

Russia Reassures Armenians Over Karabakh Corridor

By Sargis Harutyunyan

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) — Russian peacekeepers “will not move a single centimeter” from the existing Lachin corridor until a new road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia is put into operation, according to a senior Russian diplomat in Yerevan.

Talking to RFE/RL’s Armenian Service on Wednesday, Maxim Seleznyov, a counselor-envoy at the Russian embassy in Armenia, stressed that there are agreements in this regard and the parties are in direct contact over this issue. He did not elaborate.

“Russian peacekeepers will move only at the moment when the new Lachin corridor is opened. The tripartite statement



Russian Peacekeepers in Karabagh

[from November 9, 2020] spells out the steps, the sequence of steps. First, the corridor is completed, and as it comes into operation, Russian peacekeepers take control of a five-kilometer corridor around this road,” Seleznyov said.

Amid fresh fighting around Nagorno-Karabakh earlier this month ethnic Armenian authorities in Stepanakert said that the Azerbaijani side, through Russian peacekeepers, demanded that a new connection be organized between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia along a new route.

Nagorno-Karabakh’s authorities informed the few remaining Armenian see CORRIDOR, page 6

Christina Maranci Brings Fresh, Experienced Leadership to Harvard’s Armenian Studies

By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, MA — Christina Maranci, the long-time professor of Armenian art history at Tufts University, was appointed to the historic Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies this past summer.

As the first woman, the first person of Armenian descent, and the first art historian to hold the position, she brings a fresh perspective to the Harvard chair. She is also a member of a considerably younger generation than her predecessors, Robert Thomson and James Russell, though she is adamant to note the high esteem in which she holds these senior male colleagues.



Welcomed into Armenian Studies by Dedicated Mentors

Maranci was raised in an Armenian-American family in Connecticut, but Armenian culture per se was not necessarily a focal point of her childhood. With her father hailing from Istanbul, and her mother being American-born, their shared interests tended toward classical music and European culture. Art and culture was central to their household, though, Maranci says, and living close to New York City meant having easy access to the vast world of museums and other resources to learn about art.

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Senior Armenian, Azerbaijani Officials Meet in Brussels

BRUSSELS (Azatutyun) — Senior representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan have met in Brussels, a European Union envoy said on Friday, August 19.

EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar wrote on Twitter about “good and substantive discussions today” with Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, and Hikmet Hajiyev, a foreign-policy advisor to the president of Azerbaijan, “on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and EU engagement.”

Klaar did not report any details of the discussions, but posted a photograph showing the Armenian and Azerbaijani officials during the discussions mediated by him and other EU representatives.

There was no immediate report or comment by officials in Yerevan and Baku about the meeting.

Grigoryan and Hajiyev last met in Brussels in May and, as Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on June 27, had also been supposed to meet the following month, but the Azerbaijani side, he said, canceled the scheduled meeting.

The EU special representative visited Yerevan and Baku in mid-July in an apparent attempt to reschedule and organize a new meeting.

Yerevan-based political analyst Beniamin Poghosyan suggested in an interview with RFE/RL’s Armenian Service last month that a new Grigoryan-Hajiyev meeting may precede another meeting in Brussels between Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

This is the first meeting of senior Armenian and Azerbaijani representatives after the latest escalation of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone in early August when at least one Azerbaijani and two Armenian soldiers were killed. The twosidesblamedeachotherfortheviolence.

Armenian Authorities See No Evidence of Terrorism in Yerevan Market Blast

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian law-enforcement authorities say they have so far found no evidence to suggest that the recent deadly explosion and fire at a popular market in Yerevan was a result of a terrorist attack.

A total of 16 people were killed and 62 others were injured when a fireworks warehouse within the premises of the Surmalu shopping center exploded on August 14.

The death toll in the incident may rise to 17 as rescuers continue to search for one missing person presumed to have been at the epicenter of the explosion.

During a weekly cabinet meeting on

Thursday, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan asked Argishti Kyaramian, the head of the Investigation Committee, to comment on whether the explosion could be a terrorist attack.

“Various theories are being considered with the framework of the criminal case,” Kyaramian said. “But at the moment there is no factual evidence in the case that would testify to a terrorist attack or other intentional crimes.”

Kyaramian added that the evidence gained so far suggested that the explosion was a result of negligence.

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ARMENIA

ATP Tops Spring Planting Season with 7 millionth Tree



CALIFORNIA

Pasadena’s Vrej Pastry Named Small Business of the Year



ARMENIA

Youngest Artsakh Refugees Get Support From Mer Hoops





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

French University Rector Meets with President

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President Vahagn Khachaturyan on August 23 received Rector of the French University of Armenia Bertrand Venard, the Presidential Office said.

During the conversation Venard said that his term in office will end soon, adding that during this period he has tried not only to contribute to the fulfillment of the goal of providing students with quality education, but also to support the further development and deepening of the Armenian-French friendly relations. He introduced the President on the activities being carried out by the University in Armenia, the new educational programs and future projects.

The president thanked for the productive work, particularly highlighting the programs in informatics and applied mathematics being implemented in the university. Khachaturyan expressed hope that the work done by the Rector of the French University in Armenia will continue with the same spirit.

Resistance Movement To Resume Protests Sept. 2

YEREVAN (Arka) — Armenia's opposition will resume the Resistance Movement on September 2 in another bid to make Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government resign, former deputy parliament speaker Ishkhan Saghatelian, one of the leaders of the Movement, said at a rally organized on August 23 by a former chief of staff of the Constitutional Court Edgar Ghazaryan in Republic Square.

"The Resistance Movement's rally is scheduled for September 2 and the Movement, pursuing all its declared goals, will continue the struggle in full force," Saghatelian said. He noted that rallies will also be held in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and in the Diaspora.

Earlier, Saghatelian said in an interview with several Armenian TV channels that the Movement will begin the process of impeaching the Prime Minister only when there are sufficient grounds for success.

Gymnasts Snatch Gold, Silver at Euro Tourney

MUNICH (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian gymnasts Harutyun Merdinyan and Artur Davtyan won gold and silver medals, respectively, on the final day of the European Championships on August 21, the Gymnastics Federation said.

The 38-year-old Merdinyan regained the European title on pommel horse that he first earned in 2016. His other top results earlier in his lengthy career included second at the 2015 Europeans, third at the 2015 Worlds, third at the 2017 Europeans, fifth at the 2017 Worlds and seventh at the 2016 Olympic Games.

Merdinyan said he owes his longevity to persistence, International Gymnast reports.

"I don't know how I'm doing it, but I'm always trying to stay in shape and I go for it," he said. "It pays off."

Armenia Is Still Fighting for Independence, Says Pashinyan

By Nane Sahakian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia is still fighting for its independence more than three decades after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday, August 23.

Pashinyan stressed the importance of national security and normalizing relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey as he congratulated Armenians on the 32nd anniversary of a declaration of independence adopted by their country's first post-Communist parliament.

The 1990 declaration stopped short of announcing Armenia's immediate secession from the Soviet Union. It announced instead "the start of a process of establishing independent statehood."

"De facto, that process has not ended until today, not because we don't have independence but because independence is like health, which even if you have it, you have to take care of it every day," Pashinyan said in a statement, issued on the occasion.

"The government is fighting for the independence of the Republic of Armenia every day," he said. "For us, independence is security. The international structures that provide it are cracking in front of all of us, and one of the first cracks unfortunately manifested itself in Nagorno-Karabakh."

"Independence is normalized relations with neighbors. Although we have excellent relations with some of our neighbors, there is no significant progress in our relations with others because they demand too much from us or they think that we are demanding too much from them."

"For us, independence is strong allied relations, but allies are not always only allies to you but also to those who ally against

you," Pashinyan added in an apparent reference to Russia.

Pashinyan's and political opponents and other critics regularly claim that he has put Armenia's independence at serious risk by mishandling the 2020 war with Azerbaijan, weakening the Armenian armed forces and undermining relations with Russia. They say that he must therefore resign.

Pashinyan did not allude to security issues or improving relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey in his previous statements on the 1990 declaration. In August 2021, for example, he put the emphasis on internal political and economic challenges facing Armenia.

On August 23, 1990 the Supreme Council of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia adopted Armenia's Declaration of Independence, ending decades of Soviet rule and beginning a new chapter in history.

The adoption of the Declaration marked the start of the process of establishment of independent statehood positioning the question of the creation of a democratic society based on the rule of law.

The country was renamed the Republic of Armenia and a year later, on September 21, 1991 Armenia became an independent state.

To guarantee the security of the country and the inviolability of its borders, the Republic of Armenia created its own armed forces, internal troops, state bodies and public security under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council.

Under the Declaration, the Republic of Armenia guaranteed the use of Armenian as the state language in all spheres of the Republic's life, created its own system of education and of scientific and cultural development.

This declaration served as the basis for

the development of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

Agricultural Aid Programs Continue In Vardenis

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VARDENIS, Armenia — Agricultural support programs have been launched in Gegharkunik Province's enlarged Vardenis community, which contains 18 villages and 1 city. Based on the damage suffered due to adverse weather conditions in 2022, the region has started preparing aid packages that will mitigate the aftereffects.

Davit Shahnazaryan, member of the Vardenis Community Council, said, "Now, for example, in all the settlements of our community, we are counting how many hectares of seeded areas were damaged, how many were damaged by hail, how many were frostbitten, and accordingly we are preparing a support program so that the villagers can sow next year as well."

Shahnazaryan notes that in addition to that program, they are planning to provide 120,000 drams to the villagers who plant high quality types of seeds in their fields. "This will be a direct insurance expense, so to speak, because the high-quality seed is a little expensive," Shahnazaryan added.

Vardan Margaryan, another member of the council, said that they are now counting how many severely disabled people there are in the community, how many have families with numerous children, and how many of these are unable to sow grain on their own.

"We will consider everyone and we will definitely be helpful. There should be equality in our community. The abovementioned groups in particular are at the center of our constant attention," said Margaryan.

The members of the council also said that the support programs will be ongoing also in the form of loans.

"Since wheat does not grow as well in our region as, for example, in Armavir Province, every year we try with state assistance to help the villagers with fertilizer," the council members said. They remarked that after the 44-day war, Azerbaijan occupied thousands of hectares of fertile lands in Artsakh, so that now more than ever it is necessary to pay attention to grain reserves, so that we have as much bread supplies as possible.

"We are a country at war, and in addition to social problems, there may be a need to supply the army with additional food at any moment. We also take that into account," Margaryan said, adding that support programs will increase yearly.

The members of the Community Council observed that there are many hectares of unfarmed land in the community, which they are now concretely attempting to get cultivated. Shahnazaryan declared: "Those uncultivated lands do not bring us honor, because, first of all, there should be no uncultivated land in Armenia. Besides, if the land is not cultivated, no tax is paid, not to mention that if it is not cultivated, the potential of our bread stock decreases. Therefore every centimeter of land must be cultivated."

Leaders of Armenia, Georgia Inaugurate 'Friendship Bridge'

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his Georgian counterpart Irakli Garibashvili attended on Friday, August 19, a ceremonial inauguration of a bridge connecting their two South Caucasus countries.

The construction of the facility over the river Debed called "Friendship Bridge" began jointly by Armenia and Georgia in July 2021 and was completed earlier this month.

The project carried out through a 6-million-euro loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will help the two countries facilitate regional trade and passenger flow over the natural boundary marking the state border.

According to the press office of the Armenian prime minister, Pashinyan and Garibashvili highlighted the importance of the bridge in facilitating bilateral traffic.

The two leaders reportedly noted intensive high-level contacts that "testify to the dynamic development of Armenian-Georgian relations and the high level of political dialogue."

In his remarks at the ceremony, Pashinyan, in particular, stressed that the inauguration of the bridge was testimony to "close and versatile Armenian-Georgian partnership."

"No doubt, the centuries-old relations

between our two fraternal countries based on common values and historical heritage need similar modern infrastructures which are consonant with the requirements of the time and create a strong foundation for our further large-scale cooperation," the Armenian premier said.

"I am more than sure that there are all prerequisites today for developing and deepening our relations with fraternal Georgia in accordance with important foreign-policy priorities of the Republic of Armenia," Pashinyan added.

Garibashvili, for his part, also emphasized that friendship between Georgia and Armenia is measured by many centuries and added that relations between the two countries are "not only an example of brotherhood and friendship, but a prerequisite for prosperity, stability, security and development in the region."

"The Friendship Bridge, which we have built together, embodies the success of our cooperation and friendship," the Georgian prime minister said, adding that it will help double traffic between the two countries.

The Friendship Bridge consists of two separate 160-meter-long bridges in both directions, each of which is 11.85 meters wide. They are located at a distance of one meter from each other. The total width of the bridges is 24.7 meters.



ARMENIA

ATP Tops Spring Planting Season with 7 Millionth Tree

YEREVAN — Armenia Tree Project (ATP) celebrated another milestone, planting seven million trees since its inception in 1994. The symbolic seven millionth tree was planted together with Founder Carolyn Mugar, Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian, ATP's Board of Directors with ATP Armenia Tour guests on June 22 at the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Center for Environmental Studies in Margahovit, Lori.

The seven millionth tree culminates the ambitious 2022 spring planting season throughout ATP's divisions that together serve the Armenian people in raising their standard of living and protecting the global environment.

One of the most publicly visible programs, this spring, ATP's community tree program (CTP) provided 35,345 fruit and decorative trees and shrubs to 147 sites including, schools and education centers, public parks, hospitals and medical clinics, churches, pilgrimage and historic sites in all 10 provinces of Armenia as well as in Martuni and Askeran provinces of Artsakh. 57 of these sites were new to participate with CTP this year, resulting in over 1,500 sites throughout Armenia and Artsakh. Our staff works with the local population and monitors regularly to ensure the highest rates of survival and to provide technical assistance to families or institutions that receive trees to care for.

ATP partnered with a number of local and international organizations, companies and individuals for community tree plantings this spring, including, Birthright Armenia, Little Singers of Armenia, US Embassy Green Team, VMware Armenia, Bureau Veritas Group Armenia BIVAC Armenia CJSC,



ATP's symbolic seven millionth tree planted with Founder Carolyn Mugar, Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian, ATP's Board of Directors with ATP Armenia Tour guests on June 22nd at the Michael and Virginia Ohanian Center for Environmental Studies in Margahovit, Lori.

Talk Desk, AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School, St. Stephen's Armenian Day School, AYF interns, The Fuller House Center Volunteers, and St. Gregory of Narek Armenian Church Youth Group.

At Armenia's borders, ATP distributed several thousand fruit trees to villagers living in the regions of Tavush, Syunik as well as Artsakh. The 2-3 year old fruit trees ATP provides serve multiple purposes as they mature, particularly in border villages. The fruit trees grow to create natural barriers to shield the residents and protect the community, while the fruit is a source of nourishment and income.

The supply of trees ATP uses throughout Armenia and Artsakh are from ATP's four nurseries in the villages of Karin, Khachpar, Chiva, and Margahovit, which together provide over 90 varieties of fruit and decorative trees and shrubs. The nurseries serve as field research stations for state-of-the-art tree propagation, grafting techniques, irrigation methodologies, and environmental education for students, professionals, and local farmers. A new nursery is under construction in Gyumri in partnership with the EU funded "EU4Environment: Green Community, Resilient Future" project.

As one of the largest NGO employers in Armenia of both full time and seasonal workers, ATP provides steady income for individuals and families. This spring, ATP hired 154 seasonal workers to support our spring planting season in our nurseries, as well as to plant forests. ATP's forestry division, with the help of the seasonal workers planted 175,162 trees in five forests located in Kotayk, Shirak, Lori and Tavush re-

gions. ATP is doing afforestation, planting a new forest where trees were not previously growing. ATP's specialists selected particular species that enable forest connectivity, regeneration and provide migration corridors for indigenous wildlife. ATP's afforestation efforts create infrastructure and introduce income opportunities to the local population while also providing a buffer zone for natural forest areas and preventing further degradation.

The Backyard Nurseries Program (BYN) enables village residents to create income from their parcels of productive agricultural land. ATP provides seeds and cuttings to 128 families who care for and grow them over a two-three year period. ATP staff trains the landowners, supervises the planting, and monitors the site throughout the process. Once trees reach harvesting stage, ATP pays the BYN owner for those trees that are then replanted in community sites. These families then begin the nursery cycle again with a new crop of trees. This program based in the northern regions of Armenia, in Shirak, Lori and Tavush as economic development initiatives for villagers, many of the program beneficiaries heads of households are women.

With a focus area of Artsakh, our newest program of Backyard Greenhouses serves 50 beneficiary families in Martuni and Askeran by giving them small 30 square meter greenhouses and providing them with training by our partners at GreenLane NGO. The greenhouses were designed to be easy to assemble from inexpensive and locally sourced materials by students from the American University of Armenia and Worcester Polytechnic University. All 50

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

For the next generation, ATP's 33 Eco-Clubs put environmental education into action. Our Eco Clubs in border villages feel the constant presence of danger, in villages such as Baruyr Sevag and Armash of Ararat region, located at the corner where Armenia meets Nakhichevan and Turkey, and the Eco Club in Gegharkunik community, which borders Azerbaijan. The program strengthens the environmental knowledge and spirit of our youth while teaching leadership skills. Their environmentally friendly projects also build self-esteem and pride in their communities, which affect the youth's will to remain in their village.

ATP's Environmental Education team also circulated to 148 schools where our CTP program operates, further strengthening ATP's relationship with the community. Reaching 5,847 students in grades K-12 our instructors offer lessons in the schools as well as with our classroom on wheels mobile lab, in addition, students visit the Ohanian Education Centers at Margahovit and Karin nurseries for more hands-on experiences. ATP instructors teach subjects like biodiversity, climate change, importance of forests, waste management and recycling, water resources, etc. We also offered environmental education to 511 school administrators, teachers and parents.

No Evidence Of Terrorism in Yerevan Blast

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Pashinyan, in his turn, said that the footage of the explosion and what proceeded it also suggested that there was smoke and fire before the powerful explosion that triggered a massive blaze in the sprawling shopping center.

The premier also reminded about his instructions after a powerful explosion at an ammonium nitrate warehouse in the port of Beirut in Lebanon two years ago to inspect all facilities in Armenia where explosive materials were stored and where there was a risk of similar explosions.

He said that the inspection conducted at the Surmalu shopping center in the spring of 2021 was part of the fulfillment of his instruction and asked the head of the State Supervision Service to submit a report on how his instruction was fulfilled in general.

Minister of Emergency Situations Armen Pambukhchyan reported that the search operation for one missing person continued at the scene of the tragedy. He said that rescue workers were looking for one missing person feared to be dead, since that person was near the very epicenter of the explosion.

Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan, meanwhile, said that most of the 62 people who were injured in the explosion and fire had already been discharged from hospitals and the few remaining patients were on their way to recovery. She confirmed that all current and future costs for the treatment of all injured persons were covered from the state budget.

US Plans to Hire Advisor to Counter Corruption in Armenia

YEREVAN (News.am) — The US Department of State's Bureau of Law Enforcement and Combating Drug Trafficking has announced the search for a specialist for the position of senior anti-corruption adviser in Armenia. He will spend most of his working hours at the US embassy in Yerevan, RT reported on August 22, citing a relevant document.

The main objective of the bureau's program in Armenia is to support the host state in developing an effective and transparent criminal justice sector that respects human rights and actively combats corruption, the

text says.

This work includes, among other things, supporting the modernization of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions, combating international organized crime and upholding the rule of law.

In this regard, the Senior Advisor's responsibilities, according to the job description, will include examining Armenia's needs as they relate to anti-corruption and law enforcement activities.

The advisor will work closely and build constructive relationships with colleagues at the Armenian Ministry of Justice, the

Anti-Corruption Committee and other agencies related to criminal justice, the document reads.

Besides, the specialist will have to attend anti-corruption conferences and seminars, coordinate his work with the US side and report to it, train and mentor representatives of several Armenian agencies.

According to the document, the senior advisor may receive from \$91,500 to \$134,300 a year. The contract with him is planned to be concluded for a year with a possibility of prolongation.



ARMENIA

Volunteers Help Build Armenia's Future

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — “The construction-related projects were sometimes laborious but always very rewarding, with apparent progress offering a consistent boost in moral. The work with the children was also fascinating, as we got a look into the educational and cultural differences in the next generation of Armenians, and gained some perspective on our own upbringings.” This is how Justin Leach described two aspects of the work he engaged in this summer, during his vacation from college. He and his cousin Christina Kew were two of a group of eight youngsters from America who took part in the Paros Foundation's SERVICE Armenia program, spending three weeks in the country that their ancestor, survivors of the Genocide, never had the opportunity to visit. Their great-grandparents, Artemis and John Mirak, would have been thrilled to learn of their experience. Their great-aunt (who is writing these lines) certainly was excited to talk to them about it.

Justin and Christina were in Armenia from July 3-24, serving as volunteers on projects to physically renovate social facilities, assist in educational and recreational activities with local youngsters, and visit religious and historical sites to learn more about their own cultural heritage. The Paros Foundation provides the projects, logistics, and experienced staff to guide them, and the volunteers do the work.

Tearing Down and Building Up

This was no token gesture; it was hard work. The first deployment was on a construction site. Talin, which is located in the Aragatsotn Region, is a town with about 5,400 inhabitants, and, like so many small communities, does have a music school. However, the school was in terrible shape when the Paros Foundation took on the task of renovation. The 15 teachers there in 2016 were providing instruction for 120 students, but without adequate facilities for practicing, not to mention performing; the health and safety standards were poor, utterly uncondusive to motivating students. Paros decided to embark on a project, in cooperation with the town, to provide it with a modern school where youngsters could study music, both folk and classical, and with appropriate instruments. Concretely this meant rebuilding the existing structure, totally renovating two floors, building a concert hall, and providing modern rooms and sanitary facilities.,

“We were there for 3 to 4 days,” Leach said, “helping with the construction project. They took us up to the third floor, which had been renovated, and then we went to the floor below, which needed it. There was dust everywhere, the floors were coming apart. Our task was to tear out the wood of the floors, using hammers, to chip away at the tar that was like glue; this way we could tear out the old floor boards and make way for a new floor.”

That was just the beginning. “On Day 2,” he continued, “we scraped paint off the walls, then primed them for a new coat of paint.” Construction work is demanding and requires teamwork. In fact, there was a clear division of labor. “The boys carried sand and bags of cement up, in assembly-line fashion, and the girls brought up the water to make the concrete. And then they had the task of priming the walls.” It required not only muscle power but also time. “We spent a couple of days mixing sand and cement to make concrete,” he explained. “Everything was done manually. We had to shovel and churn, filling up buckets, making concrete. It was arduous,

pretty grueling.”

The days were long. They would get up early, be on the bus by 8 o'clock, ride for an hour to the construction site, then work from 10 to 4:00.” No lunch break? “Sure, we had peaches and sandwiches,” he said.

Gyumri Three Decades Later

In 1988, Armenia's second largest city, Gyumri, was nearly obliterated by an earthquake which devastated large parts of the region, leaving over 100,000 homeless. Many moved into *domiks*, container-like shelters, and what was supposed to be “temporary” for many became permanent. Jobs were nowhere to be found, poverty spread for years. Children were among the most vulnerable, lacking adequate housing, nutrition, sanitation, and education.

In 2015, the Paros Foundation launched a project to begin to address their needs, called the Debi Arach Children's Center. The name in Armenian means “moving forward.” The approach is holistic, aiming at helping children physically, psychologically, and intellectually. This means providing adequate meals on a daily basis, as well as bathing facilities, psychological counselling, and tutoring in all the subjects they take at school. The Center started with 185 children, and has been expanding its efforts to offer vocational training, including computer skills.

Debi Arach was the next assignment for Leach, Kew, and their co-volunteers. Before leaving Yerevan for Gyumri, they prepared back packs for the youngsters. As Leach explained, they filled about 80



Making cement in Talin for the music school

of them, with basic supplies for school: pencils, rulers and notebooks. When they arrived at the center, they distributed the back packs, then “had a chance to engage with the kids, playing soccer and working in arts and crafts.”

Confrontation with the conditions Gyumri residents have had to endure since the earthquake was a shock for both. “The poverty is still rampant,” Leach said. “We filled up trash bags with food and delivered them to needy families there, most of them living in shacks, *domiks*.” “It was a difficult situation,” Kew added. “Here were these older women, saying they needed food — what could you do?”

Leach said he had never experienced anything like that before. “It was pretty intense. It was fulfilling on the one hand, but somehow, there was also a feeling of paternalism, it somehow didn't ‘feel right.’ It seemed ‘not right.’ I gave one woman a bag of food, and was to follow the woman into a room, if you can call it that — bricks piled up on top of each other for walls. She took my hand and thanked me, but since I couldn't speak Armenian, I couldn't reply. I knew what I

was signing up for, but here was a woman four times my age, and I thought, I have no expertise to be doing this.”

Breaking the Language Barrier

Language, in fact, was a barrier. How did they deal with it? “We had Christina!” was Leach's immediate response. Kew is a graduate of St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School in Watertown, Mass., which offers bilingual education. In preparation for this trip, she had taken a refresher course, and, as one of three Armenian speakers in the group, together with Marina, their guide, she functioned as a translator. “It was a bit difficult with the bus driver, and the project managers,” Leach noted, “and we learned what it means to face a language barrier.”

They encountered an even more complex form of language barrier back in Yerevan. One day they accompanied a group of children with special needs on a visit to an amusement park near Victory Park. “This was a real challenge,” Leach said, “the most difficult situation as far as language was concerned; we couldn't speak Armenian and had to rely on hand language, gestures, trying to communicate with children who already had difficulties, many of them non-verbal and distracted.” This compounded the problem of not knowing the language, and “led to an unparalleled necessity for sign language. In order to communicate at all, ‘to be able to ‘speak on their level,’ as Justin put it, ‘all we had was eye contact and moving our hands. We managed somehow, and actually succeeded in creating a bond of sorts.’”

On another fun day they took children from Nork Marash, an orphanage outside Yerevan for a visit to the zoo. “The kids loved it,” Kew said. “They ranged in age from 5 to 8, and when they saw the elephants and the camels and lions, they loved it!”

Revisiting the Past

The program was packed with activities on projects designed to build a better future for Armenia and its people, providing better living standards for the aged as well as the children, the healthy as well as the disadvantaged. But it was also an educational experience for the volunteers, who had the opportunity to visit historical, religious, and cultural sites, and thereby learn about their own Armenian past.

Both Leach and Kew had visited before. Leach had been there two years ago with his family, and Kew had also visited, once a decade ago with her graduating class from St. Stephen's, so both of them had seen the ancient sites, churches, and monasteries, Garni, Echmiadzin, and many others. On this trip, they might have seen “as many as 30 churches.”

Leach reflected on the personal impact. “It was an interesting perspective for someone like myself who has not been raised in the Armenian church; to see these religious monuments, some of them over a thousand years old, all expressing one strain of spirituality, a very humbling experience.” He

is a sophomore at Emery College, studying philosophy, politics and law, as well as sociology. “I'm majoring in philosophy,” he said, “thinking of course about theology, and you know, I had the notion, ‘well I have my thoughts on everything,’ but then



Carrying bags of food

to be confronted by these ancient sites, 1000 years old, it's striking in a different way.”

Kew is entering her junior year at Endicott with a major in hospitality. On this trip, she had traveled to Armenia two weeks earlier, with her sister Alex and her mother, Julia Kew, who were with the Armenian Tree Project. In addition, she toured another week on her own. “The first two weeks I toured everywhere,” she said, “then with the group toured again. For me what I took away was the sense, here are different people coming together, and the question was, how to work as a team, how to help. It wasn't easy, considering the age group, with some kids only 15 others, 20-21, our age, but it worked out.”

Yes,” Leach agreed, “working with people in different age groups is educational, powerful. You go to Gyumri, see a lot of poverty, which is shocking poverty, but alien, somehow, you think, ‘it's a different world’, different from America. But at the schools, with kids of a similar socio-economic status, it was a recognizable environment, we played soccer and football, and they all had phones. There were fifth-graders with phones, taking pictures, using Instagram. At the same time, there we were, giving them back packs with school supplies. As kids, you adapt, you blend in, being with them; even their clothes were familiar, ordinary, so I felt it was like people I could recognize, although they had different circumstances.”

To sum it up, Leach commented, “Though Christina and I had already visited some of these sites, including the genocide memorial and museum, the historical significance was not lost on us, and helped to put the service we were doing into perspective. The pairing of these activities (touring and service) worked nicely to contextualize the import of the country's future success with the consequences of its history.”

(For more information, see: <https://parosfoundation.org/service-armenia/>)



INTERNATIONAL

Karabakh: Russia Breaks Silence on Situation along Lachin Corridor

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The situation around the Lachin corridor in Nagorno-Karabakh should be tackled based on Paragraph 6 of the Trilateral Statement from November 9, 2020, lawmaker Taguhi Tovmasyan cited the Russian Embassy in Yerevan as saying on Monday, August 22.

The Lachin corridor currently used as connection between Armenia and Karabakh was supposed to serve its purpose at least until the fall of 2023, but Azerbaijan has built a new road and is now demanding that the corridor be moved now. Karabakh authorities have already informed the few remaining Armenian residents of the town of Berdzor and the villages of Aghavno and Sus — all three in the Lachin corridor — that no Russian peacekeepers will be left in the territory after August 25 and, therefore, they needed to leave their homes before the end of the month. However, a top Russian diplomat has said that the peacekeepers were not going to move an inch.

Tovmasyan said Monday she wrote a letter to Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin to draw his attention to the fact that Azerbaijan attacked Artsakh (Karabakh) on August 1, using mortars, grenade launchers and attack UAVs and trying to cross the contact line.

The lawmaker said she then received a response from the Russian embassy, according to which the situation in the area of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent and on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border is an important issue for Moscow.

“We would like to draw your attention to the Statement by the MFA of Russia on August 4 with regard to the escalation of the situation on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. The Ministry called on the two sides to show restraint, hold the ceasefire regime and confirmed the necessity for the regulation in accordance with the Statements by the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on November 10, 2020, January 11 and November 26, 2021. (...) Russian peacekeepers make all possible efforts to stabilize the situation on the ground. The important role of Russian peacekeeping contingent was stressed in Baku and Yerevan many times. They are sure that they totally deserve the trust. We are ready to further show any necessary support to the

normalization of the ties between Armenia and Azerbaijan”, Tovmasyan cited the Russian side’s letter as saying.

The embassy said in another letter that the situation around the Lachin corridor should be tackled based on Paragraph 6 of the Trilateral Statement.

According to Paragraph 6, “the Parties have agreed that a plan for the construction

of a new route along the Lachin corridor shall be determined within the next three years, providing communication between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, with the subsequent redeployment of Russian peacekeeping troops to protect this route.”

Tovmasyan also noted that the Russian side is said to be maintaining constant communication with the sides to settle the matter.

Lemkin Institute Issues Warning About Azerbaijani Actions

NEW YORK — The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention last week issued a statement, urging all international and state bodies to monitor Turkey and Azerbaijan for “genocidal ideology and practices, to place pressure on Turkey and Azerbaijan to cease their genocidal threats against the Armenian people, and to reinforce the security of Armenians and the Armenian identity in the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Artsakh, and in Diaspora communities worldwide.”

The statement referred to a recent Telegram video popular on Azerbaijani social media which shows an Azerbaijani soldier tying what is allegedly an Armenian skull dug up from a nearby Armenian cemetery to the back of a military truck while fellow soldiers cheer.

“In the wake of this new apparent atrocity, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is once again issuing a Red Flag Alert for Azerbaijan, warning of threatened genocide against Armenians, both in the breakaway Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh (Artsakh) and in Armenia proper. The desecration of graveyards and other burial sites is a commonly seen atrocity in genocide, as it seeks to target, humiliate, destroy the identity, and deny the dignity of the target group, even after death. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention would like to emphasize, in particular, one statement from our first Red Flag Alert for Azerbaijan, where we stated:

‘Given the extreme racialized othering of Armenians by the Azerbaijani government, military, press, and educational system, any Azerbaijani incursions into territories that include ethnic Armenians can be expected to be characterized by genocidal atrocities.’”

The group warned that the danger is particularly high now, given the recent news of the transfer of the Armenian-populated towns of Aghvano and Berdzor to Azerbaijan as well as the continued documented violations of the ceasefire agreement by Azerbaijan. Former Armenian Human Rights Defender Armen Tatoyan has reported Azerbaijani soldiers mass slaughtering animals and leaving their organs in water sources used by Armenian villagers in the region and poisoning the water supply. Tatoyan also reported that Azerbaijani soldiers have been firing on Armenian farmers in their fields outside of the towns, which endangers both the farmers’ livelihoods and an important source of food for the villagers in Aghvano and Berdzor.

The group also referred to the conduct of Azerbaijani soldiers during the 2020 war with Artsakh, where torture, murder, and beheading videos involving captured Armenian soldiers and civilians were common, as well as the many statements made by Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev that Yerevan is Azeri “historic land,” provide the larger genocidal context for current Azerbaijani atrocities.

Envoy Confirms End of EU Trade Preferences for Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A senior European Union diplomat has confirmed that Armenian manufacturers no longer have tariff-free access to the EU’s common market because Armenia is now regarded as an “upper middle income” country.

Armenia was covered by the EU’s Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) from 2009 through the end of last year. Thanks to this preferential trade regime, the EU collected no import duties from 3,300 types of Armenian products and applied reduced tariffs to 3,900 others.

In an interview with the Armenpress news agency published on Monday, Andrea Wiktorin, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, said that Armenia is not eligible for GSP+ anymore because the World Bank upgraded its status from a “lower middle income” to an “upper middle income” nation in 2017.

“According to the EU’s GSP regulations, the moment you are an upper middle income country for three [consecutive] years, plus a transition period of one year, you lose the status of a GSP+ beneficiary ... and this means that starting from January of this Armenia can no longer benefit from these preferential import tariffs,” she said.

Wiktorin suggested that the loss of that status could be offset by Armenia’s Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the EU signed in late 2017. She argued that the CEPA, which has no free-trade component, could benefit the Armenian economy through its provisions calling for an improved business environment in the country.

The diplomat also argued that the wide-ranging agreement allows Armenian companies to participate in EU procure-

ment tenders and will make it easier for them to provide financial, transport and other services in the 27-nation bloc.

Russia replaced the EU as Armenia’s number one trading partner after the South Caucasus country joined the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union in 2015. It has solidified that status in the last few years.

According to Armenian government data, Russian-Armenian trade surged by 50 percent, to \$1.65 billion, and accounted for almost one-third of Armenia’s overall foreign trade in the first half of this year. By comparison, Armenia’s trade with EU member states totaled over \$980 million.

Despite the end of the trade preferences, Armenian exports to the EU, dominated by copper and other metals, reached \$426 million in this period, up by 43 percent year on year.

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijani Authorities to Hold Another Conference in Shushi

SHUSHI (News.am) — Azerbaijani authorities will hold another conference in the occupied Armenian city of Shushi.

According to APA, the conference is titled “Economy of Culture: Impulses for Development from Shushi” and will be held on September 18-19. The conference is organized by the administration of the Azerbaijani president and a number of ministries.

Armenian Residents of Russia Have to Register Fingerprints

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian citizens residing in the Russian Federation must undergo fingerprint registration and photographing by January 10, 2023, the migration service of Armenia announced on its Facebook page.

It is noted that detailed information about fingerprint registration and photographing procedures is available at <https://migration.am/news/467>.

The requirement was established by the federal law of July 14, 2022.

New Military Action in Syria ‘Unacceptable,’ Lavrov tells Turkey

MOSCOW (Ahval) — An escalation of military action in Syria would be “unacceptable,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on August 23, in comments addressing Turkey’s plans for a new offensive into the war-torn country.

Damascus and Moscow are seeking to negotiate with Ankara to “prevent any new military action,” Reuters cited Russia’s top diplomat as saying at a press conference in Moscow alongside his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in May announced plans for a new offensive in northeast Syria targeting the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG). Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, Turkey has conducted four major military operations in northern Syria.

Ankara views the YPG as a “terrorist” organization and as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), an armed group that has been at war for Kurdish self-rule in Turkey for 40 years.

Lavrov’s remarks were aimed at persuading Erdoğan to row back talk of a new campaign in northern Syria, Reuters said.

Erdoğan earlier this month met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Sochi. The pair pledged new ties — including the expansion of cooperation in the economic and energy sectors - with Turkey vowing to make some modest economic concessions.

The meeting has sparked concerns over burgeoning ties between Ankara and Moscow and Russia’s potential use of Turkey to circumvent Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.



INTERNATIONAL

2022 Aurora Prize Designated Organizations Announced

YEREVA — On August 19, World Humanitarian Day, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative announced the designated organizations selected by the 2022 Aurora Humanitarians, one of whom will be named the 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate in Venice, Italy, on October 15, 2022.

On behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate will have a unique opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by allocating part of the \$1,000,000 award to their designated organizations.

“Aurora is based on the universal concept of Gratitude in Action. It implies that people around the world who have received aid in time of crisis can best express their gratitude by offering similar assistance to someone else. As we celebrate the global humanitarian community and its impact, we are excited to use this occasion to tell the world about the organizations chosen by the 2022 Aurora Humanitarians and raise further awareness about Aurora’s movement,” said Lord Ara Darzi, Chair of Aurora Prize Selection Committee and Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London.

The 2022 Aurora Humanitarians have decided to support organizations that provide humanitarian relief, promote peace, defend human rights, help distressed and displaced communities and facilitate access to medical care.



Evelyn Merlot, General Project Coordinator, with a beneficiary of the INUKA project supported by Aurora

Jamila Afghani (Afghanistan), a peace activist and founder of the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO) who has dedicated over 25 years of her life to ensuring the women of Afghanistan have access to education, has designated the following organizations:

Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Noor Education and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO)

Hadi Jumaan (Yemen), a mediator and body collector who regularly risks his life to facilitate the exchange of prisoners of war and recover human remains from the front lines, has designated the following organizations:

Yemen Aid

Partners Yemen

Mahienour El-Massry (Egypt), a lawyer and political activist who promotes political freedom and human rights in her home country by organizing peaceful protests and defending political prisoners in courts, has designated the following organizations:

Action For Hope

Mersal Foundation

“World Humanitarian Day is a great opportunity to honor people like the Aurora Humanitarians who put themselves at risk to save others. The non-profits selected by this year’s Humanitarians and their vital work have already changed the lives of thousands of people, and we’re hopeful they would be able to achieve even more with support from

Aurora,” noted Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member.

The 2022 Aurora Prize Ceremony and special events will take place in Venice, Italy, on October 14–16, 2022. Aurora will bring together the world’s leading humanitarians to honor modern-day heroes, celebrate the spirit of humanity, and empower the next generation of saviors.

Since its launch, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has benefitted over 2,600,000 people worldwide. To join Aurora’s vision of a better future and help us make a difference, please support the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative by making a donation.

Russia Reassures Armenians Over Karabakh Corridor

CORRIDOR, from page 1

residents of the town of Berdzor and the villages of Aghavno and Sus that are situated along the current Lachin corridor that no Russian peacekeepers will be left in the territory after August 25 and, therefore, they needed to leave their homes before the end of the month.

Hayk Khanumyan, a member of Nagorno-Karabakh’s de facto government in charge of territorial administration and infrastructure, in particular, said to people. “As you know, the existing corridor has been moved to the south, and in the southern direction the road in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is already ready,

and in the territory of Armenia the road will be ready next year. The corridor will move south, so the Russian contingent will not be here after August 25. In this view, a necessity emerged, according to our civil defense plans, to discuss the issues of moving people.”

Meanwhile, the Russian diplomat stressed on Wednesday that the Russian peacekeepers will be redeployed only when the new road is ready.

“The Russian peacekeepers will not be deployed along the new corridor until it is put into operation, and there are agreements in this regard. The parties are in direct contact, and I assure you that the peacekeep-

ers will not move a single centimeter until there is a new corridor,” Seleznyov said.

RFE/RL’s Armenian Service made inquiries from Nagorno-Karabakh’s authorities regarding this question and the answer received from them in fact confirms that the Russian peacekeepers will be redeployed to the new road “after its construction is completed.”

Earlier, official Yerevan said that the Armenian side would complete the construction of its section of the new road by next May.

During a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan on August 4, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that it was necessary to sign a document in a trilateral

format regarding both the redeployment of peacekeepers and the infrastructures that feed Nagorno-Karabakh. It is still unclear whether Baku has agreed to sign such a document.

In his remarks Pashinyan also criticized the Russian peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh following the most serious fighting along the line of contact that left two Armenian and one Azerbaijani soldiers dead.

The Armenian leader urged Russia to do more to prevent further ceasefire violations, charging that Baku has been stepping up such violations despite the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops in the region.

During a news briefing in Moscow on August 11, Ivan Nechayev, a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, rejected what he described as “separate criticism” of Russia’s peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, stressing that “the Russian peacekeepers continue to be engaged in active work, taking necessary efforts for stabilization on the ground.”

Seleznyov also said that the Russian peacekeepers “are doing the maximum that their mandate allows.”

“One would like to see restraint on all sides. on the part of the Azerbaijani troops, and most importantly on the part of the Armenian public. Here in Yerevan and in Stepanakert everyone should know and understand that the Russian peacekeeping contingent is doing the maximum it can, that it is there to try to protect the civilian population from the horrors of war as far as possible,” the Russian diplomat stressed.

At the same time, Seleznyov said that Russia is ready to expand the powers of its peacekeeping mission in Karabakh if Yerevan and Baku agree on this issue.

Turkey Reiterates Normalization Conditions for Armenia

By Tatevik Sargsian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations remains conditional on Armenia accepting Azerbaijan’s key demands, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu reiterated on Tuesday, August 23.

Çavusoglu said normalization talks launched by Ankara and Yerevan earlier this year cannot be delinked from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

“Peace in the South Caucasus can become a reality with a comprehensive peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan which we also support,” he told the Turkish TV channel Haber Global. “Azerbaijan made a proposal to Armenia to which Armenia did not re-

spond positively for a long time.”

Baku wants Yerevan to recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh through such a treaty. Çavusoglu also mentioned another Azerbaijani demand, the opening of a land corridor to Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan exclave passing through Armenia’s Syunik province. The Armenian side has ruled out any extraterritorial corridors.

Çavusoglu already put forward these preconditions late last month following a fourth round of negotiations held by Armenian and Turkish envoys in Vienna. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan likewise made clear later in July that Turkey will normalize relations with Armenia only “after problems with Azerbaijan are resolved.”

The Armenian government says it wants an unconditional opening of the Turkish-Armenian border and establishment of diplomatic relations between the two neighboring states. Its domestic political opponents claim that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is ready to make sweeping concessions to both Ankara and Baku.

Çavusoglu said on Tuesday that Pashinyan’s administration has a popular mandate to make such concessions because it won last year’s Armenian parliamentary elections. Yerevan should stop using pressure from the Armenian diaspora and “local extremist forces” as excuses for not accepting the Turkish-Azerbaijani demands, he said.



Community News

Diocese of Armenian Church Sends Message Of Sympathy to Coptic Church after Devastating Fire

NEW YORK — In the wake of a horrific fire that swept through a crowded Coptic Church in Egypt on August 14, Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan extended the condolences of the Eastern Diocese to Bishop David, leader of America's Coptic Orthodox community.

"Today, my heart wept as I read of the disastrous fire that destroyed the Abu Sefein Church in Giza, at the cost of more than forty precious lives, scores of injuries, and incalculable grief among our beautiful, faithful brothers and sisters of the Coptic Church," wrote the Primate in his August 15 letter.

The latest reports calculate that 41 people died in the blaze, among them, most tragically, 18 children. The Coptic sanctuary was crowded with worshippers when the fire broke out.

Coptic Christians share ancient ties of culture, theology, and friendship with their Armenian brethren. Both communities belong to the Oriental Orthodox family of the churches, and maintain close relations internationally and in the United States.

As Fr. Mesrop wrote to Bishop David: "Let me take this moment of crisis to express again the deep sense of care, support, solidarity, and love that the Armenian faithful feel towards our brethren of the Coptic Church." He added that both communities stand together in prayer for the lives lost at Abu Sefein Church, and for the Armenians who died in an explosion at a Yerevan marketplace on the same day.

Read Fr. Mesrop's letter below.

Your Grace:

Today, my heart wept as I read of the disastrous fire that destroyed the Abu Sefein Church in Giza, at the cost of more than forty precious lives, scores of injuries, and incalculable grief among our beautiful, faithful brothers and sisters of the Coptic Church.

On this occasion of sorrow, please accept my deepest sympathies, on behalf of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and all of our people.

Bishop David, you may be aware that August 14 also turned out to be a day of pain for the people in Armenia's capital city of Yerevan, where a fireworks warehouse in a busy marketplace exploded. Rescue workers are still sifting through the debris, but at present half a dozen deaths have been confirmed, with casualties mounting.

That all of this happened on such a beautiful, peaceful feast day, the Feast of the Holy Assumption, only underlines for me the deep mystery of the ways of God.

Nevertheless, in the spirit of our Holy Mother-of-God, who gazes with tender love on all her children, see PRAYERS, page 9



Vrej (Frank) and Armig Tombouljian— co-owners of Vrej Pastry, with Assemblymember Chris Holden

Pasadena's Vrej Pastry Named Small Business of the Year

PASADENA, Calif. (*Pasadena Now*) — In a ceremony in Sacramento, Assemblymember Chris Holden honored Vrej Pastry as "Small Business of the Year" for the 41st Assembly District.

Vrej (Frank) and Armig Tombouljian — co-owners of Vrej Pastry, accepted the recognition during the annual Small Business of the Year luncheon organized by the California Small Business Association. Vrej Pastry recently celebrated their 28th anniversary. The company is located at 1074 N. Allen Ave.

"The fabric of Pasadena is made of local small businesses that provide us a glimpse of culture through traditional food," said Assemblymember Chris Holden. "From Lebanon to Pasadena, the Lebanese and Armenian sweets have a place in my heart. Frank and Armig embody the small business American dream."

Vrej Tombouljian was born and raised in a Lebanon to a family of bakers. His father owned a well-known bakery where Vrej would spend much of his time after school, helping customers and learning to bake. In his 30s, he began traveling to and from the US as a tourist. Armig Tombouljian was born and raised in Lebanon as well. After graduating high school, she began working for a jewelry store as a receptionist, often assisting the owners with design.

One evening in August 1987, Vrej had returned to Lebanon and visited a neighbor, where Armig was tutoring. The two met and married within a month. In 1988, the couple moved to San Diego, CA searching for the American Dream. They started a family, having two daughters. Vrej and his brother partnered to open a fast food restaurant, but Vrej wasn't happy. After many trials and tribulation, Vrej and Armig decided to move to Pasadena, where they found a warm and supportive Armenian community in which they raised their children, and in 1994, opened the doors to their business, Vrej Pastry.

At first, Vrej would do all the baking and designing, while Armig tended to customers. Armig began to pick up some techniques, learning what she could from Vrej, then finding other resources to learn more about cake design. The early years were difficult, but they persevered. The business began to grow, and additional staff was hired. Customers would come from all parts of California, and eventually, other states. The demand for their desserts were so high, customers would request additional locations.

"We've been in business for 28 years and called Pasadena our home. We are so excited to be honored as small business of the year and to continue sharing our Lebanese and Armenian homemade desserts with everyone," the couple said.



Dr. Hrag Papazian Named Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State

FRESNO — Dr. Hrag Papazian has been named as the 19th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Fall 2022 semester. The Kazan Visiting Professorship was established in Fall of 2000.

Papazian graduated from the Social Anthropology MPhil program at the University of Oxford, and then continued with his DPhil studies at the same institution. His doctoral dissertation was on "Contesting Armenianness: Plurality, Segregation, and Multilateral Boundary Making among Armenians in Contemporary Turkey."

Papazian was born in Beirut and attended and graduated from Hamazkayin's Djemaran College. He was very actively involved in Armenian community life since his early childhood, in cultural activities, sports, and community service.

As part of his duties as Kazan Visiting Professor, Papazian will teach a course titled "From Genocide to Post-Genocide Experience: Armenians under Late Ottoman



Dr. Hrag Papazian

and Turkish Republican Rule." The goal of the course is to examine the history of the Armenian Genocide in the late Ottoman period and explore the fate of survivors who remained in the emerging Republic of Turkey.

Papazian's research interests focus on issues of identity, group formation, inter-group relations, ethnicity, nationalism, diaspora and transnationalism, and politics and conflict. His doctoral research was on Armenians in contemporary Turkey, but he has also been conducting research in Armenia during the past two years.

For the past academic year, Papazian has been a Promise Armenian Institute post-doctoral fellow in the department of anthropology at UCLA. He taught as an Adjunct Lecturer at the American University of Armenia and taught three courses there.

Papazian will give three public lectures, under the general title of "Armenians and 'Other Armenians' in Contemporary Turkey." The first lecture of the series on "The Christian Armenian Community" will take place in-person on Friday, September 9, at 7 p.m., at the Smittcamp Alumni House on the Fresno State campus. The second lecture will discuss Muslim and Alevi Armenians who have been getting more and more vocal and visible during the past few decades in Turkey. The third lecture will examine the recently emerged community of migrant Armenians arriving from the Republic of Armenia since the early 1990s. Throughout his lectures, Dr. Papazian will be also discussing relations between these different factions of Armenians in contemporary Turkey.



OBITUARY

Sylvia M. Agabian
Art Lover, Teacher

NEEDHAM, Mass. — Sylvia M. (Messerlian) Agabian, 88, passed away on August 12, 2022, at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Needham, surrounded by her family. Born in Providence, RI, on February 2, 1934, she was the daughter of the late John and Vivian (Biberjian) Messerlian. She was raised in Cranston, RI, where she graduated from Cranston High School with the Class of 1951. Sylvia continued her education at Rhode Island College of Education, earning her bachelor’s degree in 1955. Following her graduation, Sylvia took a student teaching position with the Cranston Public Schools, before earning her own second-grade classroom with the Roosevelt Avenue School in North Attleborough. Sylvia married her husband, Merritt “Skip” Agabian, on October 27, 1957, in Worcester, Mass. The young couple initially made their home in Norwood, Mass., before building their home on Old Post Road in East Walpole in 1961. After welcoming her children, Sylvia took on the role of a homemaker, raising and caring for her family. As her three children grew up, Sylvia returned to her career, serving as a substitute teaching position with the Walpole Public Schools. In the late 1970s, Sylvia took a role with the Brockton Art Center and Museum, serving as a docent, giving tours to school children. She took several courses at the Art Center, learning about fine art and art history in preparation for her role, which she held for over 30 years. For more than 10 years, she served on the Walpole Arts Council, in-



cluding as President. In 1986 she began volunteering for the Walpole Public Schools to incorporate arts programming into the curriculum. She was soon granted a full time paid position as Cultural Arts Coordinator, bringing writers, performing artists, and visual artists into classrooms to teach the children of Walpole while also organizing extracurricular visits for students to experience cultural events in Boston. Sylvia’s love for art continued well beyond the Brockton Art Center, as she loved working with various mediums, including watercolor, oil paint, and sculpture. She frequented museums on a weekly basis, her docent card often her ticket to innumerable art institutions. She also loved going to local theater, music, and dance events. She was a member of the Sts. Sahag and

Ardemis L. (Hatabian) Hazian
Active in Community

CRANSTON, R.I. — Ardemis (Ardy) L. (Hatabian) Hazian, 93, of Cranston, passed away on August 21, 2022 at Cedar Crest Nursing Centre in Cranston. She was the wife of the late Deron J. Hazian. Born in Dorchester, MA, and daughter of the late Garabed and Vergine (Bedrosian) Hatabian. Ardy was a sales associate at Filene’s in Warwick for more than 30 years before retiring. She was an active member of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Providence; and a member of the Daughters of Vartan. Ardy was the mother of Stephanie A. DiChiro and her husband RI Traffic Tribunal Magistrate Michael DiChiro of Johnston, and Andrea L. Hazian of Smithfield, and aunt of many nieces and nephews. She was the dear sister of the late Virginia Ohanian, Sylvia Payelian, Louise Hatabian and Charles Hatabian. Her Funeral Service was held on Friday, August 26 at 11 a.m. in Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Church, followed by burial at North Burial Ground, Providence. Arrangements were by the Nardolillo Funeral Home.



Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church in Providence and was an active member of the Boston area Armenian community, often attending events at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Belmont and the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown. As an avid traveler, she and Skip visited almost every state in the country. Back at home, Sylvia enjoyed keeping up with the current fashion trends, catching a movie, or spending the night with Skip at one of her favorite restaurants. She was most happy



when surrounded by her family and closest friends. She leaves her husband, Merritt “Skip” Agabian; children Susan V. Agabian of Watertown, Kenneth P. Agabian of Boston, and Nancy M. Agabian of North Attleborough; brother John Messerlian and his wife, Virginia, of Sun City, Fla., as well as several nieces, nephews, and cousins. A funeral home service took place at the James H. Delaney & Son Funeral Home, Walpole. Interment took place in Maple Grove Cemetery in Walpole.

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ADVERTIZE IN THE MIRROR



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

Donation
The Knights of Vartan Charitable Fund of Michigan donated \$100 to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Terjenian-Thomas Summer Internship Concludes

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) marked another successful summer welcoming students from around the country for the 2022 Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program in Washington DC, where they participated in various high-profile placements, from governmental departments to embassies and federal legislative offices.

“The Assembly is committed to training the next generation of leaders through our Internship Program. Every year we look forward to connecting with bright, college-age students from across the country who have an interest in the political process, government and advocacy,” said Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. The Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program provides students a closer look into the way government functions, particularly on Capitol Hill. “We learned about the importance of grassroots support for Armenian issues,” said Bettina Saraydaroglu, who served as the Assembly’s Summer Intern Coordinator. The George Washington University rising senior, who is studying International Affairs and Geography, noted the “impact” of being an advocate for Armenia and Artsakh. “I was inspired by the work done by the staffers, Congressmen and Congresswoman who put in the time to represent their constituents,” added Saraydaroglu.

As an intern in Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz’s (D-FL) office, Lily Kalandjian appreciated the network of Armenian students and professionals she was exposed to throughout the Internship Program, including Capitol Hill staffers, World Bank traders, and McDonald’s executives.

“This summer was an invaluable experience where I was able to meet directly with Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators to advocate for Armenian issues and give back to my Armenian community while furthering the Armenian cause,” said Kalandjian, a rising junior studying Political Science at the University of Florida. “Not only was I able to get in touch with my Armenian heritage on a deeper level, but I was also able to create lifelong friends. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity provided by the Armenian Assembly as it has afforded me an experience of a lifetime.”

California native Peter Chelebian also cited the Assembly’s Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program as a “memorable summer experience” that provided him with the “tools” to understand all facets of Washington, DC. “Advocating for Armenian issues



The Armenian Assembly of America Terjenian-Thomas interns in front of the U.S. Capitol.

in the nation’s capital was incredibly empowering as I consider law and government work in the future,” said Chelebian, who highlighted the importance of meetings organized by the Assembly with key figures including Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Sam Tatevosian, director of McDonald’s Corporation’s federal government relations department.

Chelebian, a rising senior at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) is studying political science and interned at the Center for Immigration Studies. “I learned so much talking to successful and admirable power players in DC, and thank the Assembly for setting up such opportunities.”

As an Armenian Assembly of America intern, Lilia Karapetyan also appreciated connecting with elected officials and being exposed to Armenian American issues. “The meetings were incredibly useful to get in contact with professionals in the advocacy field and intern alums now pursuing their respective careers,” said Karapetyan, a rising senior at University of Maryland, College Park, where she is studying criminology, criminal justice and French.

“A number of people we met with had careers that align with my interests and hearing about their experiences will help me with my own upcoming transition into the professional world.”

In addition to the daily internship placements, participants enjoyed a range of programming and activities throughout the summer, including discussions with Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD); Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA); Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (D-CA); Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA); Grigor Sargsyan, Principal Portfolio Manager at the World Bank; Jeffrey Kramb, Armenian Desk Officer at the U.S. Department of State; Sam Tatevosyan, Head of Federal Government Relations at McDonalds Corporation; Ani Toumajan, Legislative Assistant to Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI); Assembly Board Member and intern alumnus Aram Gavoor, Esq., who serves as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professorial Lecturer in Law at The George Wash-

ington University Law School; Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist at the Library of Congress; recent Assembly Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program alumni Sophia Badalian, Tamar Barsamian, Arianna Cruickshank, Robert George, Armen Kaprelian, and Olivia Zorayan; Bryan Ardouny, Assembly Executive Director; Mihran Toumajan, Assembly Western Regional Director; Arpi Vartanian, Assembly Armenia Regional Director; Mariam Khaloyan, Assembly

ration; Lucas Eskigian, Office of Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA); Elen Hovhannisyan, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia; Gagik Hovhannisyan, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia; Lily Kalandjian, Office of Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL); Lilia Karapetyan, Armenian Assembly of America; Elena Martinez, U.S. Department of Treasury; Bettina Saraydaroglu, Armenian Assembly of America; and Alis Tokatlioglu, Armenian American Cultural Association, Inc.



The Armenian Assembly of America Terjenian-Thomas interns met with Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen and thanked him for his support on issues pertaining to the Armenian people.

Congressional Relations Director; as well as mixers with Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) interns, and a trip to the Washington Nationals baseball game, courtesy of Chuck Yessaian from the Armenian Youth Center Golf Committee.

The Assembly’s flagship Terjenian-Thomas Internship Program, which marks its 45th year, along with its sister Yerevan Internship Program, has welcomed over 1,200 students and secured placements for them in high-profile roles, including with congressional offices, government departments, media outlets, think tanks, and nonprofit organizations in Washington DC, and Yerevan. This year’s intern class included: Louisa Bayburtian, Armenian Assembly of America; Peter Chelebian, Center for Immigration Studies; Jack Dunkerley, U.S. International Development Finance Corpo-



Armenian Assembly of America Terjenian-Thomas interns met with Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA) this summer to participate in policy-related conversations, and discuss issues relating to Armenia and Artsakh.

Message Of Sympathy To Coptic Church after Devastating Fire

PRAYERS, from page 7

let me take this moment of crisis to express again the deep sense of care, support, solidarity, and love that the Armenian faithful feel towards our brethren of the Coptic Church. We all stand together in times of joy as well as grief. Together, we pray for the intercession of our holy martyrs, who stand shoulder-to-shoulder alongside our Lord Jesus, in His kingdom.

May that same merciful Lord receive all the faithful souls who perished during these heartbreaking days. May He grant comfort and peace to your long-suffering people, Bishop David, in the aftermath of this tragedy. And may we all be reunited in His kingdom, on the great day of His Second Coming.

Prayerfully,

Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan
Primate



COMMUNITY NEWS

Youngest Artsakh Refugees Get Support from Mer Hooys

LOS ANGELES/YEREVAN — This summer, Mer Hooys completed its fourth Smiley Pack program supporting the children and families of Artsakh who fled their homes and economic livelihood in the fall of 2020 to escape the war. Thousands of mostly women and children from Artsakh are now living in Armenia. Many of the fathers have been killed, and others were severely injured and are unable to return to the work they did before the war.

The Smiley Pack program provided packages of clothing, toys and sweets for the children, as well as vocational training for their parents. The program targeted those families most in need. Launched in December 2021, the program brought “smiles” to approximately 200 children in total, and provided hair styling and manicure tools and training for 20 parents to enable them to support their families.

“The Smiley Pack program was developed by Mer Hooys’ professional social services team in Armenia,” said Judge Adrienne Krikorian, Mer Hooys’ president. “We wanted to help the families who had to leave



Mer Hooys delivered 50 Smiley Packs to the children of Artsakh in June.



Young girls from Artsakh enjoying the Mer Hooys Smiley Packs

everything behind in Artsakh, and the girls in our residential program wanted to be involved.”

“Our girls were so happy to be able to help the children from Artsakh, and they enjoyed designing, filling and delivering the packs,” said Dr. Garo Garibian, Mer Hooys Board Member from Philadelphia. “Not only did the Smiley Packs provide some joy and support to these children and their mothers, but our Mer Hooys girls learned the importance and value of helping those less fortunate by ‘paying it forward’.”

In June, Mer Hooys brought a Children’s Day celebration to the Permanent Headquarter of Artsakh in Yerevan. Fifty Artsakhian children enjoyed a bubble show, pizza, music and sweet treats, along with the Smiley Packs lovingly designed and prepared for each child by the girls of Mer Hooys.



Bubble show on Childrens’ Day, part of the Mer Hooys Smiley Pack program for the children of Artsakh

The Smiley Pack program was funded through generous donations raised by the Mer Hooys Board from diaspora supporters and the Helpful Hands Foundation in Armenia. In addition, businesses and individuals in Armenia provided in-kind contributions of toys, treats and other items for the Smiley Packs.

“Mer Hooys is grateful for the support from our donors for this important program that brought some desperately needed respite, support and joy for families from Artsakh,” said Dr. Garibian.

Mer Hooys continues to achieve its mission of empowering young girls in Armenia ages 8 1/2 to 22 from seriously disadvantaged backgrounds, by providing them with a safe home, comprehensive educational programs, tutoring, psychological counseling, life skills and job training, and, where possible, family counseling and reunification strategies. The program continues to enjoy high regard in Armenia, and is a unique model for providing needed services to unwanted or underprivileged youth, teens and their families.

“Mer Hooys saves and transforms the lives of our girls, helping them to become self- assured young women with promising futures,” said Judge Krikorian. “Community support enables Mer Hooys to continue its vital work saving the lives of vulnerable girls in Armenia and giving them the chance for successful, safe, and happy futures.”

Those interested in supporting the group’s mission can mail checks made out to House of Hope – Mer Hooys, Inc., and mail it to P.O. Box 8507, Calabasas, CA 91372-8507, or donate with a credit card or PayPal at website at www.mer-hooys.org. All donations will be acknowledged and are tax deductible.



Mer Hooys girls preparing to deliver Smiley Packs to the children from Artsakh



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian International Medical Fund Concludes 23rd Mission

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian International Medical Fund (AIM Fund) completed its 23rd medical mission from June 26 to July 3, 2022. Nineteen children and young adults received cochlear implants (CI), allowing them to either hear for the first time or to regain lost hearing. The implant is placed surgically, and Dr. Akira Ishiyama, professor and otology surgeon at UCLA Health, is the principal surgeon of the CI program in Armenia.

Thanks to Ishiyama’s exceptional expertise and successful outcomes, Armenia is the only country in the region to offer the latest generation of implants and processors to CI candidates.

Dr. Salpy Akaragian, founder and president of AIM Fund, spends over half the year in Armenia taking care of the pro-



Appreciation award from the prime minister’s office

gram’s logistics and meeting with parents and government entities. This year, AIM Fund is grateful to the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Health, Erebouni MC, Arabkir MC, and parents for collaborating to complete another successful medical mission.

Due to the rising need for cochlear implants in Armenia, another medical mission (24th) will take place on Thanksgiving week of 2022. Ishiyama will spend his holiday in Armenia and operate on additional children and young adults.

In 2004, Kevork, 4, became the first child to receive an AIM Fund cochlear implant in Armenia at the Erebouni Medical Center (EMC) — where implant surgeries are still performed. Today, Kevork is enrolled in medical school and speaks three languages.

AIM Fund has implanted over 170 children and young adults in Armenia and continues strengthening its CI program, in addition to the complicated ear surgeries performed by Dr. Akira Ishiyama. AIM Fund is a non-profit organization; all offi-



Salpy with a Yezidi child



A child who was helped

cers and members are volunteers.

On July 1, 2022, Mr. Arayik Harutyunyan, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Prime Minister, honored Drs. Akira Ishiyama and Salpy Akaragian with Certificates of Appreciation, recognizing the important work of the AIM Fund.

AIM Fund is grateful to all who participate in this innovative healthcare program in Armenia — especially its generous donors — which not only gives the gift of



Monte’s father had been killed in the 44-Day War

hearing to young patients but eases the burden of families faced with the economic hardship of providing for children who are hearing-challenged.

To learn more and to contribute to the AIM Fund, visit www.armenianimf.org.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Full STEAM Ahead: AGBU Innovation Studios Puts the future in the hands of Armenian youth

By Laura L. Constantine

PASADENA, Calif. — A STEAM education — a method of knowledge exploration that guides student inquiry, dialogue and critical thinking using the fields of science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics — is changing the landscape of learning.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) recently joined the movement with an original initiative called Innovation Studios. The concept breaks the mold by providing middle and high school age Armenian youth with opportunities to not only acquire the hard and soft skills for careers of tomorrow, but also connect with their Armenian identity as an integral part of the process.

The inaugural winter/spring session began in February 2022 with 10-week workshop studios held once per week on Saturdays at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center in Pasadena.

AGBU Western Region's Educational Programs Manager Nare Avagyan described the vision for Innovation Studios. "Our goal is to provide a creative space in which students are free to explore real world topics and solve complex challenges using creativity and critical thinking. We hope to equip them with the tools and design skills needed to tackle any challenges in their educational or career journey—all while enriching their Armenian identity."

AGBU Innovation Studios is a hands-on



Nishan Jahjah documenting final model for the portfolio presentation

open-workshop environment that works counter to the structured, standardized curricula of the traditional classroom, organized into small groups in which each young person can shine in his or her journey of self-realization. With access to 3-D printers and laser cutters, the latest software in graphics, art, music, photography, video, animation, robotics, and game design, along with a wealth of mixed media materials for traditional arts and crafts, the means to creating inventive and original products of the mind, imagination and spirit are in easy reach.

In consultation with the creative education specialists of Cambridge (MA)-based NuVu, Innovation Studios also sparks collaboration, critical thinking and connections with peers from diverse backgrounds. Each studio session is guided by a Studio Coach, an expert in a specific STEAM field and specially trained to serve as a facilitator for experiential learning. For each STEAM field, there are inherent skill sets. For example, a course in Living Architecture exposes participants to conceptual design, sustainable systems, architectural de-



Von and Arden Yacoubian showcasing final project to family members after presenting to the class

sign, sketching, scale model building and simple mechanisms.

AGBU Central Board Member Lena Sarkissian, who oversees the organization's education programs, reports that a high level of interest and enthusiasm were expressed during focus group sessions with parents and teens that AGBU organized among the AGBU Western Region community.

"As a parent, these days you are continuously bombarded by the following words: creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. Also, the extracurricular market is full of options such as, computer classes, robotics, STEAM and much more. AGBU Innovation Studios is integrating all the above in order not simply to develop skills but also to develop new mind-sets."

Arpy Tatoulian-Jahjah, an educator at the Hovsepien school, who developed a

dual immersion STEAM program in the Armenian language is a firm believer in STEAM pedagogy. "It's important to follow a child's natural curiosity so they can learn how the world works. Asking and answering questions helps them express their ideas," explained the mother of two sons who registered them for the studios.

AGBU Innovation Studios has taken the need to develop technological skills and combined it with developing one's creative and entrepreneurial skills, and infusing all this with Armenian content.

Another practical advantage is that students can build a portfolio showcasing their work in each studio—a smart way to enhance their applications to colleges.

Avagyan offered an overview of the dynamics at play in a typical Innovation workshop experience. First, under the guidance of a Studio Coach, each group of participants per workshop is introduced to the array of digital software and materials at their disposal. Once familiar with the functionality and applications of these options, they come to a consensus as to what Armenian-related project or product

Greater Los Angeles. This includes newly-arrived immigrants from Armenia and the Middle East who work alongside students as assimilated as fifth generation Armenian-Americans. She also notes that the Innovation Studios model can be applied in every Armenian community, adding that the program is slated to open in Boston and New York, followed by other key cities in the U.S. and worldwide. They will also organize collaborations with peers at the TUMO centers in Armenia.

Middle school student Nyra Tatoulian was asked what she discovered during her session: "I didn't know that there were so many different animals in Armenia like some types of lizards, cougars, lynx," she responded. I didn't know they lived in the snowy part. I didn't know there was such a thing as a Eurasian lynx."

Vahe Haroutunian, who coached the Bio Robotics studio, was motivated to get involved because he wanted to maintain a connection with the academic world while



Nathalie Karimian (Armenian Content Specialist) and Arpi Yegyan: Testing the movement of her robot using the Arduino board

to develop individually and as a group. The theme could be derived from Armenian architecture, language, ancient arts, historical figures or events, or a message or narrative they wish to share with the world through mixed-media storytelling such as dance, art or film and the written word. The final product is presented in public forums, after which the participants can sign up for the next session.

According to Avagyan, the mix of participants will reflect the wide-ranging demographics of the Armenian community of

concentrating on his career in architecture. "I have come to know each student's way of learning and established an environment for each student to become well rounded in their habits when encountering stressful undertakings in a demanding design environment."

Avagyan summed it best saying, "We want them to think big. We want them to be the next generation of young Armenian innovators and creators, not just for our own community, but at a global level."



Coach Alec Melkonian and Krikor Karadanaian (Living Architecture): The coach is demonstrating how to correctly position the wood panel for laser cutting



Arts & Culture

Hye Kef to Hold 10th Anniversary Dance

ANDOVER, Mass. — The Armenian Friends of America (AFA) will celebrate their 10th Anniversary of Hye Kef 5.

The AFA was formed 11 years ago with the purpose of uniting the Armenian Community of Merrimack Valley and the surrounding area. It is composed of members of the four local Armenian Churches: Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church of Chelmsford, Mass., Ararat Armenian Congregational Church of Salem, NH, the Armenian Church at Hye Pointe of Haverhill, Mass. and Saint Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of North Andover, Mass.

Each year the AFA engages prominent musicians for its Hye Kef 5. There are always sellout crowds, with people coming from as far as California, Florida and Canada.

After a two year break, people are



Mal Barsamian

looking forward to renewing friendships and to jointly celebrating the music- the Hokis - the Soul of Armenia. All proceeds are donated to our churches, the Genocide Survivor Memorials and the sponsorship of two children orphaned by the wars in Armenia.

The dance will take place on Saturday, October 15, 6:30 p.m. to midnight, at the Doubletree by Hilton, 123 Olde River Road Andover. Performing will be Mal Barsamian, Joe Kouyoumjian, Leon Janikian, Ken Kalajian and Jason Naroian.

For AFA Room rates, Call the hotel front desk. Tickets are now available online: www.ArmenianFriendsOfAmerica.Org. Tickets will not be sold at the door.



Dancers in 2018 at the dance



Zara Kechechyan, Winemaker, Tufenkian Heritage Hotels

Armenian Women in Wine Are Shaking Up a Once Male-Dominated Industry

By Ani Duzdabanyan

LOS ANGELES (*Wine Enthusiast*) — In the last 15 years, many Armenian female wine professionals have returned home after years abroad in Europe and the United States. Once a male-dominated industry, women now fill various roles in more than 100 Armenian wineries across five regions.

Part of this growth is due to increased educational opportunities.

Since the 1930s, the Armenian National Agrarian University has trained wine specialists, but women were largely underrepresented. In its class of 2000, for instance, just 20% of graduates were women.

In 2014, EVN Wine Academy launched courses to engage female students. It offered night classes for the enology and wine business program to address a need for professional development.

Taught in English, the program became more attractive to women who could work during the day and dive into a new vocation at night.

Mariam Saghatelian, a graduate and now a teacher at EVN, says the program especially resonates with women because one of its founders is a female winemaker.



Mariam Saghatelian, Cofounder/Educator, In Vino

by women, three employed women winemakers and half of the participants were husband-and-wife operations.

“Now I see so many women working in the vineyards, managing harvest, doing physical and manual winemaking, bottling, selling and promoting wine,” says Gharibyan O’Connor.

Here, a few of the female wine professionals in all corners of the industry.

Born in Armenia, Aslanian moved to Los Angeles in 1990. In 2009, she returned home to help her father manage ArmAs, the 450-acre winery estate and boutique hotel that he established in 2007. It’s located in the Aragatsotn province, approximately 30 minutes from Yerevan, the Armenian capital.

With a degree in art history from University of California, Berkeley, Aslanian says she had to learn everything about wine after she returned home.

“There literally isn’t a single job in the winery that I haven’t done at one point myself, especially the first couple of years,” says Aslanian. “I did not leave the winery.

see WINE, page 14

Marina Mavian

To Live as an Armenian in Italy

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LIDO, Venice — Lido is one of most fascinating parts of Venice. And the fact that a house on one of its main streets has a nameplate bearing the name “Mavian” is exciting for me. It is always a pleasure to meet the hostess, Marina Mavian, who lives between Milan and Lido, and to hear her life stories as a ballerina and an artist, as a descendant of Armenian refugees and as the president of Casa Armena — Hay Dun (Armenian cultural center) in Milano.

It is August, I am again in Venice and enjoy another nice conversation with Marina Mavian at her beautiful house.



Marina, what did ballet give you and what does painting gives you today?

Ballet was the first part of my life. In ballet there are lots of rules. One should be very serious about doing classical ballet, and it certainly leaves a mark on you, whatever other career you might pursue.

I went to Armenia for the first time in 1998, and it was shock for me to see the state our ancient churches were in. I wanted to raise awareness on our treasures — *khachkars*, churches and miniatures, in Italy. Painting had been a hobby for me since I was a dancer; I used to paint in my free time, but after my trip to Armenia I started painting religious subjects. I consider it my mission. I was surprised that during my exhibitions people asked: “So, are Armenians Christians?!” Art is an effective way to transmit our rich spiritual culture to people who might have not yet been able to see original miniatures at the manuscript collections of San Lazzaro or at the Matenadaran in Yerevan. I provide another way to access Armenian art. Of course, what I make is not identical copies, but my work is inspired and embedded in the same tradition.

see MAVIAN, page 14



ARTS & CULTURE

Armenian Women Are Shaking Up the Wine Industry

WINE, from page 13

I've washed every tank. I've made whatever was necessary, from A to Z, so that I could properly manage it."

Today, Aslanian runs the estate and also designs the labels for ArmAs wines using medieval Armenian writing techniques called bird letters.

Upon her return from the U.S., Saghatelyan cofounded the country's first wine bar, In Vino, in Yerevan in 2012.

Saghatelyan faced skepticism from wine distributors and friends who worried that the concept would never work, as wine wasn't overwhelmingly popular in the country. However, In Vino became one of the driving forces to re-establish Armenia's wine culture. Starting with only 600 bottles, the bar currently carries 1,000 wines from around the world.

In Vino offers educational events and winery tours to bring winemakers and customers closer. Saghatelyan's goal? To change local minds concerning the country's 6,000-year-old industry.

"We do have wines from the Old and New World—Chile, Argentina, South Africa, California and Lebanon as well, and of course, Italy and France," says Saghatelyan. "People in Armenia used to think that wine comes only from France. Now they understand more that wine is from all over the world."

One of EVN Wine Academy's first graduates, Saghatelyan has returned to teach wine business classes for the past three years.

Gharibyan O'Connor earned a degree in winemaking from Agrarian University, followed by a MBA from the University of Dallas. She's worked as a winemaker, sommelier and now a wine ambassador who splits her time between the U.S. and Armenia.

For the last seven years, she's championed the Armenian wine industry's renaissance through her podcast, Armenia Proud – A Toast to Armenia.

In 2018, she cofounded the GiniFest Armenian Wine & Spirits Festival. Starting with 10 wineries from Paso Robles, Argentina and Armenia, the 2022 festival now pours bottles from 40 wineries that draws more than 1,000 attendees. GiniFest not only promotes Armenian wine, but helped reintroduced it to the Armenian community abroad.

"Because of the festival, the export of Armenian wine has tripled in the United States," says Gharibyan O'Connor. "The number of wine producers grew since they could see the impact, the feedback and excitement here in the U.S. All the people who come to GiniFest are devoted Armenian wine consumers."

GiniFest plans to host an international wine festival in November that represents producers from Greece, Israel, Bulgaria and other regions that are often underrepresented in the U.S.

(This article was originally published on August 16, 2022 by Wine Enthusiast.)



Victoria Aslanian, CEO/President, ArmAs Estate

Marina Mavian: To Live as an Armenian in Italy

MAVIAN, from page 13

Some of my work is permanently exhibited in quite meaningful places. For example, three of my paintings are displayed in Turkey. They were commissioned by the late Monsignor Luigi Padovese, the apostolic vicar of Anatolia in Turkey, who was brutally murdered 12 years ago. So if you go to Turkey, you will see a big Saint George and the dragon at the Iskenderun Catholic church and a Saint Paul and an icon at the Catholic convent in Tarsus.

How many years have you been in charge of the Armenian house (Casa Armena – Hay Dun) in Milano?

I started being involved in 2002, with Mrs. Armine Sirabian, who has been the president of Hay Dun before me for 25 years, a wonderful woman and a very active member of our community. I became president in 2008. We do not have sponsors, and it is difficult to keep our finances afloat, but we hope to be able to continue our activity. The Casa Armena - Hay Dun was founded in 1953, when most people knew little, or nothing, about Armenians in Milan. One of its main goals was also to make Armenian culture known to Italians. Our venue is big, which allows us to have various kinds of activities. We organize conferences, book launches, concerts, film screenings, exhibitions of Armenian artists, and so on. We also celebrate festivities there — Christmas, Michink, Vartanants, the Republic anniversaries of May 28 and 21st of September. When I was younger, they even organized ama-

teur theatre representations in Armenian, but it has not been done in a while.

When I first came to Venice in 1998, among the stores of San Marco square there was one bearing the name Mavian.

Yes, my father owned two cameras shops in Venice, although his main work was in Milan. One can still read "Foto Record 90" on the sign in San Marco square, although the store is no longer ours.

How was it to grow up as an Armenian in Venice?

I would say that for us it was normal to be Armenian here on Lido. The community was bigger back then. My father, a former student of Moorat-Raphael, was very happy to live in Venice. Armenians were known here since the time of the Venetian Republic as there were many merchants, not to mention San Lazzaro degli Armeni, the island of the Mekhitarist fathers, as well as the Moorat-Raphael Armenian college. My parents talked to us in Armenian rarely, but they spoke it to communicate with each other, so we learned some as children. Our best teacher was my paternal grandmother Anna (Gulmesian Mavian), who lived in our house, and spoke Armenian to us, but unfortunately she passed away when I was two years old. It is very difficult to get an education in Armenian in Italy — Moorat-Raphael was for boys only at that time. In any case, I always say I am Italian, and also Armenian.

Where was your family from?

My father Girair (Jirayr) was from

Bursa, and his family moved to Constantinople, when he was a child. I have been to Istanbul three times and it was a strange feeling to know my family house is still somewhere in that city. My mother was born in Venice to an Italian father, Carlo Mascarini and an Armenian mother, Nevart Ichlemedjian, who was from Smyrna, now Izmir. When they got engaged, they planned to live in Smyrna together. But while Nevart and Carlo were in Venice, the big fire of Smyrna happened in September 1922, so they never returned to Turkey. Meanwhile, Nevart's parents managed to escape from there and moved to their daughter's place in Venice.

Do you have family relics?

We do. (Marina takes me to another room and shows me a painting on the wall). This Madonna and child, painted in 1870 by an Armenian painter, is from Smyrna. My grandmother's mother, Makruhi, while escaping from the fire with her husband Karnik, instead of taking jewels or money, took this painting. A Turkish *gendarme* attacked her with a sword, but she shielded herself with this painting, and you can see a cut on it. Then they jumped into the water and swam to a French vessel. You can see also traces of the water here. They reached Italy on that French ship and were refugees in a camp in Puglia. From there, they found their way to Venice. Their daughter Nevart had no news from her parents for a long time. One day she saw her mother and father, both safe and sound on her doorstep in Venice, with the portrait of the Madonna...

Another survivor of my family was

uncle Boghos (Shishmanian), Nevart granny's cousin. He was around 18 years old at the time of the Genocide, when they took him away, and just like in Fatih Akin's film, "The Cut," they cut his throat. Boghos was left under a heap of dead bodies, but his bleeding was stopped by the snow, and he managed to survive. He, too, eventually reached Venice, where he found employment and continued his life.

It is great that you also formed an Italian-Armenian family. Moreover, your daughter is involved in Armenian studies.

Yes, I am very proud of this. My daughter Stephanie (Pambakian) devoted many years to her studies and defended her doctoral dissertation on seventh century Armenian scientist Anania Shirakatsi last March under the supervision of Prof. Valentina Calzolari (University in Geneva), Dr. Tim Greenwood and Prof. Palmer (University of St Andrews). She also taught courses of Classical Armenian in Casa Armena - Hay Dun. Some Armenians from the community took part, but there was also a great participation from an Italian audience - among the students, we were honored to have Don Matteo Crimella, a catholic priest and lecturer at the Facoltà Teologica of Northern Italy. He produced a beautiful translation and commentary of the 24-stanzas prayer of Nerses Shnorhali, "In Faith I Confess," which also features the grabar original. Stephanie presented this book in Hay Dun last June, and Don Crimella said that thanks to Stephanie he finally had access to the wealth of Armenian spiritual literature. This makes me



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Duzme from Mediterranean Meals for Mom

Helen Adourian is the successful blogger and entrepreneur at Mediterranean Meals for Moms. “*Duzme* (or *douzma*) is a traditional, comforting dish often made with ground beef (or lamb), onions, potatoes, parsley, tomatoes, eggplant, and zucchini. It is a simple recipe to make for your family or guests, and is perfect for large gatherings or parties,” Helen says. “*Duzme* really is Armenian (Dikranagerdtsi) comfort food. It means ‘lined up’ or ‘alternating,’ which indicates how the ingredients are assembled in the baking pan.”

Helen is also a licensed cosmetologist, fashion consultant, and entrepreneur. When she married her husband John, they traveled extensively which gave her extra time to discover and refine her true culinary passion and creativity. Having two sets of twins since then, Helen has made it her goal to cook a variety of healthy and organic foods for her family as often as possible. “I am a first-generation American-Armenian, and I especially like to incorporate and make traditional dishes and recipes from my family’s Turkish-Armenian background.”

“I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and live and work in California. My parents were both born in Turkey; my father is from Kayseri, and my mother is from Istanbul. Kayseri is renowned for its culinary specialties such as *manti*, pastirma and *sucuk*. *Manti* is the most popular dish in Kayseri for the local people and tourists. My in-laws are from Dikranagerd, and I also post special family recipes that I’ve learned from my husband’s relatives.”

“I made a major lifestyle change for the past two years, and have lost 80 pounds. I share my journey and weight loss tips along with recipes and Armenian keto food on my Instagram Helens_Keto_Journey.” Helen owns her own business selling and promoting wine that is keto-friendly, low carb/low sugar, and organic. For details, see: www.helensketovino.com

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 lb. ground beef | 3 small eggplant |
| 1 small onion, minced | 5 small potatoes |
| 1 tablespoon red pepper paste | 2 small tomatoes |
| 1 tablespoon tomato paste | |
| 1/2 teaspoon cumin | |
| 1 tablespoon allspice | |
| Salt and pepper to taste | |
| 2 medium zucchini | |

SAUCE:

- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- Salt and pepper

PREPARATION:

Wash and slice zucchini, eggplant, and potato, and let sit in salted water (to avoid the eggplant from browning). Slice tomatoes and set aside. Be sure to slice vegetables to about the same thickness and size. Note: Cutting the vegetables to the same thickness and similar size, plus partially cooking the potatoes in advance, assures even baking and helps decrease the baking time.

In a separate bowl, combine the ground beef, minced onion, red pepper paste, tomato paste, cumin, allspice, salt, and pepper.

Slightly oil the bottom of a large round baking dish. Make small patties with the ground beef mixture and alternate each vegetable with the ground beef. Left-over vegetables may be placed in the center of the dish and decorated with sliced tomato (see photo).

Combine one cup of water with a tablespoon of tomato paste and salt and pepper, and pour evenly over the dish. Bake at 350F for 45-55 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Serve with Armenian rice or bulgur pilaf and a fresh tossed salad.

Serves 4-6.

For this recipe, go to: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/page/6/>

Food Blogger Helen Adourian

“As I prepared more and more authentic home-cooked Armenian dishes what happened was several friends and family members started asking me for these recipes. As I began to post what I cooked on Facebook, many people were intrigued enough to ask me if I’d be interested in going to their homes to show them how to make and prepare these dishes. I did go to their homes and at that point, I decided to start blogging because I knew these were beloved and important family recipes, and they would always live on which is important for me personally and culturally. Sadly, my paternal grandfather was a very talented baker, but he never passed on his recipes to other family members, and now they are forever lost.”



Helen Adourian and her family

References:

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- <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/sonia-tashjian-celebrates-foods-of/>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/life/thegoods/shahirs-maldoum-1.5029607>

Also see:

- Helen’s *Karni Yarik* (Stuffed Eggplant) recipe at: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/2013/10/05/karni-yarik-stuffed-eggplant/>
- Helen’s Easter Bread (Choreg) at: <https://helenadourian.wordpress.com/2014/04/15/easter-bread-choreg/>
- Here’s Helen’s video about how to braid choreg, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/MediterraneanMealsforMoms/videos/348268919143662>

ARTS & CULTURE

Maranci Brings Fresh Leadership to Harvard's Armenian Studies Chair

CHAIR, from page 1

Attending UConn – Stamford, Maranci took a course on “Art Appreciation.” “I had never heard of that,” she states. “And for me, a switch went on. It was a way to understand history that made sense to me, that wasn’t just a recitation of dates and names, but an immediate immersive connection with the past through visual material and culture. And for me it really was a revelation to realize that was a way of studying the past.”

Maranci first entered Vassar and thought she wanted to study Gothic architecture, but couldn’t find funding. At that time, she says “I had the great good fortune” of meeting Thomas Mathews of New York

Making her name with Mren

Although mentored by Garsoian and the other towering figures associated with Columbia, Maranci eventually attended Princeton for her PhD. There she worked with Slobodan Curcic, a Byzantine scholar in the department of Art and Archaeology who focused on the medieval architecture of Serbia; she also studied with Peter Brown, “who was intensely interested in the Christian East and was very welcoming of an Armenian dissertation topic.” She also noted, “if you were a grad student in Art History, you were constantly talking to people in History and Classics and Religion.”

Her dissertation was on the legacy of Jo-

inscriptions, are high quality eyewitnesses to history,” stated Maranci. “That gets to the other part, that it’s in a military zone on the Turkish side of border and this means that it’s difficult to access, and it hasn’t received the kind of attention that Ani has.” Maranci notes that this is the case for most Armenian historic sites in Turkey, besides Ani and Aghtamar. “This is the status quo in Turkey. Mren is in dire condition. The lintel is in great danger of collapsing. It’s a testimony to a period of time that’s not well known, but is also very fragile. There are many monuments in the same predicament, and this is something that we know all too well with the Artsakh war. Understanding the history and understanding that the monuments are ‘archives’ of that history,” is one important way that we can bear witness to the Armenian past of the region, Maranci concludes.

Heir to the Harvard Chair

Maranci is well aware of the historic importance of the Mashtots Chair. In regard to her appointment, “I’ll say personally, it’s huge, it’s exciting. It’s personally really moving because my mother and my aunt were both present at the inaugural dinner.” [The 1955 inaugural dinner for the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), which established the Harvard chair]. She continued, “It was an amazing feeling, to be here is really exciting, and I want to do a good job. I have big shoes to fill, when you think about Robert Thomson and James Russell, the minds they represent, I’m really humbled.”

Maranci’s background has prepared her well for the new role. “I’ve held the chair at Tufts for 14 years, and 6 years I’ve been department chair, so I’ve had experience thinking about how to shape what I study and what I teach. I have been invested now for many years in growing Armenian classes, Armenian art classes, but when I teach art, I teach a little history, culture, religion, language...I had 200 students in

Maranci noted that many dissertation advisors have no familiarity with Armenian history or culture. For example, she pointed out work being done on bronze mirrors that originated in medieval Anatolia; although some had Armenian inscriptions, this was somewhat ignored by scholars who classified them as “Seljuk” or “Islamic” based on artistic criteria, and who were unable to read Armenian.

She noted: “My job puts me in a position to build bridges. One of my jobs is not just to run a big undergraduate program, but to share doctoral students with other faculty so they can learn about Armenian culture as well. I want the chair to be connected to the Armenian community, but to Harvard too as an institution. I’m in [the departments of] Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and History of Art and Architecture. And I see that as a great opportunity to spread more of the wealth of Armenian culture. There are a lot of bridges to build. Whether we’re talking about the Divinity School, classics, history. I’ve got a good start from my experience at Tufts.”

But her primary job, is, of course, as a scholar and researcher. “Even before [training doctoral students], my job is to do research and publication,” of which she has produced reams, as anyone can easily discover from her CV. She continued, “I’m producing that research, that’s the backbone of what I do. That painstaking work, which is all about details, is what’s necessary to teach with and to advocate with. If you don’t know why Mren is important, then you are not in the best position to teach and to advocate. And it’s also what I love to do, that’s important. It give me joy to work on medieval Armenian topics and when you have that joy, you can give it to others.”

In terms of whether the Harvard position holds a leadership role within Armenian Studies in the US, Maranci humbly brushed aside the suggestion and stressed cooperation: “There has to be building of connections across our chairs. Given [what has been happening] since the war, it’s important to find ways to be on the same team. This is the time. I’ve been involved in so many initiatives since the war with my fellow chairs. And that’s going to keep happening, and it has to keep happening,” she said. She added, however, that if she can leverage the status of a professorship at Harvard

“to create better protection for Armenian culture and visibility for the Armenian community,” she will do so.

As for the future of the Armenian Studies field in general, she said: “I think that we can talk about new trends in terms of scholarship and some of the things that I see, I’m not the first person to notice them, the narratives that connect

Armenia to other cultures. Of all the real ways that Armenia is connected to other cultures from Europe to East Asia.” She is happy that more scholars from various disciplines are gaining knowledge of the Armenian language and culture, as well as the incorporation of ‘digital humanities.’

continued on next page



University (NYU) and Prof. James Russell the late Prof. Nina Garsoian, both, then of Columbia, who were reinvigorating Armenian studies in the New York area.

The “Treasures in Heaven” exhibition of Armenian illuminated manuscripts organized by Mathews at the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1994 was a turning point for Maranci’s introduction into the world of Armenian Studies.

“I met Mathews, who introduced me to Garsoian, who let me audit her courses without paying the technically-required fee. And she took me under her wing,” Maranci said.

Historian and historical geographer Robert Hewsen was there at the time, too, Maranci noted. A trip to the ruins of Ani in what is Turkey now with Garsoian and a French tour group was another memorable occasion. The French tourists didn’t necessarily know who Garsoian was, but her commentary on the history, culture, and architecture of the site enthralled them. “By the end of the trip, the French were all eating out of her hand,” Maranci recalled. “She exuded authority and intellect, effortless.”

In regard to Garsoian’s recent passing, Maranci shared that, “I can’t believe she’s gone. She was a monumental figure in Armenian studies and produced so many students and so much good research. She was an extraordinary human being. She was the kindest and most hospitable person, with a wicked sense of humor. It’s a huge loss and it’s hard to imagine...I’m so grateful that I had time with her, and that she gave me the time of day. You have those people in your life who when you really need it, they are really there for you, and you never forget it. I’m always going to help others because I was always helped. [She was] an extraordinary mentor and a source of support.”

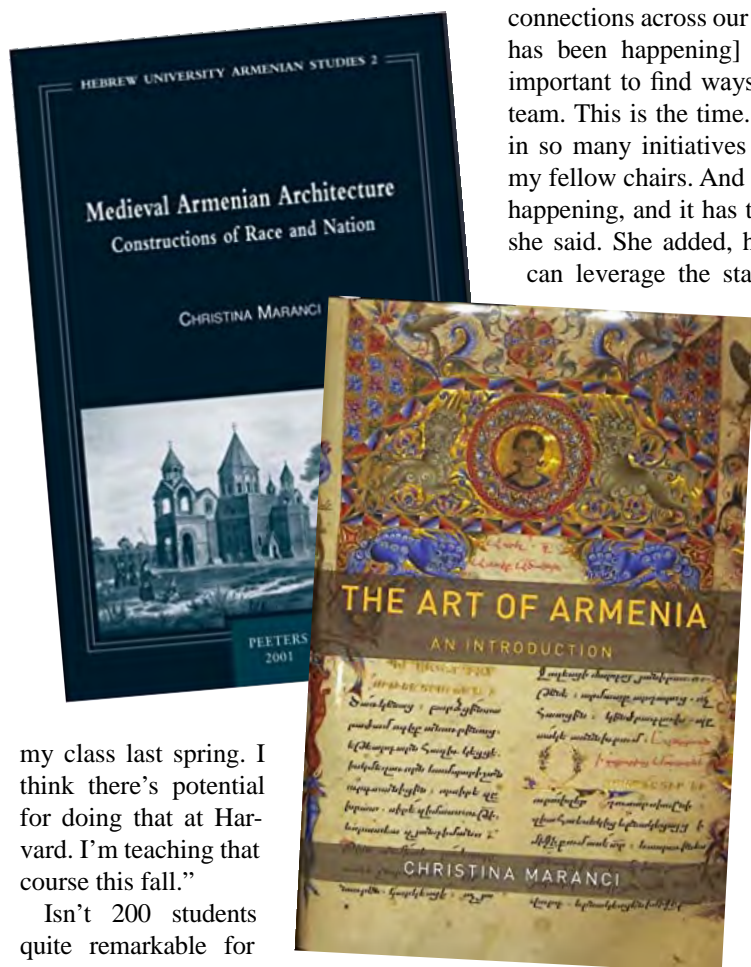
sef Strzygowski, the controversial art historian who claimed that Armenian architecture influenced the Gothic style which reigned in Europe’s High Middle Ages. But she became associated in the popular mind with her work on the Cathedral of Mren, a seventh-century church which, like the ruins of Ani, is in Western Armenia.

“It is an amazing site and has been studied since Toros Toromanian and before,” Maranci said. “It is an extraordinary monument because of the way it bears witness to the seventh-century wars, between the Byzantines and Persians as well as the Islamic conquests. And it’s covered with inscriptions. And it names the [Byzantine] Emperor Heraclius. It can be studied architecturally, and in terms of its inscriptions and sculpture. The sculpture helps us understand the culture of the era, and how connected Armenia was to the Byzantine world.”

Heraclius was the seventh-century emperor known for his wars with the Sassanid Persians and his retrieval of the relic of the “True Cross” which was taken from Jerusalem by Persian forces. The Byzantine-Persian wars, according to some scholars, weakened both empires, setting the stage for the Islamic conquest of the Middle East.

Maranci is enthusiastic about the history which the site of Mren contains. “Why was it built? It calls Heraclius ‘the victorious Emperor Heraclius.’ We can crosscheck that with Sebeos’ history [a history of the era written by a contemporary Armenian writer, Sebeos]. It seems to have been built to express alliance with him. There is a sculpted lintel showing Heraclius returning the True Cross to Jerusalem, which was a crucial benchmark in terms of his success.”

“Mren and monuments like Mren, with



my class last spring. I think there’s potential for doing that at Harvard. I’m teaching that course this fall.”

Isn’t 200 students quite remarkable for an Armenian related course? “I’m going to be as welcoming and generous as I can. You get undergraduates interested. And that’s the base of interest. And from that you get majors, in art history, or in Armenian. And from there you start to produce doctoral students. What I find that I’m doing with doctoral students all over the place, I’m not just training the students, I’m teaching their advisors,” she explained.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 25-DECEMBER 15 — 100th Anniversary at Fresno’s Valley Lahvosh Baking Company® - Guided Tours Available. Valley Lahvosh Baking Company® is listed on Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources and celebrates its 100th Anniversary in 2022. In honor of this milestone, guided tours of the factory will be given and are scheduled for: August 25, September 22, October 20, November 17 and December 15. Call today to reserve your place: (559) 485-2700 ext. 200. Sign up for a guided tour of this historic bakery and see where Valley Lahvosh® and the Original Peda Bread are made. <https://m.facebook.com/valleylahvoshbakingco/> <https://www.instagram.com/valleylahvosh/?hl=en>

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.

OCTOBER 8 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter presents “An Evening of Comedy III featuring Harout Soghomonian” on Saturday, 8 p.m. at Phoenicia Restaurant. Special guest appearance by Antic and guest appearance by Tsoghig Samuelian. Admission \$100. For reservations call or text 818.730.1100.

MASSACHUSETTS

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 11 — Saint Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Merrimack Valley Annual Picnic, 158 Main St. North Andover. 12 Noon to 5pm Call Sharké @ 978-808-0598 or Visit www.saintgregory.org **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 12 — St. James Men’s Club Monthly Dinner Meeting with speaker Mark DerMugrditchian discussing his book 4 Strokes West: An Amazing American Adventure. Monday. Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinner. 6:15 p.m. Social Hour, 7 p.m. Dinner. \$20 per person. Ladies welcome. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information e-mail mensclub@stthagop.com.

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

OCTOBER 14-15 — St. James Armenian Church 75th Annual Bazaar – Save the date for the return of our traditional two-day Bazaar! Delicious Armenian Food and Pastries. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children’s Activities, Booths and Vendors. Details to follow. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org.

OCTOBER 15 —Armenian Friends of America (AFA) will celebrate their 10th Anniversary of Hye Kef 5 with a dance. Performing will be Mal Barsamian, Joe Kouyoumjian, Leon Janikian, Ken Kalajian and Jason Naroian. 6:30 – Midnight, Doubletree by Hilton, 123 Olde River Road Andover. For AFA Room rates, Call the hotel front desk. Tickets are now available online: www.ArmenianFriendsofAmerica.Org. Tickets will not be sold at the door.

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>

September 9 – Dance Ensemble of Vanush Khanamiryan Academy
September 23 — Armenian Cultural Hour - Friday, 7:30 pm, “Daniel Yerazhisht”

OHIO

SEPTEMBER 22 — Lessons of the Armenian Genocide: a lecture & Q&A from Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author Peter Balakian organized by the Armenian Cultural Garden of Ohio and John Carroll University Peace, Justice & Human Rights Program. 7 p.m. at the John Carroll University Donahue Auditorium (in the Dolan Science Center), 20700 N. Park Blvd. University Heights, OH 44118. Free and open to the public.

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.

from previous page

“I also am glad to see rising numbers of women in the field in various disciplines. Even in art history, to see more women is great. And the last thing I’ll say is, newer fields like material culture are starting to come to the fore. There are some interesting projects now on film studies, dance, etc. It’s exciting to see Armenian studies branch out and deepen at the same time. And to see new players as well. It’s an exciting time and I’m hopeful about the future and what the next generation of students is going to bring.”

Protector of Monuments

One of the most valuable aspects of Maranci’s particular expertise puts her on the front lines of the protection of historical Armenian monuments which are now under threat in Karabakh (Artsakh) and have been for years throughout Azerbaijan and Turkey.

“I’ve been involved in so many conver-

sations about the fate of the monuments, with church and other NGOs [non-governmental organizations],” Maranci said. “It’s been really extraordinary to see how mobilized the Armenian community has been in the last 2 years. The more people that raise their voice the better. The situation is really dire. I’ve sent out open letters and organized events. I can also communicate at a level of talking with the World Monuments Fund and various bodies that do this work.”

As an expert on the Cathedral of Mren and other Armenian monuments in Eastern Turkey, Maranci has been involved in initiatives to protect that region’s monuments for many years now, and continues to do so. “Most recently we went to Turkey and I spent a day in Ankara with WMF [World Monuments Fund].” Maranci declined to discuss particulars but shared that, “The point is, there are projects underway to protect monuments at Ani and hopefully at Mren. These are delicate situations but what’s important is that I can present

information that is documented about the monuments. It’s not spin. And this is really important to the people who can make decisions about the monuments, like the State Department and the WMF. ‘Here’s the research, here is what we know.’ And that helps people make good decisions.”

She feels that the same applies to Artsakh. “For almost 20 years, from my experience, what I can tell you is that as dire as things look right now in Artsakh, what I know is that things can change and things can change fast. Keep working, keep optimistic, and don’t get discouraged. It’s so easy to get discouraged. What helped me was to keep plugging away, and keep applying for various grants and projects.”

As a scholar, she does get tired of fact that the Armenian heritage is used as a pawn in international geopolitics. She explained, “There’s such a political game involved in the monuments and heritage and I find it to be bewildering. What I’m interested in is making sure the buildings

stand up so that future generations can look at them and enjoy them. If I can help that process of making sure these buildings are still standing, that is what I will do.”

For example, she doesn’t care to engage in a semantic discussion about the differences between Armenians, Caucasian Albanians, Artsakh Armenians, or Artsakh Armenians that at some point used the term “Aghvank” (Albanian) in a regional or ecclesiastical sense.

“It’s just a way to erase Armenians from the region, it’s just a strategy,” she said of the controversy pushed forth by the Azerbaijani authorities. “That’s one of the great acts of violence being done here. It’s shocking that we’re in this position.”

Maranci is the author of four books, with her latest *The Art of Armenia: An Introduction*, which came out in 2018. Other books include *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation*, and *Vigilant Powers: Three Churches of Early Medieval Armenia*.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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02472-1509

Telephone: 617-924-4420

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Politicizing a Tragedy



By Edmond Y. Azadian

news and social media, with many proposing different scenarios and even some pointing a finger at Armenia's foes.

Only some members of a fringe political group called the National Democratic Axis (Bever; NDA)) have indirectly accused Russia as the perpetrator of the disaster.

Indeed, a supporter of the NDA has claimed in a Facebook post: "The Russians will blow up half of Armenia with fireworks until it capitulates."

Another leader of the same group, Garegin Chukaszian, believes that "foreign forces are behind these actions, diverting public attention from the upcoming 'ethnic cleansing' of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh."

Other than those few statements, there have only been scant references to Russia regarding this tragedy. Mainstream media, in particular, has been cautious not to make similar claims against Russia.

However, Moscow has lodged an irate protest with the Armenian government, asking it to curb the promulgation of such accusations.

The Russian embassy in Yerevan sent a note to Armenia's Foreign Ministry, stating, "We are outraged by the cynical fake reports in the local media containing blasphemous and false accusations

against Russian structures in connection with the August 14 tragedy at the Surmalu shopping center. We consider this a direct provocation by the political forces behind such insinuations aimed at undermining Russian-Armenian relations. We expect the Armenian authorities to take steps aimed at preventing such unfriendly manifestations, including necessary public comments."

Deputy Director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry Ivan Nachev added, "We are awaiting a response."

Russian analyst Stanislav Tarassov, who is known for his sympathies towards Armenia, has warned that Moscow has serious concerns, otherwise it would not come out with such a protest, and he has added: "Armenian authorities, unlike [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev, were not able to become trusted allies for Russia."

This confession marks truly the disproportionate reaction of the Russian side.

In the first place, the Armenian authorities cannot be held accountable for a statement made by a fringe group. Second, Moscow can order the suppression of free press only to a vassal state. It is indeed an obscene intrusion in the domestic life of an ally.

We need to remember that Moscow had requested Yerevan to lodge a protest against Canada, whose government had decided to open embassies in Armenia and some Baltic states. The Russian authorities had regarded this opening of embassies on Russia's periphery replete with ill intent. However, considering that one of those embassies was for Armenia itself, one has to wonder how it expected Armenia to twist itself into such a political pretzel by protesting a major country opening an embassy on its soil.

Moscow is not very comfortable with the fact that, once in a while, Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations head towards con-

sideration by Brussels.

The statements by a fringe group in Armenia would not have been sufficient cause for that kind of official reaction. There is indeed a growing anti-Russian sentiment in Armenia, avidly fanned by the Western-leaning forces, but mostly engendered by Russia's blatant actions. In recent months, there have been many incursions on the territories of Karabakh and Armenia proper by Azerbaijani forces, in plain view of Russian peace-keeping forces, and yet the Kremlin has turned a blind eye to them. Armenia's correct protests regarding Russian peace-keepers' inaction during those provocations were ridiculed by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a press conference in Cambodia.

After the 44-Day War, in an interview given to an Armenian news outlet (1st Channel), President Vladimir Putin's alter ego, Russian analyst and top strategics Alexander Dugin (whose daughter was just killed in a terrorist attack) bluntly claimed that Armenia did not keep its side of the bargain and forced President Putin to engineer the 44-Day War. He revealed that former President Serzh Sargsyan's administration had promised to Ilham Aliyev, through the good offices of the Russian president, that Armenia was ready to cede the five regions it had taken as insurance back to Azerbaijan, but after the Velvet

Revolution of 2018, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reneged on that promise.

But most importantly, a crucial summit is approaching where historic decisions may be made. On August 31, Presidents Putin and Aliyev will be meeting with Prime Minister Pashinyan. Armenia's political establishment is apprehensive that once again the Russian president may sell out Armenia to Azerbaijan.

At issue is the Zangezur Corridor in Armenia's Syunik province, linking Nakhichevan and Azer-

baijan with Turkey. Despite public assurances by Moscow that the corridor would not compromise Armenia's sovereignty, indications are that Mr. Putin will pressure Pashinyan to give in. Indeed, Mr. Lavrov had stated that "there should not be any equivocation that the roads and corridors to be opened will remain under the control of their respective governments."

Mr. Putin's motivation to cede the corridor to Azerbaijan goes beyond Armenia; it is a move to hurt Iran. Russia has weaponized its energy resources to counteract Western sanctions in light of the former's war against Ukraine. As the Iran nuclear deal is becoming a reality, Tehran will turn out to be a real competitor to Russia by selling oil and gas to the West, thus blunting Russia's most potent weapon. And Iran is as wary as Armenia over the control of the Zangezur Corridor by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Although Iran extended diplomatic courtesies to Baku by congratulating Azerbaijan after its victory in 2020 "for recovering its historic territory," it was also a loser along with Armenia, as Israel, a close ally of Azerbaijan, will have a broader area to conduct surveillance activities from Azerbaijan over Iran, not to speak of the latent rivalry between Azerbaijan and Iran over historic territory. Azerbaijan openly claims two regions in Iran where ethnic Turks reside while Iran claims Azerbaijan's territory was amputated from the motherland.

In this game, Baku plays the Turkic card of demographic fault lines to entice Iranian-Azerbaijanis, while Iran plays the Shia religious card. Shia extremists have become very active in Azerbaijan and as the world witnessed only a few weeks ago, they literally took over the Azerbaijani embassy in London for a few hours.

As we can see, there is a global confrontation in Armenia and in the region and a simple protest by Russian has deep political reverberations in Armenia and in all of the Caucasus region.





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

No Respect for the Living or The Dead in Armenia; Case in Point: Vahakn Dadrian

Vahakn Dadrian, the preeminent expert on the Armenian Genocide, died in upstate New York on August 2, 2019, at the age of 93. Born in Istanbul, Turkey, he devoted his entire life to expose the Turkish denials of the Armenian Genocide. Dadrian conducted his meticulous research in Turkish, English, French, German and Armenian, publishing dozens of scholarly books and articles in professional journals.

One would think that a distinguished individual such as Dadrian would be respected, not only during his lifetime, but also after his passing. Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan took the right step by issuing a decision on August 19, 2019, to appoint a high-level State Commission to make the necessary arrangements for Dadrian's burial in Yerevan and allocated an appropriate budget for the funeral expenses.

The members of the State Commission were: "A. Harutyunyan, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports; Z. Mnatsakanian, Foreign Minister; A. Torosyan, Minister of Health; A. Janjughazyan, Minister of Finance; H. Marutyan, Mayor of Yerevan; R. Martirosyan, President of National Academy of Sciences; V. Terteryan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Management and Infrastructure; V. Movsisyan, Deputy Police Chief of Armenia; Bishop Hovnan Hakobyan, Grand Sacristan of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin; A. Iskanakaryan, Director of the Special Services for the Population; H. Marutyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum; and G. Sarkissian, President of the Zoryan Institute (Canada)." Dadrian was the Director of Genocide Research at Zoryan.

After the Embassy of Armenia in the United States transferred Prof. Dadrian's ashes to Armenia, a Memorial Service was held on August 31, 2019, at the National Academy of Sciences, of which Dadrian was a member. The Service was attended by the State Commission members, as well as Ararat Mirzoyan, then Speaker of the Parliament, Dadrian's 90-year-old sister, and other dignitaries and academicians. Prof. Dadrian's ashes were interred at the Tokhmakh Cemetery in Yerevan.

Recently, when Maggie Mangassarian Goschin, director of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills, California, wanted to include a photo of Dadrian's grave in her museum where Dadrian's archives are stored, no one could locate Dadrian's grave. After a lengthy search, Baghdig Kouyoumdjian of Paris and Hrair Hawk Khatcherian of Canada finally found Dadrian's unmarked grave. It turned out that after three years of his burial, the State Commission did not have the courtesy of placing on Dadrian's grave a tombstone or even a plaque indicating his name. The grave was shockingly covered with weeds and garbage. The two gentlemen placed a temporary plaque on Dadrian's grave and cleared

the weeds. This is the horrible treatment that this eminent scholar received in his homeland after his death.

Prof. Taner Akcam, a well-known scholar of the Armenian Genocide and Director of UCLA's Armenian Genocide Research Program, was the first to sound the alarm on his Facebook page about the deplorable neglect of Dadrian's grave. It is ironic that an individual of Turkish origin is more concerned about the despicable treatment of Dadrian's grave than the Armenian government. Dadrian was Akcam's mentor and collaborator on Genocide research. Akcam wrote on his Facebook page: "Dadrian does not deserve this. It is unacceptable and an immense shame that the grave of the founder of modern Armenian Genocide research is neglected and forgotten."

In response to Prof. Akcam's justified outrage, Mari Hovhannisyan, program coordinator of the Zoryan Institute (Armenia), issued a statement titled, "Tempest in a teacup." She gave the excuse that the delay was "due to COVID-19 and the 2020 Artsakh War, Armenia was burying several thousand of its brightest sons and daughters, tragically lost due to both of these crises, each requiring their own appropriate tombstones." This is an unacceptable excuse. Dadrian was buried seven months before COVID-19 affected Armenia and more than a year before the Artsakh War. That's plenty of time to place a tombstone or at least a plaque on Dadrian's grave, not to mention that almost two years have passed since the 2020 war and COVID-19 is no longer prevalent in Armenia. Furthermore, since Dadrian's death, other individuals have been buried in nearby graves and they have a tombstone!

More troubling are the attempts to cover up this scandal. Zoryan's Hovhannisyan wrote on her Facebook page: "We kindly request those who have raised this issue publicly to refrain from spreading unchecked information and making unnecessary comments, which can only lead to tempest in the teacup." Vahan Hunanyan, spokesperson of the Armenian Foreign Ministry, and Harutyun Marutyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan, issued similar meaningless excuses. This is the usual behavior of those who want to cover up their embarrassing mistakes. It would have been more appropriate to issue an apology and take immediate steps to place a tombstone on Dadrian's grave.

If the State Commission members, appointed by Prime Minister Pashinyan, could not arrange to place a tombstone on the grave of a highly-respected Armenian scholar in three years, they should have been reprimanded by Pashinyan for their negligence and incompetence. This is a national scandal. It is also a regrettable indication that if Armenian officials cannot place a tombstone on a grave, how can Armenians trust their government to run a country with so many serious problems?

Finally, Prof. Dadrian's grave should not have been placed in the Tokhmakh Cemetery. It would have been more appropriate to place the urn of Dadrian's ashes at the Memorial Wall next to the Genocide Monument or the Komitas Pantheon, alongside other prominent individuals. That is the least the Armenian government could do to rectify its grave error.

Armenian Border Residents Wary Of Opening up to Turkey

By Arshaluis Mgdesyan

Since the 1990s, residents of the Armenian border village of Margara have looked at Turkey only through a barbed wire fence.

Now that there is finally talk of a tentative opening, many here find it hard to believe.

"For 30 years now, we have been constantly hearing rumors, talks about a possible opening of the border with Turkey. I don't believe these rumors," one Margara resident, Armine, told Eurasianet. She showed a visitor her backyard; the garden where she grows tomatoes and other vegetables backs directly on to the border fence. She can even hear the call to prayer from a mosque on the Turkish side.

While locals may be skeptical about the opening, the Armenian and Turkish authorities say it is going to happen, at least on a limited scale. On July 1, the foreign ministries of both countries [announced](#) that they had agreed to open the land border to third-country nationals "at the earliest date possible."

While the two sides have not yet announced any plans to let Armenians and Turks themselves cross the border, that appears to be the goal of the normalization process. And even as they still don't believe it will happen, the announcement has sparked anxiety among residents of Margara about their security, both physical and economic.

"I am against opening the border. Turkey cannot become a good neighbor for us. They cannot be trusted.

They will come up with various ways to deceive us," said Ashot Margaryan, who teaches military preparation at the Margara high school.

There are many things still unknown about what the open border will look like: what sort of visa regime there will be, customs duties on imported products, regulations on buying real estate. But many locals fear the worst.

"We now sleep with the doors of our houses open. After the opening of the border, I am afraid that the Turks will pour in and it will not be safe here," Margaryan told Eurasianet.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this border has been guarded by Russian border troops. They are backed up by Russia's 102nd military base in nearby Gyumri, where roughly 5,000 soldiers serve. One observation tower of the Russian border guards is visible from Armine's home.

"The fact that there are no problems on this border is not due to anything we do but because of Russia, whose soldiers guard our border with Turkey," Margaryan said.

There are rare incidents: Russian border guards [occasionally report](#) that migrants and smugglers try to cross. Those reports are more common in summer, when the Araks River, which forms the boundary, becomes shallower, thicker vegetation makes it easier to hide, and temperatures at night are more amenable to travel. In recent years the border guards have arrested citizens of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Turkey for illegal border crossings.

'Turkey will Kill Our Agriculture'

Some Margara residents support normalization or the opening of the border in principle, but worry about the potential economic impact.

"I am not against the establishment of normal relations with Turkey. Even neighbors who have enmity toward one another eventually begin to establish relations, talk to each other," said one resident, Paruyr Antonyan. But he worries that the tomatoes, cucumbers, and other produce that local farmers grow won't be able to compete with Turkish products.

"Opening the border can have bad consequences, cheap and subsidized Turkish agricultural products will

flood our market and kill our farms," he told Eurasianet. "They have subsidized agriculture. We will not be able to compete."

Customs duties in Armenia are regulated by the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), of which Armenia is a member. Still, some Turkish agricultural products like tomatoes are already competitively priced in Armenia, even with the extra costs that come from transport through Georgia.

Responding to fears of a Turkish takeover, Armenian officials have instead tried to emphasize the positive.

"Perhaps, in a certain segment of the economy, some goods will lose their competitiveness, but this will make you think about what new opportunities will appear after the opening of the border," Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan [said](#) at an online press conference on January 24.

Meanwhile, work is underway to ease the future border crossings. The road leading to Margara has been under repair since June and is being widened, and the bridges along the route are being improved as well.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration, which manages roads in the country, declined to comment to Eurasianet on the construction. But locals say it seems to be connected to the border opening and suggests an anticipation of a large increase in traffic.

"The road was in a deplorable state for a long time. All of a sudden, renovations began. It is clear that the road is being repaired to open the border with Turkey," one resident, who asked his name not to be used, told Eurasianet.

Armenian businesspeople also are scouting out the area for potential opportunities. During a visit to Margara, one man approached a group of people including this correspondent, asking: "Guys, maybe you know people here who are selling houses or land?"

This is a regular occurrence, locals said. "Businesspeople, various entrepreneurs come here often," one resident, Arsen, said. "They all ask the same thing — are the plots of land for sale, especially close to the highway."

That has spurred fears that locals may soon be pushed out of the area.

see BORDER, page 20



Turkey Hopes to Extend Mediation Role in Ukraine War after Grain Deal Success

By Andrew Wilks

ISTANBUL (AI Monitor) — Flushed with the success of the Ukrainian grain shipment deal it helped negotiate, Turkey is hoping to eventually translate its position as a mediator between Kyiv and Moscow into a peace agreement.

Defense Minister Hulusi Akar hosted UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in Istanbul over the weekend. The UN chief was given a tour of the Joint Coordination Center running the shipments of grain and other foodstuffs from Ukraine’s Black Sea ports.

Speaking at a news conference on Saturday, Akar stressed Ankara’s desire to further expand cooperation on grain shipments with the aim to “prepare the ground for a permanent peace environment,” adding that “while these needs are being met,” “we think that we must think about peace.”

His remarks were backed by Guterres, who said he hoped the “extraordinary spirit of commitment” at the center, which is run by officials from the UN, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia, would result in a “complex [and] lengthy process in which we all would like to see peace triumphing.”

The first shipment left Odessa on August 1 under a deal brokered by Turkey and the UN that allows for the export of some 22 million tons of grain held up in Ukrainian silos by the war.

Over the last three weeks, 656,349 tons of agricultural products have left Ukrainian ports on 27 ships, Akar told journalists. Another 24 vessels have been allowed to pass through the Bosphorus to collect cargo from Ukraine. “We anticipate that this number will continue to increase,” he said.

Turkey’s stance following Russia’s invasion in February has caused concern among the countries that imposed sanctions on Moscow. Ankara has close relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

The decision not to join the sanctions regime alarmed Western allies and fears were compounded earlier this month when President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russia’s Vladimir Putin pledged to expand cooperation on trade and energy.

Washington has also warned that Russians are trying to use Turkey to evade sanctions, a message that was reinforced by US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo in a phone call with Turkish Deputy Finance

Minister Yunus Elitas over the weekend.

Despite these issues, Turkey feels its position has been vindicated by the success of the grain shipments. During a visit to Lviv by Erdogan and Guterres last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised Turkish support for his country. “The visit of the president of Turkey to Ukraine is a powerful message of support from such a powerful country,” he said.

Erdogan, meanwhile, said Turkey would continue diplomatic efforts to end the fighting. “While continuing our efforts to find a solution, we remain on the side of our Ukraine friends,” he added.

Turkey’s role as a mediator in international affairs can be traced back more than a decade, according to Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, director of the German Marshall Fund in Ankara. It brokered indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel in 2008 but a deal was scuttled by Israel’s invasion of Gaza. Ankara, which has a history of military cooperation with Israel, had previously acted as an intermediary between the Jewish state and the Arab world.

“Even before this war started, the Turkish Foreign Ministry had a vision of Turkey

establishing itself as a mediating state in the world,” Unluhisarcikli said. “When this war started, Turkey’s policy was defined as mediation and that was in line with the expectation of the Turkish people. It also serves Turkey’s policy of trying to remain neutral in wars in which it is not one of the belligerent parties and serves its balanced approach. That has been Turkey’s overarching policy in the Russia-Ukraine war.”

This policy saw Turkey host talks between Russia and Ukraine. In March, their respective foreign ministers met in the Mediterranean city of Antalya, followed by talks between officials in Istanbul at the end of the month.

Although neither meeting produced any concrete steps, the July 22 grain agreement shows Turkey’s persistence can pay off.

“The grain deal is a successful mediation effort by Turkey and the UN,” Unluhisarcikli said. “It is only natural that Turkey would like to build on this. It may not be soon but once the conditions are right for negotiations for peace, I think Turkey is one of the likely places where the parties will meet.”

While a conclusion to the war seems a distant hope, Turkey’s role as a middleman could be extended to other areas of the conflict.

“In the intermediate period there could be other talks on prisoner exchanges, on the conduct of the fighting, for example, where Turkey provides a platform,” Unluhisarcikli added.

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Armenian Border Residents Wary of Opening up to Turkey

BORDER, from page 19

“We are afraid of the Turkification of our village and the emigration of our fellow villagers from here after the opening of the border,” said another Margara resident who asked not to be identified. “Now my house costs 15-20 thousand dollars. If after the opening of the border, Turkish businessmen come and offer me or others 10-15 times the current value, what then? Many will sell their houses and leave the village and Turks will settle here.”

Historical legacy

Hanging over the question of the border opening is the fraught history between the two sides, above all the 1915 genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The two countries opened the border shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but Turkey closed it again in 1993 in support of its ally Azerbaijan in the first war over Karabakh.

There have been unsuccessful attempts to restore relations since then, the latest one beginning last year following Azerbaijan’s victory in the second Karabakh war. Special envoys from the two sides began meeting one-on-one in January.

The agreement to partially open the border, along with a promise to restart direct air cargo transit between the two countries, was the first concrete result of the process.

The timeline of the border opening remains unclear. While many expected it to happen in August, it now appears to have been pushed back. “We think it would be logical for this process to bring first results within the next few months,” Armenia’s Foreign Ministry told Eurasianet.

(Arshaluis Mgdesyan is a journalist based in Yerevan. This article originally appeared on the website www.eurasinet.org on August 19.)