureaucrats.

The law allows prosecutors to examine the history of a property as far back as 1990, which critics of the law say bears the potential for abuse. While officials have said they will only seize property from an owner who gained it through corrupt means, many are not sure.

“What will happen to property that was theoretically corrupted in the 1990s, but over the past 30 years has been resold several times and has now passed into the hands of a bona fide owner?” asked Varuzhan Avetikyan, a corporate lawyer and former head of the legal department at the Central Bank of Armenia.

Concerns like that have led some potential investors to shy away from Armenia, Avetikyan said.

“Some of my clients from abroad have refused to deal with their potential partners, fearing that the assets they wanted to acquire at some point might come to the attention of law enforcement,” he told Eurasianet.

Others, though, dismiss those concerns. “The claim that the return of ill-gotten assets discourages investment is a myth. This is a myth propagated by those who profit from corruption,” Ruben Carranza, of the International Center for Transitional Justice, told Eurasianet.

Carranza cited examples like Hong Kong and Indonesia as places where similar laws made them more attractive to foreign investors. “The investigation of corrupt officials actually strengthens the investment climate: This is how the Indonesian economy got stronger after the removal of their former dictator, Suharto. Their anti-corruption agency vigorously pursued the Suharto family,” Carranza said.

(Arshaluis Mgdesyan is a journalist based in Yerevan. This piece originally appeared in Eurasianet.org in August 3.)

Principal Administrator / Full-Time

St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School of Watertown, MA, a private preschool-Grade 5 dedicated to educational excellence in an environment rich in Armenian Culture, is seeking a full-time principal.

Responsibilities

Serving as chief administrator, managing day-to-day operations, keeping records, communicating and disseminating information; developing and managing after-school enrichment curricula, managing compliance with AISNE school accreditation, extensive outreach to the parental and support community, and more

Minimum Qualifications

Master’s Degree in Education
Experience in administration, as well as curriculum and instruction
Minimum of 10 years relevant experience

Benefits

Competitive salary
Coverage for Health and Dental Insurance
403(B) plan with match

How to Apply

Send cover letter and resume, Statement of educational leadership philosophy and three letters of recommendation to Careers@ssaes.org

Turkey Warns against ‘New Provocations’

WARNING, from page 1

Armenia that has been controlled by Russian peacekeepers since the end of a deadly 2020 war in which Baku managed to regain control of large swaths of territories in and around the disputed region

Nagorno-Karabakh’s ethnic Armenian leader Arayik Harutyunyan ordered a “partial mobilization” of army reservists in the wake of the incidents, but the situation did not further escalate amid reported agreements that Armenians would be leaving several villages along the Lachin corridor that are to be handed over to Azerbaijan as part of the 2020 Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement.

Turkey, which is Azerbaijan’s top military and political ally, has been engaged in a normalization process with Armenia since late last year. Ankara, however, has made it clear that establishing diplomatic relations and opening borders with Armenia depends on Yerevan’s accepting Baku’s key demands. Commenting on prospects for normalizing Turkish-Armenian relations in July, Turkish Foreign Minister Çavusoglu said that Yerevan should specifically negotiate a peace agreement sought by Baku and open a land corridor to Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave.