

Center for Truth and Justice Makes Armenia’s Case Against Azerbaijan At United Nations

By Harry Kezelian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ANN ARBOR, MI — Since the autumn of 2020, the effects of the 44-Day War and its aftermath have reverberated throughout the Armenian world.

While locals in Armenia were concerned with the direct threat of Azerbaijani aggression, Diasporan Armenians wondered what they could do to help. A non-profit organization, the Center for Truth and Justice (CFTJ) was founded by a group of Southern California lawyers who gathered to focus on something they do best: collecting evidence.

This past month, August 2022, an authoritative United Nations committee in Geneva gave the CFTJ and other non-governmental organizations a chance to make their case for Azerbaijan’s violation of a major human rights treaty which both Azerbaijan and Armenia are a party to. This hearing could have a huge effect on the outcome of the pending Armenia v. Azerbaijan case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is the first ICJ case in history of which Armenia is a party.

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Diaspora Minister Sinanyan Wants to Connect Armenia And Diaspora

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — The Republic of Armenia’s first High Commissioner for Diaspora Zareh Sinanyan has one great advantage: he understands both the diaspora and Armenia, the two entities (which along with Artsakh) make up the Armenian nation. He was born in Armenia in 1973 and grew up in California, where his parents immigrated in 1988.

A lawyer by training, he was very active politically, serving on the Glendale City Council for several terms before becoming mayor.

Despite his success in his new country, he and his wife and four children moved to Armenia in 2019, and he assumed this new position in the government.

He is now in a position that at once is extremely difficult, but at a point in the country when many more are moving to Armenia from the diaspora. He spoke recently about the challenges the country faces as well as the summit his office is organizing for later this fall. (This interview was conducted a week before the latest Azerbaijani attacks.)

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Pelosi Visit Shakes Up Region

Thrills Armenia’s Leadership

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi led a high-powered delegation to Yerevan on September 17, stunning friends and foes alike, and giving a lift to the besieged Armenian nation suffering from attacks by Azerbaijan on September 12 and 13, which resulted in at least 135 deaths.

Pelosi, who was accompanied by Armenian-American members of the House of Representatives Anna Eshoo and Jackie Speier, both Democrats of California, and Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), blamed Azerbaijan for the latest outbreak of fighting with Armenia, as she made a high-profile trip to Yerevan in a public show of support.

Pelosi is the highest-ranking US official to travel to Armenia since the country gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Asked at a Yerevan news conference about the latest spasm of fighting, which erupted last week, Pelosi said her trip had particular significance following the “illegal and deadly attacks by Azerbaijan” on Armenia.



Prime Minister Pashinyan presents a bouquet to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

“We strongly condemn those attacks,” Pelosi said, adding that the border fighting was triggered by Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia.

“As for what Armenia expects [from the United States], we expect active support for [our] democracy, sovereignty, and territorial integrity in all possible directions,” Alen Simonyan, the speaker of Armenia’s

parliament, said at the news conference.

On her last day in Armenia, on September 19, her office released the following statement:

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The official launch ceremony on July 7 for the November convention

Future Armenian Initiative Prepares First Pan-Armenian Citizens’ Assembly

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — During times of crisis, Armenians frequently call for unity as a people and a nation, and during the current era of Armenian independence a number of different fora had been created by various organizations and bodies, including the Armenian government, to bring together Armenian representatives of organizations or regions throughout the world. What has never been attempted is

a citizens’ assembly, a body composed of randomly selected Armenians to study and reach recommendations on important but potentially divisive issues. They often are convened by governments, but in this case, it is the Future Armenian Initiative, cofounded by Noubar Afeyan, Artur Alaverdyan, Richard Azarnia, Aram Bekchian, David Tavadian and Ruben Vardanyan in 2021, which is preparing one for Armenians throughout the world to be held this November in Yerevan.

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Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Condemns The New Azerbaijani Attack on Armenia

We join our voice to that of all peace-loving people to condemn the September 13 Azerbaijani attack targeting the regions of Sotk, Jermuk, Kapan and Vardenis, all within the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, which resulted in at least 49 deaths and many wounded.

It is the duty of every Armenian in the world to reflect on this alarming situation and to raise his voice of protest.

It is also the duty of the Armenian authorities to powerfully protest in the appropriate quarters, and even more so to counter the press and media campaign unleashed by Azerbaijan and Turkey and disseminate the voice of justice.



Azerbaijan is negotiating with Armenia under the pretense of signing a peace treaty. With these attacks, it is trying to impose its own conditions, which compromise Armenia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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Foreign Diplomats Visit War-Hit Armenian Town



FRANCE
Armenians of Paris Demonstrate Against Azerbaijan’s Aggression



CALIFORNIA
‘Gate to Heaven’ To Be Released In US in October





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NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenian Emergency Services Ordered on High Alert Due to Border Tension

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of Emergency Situations Armen Pambukhchyan ordered the Rescue Service Department of the Gegharkunik, Syunik and Vayots Dzor provinces on high alert on September 20 due to the tension on the border in order to rapidly respond in case of necessity. Minister Pambukhchyan is visiting the epicenter of events.

Armenia Adds 2,142 New Covid Cases in One Week

YEREVAN (panorama.am) — Armenia confirmed 2,142 new coronavirus infections over the past one week, bringing the national tally to 441,444 as of 11 a.m., Monday, September 19, according to data released by the Ministry of Health.

A total of 6,486 tests were administered from September 12-18, and 2,528 more patients have recovered from the disease, with the total number of recoveries now standing at 428,059.

Ten new Covid-19 deaths have been recorded in the country, taking the official death toll to 8,679. The figure does not include the deaths of 1,684 other people carrying the virus. According to the health authorities, they were caused by other diseases.

Armenia now has 3,014 active cases. As many as 3,205,438 tests have been performed in the country since the disease outbreak.

Brian May Tweets in Support of Armenia, Against Azerbaijani Aggression

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Legendary Queen guitarist Brian May took to Instagram on Sunday, September 18, to raise awareness of the latest Azerbaijani military aggression against Armenia.

“I’m breaking my silence here because another tragedy seems to be unfolding, and there is a danger, as always these days, that the media will not report it truthfully. Armenia is a tiny country, lacking any oil or gas or substantial wealth, an island of Christianity and democracy surrounded on all sides by despotic dictatorships. It is one of the most peaceful countries in the world, with a profound embedded sadness because of its tragic history — during the first World War 1.2 million Armenians were murdered by the Ottoman Empire, in a brutal ethnic cleansing operation still denied by Turkey,” the musician wrote on Instagram.

“Today Armenia is again threatened, by a conspiracy to wipe it from the face of the Earth. Just two days ago, peaceful villages on the Armenian border were shelled by Azerbaijan in an offensive to terrorize and destabilize the Armenian people. Against an unholy alliance of three ruthless dictatorships, Armenia is all but defenseless, and needs the full support of the West to survive,” he said.

Pelosi Visit Shakes Up Region

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“Our Congressional delegation traveled to Armenia, an important front in the battle between democracy and autocracy. Throughout our engagements in Yerevan, the capital, we conveyed a strong message of support for Armenia’s democracy and security, particularly following Azerbaijan’s offensive against Armenia. Our visit was planned before the September 12th initiation of hostilities.

“Members of the House Armenian Caucus Chairs Frank Pallone, Anna Eshoo, and Jackie Speier, and I began our visit by laying a wreath at the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial. There, we prayed for the 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children murdered in the genocide. Congress is committed to ensuring that the truth of the genocide is never erased — which is why, in 2019, we passed legislation to formally acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, which President Biden echoed with his official recognition last year. It was a privilege to be awarded the Ambassador Henry Morgenthau medal from the Genocide Museum-Institute, which I accepted on behalf of the Congress for our work to recognize and raise awareness on the Armenian Genocide.

“Our delegation was honored to meet with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other high-level government leaders, including Speaker of the National Assembly Alen Simonyan and Defense Minister Suren Papikyan. These engagements provided for an exchange of ideas on policies and actions to advance stability, peace, and prosperity in Armenia and the region.

“Important to our visit, our delegation then held a roundtable with civil society leaders, who expressed the concerns and needs of their people during this difficult time and shed their light on Armenia’s battle for its democracy and security. It was my honor to address those leaders in a speech at the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, a crown jewel of Armenian culture, where I delivered a clear message of America’s commitment



Speaker Nancy Pelosi with the US delegation at a reception at the Cafesjian Center

On September 18, the delegation visited Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

In his welcoming remarks, he stressed, “Mrs. Speaker, dear colleagues, let me warmly welcome you in our country, in our government. This is really an unprecedented

Armenian democracy, as this is also very important for us.

“We see the readiness of the US government to support the democratic agenda in our country. I want to express our dedication to the agenda of democratic reforms, despite the fact that, as you see, it’s not an easy path,” he said.

Pashinyan thanked the US government for not equivocating on blame when it came to the latest attacks. He also expressed his hope that the UN Security Council would be of help.

In her turn, Pelosi said: “Thank you very much Mr. Prime Minister for the warm words of welcome and for appreciating the significant work done by my colleagues, who are members of this delegation. The support to democracy in Armenia, the resolution on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, countering Turkey over the Nagorno Karabakh issue, and in all other terms, we are the friend of Armenia. We are here by respecting your government.

“Elections were held last year which were assessed as free and fair, and your wonderful victory in the conditions of war and other circumstances. And the thing is that when we travel to any country, it has a purpose of showing respect, listening and learning, but I can say frankly that this delegation which came from the United States to Armenia has brought with it the love and the respect of the American people to your government and the love to the people of Armenia. Thank you for this hospitality.”

The sides, then, discussed a broad range of issues relating to the Armenian-American partnership and the further development of cooperation in different directions.

Pashinyan said that the government of Armenia will continue the consistent steps to strengthen democracy and develop dem-



Upon her arrival, Speaker Pelosi and her delegation were met by US Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy

to Armenia. Later, we met with opposition leaders serving in the National Assembly. While there are disagreements about domestic policy, there was clear agreement among these leaders that Azerbaijan must immediately stop its aggression.

“Further informed and inspired by the reception that we received, our delegation returns to Washington proud and ready to advance the Congress’s longstanding commitment to a democratic Armenia and a secure, peaceful Caucasus region.”

Meeting Pashinyan

visit by the United States to Armenia, and we appreciate that. I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mrs. Speaker, for your personal efforts and contribution to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the United States, as well as for the efforts of your delegation.

“This is really highly appreciated, and even taking into account this fact only, all Armenians consider you as Armenia’s reliable friend. But I want to continue my words of gratitude because I also want to express gratitude for the US support to the



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ocratic institutions.

Pashinyan and Pelosi also discussed the recent aggression of Azerbaijan against Armenia's sovereign territory and issues relating to the withdrawal of the Azerbaijani units from Armenia's territory.

Warm Greeting

Crowds lined the streets of Yerevan hours before Pelosi's fleet of seven slick black cars pulled into the center of the Armenian capital on Sunday.

Waving American flags, thousands of people turned out to catch a glimpse of the speaker of the House of Representatives as she paid a historic visit to the Caucasian nation, becoming the highest-ranking U.S. official to do so since it gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Those US flags carried a significant political message about the country's political allegiances. For years, Armenia chose to be a key strategic ally of the Kremlin, but many are now increasingly questioning whether Moscow can act as guarantor of the nation's security against the superior firepower of neighboring Azerbaijan, which launched a massive artillery bombardment on Tuesday. Since then 135 Armenians and 77 Azeris have died in a conflict that looks at risk of breaking through a fragile ceasefire.

With Russian President Vladimir Putin mired in a war that is rapidly turning against him in Ukraine, Yerevan is finding that its appeals for help from a Moscow-led security grouping, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, are falling on deaf ears. That's a pivotal strategic problem as the enemy in Azerbaijan is lavishly supported

global struggle against tyranny and oppression.

Armenia has consistently been ranked as one of the freest nations in the region, with higher levels of human rights and press freedoms than many other parts of the former Soviet Union. Azerbaijan, meanwhile, has been governed by a father and son presidential dynasty for almost three decades, and has frequently come under fire from international organizations for cracking down on civil liberties and jailing dissenting journalists.

In terms of regional security alliances, the geopolitical situation is complex. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia has been a close ally of Moscow in the CSTO, which includes largely authoritarian former

more, the Russian peacekeeping mission has failed to prevent Azerbaijani troops pushing forward in Nagorno-Karabakh in recent months, making many Armenians skeptical about the decision to depend on the Kremlin.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has forged a close partnership with NATO member Turkey, receiving large shipments of advanced weapons from Ankara that have given it a considerable edge over its neighbor, which pulled out of the CSTO itself in 1999.

Only compounding Armenia's concerns, the EU is also courting Azerbaijan as it is looking to tap into Baku's vast oil and gas reserves to help replace Russian fossil fuels. In July, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed a deal with

makers said on Monday, September 19, after meeting with US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The US Congress had banned all kinds of direct assistance to Baku through Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act passed in 1992. But a decade later it allowed US administrations to waive the ban to help Azerbaijan's military and security agencies cope with terrorist threats.

As did his predecessors, President Joe Biden waived Section 907 in April 2021 over the strong objections of the Armenian community in the US

Armenian-American leaders renewed their calls for the Biden administration to freeze military aid to Baku after the outbreak of the large-scale border clashes be-



Speaker Nancy Pelosi, flanked by, from left, Representatives Anna Eshoo, Frank Pallone and Jackie Speier and Armenia's Ambassador to the US Lilit Makunts, and at her right, Armenia's Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan at Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial



Communist states such as Belarus and Kazakhstan. Yerevan also maintains strong economic and political ties with Iran, another country locked into hostile relations

strongman President Ilham Aliyev under which Azerbaijan should provide the bloc with an annual 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas by 2027, describing the country as a "crucial energy partner for us."

Pelosi's condemnation of the Azerbaijani attack, naturally, received a less than warm welcome in Baku, which insists Azerbaijan is only responding to coming under fire from Armenian territory. "Groundless and unfair accusations against Azerbaijan are unacceptable," Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Leyla Abdullayeva tweeted following the speech. "Such statements serve not to strengthen fragile peace in the region, but rather to escalate tension."

While Armenia is becoming more hostile to the Kremlin, Baku seems to be drawing closer to it. Just two days before Russia's full-blown invasion of Ukraine in February, Aliyev met with Vladimir Putin, signing off on a comprehensive agreement that they said "brings our relations to the level of an alliance."

As the US House Speaker tours Yerevan, her Russian counterpart, parliamentary speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, is preparing to take a trip to Azerbaijan this month as part of a new diplomatic offensive.

Even more concerning for Armenians still holding out hope for Russian support in the conflict, pictures published from a summit of Eurasian leaders in Uzbekistan on Friday showed Putin relaxing and laughing in talks with Aliyev, along with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Military Aid to Azerbaijan

The United States will likely stop providing military aid to Azerbaijan in response to last week's fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Armenian opposition law-

tween Armenian and Azerbaijani forces late on September 12.

Lawmakers representing Armenia's two main opposition groups echoed those appeals when they met with Pelosi late on Sunday at the end of her visit to Yerevan. They sounded upbeat on that score after the meeting.

"I got an overall sense that there is a [US] resolve to stop military aid to Azerbaijan in the next fiscal year," said Anna Grigoryan of the Hayastan alliance. "We basically got that message."

Pelosi did not comment on the possibility of such a measure when she spoke at a news conference earlier on Sunday. But she did accuse Azerbaijan of launching "illegal and deadly attacks on the Armenian territory." She indicated that the House of Representatives will also condemn Baku soon in a resolution already drafted by some of its pro-Armenian members.

"The US must halt all assistance to Azerbaijan - immediately and permanently," one of those lawmakers, Adam Schiff, tweeted on September 13.

The House of Representatives already voted in July 2021 to block any aid that can be provided under Washington's Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training programs. But it did not bar the US Department of Defense from continuing to transfer military equipment to Azerbaijan.

The administration of former President Donald Trump significantly increased the security aid to Baku, reportedly providing over \$100 million worth of equipment and other assistance to Azerbaijan's State Border Guard Service in 2018-2019 alone.

(Azatutyan, Armenpress and Politico contributed to this report.)

by Turkey, a regional military heavyweight that Yerevan associates with the genocide of the Armenian people during World War I.

The thousands who took to the streets of Yerevan, close to where the US delegation was holding meetings, demanded their country withdraw from that Russian-led military partnership. Billboards featuring Putin were torn down, crowds chanted Pelosi's name, and demonstrators held up signs reading "CSTO [Collective Security Treaty Organization] go screw yourself."

"All my life we have been a Russian colony," said Anna, a protestor who brought her seven-year-old daughter to the rally. "It's time for us to try something else."

Another demonstrator angrily confronted a Russian journalist after spotting his nationality printed on a press card. "Why are you here? Why don't you go back to Russia and report on what is going on there?" she demanded. "You are occupiers!"

Pelosi has established a reputation for jetting into hotspots in recent years — and has visited both Kyiv and Taipei this year.

The stakes between Armenia and Azerbaijan could hardly be higher. The clashes are the most serious escalation since the two countries fought a brief but bloody war in 2020 over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, inside Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized borders but held by Armenian separatists.

Ahead of the trip, Pelosi also likened Armenia's situation to that in Ukraine and Taiwan, portraying the conflict as part of a

with the West.

When offered the prospect of closer trade ties with the EU — a move that Ukraine seized, massively ramping up tensions with Putin — Yerevan instead decided to spurn Brussels in 2013 to put itself squarely in the Russian economic orbit.

On the Defensive

Choosing the Russians has hardly paid dividends, and Armenia is now on the back foot when it comes to who holds hard power in the region.

After a string of defeats during the 2020 war, Armenia had to cede swathes of territory in Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan. A Kremlin-brokered peace deal saw thousands of Russian peacekeepers deployed to the breakaway region to prevent further offensives and protect the remaining 100,000 ethnic Armenians living there.

Citing its obligation to protect its members against invasion, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has called on the CSTO to provide "military aid for restoring the territorial integrity of the country." In 2020, the alliance refused to send support to Armenia, arguing that the fighting was only playing out on Azerbaijani territory. With the conflict now raging on both sides of the border, Pashinyan argues there is a clear-cut case for intervention.

The response from Moscow, though, has been muted. Russia has only agreed to send a factfinding mission, while Kazakhstan effectively ruled out deploying troops. What's



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Future Armenian Initiative Prepares First Pan-Armenian Citizens' Assembly

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Background

Artak Apitonian, until June 2021 a deputy foreign minister of the Republic of Armenia, and a career diplomat for some thirty years who has served previously in various countries, became the first executive director of the Future Armenian Development Foundation in February 2022. The foundation was created to further the Future Armenian Initiative, he explained, which was launched in 2021.

Apitonian said that after leaving the Armenian diplomatic service, “Frankly, the most important thing for me was to make a difference, to do something to overcome the polarization in society and try to bring people together, especially those who want to bring forth change in Armenia. In that sense, it [Future Armenian] was quite harmonious with my values, the values that I have been preaching for almost all my diplomatic career.”

The idea came forth as a result of prior efforts undertaken by a number of the cofounders. Vardanyan and Afeyan launched a program called Armenia 2020 in 2002-2003, which presented various scenarios for Armenia’s development until the year 2020 to the Armenian government as well as to Armenian society and attempted to bring together accomplished Armenians from around the world.

“Unfortunately,” Apitonian explained, “this exercise, although it was very, very rich in content and verified by various experts, not only Armenians but famous international experts, and brought up from the experiences of various countries, just stayed there. It was not taken up by the then government. It was not widespread in public [discussions] and it stayed on paper.”

In January 2017, Vardanyan and Nuné Alekanyan began working on the manuscript of a similar discussion of developmental models and issues facing Armenia in what was called the Armenia at the Crossroads project. They made an effort to obtain comments and discussion from hundreds of Armenians around the world through focus groups and online means.

This in turn led in 2020 to the renewal of the Armenia 2020 project as Armenia 2041. Vardanyan and Afeyan established it as a foundation which works “to strengthen Armenia and [the] Armenian Global Nation” (<https://armenia2041.org/about-us/>) “into a prosperous and progressive state,” according to its website. Arman Jilavian served as its director. The Covid pandemic and the Artsakh war in the autumn of 2020 interfered with its progress, and the cofounders changed their approach, Apitonian said, turning it into the Future Armenian initiative. The post-war environment in Armenia made them feel the need for a common dialogue and agenda for the Armenian people had become even more acute, he emphasized. “Healing and thinking about the future should go hand in hand, as there can be no healing without clear vision,” he said.

Apitonian pointed out, “There is a lot of mistrust in our society, both in Armenia and the diaspora. There is a lot of isolation. A lot of people are self-isolated. We need to bring back the activity and involvement of the people and reactivate the citizens. This can only be built on trust... We want to do this through action, not just by claiming it but by showing it... It would be very naïve to think that by one convention we

can change the culture, but we need to start somewhere. It might be a long journey, but we need to go that way and stay consistent.”

Goals, Cofounders and Staff

Many of the ideas of the Crossroads project were used last spring and summer to fashion a set of 15 pan-national goals for Armenians, Apitonian continued. The 15 goals are, in brief, Vision Setting, Assured Sovereignty, Historic Responsibility, Free Artsakh, Armenia-Diaspora Unity, Strong Diaspora, Strong Alliances, Exponential Growth, Growing Population, Excellence in Education, Preeminence of

Tatev created a new standard and revived its region through tourism, and Ameria brought new technologies and banking culture to Armenia, “the Future Armenian is also a new standard, a standard which was developed mostly in developed democratic countries. It is a model of participatory democracy, successfully used in France, Canada, Germany, Scotland and Ireland, and also on a global scale at the UN on climate issues. So this is the best model for the activation of citizens, overcoming their polarization in society, and creating a roundtable for discussion on various ideas, and reaching conclusions.”

Apitonian noted that no matter the coun-

state any figures because they might still change or grow along with the structure. As a foundation, in any case, the Future Armenian will have to provide reports annually.

How It Works:

Expert Committees and Convention

The citizen’s assembly which the Future Armenian Initiative wishes to institute is not an organization but a type of public forum and process. The participants are not elected and there are no political parties. Every Armenian, whether from Armenia, Artsakh or the diaspora, has the right to register. Minorities living in Armenia can also register.

As part of the initial stage of this process, some 110,000 Armenians throughout the world have become signatories online, agreeing theoretically to focus on 15 pan-national goals. Apitonian said that this number is enough to continue to the next stage. He said, “The main thing is not only to have a large number of supporters or signatories but to have change on the societal level. Signing the initiative itself doesn’t mean we necessarily will have change on the societal level. We need to work together, comment and discuss things and come up with solutions together. This is a very important culture which unfortunately we are missing as a nation.”

This number incidentally already probably is one of the largest for such online lists. Apitonian thought perhaps there were more only for some actions concerning the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015.

The next stage is for the signatories, or anyone else, to register for possible participation in the citizens’ assembly, which in this case is called the Convention of the Future Armenian, which is planned for November 11-13 of this year in Yerevan. The larger the registration base, the more effective will be the social selection process and the legitimacy of the assembly. In other countries, such as in France, governments



Artak Apitonian

Science, Technology and Creativity, Good Governance, Just Society and Reduced Inequalities, Preserved Heritage and Evidence-Based Decision-Making.

In addition to Vardanyan and Afeyan, the four other cofounders contributed their input, along with five additional active participants. The six cofounders, who are businessmen and philanthropists, are the ones who today continue to finance the ongoing project. The cofounders are from various countries and cultures. Apitonian said, “These various cultures bring richness to our options. Seeing the same issue from various angles provides the grounds for bringing the best possible solutions to problems. Actually this richness is one of the main assets of our nation, including the possibility to talk to various countries and their leaders.”

Vardanyan and Afeyan have many other ongoing business and philanthropic ventures in Armenia, such as the IdeA Foundation (Initiatives for the Development of Armenia), Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, United World Colleges Dilijan College, Revival of Tatev Project, Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology, and AmeriaBank. Apitonian said, “They are all part of a big ecosystem. We work closely together and we harmonize our activities, but we are separate programs led by different people. We are all very much in harmony with each other because we are doing the same job: It is about developing Armenia and the Armenian world, bringing the best expertise and experience to Armenia, and then creating more opportunities for the local population to develop and grow and stay in Armenia.”

He said that just as the Dilijan School brought the best standards to Armenia for education and local area development,

try of their upbringings, the Future Armenian board members are all devoted to the democratic process and a belief in democracy. He said, “We need to develop our democratic system because I don’t think Armenians can live in any other system.” This is the only way to choose the best people for the best positions in government and reach the best solutions, he continued.



Cofounder Ruben Vardanyan, second from left, at the Artsakh Forum

The board members created a staff for the Future Armenian Development Foundation, starting with Apitonian. Apitonian said that currently he has 9 full-time and 3 part-time staff working with him. A number of them are also previous colleagues of Apitonian with diplomacy or UN background.

The organizational budget and program budget will be published eventually, but at present Apitonian said he didn’t want to

were involved and it was possible to use census data to do the random selection. In the Armenian case, the Future Armenian initiative is not a government and might not be allowed use of this data, Apitonian said. Secondly, this data does not even exist for the Armenian diaspora. This is why registration is necessary for the Armenian process, he concluded.

Several thousand people have already registered. There is no specific target nu-



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merically for the registration process, Apitonian said, but there needs to be sufficient numbers of every category. For example, if there are 10,000 registered and 7,000 are all from Yerevan, that would not be suitable.

Participants in the assembly will be selected through a public computerized draw from those who have registered utilizing various quotas which take into account factors such as the countries people live in and their rural or urban settings, age, gender and education. Basically, Apitonian said, “It is a kind of miniature of the nation in one room.” For example, if one third of Armenians live in Yerevan, one third of the participants chosen must come from there. If 1/10 of Armenians are from Shirak Province, 1/10 of the participants must be from there. The participants do not represent any constituency per se, but only represent themselves. If chosen properly, however, it can be claimed that they represent Armenians as a whole.

Apitonian said that a group of IT companies has already been set up to work on this process, which will be done with transparency, and 200 people will be chosen, half from Armenia and half from the diaspora, to physically participate in the convention. When asked if this was a sufficient number, he gave the example of the assembly in France to overcome societal polarization after the Yellow Vest movement. Only 150 French were chosen to represent the entire French population of over 65 million, so Apitonian said that 200 should be quite enough. In addition, there will be experts present, and observers from various organizations.

In order to allow participation by Armenians from varied economic backgrounds

were selected by the online signatories to the 15 goals in an opinion poll, Apitonian said, and three corresponding committees of experts to prepare background papers with potential scenarios and recommendations for the conventioners have been created. The Future Armenian staff (and presumably cofounders) first cast around for the names that are most widely known on these topics, and then asked these people for their own recommendations of experts.

The first committee, on Armenia-diaspora unity, began its deliberations on August 31, led by journalist and editor of *Aravot* daily Aram Abrahamyan. The committee on historical responsibility started the next day, led by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate of the Armenian Church in Western Europe and Representative of the Armenian Church to the Holy See, while the committee on population growth, led by Armine Hovannisian, executive director of Junior Achievement of Armenia and founder and chair of the board of Oran, began on September 7.

At the convention, Apitonian said, “The citizens will test this expertise through public discussion” and give their own opinions. Apitonian said that most likely other in person and online conventions will take place later to address the remaining goals.

Implementation Phase

After the convention and public discussions comes a third phase of the process. Apitonian said in this phase, the Future Armenian group “would start our efforts to bring together all the organizations which want to be part of the implementation [of the recommendations of the convention] and start talking with the government, since the government has an important say in the implementation part. We need to harmonize our activities, share information, and see all possible lacuna which we can identify, and then we need to act to fill those lacuna.”

What the Future Armenian calls affiliation networks will be created in this stage (in Armenian *hamakordzagt-sutean tsantser*) with various organizations. Apitonian said, “These are very loose but large alliances of various organizations and individuals. We might even bring in some foreign partners or organizations for certain goals, such as international organizations working in Armenia. From one goal to another the participants will change and the structure might change.”

Apitonian noted that Aurora or other bodies in the Afeyan-Vardanyan ecosystem might participate in their own names in these networks.

Discussions have not begun yet with the Armenian government, he said, but there was some government participation in the expert committees already, in a pilot forum in Artsakh over the summer, and in the July 7, 2022 public announcement of the Future Armenian process at the Matenadaran (the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) in Yerevan. He said, “It is a good sign that they are ready to go forward.”

When asked what would happen if the government did not in fact participate, he said that there were still a number of projects that could be implemented without government involvement, such as educational or economic ones, public movements, and various ideas for the diaspora. Government participation would however

lead to more results and strong performance, he said.

Apitonian stressed that “When we establish this network, we are not going to be the leader. We set the table for everybody to come around. It would be led by the participants themselves. We are going to organize and bring people together but then these people will choose this or that leader among themselves.”

Furthermore, while the Future Armenian initiative welcomes taking others’ experiences, “Everything produced within the Future Armenian stays in the public domain. Everybody can use it. We have no intellectual ownership of it. All our documents, recommendations, scenarios and outcomes are public domain.”

Political Implications

Apitonian declared, “We are not trying to politicize this process. We want to depoliticize the process of public discussion, public decision making and public implementation of the process.” When asked whether

ulation, housing and work for everyone, definite social guarantees for large families, and a strong system of education and advocacy.

Apitonian noted that the forum participants were chosen because they were all stakeholders in the issues discussed, but in addition, due to security concerns, it would have been difficult to have any participation from diasporans. Four demography experts did come from Yerevan to provide their expertise.

The third step of the process in Artsakh is the realization of the projects that were adopted as the top rated at the forum. The Future Armenian Initiative will present them to relevant state bodies, Armenian organizations and institutions, and Armenian business circles both in Armenia and abroad. Apitonian said that in Artsakh the forum had the full support of the government, the opposition and the public. That meant, he concluded, that there would be support from the government in implementation as well as by other institutions, in-



Cofounder Artur Alaverdyan, center, at the Artsakh Forum



Cofounder Noubar Afeyan at the official launch ceremony on July 7 for the convention

and geographic locations, Apitonian said that travel and lodging expenses for all 200 participants would be borne by the Future Armenian Foundation. This would allow ordinary Armenians from distant locations like Buenos Aires to buy a ticket, fly half-way around the world, find lodging in Armenia and participate in a three day convention, and then fly back home. Sponsors will be found both inside and outside the foundation, he said. Those who have sufficient funds and do not need this support could donate the money back for various projects and programs.

Those who register and are not chosen for the physical convention, will still have the opportunity to follow live transmissions from Yerevan. They also could participate in an online format, Apitonian said, through which documents would be shared and discussions moderated.

Of the 15 goals, only three will be discussed at the November convention: Armenia-diaspora unity, historic responsibility and population growth. These three

the current regime might fear that Future Armenian Initiative could turn into a vehicle for attaining political power eventually, especially given the repeated reports in the Armenian press that cofounder Ruben Vardanyan wants to become prime minister, which Vardanyan later refuted, Apitonian said he shared the same concern that there could be such assumptions.

However, he said, “One thing this movement wants is to overcome this mistrust – and there is clearly great mistrust. These suspicions and mistrust are like worms eating away at all possible things.”

He said that sometimes the pie is so small that there is not even anything to share, yet Armenians still accept mistrust and trying to blame one another. Armenians instead need to make their pie, their country, economy and opportunities bigger, so that there is room for error. It requires generational change, he said, and the answer is openness, transparency and inclusiveness.

Artsakh Pilot Project

The Future Armenian Initiative has already attempted a pilot project in Artsakh. It convened a citizens’ assembly or forum on May 22 in Stepanakert to focus on the topic of population growth in Artsakh. Committees of experts had prepared their recommendations which more than 60 participants, Artsakh citizens of varied backgrounds who were signatories of the Future Armenian initiative’s goals, discussed. The citizens then provided their ratings of proposed projects.

The highest-rated one, according to a summary of the forum provided by the Future Armenian Initiative, is called “We Stay in Artsakh.” Its main ideas are to assure a decent living for the existing Artsakh pop-

cluding those led by the opposition.

For the We Stay in Artsakh project, for example, the Artsakh government will play the central role, though there will be a public-private partnership, Apitonian explained. As noted above in general, all ongoing programs of potential partners appropriate for the We Stay in Artsakh project goals will be inventoried and gaps identified, after which specific programs to implement will be identified. The affiliation network would carry this out this process, Apitonian said, not the Future Armenian staff. The affiliates who agreed to join this particular network would determine the modalities of action.

While some projects thus primarily involve the government, Apitonian noted that other programs, like the construction of housing, is also already being carried out by various organizations, such as the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, the Tufenkian Foundation and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). Part of what the Future Armenian will do is to bring together all these actors and try to harmonize their actions so they do not duplicate each other’s activities, nor miss anything important which they could be doing, he said. In other words, he continued, “We do not want to impose regulations. It should be a collectively driven process, but we are ready to help with expertise.”

Apitonian has started discussions with the AGBU and was going to contact the Tufenkian Foundation next.

He declared that the Artsakh Forum was very successful and might even be continued on an annual basis in order to bring people to Artsakh and galvanize them to work further on their problems.



ARMENIA

Foreign Diplomats Visit War-Hit Armenian Town

By Anush Mkrtchian

JERMUK, Armenia (Azatutyun.am) — A group of foreign ambassadors and other diplomats visited on Friday, September 16, the largest of the Armenian border settlements shelled by the Azerbaijani army during this week’s deadly clashes with Armenian forces.

The Yerevan-based diplomats, among them US Ambassador Lynne Tracy, toured Jermuk, Armenia’s most famous spa town 170 kilometers southeast of the capital, and inspected damage to its civilian infrastructure during a trip organized by the Armenian military. Journalists were allowed to accompany them.

Jermuk was close to one of the epicenters of heavy fighting that broke out at several sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border

on Monday night. The vast majority of its residents, notably children and women, were evacuated or fled their homes on their own amid cross-border artillery fire. Civilian access to the largely deserted town remains strictly limited for security reasons.

Local government officials said that the Azerbaijani shelling damaged a spa resort, three guest houses, a children’s playground, an administrative building and a cable car line. The cable car director told reporters that about a dozen shells landed on the facility and seriously damaged it.

Just outside Jermuk, the tail of an unexploded rocket fired by Azerbaijani forces stuck out by the main road leading out of the town.

The fighting also directly affected a dozen other border towns and villages. According to the Armenian government, a



A guesthouse in Jermuk damaged by Azerbaijani shelling, September 15, 2022



A guesthouse in Jermuk damaged by Azerbaijani shelling, September 15, 2022

total of 60 houses and other structures were destroyed by the shelling.

Major-General Eduard Asryan, the chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff, met with the visiting diplomats and answered their questions. Asryan told them that Jermuk and nearby hills were the “main direction of the enemy attacks” launched at several sections of the border.

Azerbaijani troops managed to advance a few kilometers into Armenian territory in the Jermuk area, he said, adding that they made far more modest territorial gains at three other border sections. Although Armenian army units recaptured some of their lost positions there, the general went on, a hill 4.5 kilometers east of Jermuk remains under Azerbaijani control.

Asryan said at the same time that a small Azerbaijani unit occupying the hill is near-

ly surrounded by Armenian forces and will have no choice but to leave it within days. He claimed that another group of Azerbaijani soldiers retreated towards the Azerbaijani border for the same reason earlier in the day.

According to the Armenian government, at least 135 Armenian soldiers were killed during the fighting largely stopped by a ceasefire agreement late on Wednesday.

“Unfortunately, we understand that this number is not the final one,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told members of his government on Friday.

The government has not yet released the number of Armenian soldiers missing in action.

The hostilities also reportedly left one Armenian civilian dead and six others wounded.



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INTERNATIONAL

Yerevan Unhappy With Russian-Led Bloc's Response To Border Clashes

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has failed to properly react to large-scale fighting that erupted on Armenia's border with Azerbaijan earlier this week, a senior Armenian official said on Friday, September 16.

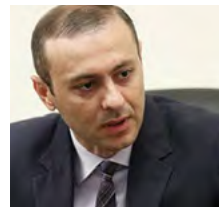
The Armenian government appealed to the alliance for help hours after the outbreak of the deadly hostilities on the night from Monday to Tuesday. The presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan discussed the request at an emergency video summit chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan late on Tuesday.

They stopped short of openly siding with Armenia and decided instead to send a fact-finding mission.

Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia's Security Council, clarified that Yerevan sought the CSTO's "military and military-political assistance" that

would help it drive Azerbaijani forces out of its territory.

"That was our demand to the CSTO," Grigoryan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "Up until now it has not been fulfilled. So in this regard, [the CSTO response] cannot satisfy us."



Armen Grigoryan, Secretary of Armenia's Security Council

Asked whether Yerevan asked Russia and the other CSTO member states to send troops to Armenia, he said.

"The international community has many instruments, from military-political to diplomatic and economic ones."

The official also would not be drawn on growing domestic calls for Armenia to leave the Russian-led bloc. "It's the

CSTO, not Armenia, that should think about that," he said.

Moscow scrambled to end the deadly fighting, with various Russian officials holding urgent phone talks with their Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts. The United States and the European Union also engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at halting the hostilities that left at least 135 Armenian and 77 Azerbaijani soldiers dead.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said on Friday that most key foreign powers have voiced support for Armenia's territory and held Azerbaijan responsible for the worst fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone since the 2020 war.

"But I must also admit that we had a bit higher expectations from some countries or a country, and it's no secret that in some cases those expectations were not quite met," Mirzoyan told a weekly cabinet meeting in Yerevan. He did not elaborate.

Armenian, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers Meet in New York with Blinken

NEW YORK (RFE/RL) — The Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers met in New York on September 19 in their first talks since recent deadly border clashes claimed more than 200 lives.

The meeting between Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Ceyhan Bayramov was arranged by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the sidelines of the annual UN General Assembly in a bid to ease tensions and maintain a fragile cease-fire between the two countries.

"We are encouraged by the fact that the fighting has ceased and there has not been" a resumption of shelling, Blinken said. "Strong, sustainable diplomatic engagement is the best path for everyone. There is a path to a durable peace that resolves the differences."

Speaking ahead of the meeting, Bayramov said his country was "satisfied with the level of relations" with Washington and said his direct talks with Mirzoyan were not unusual.

"We are always open for meetings," he said.

The meeting came after Armenia said

the clashes last week — the worst fighting since a six-week war in 2020 — left 207 people dead or missing on its side alone.

Damage and Death Toll

On September 19, a meeting of the RA Security Council was held under the leadership of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, where the following statement was adopted.

"On the night of September 12-13, 2022, the armed forces of Azerbaijan launched a large-scale aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia, using large-caliber weapons, artillery, missile systems, and drones.

As a result of the aggression, the number of dead and missing persons reaches 207, including 3 civilians killed, the location of 2 civilians is considered unknown, 293 servicemen, 7 civilians were injured, 20 servicemen were captured. There are evidences of cases of torture, mutilation, and thus illegal killing of captured or killed Armenian servicemen by Azerbaijanis.

The armed forces of Azerbaijan targeted 36 settlements, including Goris, Sisian, Kapan, Jermuk, Vardenis, Togh, Geghama-

sar communities, as a result of which 192 houses, 3 hotels, 2 schools, 1 medical facility, 1 banquet hall were partially or completely destroyed. 4 stables. 7 electrical infrastructures, 5 water infrastructures, 3 gas pipelines, 1 bridge, 2 highways, 1 street were damaged. 2 ambulances, 4 private cars were targeted.

The armed forces of Azerbaijan entered the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in several directions. Thanks to the persistent and heroic resistance of the Armed Forces of Armenia and the involvement of the international community, the attack of Azerbaijan was stopped, but the military-political situation remains tense.

The aggressive policy pursued by Azerbaijan is aimed at establishing peace in the region, opening regional communications, aborting the efforts aimed at the comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and imposing forceful solutions on the Republic of Armenia.

Having adopted the agenda of establishing peace and opening regional communications, the Republic of Armenia considers unacceptable the policy of threat and coercion conducted by Azerbaijan.

The Security Council declares that the Republic of Armenia will protect its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity by all available means. Azerbaijani troops must withdraw from the occupied territories of Armenia.

We call on the international community to continuously put pressure on Azerbaijan to end the occupation of the sovereign territories of the Republic of Armenia and to withdraw the troops, and we welcome all those countries and organizations that have taken a clear position.

At the same time, we reaffirm the commitment of the Republic of Armenia to adhere to the obligation of a responsible member of the international community," the statement said.

On September 13, from 00:05, the units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces fired intensively at the Armenian positions in the direction of Goris, Sotk and Jermuk.

(Civilnet.am contributed to this report.)

INTERNATIONAL

Armenian President Sparks Fury as He 'Poses for Photos' by Queen's Coffin

LONDON (TheSun.co.uk) — The president of Armenia sparked fury after he was photographed by a "flunky" bowing in front of Queen Elizabeth II's coffin at Westminster Hall on Sunday morning, September 18, the English newspaper *The Sun* reports.

Footage captured the moment President Vahagn Khachaturyan was snapped by Armenian Ambassador Varuzhan Nersesyan at the foot of the late monarch's flag-draped English oak coffin. Strict rules inside the solemn 1,000-year-old building — where the late Queen was lying in state — forbid the use of any cameras. Those entering the great hall with a specific time slot to pay their last respects are given a briefing beforehand spelling out the rules.

One attendee at Westminster Hall told *The Sun*: "There were hundreds of people in that hall — no one was speaking. Only him. Yap, yap, yap, yap. He clearly planned to have his photo taken. He and his aide hold back as the group in front passes the coffin. It's an absolute outrage. ...He knows the rules and would have been told before he went in." Another source said: "Everyone has managed to follow those rules to the very letter — apart from this one individual."

Mirzoyan Meets with Secretary General of OSCE

NEW YORK — On September 19, Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Helga Schmid in New York.

The foreign minister presented to his interlocutor the details of the aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against the sovereign territory of Armenia, pointing out that it was accompanied by deliberate targeting of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure, atrocities and torture against Armenian servicemen, servicewomen and prisoners of war. Mirzoyan noted that the aggression carried out by Azerbaijan grossly violates the fundamental provisions of international humanitarian law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

He strongly condemned the actions of Azerbaijan aimed at achieving its maximalist aspirations through use of force, particularly underlining the importance of a clear and targeted response of the international community, including the OSCE, to the aggression of Azerbaijan, as well as the urgency of launching relevant mechanisms within the framework of the organization.

He stressed the role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship in terms of reaching lasting and comprehensive resolution of the conflict. Mirzoyan referred to the humanitarian issues resulting from the 44-day war, stressing the need for immediate repatriation of Armenian POWs and other detainees.

Russia Wants to Develop Real Ties With Armenia - Russian Deputy PM

YEREVAN (TASS) — Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk, who leads the Russian delegation to the 9th Russian-Armenian Interregional Forum in Yerevan, declared to TASS on Sunday, September 18: "We have arrived here in such a representative delegation in order to emphasize our historic ties with Armenia and our intention to strengthen relations between our peoples and economies. This is the ninth forum, which is being held in a difficult time for our countries. The task is to resolve economic problems facing Russia and Armenia. These are not merely lofty words, not a theory or promises. This is real work in

the interests of the people in our countries."

The 9th Russian-Armenian interregional forum opened in Yerevan on September 19. Its program includes roundtable meetings to discuss current issues of cooperation to expand logistics and investment potential of the countries' regions, the development of digitalization, and humanitarian exchanges between Russia and Armenia.

The Russian delegation includes more than 250 members representing organizations and businesses from 13 Russian regions, federal government officials and representatives of Russia's trade mission and embassy in Armenia.



INTERNATIONAL

Diaspora Minister Sinanyan Wants to Connect Armenia and Diaspora

DIASPORA, from page 1

Diaspora Summit

One of the ways Sinanyan hopes to bring the two sides together is the Global Armenian Summit, which will be held from October 28 to 31 in Yerevan. The summit will serve as a forum for representatives of the diaspora, together with their local counterparts, to discuss the most pressing challenges and strategic questions of pan-Armenian significance.

According to the event's website, "The proposals, solutions, and results achieved at the summit will serve as the cornerstone for developing new approaches to our common pan-Armenian agenda. The summit will provide Armenia and the Diaspora the opportunity to identify priorities and develop a roadmap for future cooperation."

About 600 participants from 40 countries, including Armenia and Artsakh, are expected to attend the summit.

"It's a good representation of a cross-section of the diaspora. Our goal is to involve constructive voices, concerned voices, individuals that are truly vested in Armenia's future, about topics that are on our minds that are urgent today and are relevant for our future," Sinanyan said.

Large conferences inviting members of the Diaspora from a variety of fields have taken place for years. Often, little is gained other than discussions which do not go beyond talk. Sinanyan said that he knows that and wants to make sure that concrete results ensue.

"Your concern is ours, from the very beginning, not to have another diaspora-Armenia conference that involves a lot of talking and not really leading to productive results," he said. "We've done everything — gone out of our way — to make sure it's anything but that. It's dialogue. It's an exchange of ideas that are going to have an impact on the way Armenia will run its own affairs and the diaspora will run its own affairs and impact our diaspora strategy and hopefully shed some light on concerns that need to be addressed."

He went on, "There is a lot of misunderstanding about what's happening in Armenia and there is a lot of misunderstanding in Armenia about how the diaspora feels and what role the diaspora sees for itself in the future of Armenia."

He expressed his hope that with the October summit, more understanding would be possible. "There is an opportunity to have that discourse. If you look at our agenda, you will see the way the conference is structured. It is intended for this discourse to take place,"

(He stressed that "the future of Armenia is difficult to separate from Artsakh," so that people later don't say that the government of Armenia does not care about that republic.)

The summit has economic and educational aspects, he said, which involved development of tech and IT in Armenia.

"The tech sector does have a lot of diasporan involvement, from the funding of the companies to founding," he said.

Bringing the Two Closer

It is no secret that Armenia and Diasporans don't always understand each other and that lack of understanding can create frustrations on both sides. Sinanyan addressed those. With his foot in both camps, he seems to have a personal understanding of both viewpoints.

"Saying that the two sides have issues does not do justice to the dilemma. Instead, we need to wonder how deep those misconceptions are," he said.

"There is some legitimacy to both sides.

In Armenia they say, you know you send some aid, sure, but we are the ones who have to die. We're the ones who have to fight. We're the ones to pay taxes. We don't send aid, we pay taxes," he said. "In the diaspora they say we've been helping so much but you don't create opportunities for us to be more involved and engaged, and also whatever aid we send has been squandered."

He added, "Unless these topics are discussed openly with a constructive mindset, these are not going to be addressed."

He said his office has "been open" to "all kinds of discourse no matter how painful it may seem to one side or the other."

"The most important goal of our office is



Diaspora High Commissioner Zareh Sinanyan

to deepen the integration between the diaspora and Armenia, and if that sounds like a broad concept, it is because it is," he said. "The second goal is to effectuate mass repatriation to the homeland."

Sinanyan was cautious when it came to naming names or blaming parties which have been agitating against the government.

"Unfortunately what we've encountered is less of constructive criticisms, suggestions or discourse, but from certain political circles, it has just been outright absurd criticism of Armenia and Armenia's government, blaming Armenia's government for every problem that has been accumulated over the first 25 years of independence," he said.

"We work with our counterparts throughout the diaspora. Part of the work that our compatriots in the diaspora engage in is soft power and advocacy. We do work with those entities in the diaspora that are willing to do so and do so constructively. To the extent that those organizations are not connected to the old regime that has ruined Armenia and aren't today openly hostile to the people of Armenia and the Republic of Armenia, we will continue working with them," he said.

A new law passed in Armenia would appoint people in the diaspora to connect with Sinanyan's office.

He explained, "We did pass a law at the end of November, which created the institute of diaspora commissioners and the idea is to have counterparts in the communities that provide the boots on the ground, so to speak, to help the high commissioner's office do its work on location. That idea has been met with various degrees of understanding, depending on the community we are dealing with. Some are very excited about it and want to move forward with it and others don't understand it. Especially in those communities where the old diaspora structures feel they are in control, they are extremely opposed to this institu-

tion. I think one may understand why. The conference is also an opportunity to discuss and explain why we decided to create this statute and move forward with the appointment of commissioners."

Duplication of Effort

"We engage with and cooperate with dozens of organizations in the diaspora, if not hundreds. Any organization that is in any way in the diaspora space and is not politically inclined not to work with the country of Armenia, we work with. We appreciate their presence and the resources they represent. That cooperation for the most part is very, very successful and very fruitful," he said.

"Would we like to work with them all? Absolutely," he said, adding "Thank God" there are so many.

Currently the office has 37 people at the High Commissioners office and will expand to 50 especially when the Repatriation Integration Center comes online, within the next 4-5 months.

"No less than 30 percent of our staff, if not more, is from the diaspora," he said, something that had never been the case in the diaspora office before.

Sinanyan spoke about the healthy numbers of repatriates, though he did not claim credit for them. "Repatriation is something that happens by itself, despite the fact that the country doesn't have a robust repatriation program, meaning there are no incentive programs [and] there are no subsidy programs. That doesn't exist yet."

"Thankfully we have thousands of Armenians moving to Armenia from every part of the world. A lot of them are from distressed areas of the world, but many, many others are not," he said. He said to make the experience as painless as possible, those in his office have looked at other countries' actions and have decided to create a center for repatriation and integration. "The idea is for them to repatriate, so when they arrive in Armenia, or even before they do so, they get in touch with the center and use it as a one-stop shop for all their repatriation needs," he said.

"We are well on our way and construction is already going on at the Hrair and Anna Hovnanian Center, next to our repatriation counterparts such as Birthright Armenia, Repat Armenia, and the Armenian Volunteer Corps," he said. "The idea is to create one more important hub of the repatriation infrastructure which has been lacking and which is necessary in order for us to turn to mass repatriation."

Two Worlds Meeting

Sinanyan knows firsthand the joys and pains of repatriation.

"It's been really wonderful for my family, a very painless experience — much less problematic than we thought. You can move from one city to another in the same country and it's still painful. It's been quite nice. My kids feel very much at home. They miss the States sometimes, but ... you can live without In and Out Burger or Krispy Kreme donuts. They have a great circle of friends. They go to a great school that is really friendly to repatriates and has a really nice integration program for the children. My wife really enjoys living in Armenia even though she is not from Armenia. She works from Armenia for her American clients. For me, I am serving my homeland at one of the hardest times in its history. It's both very emotionally and physically taxing and at the same time very rewarding.

He added, "Obviously you have to adjust to certain realities of Armenia — the way of thinking, the speed in which things get done. Otherwise, I am in my homeland and this is the one place you can stay Armenian in perpetuity without fear of assimilation or loss of heritage. Other than the monumental security concerns, this is a great country to live in."

"One of my goals, my daily struggle is convincing Armenia that the diaspora is not a burden and on the contrary is an asset, pretty much the only asset we have and we need to rely on that asset and deploy it more fully and utilize it more intelligently than it's ever been done before," he said.

"Unfortunately, in the diaspora there are forces that are hellbent to make sure that that does not happen, that the diaspora doesn't engage with Armenia meaningfully. For three decades it didn't. The engagement that was there was a very damaging donor-recipient relationship. We know that kind of relationship is not sustainable and if it's not managed properly, it has even less impact," he said.

"The relationships must be much more symbiotic, much more respectful and mutually useful and gratifying. Both sides have to understand what they are getting out of that relationship. They first have to understand the full potential of the rewards that they can reap from that relationship and I don't think we have reached that stage yet," he continued.

The number of repatriates varies. There were years in the 1990s that no one moved there, whereas now, there are thousands. "Statistical information is very hard to come by in Armenia and there is so much back and forth you can't tell who is really moving here and who is just visiting," he said. "But if you spend any time in Armenia over the past year or so, you can see this year is a bumper year for people moving to Armenia.

"After the 44-day war, a lot of people in the diaspora did not get disheartened and they didn't get disappointed. Quite to the contrary, they decided they needed to take personal responsibility for the fate of their homeland and that the only way to do that is to move and be physically here," he said.

"It certainly moved a certain type of people to make that move," he said.

Always quick to point out how someone would counter his comments, he then referred to the population exodus from Armenia: "The naysayers will say you are not talking about how many people have left the country. That's right. I am not talking about how many people have left the country."

Sinanyan was also diplomatic when addressing the pushback the Pashinyan government got when on several occasions, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation from Europe were not allowed

continued on next page



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians of Paris Demonstrate against Azerbaijan's Aggression

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — On Thursday, September 15, one thousand people gathered in Paris next to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protest strongly against the premeditated aggression by Azerbaijan on the sovereign territory of Armenia. Among the slogans uttered by the demonstrators we could hear: “Stop Aliyev! Get out of Armenia!” and “Panturkism = fascism.”

Around twenty political personalities came to support the Armenian struggle, including Gabriel Attal, former Spokesman of the French government and today Minister of Public Action and Accounts.

In his speech, Ara Toranian, co-chairman of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF), thanked France, which was almost the only power in the world to react diplomatically to the situation by referring the matter to the United Nations Security Council. He exclaimed: “Stop burying your head in the sand and give yourself the means to defend yourself!”



Ara Toranian (photo Jean Eckian)



Mourad Papazian (photo Jean Eckian)

and “If we don’t let anyone divide us, we will win,” pointing to the examples of Sardarabad in 1918 and Karabagh in the 1990s.

Joining the demonstration was Berivan Firat, spokesperson for the Kurdish Democratic Council in France. With verve she said: “The struggle of the Armenians is the struggle of the oppressed peoples – it is my struggle... Today, I am Armenian... Erdogan is a danger for the Kurds, for the Armenians, for the Syrians, but also for France, for the West, for our youth and the generations to come.”



Mourad Papazian, co-president of the CCAF, declared: “Today, Baku is attacking the Republic of Armenia, a sovereign territory recognized by the UN. It is not allowed to attack a territory recognized by the UN without receiving a response from the UN.... We fear for Armenia, its security and its people. We must find a way to ensure peace for the Armenians of the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.”



Berivan Firat, center, with Mourad Papazian and Ara Toranian (photo Jean Eckian)



From left, Mourad Papazian, Gabriel Attal, Ara Toranian (photo Jean Eckian)

from previous page

to get into Armenia, though he did say he was not involved with the decision and that it was not one he might have made.

“First of all, let’s get one thing straight. I was not part of that decision. My cultural political background would make me very reluctant to make that decision. But the people that are subjected to this are very, very small [in number] and these are not people that are [only] opposed to the government. Every government has opposition, but [these are] people who have taken violent steps against the government, the symbols of the government or government officials.” He added, “I understand that the people who were banned were individuals that participated in a demonstration or picket of the prime minister’s visit to Paris.”

He stressed the popularity of the government with the Armenian population. “Several democratically held elections have amply demonstrated that this government is more popular than the previous criminal regimes have ever been, who have never won a single fair election. But these people that are from the old regime have their supporters in the diaspora and sometimes those people cross the line and they have crossed the line with me several times. In this case, they got physical and this is what it’s about, but I’ve already told you what my approach would be.”

“The concept of the diaspora is a very fluid one. Different diasporas have a different role to play in all of this. First, the diaspora has to understand Armenia’s realities. Anyone who sits in Los Angeles or San

Francisco and complains day in and day out why Armenia is not attacking Azerbaijan are simply disconnected from the reality in Armenia. They don’t understand what is happening on the ground,” he noted.

He did say that he understood why some people needed to complain about the government. They need to think “how they can be constructively useful, making sure that our fundamental and existential problems are addressed now because we do have existential threats that we are facing. Now is not the time to be romantic about the homeland. The homeland, Armenia, and the people who live in Armenia are real human beings. Armenia is a real place. Like it or leave it, it is the way it is. The people who live here and those that live here and those in the diaspora that are engaged to make it

a better place and want to join in that struggle, all have a role to play.”

He added, “I will go so far as to say for some of our people, both in Armenia and the diaspora, that role is to provide robust, aggressive and productive criticism about what they don’t like and offer solutions. Just criticizing out of thin air doesn’t serve a purpose. Offer viable, realistic solutions to those problems,” he said.

“I hope people can find that role and engage Armenia, whether through our office or NGOs, benevolent organizations, the educational process, ... the main thing is to add something to our daily struggle,” he said.

To find out more about the Diaspora High Commissioner’s Office, visit <http://diaspora.gov.am/en>.



Community News

Dr. Hrag Papazian To Speak on Muslim And Alevi Armenians at Fresno State

FRESNO — Dr. Hrag Papazian, Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies, will present an in-person lecture titled “Muslim and Alevi Armenians” at 7 p.m. on Friday, October 7, in the University Business Center, A. Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. The presentation is the second in Dr. Papazian’s three-part series on “Armenians and ‘Other Armenians’ in Contemporary Turkey.”

This second lecture will be devoted to the officially Muslim and hence legally “non-Armenian” citizens of the Republic of Turkey who, drawing on their Armenian ancestors Islamized or Alevized generations earlier, identify as Armenians today. The talk will discuss the contextual developments that facilitated the unprecedented public “coming out” of such individuals during the last few decades, and examine these people’s understandings of Armenianness, their experiences in the post-genocidal context,



and their relations with the Christian Armenians of Istanbul.

Dr. Hrag Papazian is the Kazan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State.

He earned his doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of Oxford (2020) where his dissertation about Armenians in contemporary Turkey was awarded the David Parkin Prize. His thesis also received an honorary mention in the Society for Armenian Studies Distinguished Dissertation Award competition (2017-2020).

The lecture is free and open to the public. Parking is available in Fresno State Lots P6 and P5, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. A free parking code can be obtained by contacting the Armenian Studies Program. For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, please follow us on our Facebook page, @ArmenianStudies-FresnoState or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenian-studies>.



Foreign Minister Davit Babayan

Karabakh Foreign Minister to Speak at Promise Institute Event

LOS ANGELES — In collaboration with the Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region (ANCA-WR), the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA will host Davit Babayan, PhD, the foreign minister of the Republic of Artsakh, for a conversation about the future of Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh.

This event will take place at UCLA Mong Learning Center at 404 Westwood Plaza, on Wednesday, September 28, at 7 p.m. Pacific Time. Registration for this in-person event is required and free. To RSVP, visit bit.ly/PAI9-28-22.

Following the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh, the November 9 ceasefire agreement, the subsequent constant violations of said agreement, and the most recent attacks on Armenia, the future of Artsakh and the region are uncertain and of great concern for the global Armenian community. Foreign Minister Babayan, who has extensive experience in Artsakh’s government and deep knowledge of the region’s geopolitical landscape, will address this question and engage with the LA-Armenian community.

This event is co-sponsored by the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA Law, the International and Comparative Law Program at UCLA Law, and the UCLA Armenian Students’ Association.

During his visit to the United States, Babayan will also headline the ANCA-WR Grassroots Conference as the keynote speaker on Saturday, September 24. In addition, a member of Republic of Armenia’s International Court of Justice delegation, Yeghishe Kirakosyan, PhD, adviser to the Prime Minister of Armenia and the representative of Armenia before the European Court of Human Rights, will speak at the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA Law on Monday, September 26 at 12:15 p.m. about the use of international law by small states.

Davit Babayan was born in Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh. He was appointed Foreign Minister of the Republic of Artsakh for a second time in January 2021; prior to this, from 2007-2021, he was Artsakh’s presidential spokesperson. He also served as an Adviser to the President of Artsakh from 2005 to 2007. Dr. Babayan is the founding leader of the Artsakh Conservative Party. He received a bachelor’s degree in economics from the Yerevan Institute of National Economy, and master’s degrees from American University of Armenia and the Central European University (Budapest). He holds a doctorate in historical science from the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Institute of Oriental Studies. Dr. Babayan has authored more than 300 articles and monographs related to Azerbaijan – Artsakh (Karabakh) negotiations, Caucasus geopolitics, great power competition, and Chinese geopolitics.

For more information, please contact the UCLA Promise Armenian Institute at armenian-info@international.ucla.edu, 310-569-6325, or visit The Institute’s website www.international.ucla.edu/armenia/.

TCA Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Presents Exhibition of Mike Hagopian’s Paintings, Book Presentation

ALTADENA, Calif. — Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA)’s Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Committee is proud to announce an exhibition of Mike Hagopian’s paintings, along with the presentation of his book of paintings, on Sunday, October 9, at 5 p.m., at the TCA Beshgeturian Building’s main hall in Altadena.

Mike Hagopian was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He graduated from the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)’s Hovagimian-Manoogian High School. When he immigrated to the United States, he settled in Pasadena and got involved with AGBU again, serving on its Pasadena-Glendale Chapter Committee and later undertaking roles in the Ardivazt Theatre Company, under the direction of Krikor Satamian.

Hagopian is a multitasking artist. Beside his painting, he also writes poems and composes songs. Two of his poems and two of his songs will be part of the cultural program during the presentation of his book of paintings.

In his preface to the book, titled *A Journey along Lines, Forms and Col-*



Mike Hagopian with some of his paintings

ors, Sarkis Majarian writes: “Through his style that bears the characteristics of the Impressionist, Abstract, Surrealist and Symbolic schools of art, it is impossible not to feel and see the resurrection of life, nature and figures that emerge from the depth of his canvases.”

The book will be presented by Dr. Krikor Simonian and there will also be a cultural program, including recitation of poems by Blair High School’s Armenian Academy students and vocal renditions by Khatchig Nahabedian. This event is one of a series of various programs in celebration of the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s 75th anniversary.

The public is invited and there will be a reception at the conclusion of the program.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, third from left in the front row, with a Massachusetts Armenian women's host committee in mid-September

Maura Healey Condemns Azerbaijani Attacks on Armenia

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BEDFORD, Mass. — In a follow-up to a meet and greet event with the Armenian community last week, taking place just as the Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia were commencing, Massachusetts Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Maura Healey issued a statement on Monday, September 19. She de-

clared: "I'm standing with the Armenian community and strongly condemn these attacks. I'm praying for the safety of all those involved and calling for a peace agreement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

Stay tuned for a forthcoming interview with Healey that will appear both online and in the October 8 print issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*.

Bone Marrow Registry Hosts 11th Annual Walk of Life

WATERTOWN — On September 24, the Armenian community of New England will come together in support of the 11th annual Walk of Life of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR). Every year the beloved Pan-Armenian event in Watertown draws an avid youth participation, with large numbers of students from area schools and colleges. It also attracts the support of numerous community organizations and many public figures.

Established in 1999, ABMDR, a non-profit organization, helps save lives by recruiting and providing matched unrelated donors for bone marrow or stem cell transplantation to all Armenian and non-Armenian patients worldwide who are suffering from leukemia and other life-threatening blood related illnesses. Due to the unique genetic make-up of Armenians, it is nearly impossible to find suitable matches among the existing international registries. Hence the importance of establishing a registry that would help facilitate recruiting and identifying matched unrelated bone marrow donors.

Over the past 11 years, the Walk of Life in New England has received support and



sponsorship from several large and small businesses, including: PROMETRIKA LLC of Cambridge, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, the Armenian-American Pharmacists' Association (AAPA), Watertown Savings Bank, ThermOil Inc, Quebrada Baking Company, several other local businesses, the Armenia Tree Project and St. James Armenian Apostolic Church.

The walkathon's opening ceremony will be held on the grounds of St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center, on September 24 at 11am and will conclude at Faire on the Square, in Watertown Square, where participants will gather to celebrate the day's achievements and enjoy great music, dancing, and food.

The funds raised at the walk and all other donations go a long way to ensure ABMDR stays loyal to its mission, by educating the public, recruiting donors and thus building a robust donor registry, and facilitating bone marrow stem cell transplants for patients worldwide.

ABMDR New England is encouraging community members to join the Walk of Life by visiting the group's website. Interested readers can reach out to: abmdrne-wengland@gmail.com .

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Center for Truth and Justice Makes Armenia's Case Against Azerbaijan at United Nations

TRUTH, from page 1

The CFTJ was represented in Geneva by Chicago-based lawyer, Talin Hitik, who recently explained the history of the CFTJ as well as her role in the process of bringing Azerbaijan's war crimes to the attention of the United Nations. (This interview took place immediately before the most recent Azerbaijani attack on Armenia on September 12/13.)

Given the importance of evidence in civil and criminal litigation in the US legal system, the CTFJ, a group of Los Angeles-area Armenian lawyers (and one judge) saw the possibility to use their skills and training to find substantive evidence of Azerbaijan's war crimes in order to pursue international legal redress on some level.

The CFTJ has opened two law clinics, one in Armenia and one in Artsakh. They have enlisted local law students to collect firsthand testimonial evidence from war survivors via in-depth, recorded interviews. The US-based lawyers trained 100 Armenia-based law students and lawyers to carry out this task.

This Diaspora-Homeland synergy has had productive results, collecting the recorded testimonies of numerous soldiers, former POWs, private citizens who lost loved ones, homes, or property, and other eyewitnesses.

Armenia v. Azerbaijan

The chance to use these testimonies as evidence in an international forum came in the wake of the Armenia vs. Azerbaijan case pending before the ICJ in the Hague, Netherlands. The original application from Armenia on September 16, 2021, alleged violations of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, an international human rights treaty originally drawn up in 1965, which Armenia and Azerbaijan are both party to. Because cases in the ICJ often take years to adjudicate, Armenia requested "provisional orders" (like a temporary injunction). The ICJ promulgated an "order" on December 7, 2021, stating (paraphrased) that Azerbaijan must (1) protect POWs from violence and bodily harm, (2) prevent the incitement of racial hatred and discrimination against Armenians, (3) prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration of Armenian cultural heritage monuments.

Since then, the CFTJ, through their teams in Armenia and Artsakh, has been collecting eyewitness testimony of Azerbaijan's violation of these three points. In keeping with what is admissible under International Law, they have focused on violations that took place after December 7, 2021, when the Order was promulgated.

Last month, August 2022, the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which is based in Geneva and is tasked with monitoring implementation of the treaty, conducted its periodic review of Azerbaijan. All countries which are party to the treaty ("State Parties") periodically come under the Committee's review; Azerbaijan most recently came under review in 2016. Interestingly, the United States also came up under review in August.

As part of the review process, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations, such as nonprofits and human rights organizations) are invited to submit reports to CERD. One of the NGOs that applied to and was granted the right to do this was CTFJ.

Since none of CTFJ's members specialize in international law, they sought the assistance of Hitik, an active member of the

Armenian community who has specialized experience in the area.

"The Center for Truth and Justice reached out to me to be an international law advisor," Hitik stated. "I advise them on matters of international law. They excel at evidence but they don't know how to use their evidence."

The application of valuable evidence to the international law forums such as the ICJ is key to the successful litigation of the case against Azerbaijan.

"I started talking to them [the CFTJ] about how to use their evidence, what types of cases can they file, etc.," added Hitik.

Hitik, a graduate of DePaul University School of Law in Chicago, has experience that uniquely qualified her for this task. "I have a certificate in international comparative law, from when I was in law school," she stated.

She added, "I worked in the Hague at the Hague Conference [an organization specializing in private international law] and also at the Permanent Court of Arbitration [a non-UN body that provides arbitration services between countries]. I taught different subjects of private international law at American University of Armenia and Yerevan State University, international humanitarian law and two different courses concerning the human rights system. My current focus [in my private practice] is on private international law. I focus on conflicts of international law and teach public international law at University of Michigan Law School."

The Evidence

In relation to the members of CFTJ and their legal abilities, "preservation of evidence is their bread and butter," Hitik stated. "And Armenia wasn't doing this at all." She adds that local authorities in Armenia were understandably preoccupied with immediate matters of life and death. "So people were fleeing Karabakh to Armenia, and they started taking witness testimony."

She added, "They were, really importantly, taking testimony from former prisoners of war (POWs) who had been in Azeri captivity, who detailed torture, ill treatment, and cruel treatment, and what happened to them at the hands of Azeri soldiers." The POWs had been returned to Armenia as a result of negotiations on their behalf by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"Much to their credit, the Center for Truth and Justice found out about [CERD's] review of Azerbaijan, so they submitted a written petition to the UN," Hitik noted.

Hitik also explained the basics of the process leading up to the August hearing: "So, what happens is the state party [in this case, Azerbaijan] submits a report written by their government on how they had complied with their treaty obligations. They submit that report and the CERD body receives their report. And they have an in-person hearing scheduled for some later date."

"At the in-person hearing," Hitik continued, "they give the country 'themes' that they want to address. They also give an opportunity for civil society organizations to give an alternative report." That's where Hitik and the CFTJ came in.

"Seven or eight different alternative reports were submitted," Hitik shared. "Most were Armenian-oriented, from the Diaspora or Armenia. Most of those groups gave an intervention at the oral hearings"

An "intervention" [technically, an "oral intervention"], she explained, is international-law jargon for any time an entity is

allowed to voice its opinions, arguments, findings, and so on, before an official body of the United Nations or other international organizations. This is different from the lengthy official report which the organization has submitted; the "intervention" gives a representative of the organization the chance to make a short oral statement before the body, similar to a closing argument in an American courtroom, in which the main issues can be summarized and stressed.

In addition to Hitik, who represented the CFTJ, several others were present at the meetings to speak out against Azerbaijan. "There is a really impressive report from a consortium of five NGOs based in Yerevan," Hitik stated. "They had a different methodology." On behalf of that consortium, Yerevan lawyer Anna Melikyan was physically present, said Hitik.

"There was also a woman who lost her home in Hadrut," she added, "a 3rd- or 4th-generation resident of Karabakh, and their family lost three homes in Hadrut and relocated to Yerevan. Her name is Margarita and she's now a celebrity in Armenia."

Margarita Karamyan is a former member of the regional administration of Hadrut and now heads the "Return to Dizak" NGO in Yerevan. Margarita was funded by the Yerevan NGOs and got a visa to attend the meeting in Geneva, where she spoke in English.

"It was really powerful to hear someone who was talking about watching her neighbors get killed, and losing her own home," Hitik shared. "All of the analysis aside, the most influential thing was having someone say, 'I lived through this, I am a survivor.'"

The Hearings in Geneva

The 107th Session of CERD met from August 8-August 30, 2022. Among other agenda items, the following countries were up for review: Azerbaijan, Benin, Nicaragua, Slovakia, Suriname, United States of America, and Zimbabwe.

The first review for which NGOs were invited to speak was that of Azerbaijan, and the first item on the agenda was a closed door meeting for NGOs to give speeches ("interventions") on the issues at hand.

This meeting, which took place on August 8, was the official opportunity to make an official intervention. The meeting took place in a formal room before a panel, somewhat similar to a Senate Hearing, said Hitik. From the committee, the chairwoman of CERD and three others were present, others were on Zoom.

Hitik was accompanied by three other Armenians from Los Angeles, as well as Anna Melikyan, the lawyer from Yerevan, and Margarita Karamyan, the refugee and activist from Artsakh.

In addition, a representative of the Armenian Bar Association (US) spoke via Zoom, as well as several other organizations based in Armenia, the US, France, Russia, and elsewhere.

The purpose of the closed-door meeting, in theory, is to protect the NGOs and their members or spokespeople from retaliation for speaking out against the State Party.

A second, unofficial meeting of NGOs was held, Hitik added, on Monday, August 15. During this so-called "lunch hour," each representative was again invited to speak for four minutes, followed by a back and forth with the committee members, which was off the record.

The third meeting which took place was the culmination of the process, the actual review of the state party [Azerbaijan], also on

August 15. This took place at 2:00 PM, after the "lunch hour."

The official delegation from Baku was present, headed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Elnur Mammadov.

Mammadov "did most of the talking," according to Hitik. She further stated that along with representatives of all of the government, the delegation gave their testimony as to how they complied with the convention.

"It's supposed to be an open discussion between the State Party and the members of the committee," Hitik stated. "And they have to answer questions by the members of the committee."

After further testimony from Azerbaijan on the following day (August 16), the committee composed a document of their concluding observations. This document was officially adopted on August 26 and distributed in an advanced unedited version on August 30.

The most significant section of the entire report, which was on all aspects of Azerbaijan's adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, was the section discussing the ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Power of In Person Testimony

For every country that's under review, Hitik said, one committee member is assigned as "country rapporteur." At the end, that person is in charge of the concluding observations.

The country rapporteur for Azerbaijan was Dr. Chinsung Chung, a sociology professor from South Korea. "She did not have the strongest grasp of the historical and geopolitical nuances," said Hitik. "I was a little disappointed that the committee chose this person. I was a little disappointed that the committee members did not have enough background with the region or the conflict."

Hitik gave a prime example of why being present at the meeting was critical for the Armenian side. During the review, Chung was asking questions to the Azerbaijani ministers, when an exchange took place along these lines, recalled Hitik: "I would like to know if you have allowed humanitarian aid in Nagorno-Karabakh," Chung apparently stated. The Azeri representative reportedly replied, 'I have to inform you, that the region is not called Nagorno-Karabakh, it's now called Karabakh.' Chung then said, 'I'm sorry, I didn't know, I will only use the term Karabakh,'" according to Hitik.

Hitik pointed out the legal and geopolitical ramifications of this brief exchange. While referred to colloquially by many Armenians as "Karabakh" or "Karabagh," the autonomous region was during Soviet times officially named "Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast." "Nagorno" is a Russian prefix meaning "Mountainous," and was applied in distinction to Lowland Karabakh which did not have an Armenian population and was not an Autonomous Oblast. It is the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast which legally declared independence from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan in 1989. While its successor body and other Armenians have adopted the name "Republic of Artsakh," Azerbaijan refers to the region simply as "Karabagh."

Therefore, according to Hitik "they were trying to get a UN body to say on record that it's 'Karabakh'" in order to bolster their legal claim.

An hour after that meeting, Hitik, along with Anna Melikyan, had a meeting with the



COMMUNITY NEWS

UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Alexandra Xanthaki. Hitik said the diplomat asked her, “How do we know what’s true?” Hitik replied, “I’m going to give you an example of rewriting history,” and proceeded to explain the “Karabakh” vs “Nagorno-Karabakh” exchange.

Xanthaki understood what was happening. “They are trying to say that the conflict is a fait accompli,” she observed, according to Hitik, and continued, “Do me a favor, and you and all your NGOs write up a brief history of the internationally recognized terminology. And if you can please include what other UN bodies have called it in recent history.”

A paper was written up, mostly by the consortium of five NGOs from Yerevan, and the pro-Armenian group sent it over to the secretariat of CERD. The final document issued by CERD used the term “Nagorno Karabakh” rather than “Karabakh.” “This is why being in the room is so critical in all of these discussions,” Hitik concluded.

Another example of Azerbaijan trying to deceive the UN came when Mammadov, according to Hitik, “spoke for five minutes about how great they are. Then he spent the next 20 minutes talking about how the Republic of Armenia violated CERD. It is incredibly inappropriate and awkward for a country to talk about another country [in this context when the first country is the one up for review.]”

Hitik paraphrased Mammadov as saying that “due to the Republic of Armenia’s illegal occupation of our territory for the last 20 years, we were not able to control our compliance with the convention, because we did not have control over our territories due to Armenia’s illegal occupation.” Although the official UN press release repeated this statement, Hitik and her colleagues followed up with the authorities.

“Basically, it’s clear to all of us that were there, that we had a huge impact on the concluding observations. A lot of the things we talked about ended up in the report. The first thing they talk about in their conclusion is Nagorno-Karabakh, because so many of us [advocating on behalf of Armenians] were actually there [during the hearings].”

Hitik also states that she and her colleagues made the most of their time in Geneva to advocate for the Armenians of the region.

“We met with almost every working group and special rapporteur outside of this. The Special Rapporteur on Torture, on Racism, the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, etc.”

The mercenary situation was particularly shocking. According to Hitik, an Azeri soldier who could apparently speak neither Russian nor Turkish was captured by Armenian forces, who believed he might have been speaking Arabic. A recently arrived Syrian-Armenian refugee was brought into translate. This translator was one of the individuals interviewed by CFTJ and videotaped.

The translator was “very detailed and specific,” noted Hitik, who summarized his video testimony, which is not currently available to the public. According to her, the translator told interviewers that “the mercenaries said that they were recruited by a man who had ties to the Mujahideen in Idlib, Syria. Because the men hired as mercenaries were mostly extremist Sunnis, the recruiter told them that A., they would get \$1,500-2,000 per month and B., they’d be committing jihad. They were also told to take no prisoners of war and to kill every Armenian they saw regardless of whether they were a soldier or a civilian. They were asked to behead them and take pictures for proof.”

Hitik further related that according to the translator’s video testimony, “The mercenary had pictures on his cell phone of beheaded soldiers and civilians, and showed them to the Syrian-Armenian translator.”



Talin Hitik in Geneva

“A lawyer from the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries watched this video for seven minutes and she said ‘you need to give me this video,’” Hitik related. The video, taken by CFTJ, is not publicly available, which is why the contents are paraphrased.

Other interviews included material such as POWs discussing being taken out of their cells, beaten, forced to say “Karabagh is Azerbaijan,” not given food, etc., according to Hitik.

One POW was beaten so badly, she says, that he had to be hospitalized in Baku, and as soon as he recuperated, was tied to the back of a truck and dragged around.

There were also photographs from a mother who received her 20-year-old son back in pieces.

These videos were shown to the Special Rapporteur for the Convention on Torture, Dr. Alice Jill Edwards of Australia, says Hitik.

What Was Achieved?

According to Hitik, the NGOs argued the same things that the Republic of Armenia argued when the country filed a lawsuit against Azerbaijan in the ICJ. That original case alleged a violation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The conduct focused on was the treatment of POWs, the destruction of cultural heritage, and the vile and public hate speech in Azerbaijan, including from officials such as President Ilham Aliyev. This was the conduct which the December 7, 2021 provisional order from the ICJ demanded the Azerbaijan desist from (at Armenia’s request), without mentioning Aliyev by name.

The CFTJ in its report to CERD in Geneva on Azerbaijan’s conduct, echoed these same points. In fact, CFTJ focused on the direct violations of the December 7 Order that took place since that Order was promulgated, more so than Azerbaijan’s general wrongdoings since the beginning of the war.

In response to the efforts of the CFTJ and the other NGOs, CERD included prominent statements on Nagorno-Karabakh in their

Concluding Observations on Azerbaijan (the August 26 report). In the report, CERD officially stated that they were “deeply concerned” about the allegations of “severe and grave human rights violations” on the part of Azerbaijan’s military against POWs and others, as well as reports of destruction of Armenian cultural heritage sites, incitement to racial hatred (including by public figures and officials), and the lack of a mechanism to investigate such violations and provide victims with redress.

CERD officially recommended that Azerbaijan “strengthen its efforts” to investigate human rights violations, take steps to provide support and reparation for victims, investigate the reports of destruction to Armenian cultural heritage sites and facilitate UNESCO to preserve these sites while consulting with the Armenian ethnic community. They also recommended that Azerbaijan adopt measures to combat hate speech and incitement, including by officials, targeted at ethnic Armenians.

According to Hitik, it is obvious that Azerbaijan is not going to comply with any of this, but these findings by an official body of the United Nations is still extremely important.

“This particular committee, CERD, was so important,” says Hitik. “The CERD is the

committee on the Convention. The ICJ case [Armenia vs. Azerbaijan] is a case about that Convention. If you are a judge sitting in the ICJ and you are hearing this case [Armenia vs. Azerbaijan], it would be malpractice for you to not read the document [adopted by CERD on August 26 after the Geneva hearings discussed in this article]. They [CERD] are the body given the authority to comment on any state party’s compliance with the convention. These are going to be read by every single judge in the ICJ case.”

Hitik continues that while CERD can hypothetically follow up, their role is more to make findings of fact. “The ICJ will assume that everything here [in CERD’s conclusions] is true, this is an official UN document.”

And why is that important? Well, the ICJ is the court of the United Nations – often referred to colloquially as “World Court.”

“The ICJ case is a really big deal. What we’re looking for is a declaration by the most important international tribunal to at least recognize the violations of international law committed by Azerbaijan. This case will go on for some time. The memoranda you submit are 200 pages or more. This is the first time in Armenia’s history that they’ve been in the ICJ; it’s a huge deal.”

What could be the real life ramifications of the case and of the recent advocacy in Geneva by Hitik, the CFTJ, and other organizations?



Members of the Armenian delegation in Geneva

“On a concrete level I would hope that a judgement on Azerbaijan’s violation of CERD could reopen a discussion on remedial secession by the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. If we go for the next five years and Azerbaijan still has effective control, there is no way that the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh will have their full rights realized. I am pessimistic about the possibilities for internal self-determination of the Armenians living under the Azeri regime,” she said.

She continued, “A case like this could push the international community for the need for remedial secession.”

Remedial secession took place in the past 20 years in Kosovo, East Timor, and South Sudan. “It could be as big a deal as the Kosovo case,” Hitik continued. “Even though the Kosovo case was non-binding, it had an enormous impact.” And the work she and her colleagues did in Geneva with CERD “will have a huge impact” on the outcome of the Armenia vs. Azerbaijan case, the lawyer concluded.

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Arts & Culture

George Staib

‘My Biggest Dream Is to Perform in Armenia!’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN / ATLANTA, Georgia – Born in Tehran, Iran, George Staib is of Armenian descent and has been living in the United States since the age of 10. He began his dance training at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Penn., in conjunction with the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, then went on to earn an MFA in dance and choreography from Temple University.

Company credits include: Ann Vachon/Dance Conduit, Coriolis Dance Company, Gathering Wild Dance Company, and Paula Kellinger and Dancers. In addition, the fall of 2006 provided Staib the opportunity to perform with the José Limón Dance Company as a guest artist in their re-creation of *Missa Brevis*. In 2001 Staib joined the dance faculty at Emory University where he teaches contemporary and ballet techniques, choreography, and a seminar created to examine the impetus and practice of consuming and making art.

Since relocating to Atlanta, Staib’s work and teaching have been commissioned across the United States resulting in his recognition by *Dance Teacher Magazine* in 2014 as one of



the top five dance educators in the country. As added service to the field, Staib is a contributing writer and critic for ArtsATL. Staib is a two-time recipient of Emory’s prestigious Winship Award, taking him to Tel Aviv in 2011 to study Gaga, release technique with Iris Enez, and Jerusalem to conduct choreographic workshops. In 2016, Staib and the company were invited to Stockholm to perform and teach at Södra Latins and Ballet Akadamen, and subsequently created new work for Saraceno Dance. In addition, staibdance curated and produced the first-ever Atlanta Multicultural Dance Festival, created a summer intensive in Sorrento, Italy, now in its 11th year and hosted a 10-part podcast series titled *Secret* see DANCE, page 15



‘Gate to Heaven’ to Be Released in US in October

LOS ANGELES — ARTsakh Arts and Cultural Foundation (US) announced this week that the film, “Gate to Heaven,” a film by Jivan Avetisyan, is included in this year’s AMC’s independent programming schedule. This is a highly competitive program, which accepts only 4-8 titles every year.

“Gate to Heaven” will see its theatrical release starting October 21, 2022 at the following locations: Glendale, Detroit, Las Vegas and Orange.

“Gate to Heaven” is an international war drama starring Richard Sammel, Tatiana Spivakova, Sos Janibekyan, Leo Pobedonoscevas and Naira Zakarian.

In the midst of our unprecedented times coupled with the brutal war of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), “Gate to Heaven,” a film from Armenia/Artsakh, managed to receive a considerable amount of publicity especially in Europe, Russia, and the US. The riveting war drama takes place in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) during the four-day war in 2016.

The story, haunted by his past, German journalist Robert Sternvall returns to Artsakh after 22 years when the Nagorno-Karabakh war reignites to cover the conflict. In the result of his journalistic investigation, Robert meets Sophia Marti, a young opera singer, who happens to be the daughter of missing photojournalist Edgar Martirosyan, whom Robert abandoned in captivity during the fall of the village of Talish of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992. As their romance develops, Robert’s guilty conscience catches up and he must face the truth of his past actions. Meanwhile the editor-in-chief of Berlin Post is preparing a grand exhibition to showcase Robert’s talent and celebrate his accomplishments, which is set to take place soon. Sophia is eager to attend the prestigious event not knowing what awaits her...

German actor Richard Sammel – best known for his role as Thomas Eichhorst on the FX television series “The Strain” (2014–2017). He has appeared in more than 100 films and television series since 1991. An indelible performance in Quentin Tarantino’s see HEAVEN, page 15



Director Jivan Avetisyan

2022 Marked Return To Live Experience At Eastern Diocese’s Summer Camps

NEW YORK — After two summers of running “virtual camp” due to the pandemic, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America once again welcomed camp families to the “live” experience at its Hye Camp and St. Vartan Camp programs. Consequently, summer 2022 became a time of precious camp memories for children from local parishes across the Diocese.

The energy and excitement from all camp participants was palpable and knowing that the Diocese reached out to close to 400 youth and young adults throughout this summer was heartwarming. Hye Camp returned home to Camp Hickory in Ingleside, IL, and St. Vartan Camp returned home to the Ararat Center in Greenville, NY.

“It was wonderful to be back in-person once again after not seeing one another for three years. Reconnecting with God’s children and seeing how eager they were to develop old and new relationships was a true blessing. Whenever we are together as a Hye Camp family, small miracles take place. Both staff and campers are challenged to grow and mature in a loving Christian environment,” said Fr. Aren Jebejian, Hye Camp Director.

Hye Camp and St. Vartan Camp both offer Armenian Church youth an opportunity to explore their faith and culture in a way not always possible in a parish setting. At camp, participants not only learn about their faith and culture, but they truly live it as part of a vibrant Armenian Christian camp community.

St. Vartan Camp is a seven-week camp program that predominantly serves Diocesan East Coast and southern parishes, and it begins with a half-week of staff training followed by three two-week sessions. Campers do have the option to only attend one week if so desired. Hye Camp is a week-long program that serves mostly Midwest and Southern parishes, and it begins with a three-day CIT and Staff Training program.

Connecting with Each Other, and with God

“Time passes differently at St. Vartan Camp. When you return, even if you’ve missed a year or two, it feels like you’ve never left. It was so nice to be back at our beloved Camp. The summer passes quickly, but our Camp memories will stay with us forever,” remarked Fr. Vart Gyozyan, the St. Vartan Camp Director at Session B. “Everything good, everything magical happens between the months of June and August at St. Vartan Camp. At the end of the day, our feet were dirty, our hair messy, but our eyes were sparkling; because we connected with each other and with our God.”

The Diocesan Summer Camp programs offer daily classes of religion, Armenian language and culture, and arts and crafts, as well as time each day for sports and swimming. see CAMP, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

George Staib: ‘My Biggest Dream Is to Perform in Armenia!’

DANCE, from page 14

Architecture: the process of process, that features culturally based artists from across the country, now in its second season. Staib’s most recent accomplishments include promotion to the rank of Professor of Practice at Emory University, engagement as an educator with Immerse ATL, recognition by the Atlanta Regional Commission as an Arts Leader of Metro Atlanta, and in the summer of 2022, Staib serves as a faculty member and choreographer for the American Dance Festival in Durham, NC.

George, how is it that you are a dancer and yet your BA is in political science?

I believe it is my Armenian upbringing that led me to the study of political science. As I was growing up in Tehran, my family encouraged me to be a doctor or a lawyer. So in college, I changed my major many times, and then decided to pursue political science. At the same time, I began dancing and slowly moved away from preparing myself for a law degree. I did not start my formal dance training until the age of 20, and once I started, I knew I wanted it to be my career.

Years ago you performed with the José Limón Dance Company as a guest artist. What did that mean to you?

In my graduate school experience, I studied Limon technique every day, in addition I was in another company that was directed by one of Limon’s first dancers, Ann Vachon. Limon became my life. And still to this day, the principles of alignment, breath, movement patterns, investigation and physicality remain very much alive in me. I feel loyal to the gifts of understand-

ing I gained from his technique. And as a matter of fact, am preparing a new, short piece that is in some way a tribute to what I learned in that practice.

George, few choreographers also write – you are a writer and critic for Arts-ATL, Atlanta’s only source for arts news and critical evaluation. They say writing for art is a thankless task – is it so?

I would say it is thankless. Sadly. More and more in the US, arts writing, especially for dance, becomes less valuable for general audiences. It appears that the people most interested in dance writing and criticism are the people who are directly part of the writing, the people on stage, the choreographers. For me, I LOVE talking about, writing about and thinking about choreography. Sharing the experience of a dance performance, digging in to the work and hearing from others will always be the reward for me.

Do art professionals care about criticism – do you have any feedback?

Many people will say of art criticism: “That is one person’s opinion” — which is good and a little troubling, I think. Our world is very competitive and many people want good feedback and consistent support. As do I. At the same time, we can be very much connected to what other people think and this is the difficult issue. We want honesty, kindness and constructive criticism. Sometimes these things do not go hand in hand.

You worked also outside of the US – what successes you have had abroad?

The success is based on the joy of coming together with amazing artists from

many backgrounds and cultures — bringing them all into the same room to share and explore. I have had the privilege of studying in Tel Aviv, teaching and creating in Stockholm and also directing a program in Italy.

What about working in Armenia?

This question brings tears to my eyes because this is my biggest dream. There is the HyeFest festival which has been something I have desired for many, many years. I know of other contemporary companies that have been there and for me, it would be a blessing. The work we do in staib-dance is all focused on the Armenian experience and to share this in my homeland with my people would be a gift. I could die a very happy man if this became an opportunity. I think about how proud my family would be.

Staib does not sound like an Armenian name.

Haha, yes. It is a German name, my father is of German descent and he met my mother in Tehran. My Armenian family name is Hovanessian and for a long time I thought about changing my name or using Hovanessian in the name of my company - but I could not find a way to make it work properly. Maybe one day?

What do you remember from Tehran and where are your ancestors from?

I remember so much from living there. All of my ancestors were there, I went to school there, I spoke Armenian, Farsi and remember feeling so connected to the land and the people. It will always be home for me - always. More specifically, my grandmother was born in India because

her family was there on business when she was born. My grandfather was born in Armenia, my mother and her sisters were all born in Isfahan. I love the incredible backgrounds of my family and am so proud of my heritage. Very proud.

Many choreographers of Armenian descent in some period of their career pay tribute to their roots. Have you already done so or it is expected?

The work of my company, especially for the last 12 years, has all been a tribute to my background, my people, my time in Tehran. In addition, we look at the intersection of my experiences in Iran and how they relate to the culture in the US. My most recent works have been focused on the Nowruz celebration, the Gregorian process of mourning the passing of a loved one the revolution in Iran and our migration to the US.

We are beginning our largest work to date and it is called “Ararat.” This piece is a tribute to the strength of the Armenian people, especially after scattering across the world following the genocide. It is a celebration of how our culture remains strong and beautiful especially after something so tragic.

All of my work involves music, text and physical ideas that belong to us. My work is also a way to put our traditions and ideas into contemporary forms and contemporary movements, which I think is rare for people like us from our part of the world. “Ararat” speaks to our triumph and our resilience. My goal is to perform this piece in Yerevan - and I will do anything to make it happen.

‘Gate to Heaven’ To Be Released in US in October

HEAVEN, from page 14

“Inglorious Basterds” in 2009 brought Sammel international recognition.

His other film credits include “Les Misérable du XX Siècle” for director Claude Lelouche; “Life is Beautiful” for director Roberto Benigni; the original “Taxi” written by Luc Besson; “Casino Royale” for director Martin Campbell; “Beauty and the Beast” opposite Vincent Cassel and Léa Seydoux for director Christophe Gans; and most recently McG’s “Three Days to Kill” opposite Kevin Costner.

“The most striking aspect of Avetisyan’s work is certainly the psychological depth of its main characters, in particular that of Robert and Sophia. Robert is a veteran in his field, incapable to achieve a good work-life balance, tremendously stubborn and characterized by a complex personality; meanwhile, Sophia is shown in all of her fragility and seems to believe in the healing power of music. Their romance is staged with no sugarcoating, but still with an adequate, credible level of tenderness and passion. In more general terms, the well-written lead characters are backed by solid interpretations and a good supporting cast. Worth mentioning in this respect are the performances from Sos Janibekyan (playing a local journalist accompanying Robert during his investigation), Leonidas Povedonoscevas (Sophia’s partner) and Benedict Freitag (Robert’s editor-in-chief), whose appearances — brief but incisive enough — contribute to disclose part of the two leads’ backstories.

“Gate to Heaven” was recently included



Scene from “Gate to Heaven”

in Be Epic! London International Film Festival held on September 2-3, as the opening film of the festival. It won in the category of “Best Cinematography.”

“Gate to Heaven” won “Best Production Design” and “Best Sound Mixer” on April 15, 2022, at the third Anahit Film Awards held by Armenian National Film Academy. In addition, the film won four awards at the Ontario International Film Festival (ONIFF) in Canada on October 24, 2021: “Best Sound,” “Best Music,” and “Best Script for the International Feature,” and “Best International Feature Film.”

The composer of the soundtrack, Michele Josia of Italy, received two awards for his beautifully composed soundtrack. Silver Medal – Outstanding Achievement – “Soundtrack for Film and Television” at the Global Music Awards, California, (U.S.). Michele’s second recognition comes as a finalist for “Best Score of the Month” at the TMA – American Tracks Music Award.



Sos Janibekyan

Avetisyan is currently working on two other two feature film projects, titled “Re-

vival” and “Black List,” which are currently in the development phase. “Revival” received international interest by the selection committee of Berlinale Talents, Berlin International Film Festival. Avetisyan was selected amongst 3,400 applicants to attend Berlinale Talents 2020.

“Black List” has been inspired by the life of Alexander Lapshin, a popular Russian-Israeli travel blogger who unwittingly found himself on Azerbaijan’s infamous Black List.

Avetisyan spent 38 days in the September 2020 Artsakh War, which began at the end of September and ceased on November 9, 2020. He spent a substantial amount of time documenting all the atrocities and war crimes committed against the Armenian population of Artsakh including his family. He will integrate these photos and videos in his future film projects.

His quest is to continue to tell these stories, bring awareness on Artsakh, and promote peace through the art of filmmaking.

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>

OCTOBER 8 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Los Angeles Chapter presents “An Evening of Armenian Music and Dance” about Soghomonian” on Saturday, October 8, 8:00 pm. Special guest appearance by Tsoghig Samuelian. Admission \$100. For reservations call or text 818.730.1100.

POSTPONED

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 14 – OCTOBER 14 — Opening Reception: Thursday, September 15, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Members Exhibition 2022, the upcoming exhibition at Mosesian Arts, Watertown, gives current members of the arts center an opportunity to showcase their work. What is surprising in this year’s exhibition is how many of the artists turned to nature for inspiration, for comfort, and reflection. <https://www.mosesianarts.org/>

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 18 — Join Holy Trinity Armenian Church for our annual picnic, from 12pm to 5pm! A delicious menu including Lamb Shish, Losh & Chicken Kebab, Eetch, Vegetarian Mezze Platter, Pastries, Armenian Delicacies, and Beverages. Enjoy live Armenian music with the Greg Krikorian Ensemble. A 50/50 raffle will take place. For more info please visit htaac.org/ or call 617-354-0632.

OCTOBER 2 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston will host its International Food Festival which from 12 noon to 3 p.m. For more information, see <https://htaac.org/>.

OCTOBER 8 – SAYAT NOVA DANCE COMPANY’S 35TH ANNIVERSARY PERFORMANCE. A must see show! Honoring our heritage and celebrating 35 years of preserving and promoting the Armenian culture. To be held at Regis College (Eleanor Welch Casey Theatre), Weston, MA. Show begins promptly at 7 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm). To purchase tickets and to see the seating chart and pricing, please click on buytickets.at/sayatnovadancecompany/753694. All tickets are final sale. No videography.

OCTOBER 9 — Sayat Nova Dance Company’s 35TH ANNIVERSARY GALA, celebrating 35 years of preserving and promoting Armenian culture. To be held at The Castle at Sheraton, 1657 Worcester Rd., Framingham, MA. 6 pm – Reception; 7 pm – Dinner and Program. Entertainment by popular singer GOHAR HOVHANNISYAN & BAND. Donation: \$150 for adults;

\$100 for 18 and under. RSVP by September 30. Tables of 10 guests highly encouraged. www.sayatnova.com/35th-anniversary

October 14-15 — St. James Armenian Church 75th Annual Bazaar – Our traditional two-day Bazaar is back! Fri 12-8 pm, Sat 11 am-7 pm. Delicious Armenian Food, Mezze, Pastries, and Baked Goods. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children’s Activities, Booths and Vendors. 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/bazaar.

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.

OCTOBER 29 — Save the Date: A Panel Discussion with Artists from “On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection. At the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. www.armenianmuseum.org/on-the-edge

NEW HAMPSHIRE

OCTOBER 2 — Shish Kebab Picnic – Sunday. The Ararat Armenian Congregational Church at 2 Salem St. Salem, NH will hold a shish kebab picnic Sunday, Oct. 2. A church service is at 10:30 a.m. followed by the picnic from noon to 4 p.m. Wildlife encounters for kids is at 2 p.m. The event includes food, live music, face painting, a bounce house and more. Meal tickets are \$20 at the door and include your choice of lamb or chicken, rice pilaf, vegetables, salad, hummus, tabouleh, pita bread and dessert. Free kids meals for children 12 and under. Free meal for the first 100 who attend the church service. For more information call Mary Ann @ 603-770-3375. All Tickets sold at door.

NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 15 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York Chapter is celebrating the diamond anniversary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association with a gala. Honoree will be Sen. Robert Menendez (R-N.J.) artist Tigran Asatryan and his band from Los Angeles will perform for the first time for the New York/New Jersey community. The gala dinner, taking place at the Terrace in Paramus, N.J. (293 Paramus Road), will include a sophisticated silent auction pieces as well as a variety of raffle items. For sponsorships or tickets, please contact Talia Bouldoukian (rsvptaliab@gmail.com or 917 238-3970) or Tamar Degirmenci (tiiaa20@aol.com, or 201 315-6486).

RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 1 — AHARI, the Armenian Historical Association of RI, is sponsoring an Open House, “Under the Tent”, at the museum on Saturday, Oct 1, 2022 from 1PM - 4 PM. celebrating its 5th Anniversary since its opening on 245 Waterman Street, Providence. It will be an interactive, informative and fun day. Bring old photos with Armenian script for translations. Live performances, dance instructions, refreshments and more. Chronicles’ oral histories. Free and open to the public. info@armenianhistorical-ri.org or 401-454-5111.

2022 Marked Return to Live Experience At Eastern Diocese’s Summer Camps

CAMP, from page 14
Evenings are filled with fun programs like Capture the Flag, Clue, Campfire, Talent Shows, Dances, and more.

Campers at St. Vartan Camp’s Session B in July had the special experience — unique in camp history — of a surprise visit from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

“There was an undeniable appreciation and thankfulness from the youngest camper to the eldest staff, for everything St. Vartan Camp in 2022,” said Fr. Stepanos Doudoukjian, the St. Vartan Camp Director at Session C. “This incredible gratitude was evident each day from the rising of the sun until the very last curfew. It seemed that in the summer of 2022, mealtime chants were louder, chapel prayers were more fervent, smiles were bigger and brighter, friendship bonds were stronger, and more tears shed

on the final day.”
He added: “All of this was possible because God surely blessed each of us, our camps, campers and staff with His abundant love and grace. Thank you God!”

The camp administrators, camp directors, and camp families thank the Dadourian Foundation and the Barbara Apisson Trust for their immense generosity for the funds they granted this summer, which went towards direct scholarships and offsetting a number of costs during the camp season that directly benefited the entire camp community.

The Eastern Diocese plans to announce its 2023 Summer Camp dates soon and launch registration early in 2023, so stay tuned for details. In the meantime, campers can relive the memories of summer 2022 by viewing online photo galleries.



Pictured here are participants in this summer’s Midwest Hye Camp session.



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COMMENTARY

EDITORIAL

Pelosi's Yerevan Visit Averted Full-Scale War



By Edmond Y.
Azadian

rendered marginal.

However, the timing of the US Congressional visit on September 17, headed by Speaker Pelosi, proved to be lifesaving for Armenia, because by all indications, the Azerbaijan-Turkey tandem was planning to launch a devastating blow to Armenia and achieve what Azerbaijan's leader Ilham Aliyev was publicly advocating, to open the Zangezur corridor by force.

Azerbaijan's president has learned from his overlord, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that you can take risks and challenge allies and escape unscathed.

Assessing the scale of aggression against Armenia, the damage to military and civilian infrastructure was heavy, a result of the flurry of logistical activities between Azerbaijan on one side and Turkey, Israel and Pakistan on the other. Indeed, intense activity, including military flights, preceded the attack on September 13. In particular, Silk Airways, owned by the Aliyev family, has been very busy carrying military hardware from Turkey and Israel. Those flights have been complemented by military air traffic from Pakistan.

To set the stage for a full-scale war, Turkey had concentrated troops on Armenia's borders and announced joint war games with Azerbaijan in the preceding weeks, replaying the exact same scenario that led to the devastating 2020 war against Armenia.

Azerbaijan, emboldened by its recent territorial gains in Armenia proper as well as Artsakh, has been convinced that further turmoil and wars in the region may provide opportunities for future adventures.

Azerbaijan in particular has set its sights on Iran's Azerbaijan province. This plan, of course, is in line with Turkey's policy of pan-Turanism, and Israel's policy of containing Tehran's nuclear ambitions, if necessary, by overthrowing the current regime or dismembering its territory.

We may dare to speculate that there was a bigger plan at play: to stage a mini-war against Armenia and thus create the cover for a larger-scale war against Iran.

The Biden Administration was on the verge of finalizing the nuclear deal with Iran, when the Israeli delegation arrived in Washington to stall the negotiations, probably threatening to sow discord.

Europe and the US had taken the calculated risk of securing energy from alternative sources in case Russia cut off gas supplies entirely and that included the Iranian prospects.

Incidentally, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's shameful trip to Baku to shower unwarranted compliments on the Azerbaijani autocrat at best will result in the generation of 2 percent of Europe's annual gas supplies. To do so in the wake of that country's open advocating for ethnic cleaning and support for attacking a sovereign country is indefensible.

Azerbaijan was resentful when the US designated Ambassador Philip Reeker as that country's co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. That ran counter to Aliyev's plans and statements that the Minsk Group has no further role to play, as he had solved the Karabakh impasse by force – trampling on one of the fun-

damental principles of OSCE's mission.

President Aliyev had planned his country's most recent attack carefully to coincide with Mr. Reeker's trip to Baku, to express his displeasure over the revival of the Minsk Group, which will come to haunt him with the unfinished business of the Karabakh conflict. That attack also intended to overshadow Pelosi's visit to Armenia.

Pelosi's two-day visit to Yerevan had its emotional and political dimensions. As for the emotional one, her visit to the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Martyr's Monument, with tears flowing down her face, sent a powerful message, especially when one is reminded of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Biden Administration. She wants American-Armenian voters to remember that a Democratic administration had their backs, at the next US elections.

On the political level, the visit sent a stern warning to Azerbaijan that the laissez-faire days of the Trump era are over, when then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo gave the green light to Baku at the start of the 2020 war by stating, "We hope Armenians can defend themselves."

Both Speaker Pelosi and Secretary of State Antony Blinken clearly indicated that the aggressor was Azerbaijan and that Baku had to withdraw its forces from occupied Armenian territories.

Armenians were excited regarding their expectations from the US. When asked if the US can supply arms to Armenia, Ms. Pelosi was very deft and gave an anticipated diplomatic answer: "We are here to find out what Armenia wants," as if she was not aware that a defeated nation needs both political support as well as modern weaponry.

Pelosi used Armenia as a launching pad to snipe at Russia in reference to the Ukraine war. When she spoke before the Khanjian mural of Vartanank at the Cafesjian Center and referred to brave Christian Armenian warriors defending their nation, rightly or wrongly this was considered by some Armenian analysts an indirect reference to today's Iran, which they considered a faux pas, especially as the Iranians 1,500 years ago were not even Muslims (and today's Iran has good

relations with Armenia).

One of the fallouts of this visit was to embolden the Western-leaning political forces in Armenia to stage rallies demanding that Armenia leave the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a defense structure headed by Russia that has become a mockery in diplomatic circles as a toothless organization, duping Armenians that they can base their country's defense on it.

Even the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan, said openly that Armenia can't rely on the CSTO for its defense and military needs.

The war in 2020, as gruesome as it was, did not receive much attention on the global political radar. This time around, Pelosi's visit and the assertive US role in the region have amplified the conflict's reverberations.

The United Nations Security Council has been debating the issue and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan just met with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov, through the good offices of Antony Blinken.

Emotional euphoria has to calm down and give way to sober political planning. The US's political "invasion" of the Caucasus, traditionally considered Russia's zone of influence, may still generate some resentment and political repercussions, as expressed in the sarcastic remarks of Russian leader Vladimir Putin's spokesman. In a call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that a "quiet and businesslike approach" to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict would bear fruit, calling Pelosi's actions and visit "loud."





COMMENTARY

Urgent Demand For National Defense Strategy

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian C.M.

We would hardly be unveiling a national secret by announcing that the entire Armenian nation, extending from the motherland of Armenia and wounded Artsakh all the way to the vastly dispersed diaspora, lives today in a deep state of uncertainty and insecurity.

Emboldened by its military success and Turkish collaborators, Azerbaijan does not miss a chance to keep Armenia under the threat of random border attacks, which heighten further the Armenian national anxiety as they remain frustratingly unsanctioned.

The tragic end of the infamous 44 days war of Artsakh has unveiled the weaknesses of our nation, which experienced an obviously unjustified euphoria, initially stimulated by the proclamation of independence in 1991.

Armenians rushed to celebrate but forgot that the independence of 1991, just like the earlier one of 1918, was handed to us as the result of major political developments around Armenia, rather than being the result of any hard-won armed struggle. Independence has been taken for granted rather than treasured as a precious gift to be constantly defended and protected by a vigilant national defense system. As a matter of the highest national priority, such a defense system should have been carefully and constantly improved and maintained at a state of perpetual readiness.

Suddenly and painfully, the 44-day war revealed that all regimes after independence, including the current one, had irresponsibly neglected to implement the vital components of a core national security and defense strategy.

We cannot escape the urge to make a comparison with Israel, even as we are fully aware of the big differences in the scale of available resources. Even so, it must be noted that compared to Armenia in 1991, Israel was actually in a far worse situation when it became independent in 1948. It had then a meager population of hardly a million Jews in a poor and backward desert land, surrounded by many millions of well-armed sworn enemies, all deeply motivated by the perceived holy purpose of annihilating that fledgling newborn Jewish state.

Today Israel is unquestionably an internationally respected modern and first-rate model country, with a ten-fold larger population than at its founding. It has a first-class economy and an industrial and scientific network

wherein the defense-dedicated component is at such a high level that it is coveted by the biggest nations of the world. The one obvious lesson to be learned is that from its very first day of existence, Israel wisely made its defense preparedness a top national priority. Its entire population, male and female, is invariably trained and ready at the spur of a moment to take up arms and defend itself and its land against any aggressor. Israeli universities and institutions are prolific providers of the human resources that have turned their defense industry into the envy of the entire world.

Anticipating the usual protest and arguments of Armenian wisemen, every time a comparison of Armenia with Israel is attempted to be made, let us once more admit that Armenia is not Israel and Armenians are not Jews in terms of their numbers in the world as well as their comparative economic potential and resources. On the other hand, with the same concern for fairness, we must admit that Armenia and the Armenians have had, and still have now, enough potential to aspire to reaching at least a respectable fraction of the overall Israeli success.

Yet Armenia today is very distant from attaining even such a modest objective. The mistakes that have been committed, which continue in Armenia today, need to be pointed out loud and clear, and stigmatized, in order to pave the path for immediate effective measures for corrections to be undertaken as urgent national priorities.

In 1991, post-Soviet Armenia had a population of over three million living in a fully developed country, inheriting as part of the Soviet world superpower an advanced industry backed by an educational and scientific network of institutions of high international caliber. Thirty years later, as a result of sustained emigration, its population is now reduced to well below its original level, instead of at the least doubling in size. The thirty long years of precious nation-building opportunity after independence was wasted. During that time, the steady plunder of Armenia's intellectual and material national wealth was permitted and even encouraged.

The disdain shown by independent Armenia's top leadership towards sciences, research and higher education, coupled with the associated neglect of any planned development of advanced technology and industry, has led to the catastrophic brain drain from Armenia, to the benefit of many advanced countries of the West. Nowadays it is quite common in Europe or in America to come across Armenian names among the top-level personnel of highly respected educational or research institutions and industries. Many of these individuals are immigrants from independent Armenia.

At the same time, we hear laments from the equivalent prestigious institutions in Armenia, rightfully complaining that year after year they are left with unfilled positions for students in advanced studies as well as for young talents in teaching and research.

It is shocking to learn in recent news from Armenia that while we are justifiably so critically concerned about Armenia's need for a strong national defense system and strategy, particularly in the past two years, even the meager national budget allocated for defense has been "underspent." Evidently, some substantial fraction of the allocated sums was "returned" in order to be spent on "other needs" of the country!

A true uproar concerning this situation is well justified. It certainly is not necessarily a matter of being for or against one politician or political party or another. It reflects the unpardonably incompetent management of the country's resources for many years now. This is an unmistakably suicidal calamity for the future of our nation!

Armenians must demand that Armenia's current authorities proceed rapidly to plan and implement a national security strategy. Such a strategy must be based on an immediate effort to upgrade and finance the institutions of higher learning in all areas, but more specifically in the fields of teaching and research related to advanced defense technologies. Companies involved in the latter must be prioritized and helped in terms of finances, equipment and human resources.

All this implies the ready availability and wise allocation of substantial financial resources. As a starter, resources that are already available should be promptly and wisely used and certainly not returned, ridiculously, for other uses. Next is the need to structure a targeted nationwide program of financial backing of this vital necessity for the survival of our nation.

Way back in October 2020, in an open letter appropriately addressed and delivered to Prime Minister Pashinyan, I proposed the launch of Armenia Reconstruction Funding Bonds to which all Armenians can contribute as an instrument of real investment in the present and future of their motherland, over and above and beyond any outright donation. Such a program has the potential of raising funds at the needed scale of billions of dollars. It is significant to note that that the *Armenian Mirror Spectator* article about Armenia Bonds generated at the time a very positive response from all, including even quite unexpected corners of the world. There was only the prominent exception of the office of Mr. Pashinyan, from which no response whatsoever was registered.

Without commenting further on this, today the reconstruction or the prosperity of our motherland is not just a wishful goal. It is a necessity for its very survival.

Beyond all the various diplomatic instruments which must be carefully crafted and maintained, Armenia must immediately develop and implement a world-class, effective self-defense system.

In addition to Armenia and Artsakh, the neglected vast potential of the Armenian diaspora must be wisely organized and used.

Let it be clear, however, that all this is the prime duty of the Armenian authorities themselves.

Silence on the Eve of Azerbaijan's New Aggression: Vladivostok's Eastern Economic Forum

By Lt. General Hayk Kotanjian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On September 7, 2022, President Vladimir Putin provided international legal argumentation for the legitimacy of self-determination of Kosovo during his speech at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia, after the speech of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. The relevance of this argumentation is due to its applicability to the issue of self-determination of Crimea, Donbas, and Nagorno-Karabakh in the context of the genocidal wars in Ukraine and Artsakh, and the new aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Armenia on September 13, 2022.

In connection with the particular importance of this brief and, at the same time, precise international legal argumentation, I would like to provide an authentic transcript of this fragment in its entirety: "The UN Charter has a provision about the right of nations to self-determination. During the Kosovo crisis, the International Court of Justice ruled that if a portion of a territory, a portion of a country chooses to declare independence, it does not have to ask the central government of that country for permission. This was the case in Kosovo. Is the situation with the Donetsk Republic and the Lugansk Republic not the same? It is the same."

Our comparative analysis of the Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts presented during a hearing

at the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Scientific and Expert Council and at the international conference "Dynamics of Regional Security in the South Caucasus" in the fall of 2011 (<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/1469195.html>) confirms the undeniable applicability to the situation around Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) of the arguments of President Putin, the leader of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-chair country.

In continuation of President Putin's comments on the self-determination of Kosovo, the prime minister of Armenia had every reason to appeal to the president of Russia as the head of a OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair country with a call to consider the possibility of using reprisals against Azerbaijan as a violator of one of the main principles of the conflict settlement put forward by the co-chairs – the principle of non-use of force and threat by force. The prime minister of Armenia, relying on the commentary of President Putin, had to make this statement concerning the initiator of the genocidal war against the legally self-determined NKR, unleashed in violation of international legal principles. We are talking about the principles that were present in almost all documents on Nagorno-Karabakh adopted at the level of the heads of co-chair states, including the president of the Russian Federation.

An additional reason for addressing from the rostrum of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok the OSCE

Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship represented by the president of Russia on the use of international legal reprisals against Azerbaijan could be the fact of involvement in the genocidal aggression against the NKR of thousands of terrorists from organizations banned in Russia, which are part of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The basis for this could be the official statements of the director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and the president of France.

In conclusion, I consider it necessary to support the bewilderment of colleagues from the scientific and expert community due to the lack of response of the prime minister of the Republic of Armenia to the international legal commentary of the president of Russia on self-determination concerning the example of Kosovo. The puzzlement of colleagues by the silence of the Armenian prime minister, who was present at that same time, is due to the apparent demand for the announcement of the above common truth, which is that the recognition of Kosovo's independence is based on the model of identifying and resolving the Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship.

Lieutenant General Hayk Kotanjian (retired) is a Doctor of Political Science, Professor in State Security and Strategic Studies (Russian Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation) and International Counterterrorism Fellow (US National Defense University).



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijan's Massive Attack Puts the World's Spotlight on Armenia

During last week's massive attack on Armenia's eastern border by Azerbaijan's military, over 200 Armenian soldiers and civilians were killed. In addition, the Republic of Armenia lost additional territories to Azerbaijan.

This unprovoked Azeri attack comes on the heels of the 44-day war in 2020 when Azerbaijan occupied most of Artsakh and killed thousands of Armenian soldiers.

Since then, Azerbaijan has been regularly attacking the Armenian population of Artsakh as well as the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. Azerbaijan's military penetrated Armenia's border on May 12, 2021 and is still there.

Facing a politically and militarily weak Armenia, Azerbaijan with the support of Turkey is applying increased pressure to extort further concessions, which include the elimination of the remnants of Artsakh Armenians and occupation of more of Armenia's territories. In addition, Azerbaijan repeatedly insists that Armenia accept what it calls "the Zangezur Corridor," which implies Azeri sovereignty over the planned road across Armenia from Azerbaijan to its enclave of Nakhichevan.

While Armenia's Prime Minister continually announces his desire to sign a peace treaty with Azerbaijan and open the border with Turkey, these two hostile countries persist in issuing threats to achieve their demands by force.

Armenia expects to be protected by CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) composed of Armenia, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. CSTO is a mutual defense treaty that requires all members to protect any one of them from attack by an outside power. The CSTO did not defend Artsakh during the 2020 war, because it was not a part of Armenia. Even though last week's attack was clearly on the territory of Armenia, CSTO did not come to Armenia's defense. Due to the engagement of Russian forces in Ukraine, President Putin neither wishes nor is capable of sending his troops to a second war front. On the contrary, Russia is doing everything possible to maintain good relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, which are much more important to Russia than Armenia, particularly at a time when Russia is isolated from the Western world. Last week, President of Russia Vladimir Putin, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev along with several other leaders gathered at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's summit

meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Armenians were disheartened to watch the videos of a profusely friendly meeting between Putin and Aliyev, and a walk by Putin and Erdogan while holding hands. For the first time, several high-ranking members of the Armenian government expressed their disappointment in CSTO's inactive stand, at a time when Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is the current Chairman of the CSTO Collective Security Council.

Two of Armenia's neighboring countries indicated their mutually contradictory positions after Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia. Iran amassed its troops on Armenia's Southern border and repeatedly declared that it is unacceptable to alter by force the Iran-Armenia border. Turkey, on the other hand, massed its troops on Armenia's western border after many high-ranking Turkish officials expressed their support for Azerbaijan and falsely condemned Armenia for initiating an attack on Azerbaijan.

Armenians were pleased that the international community finally started paying attention to Azerbaijan's attacks on Armenia. At the invitation of France and the request of Armenia, the United Nations Security Council held two meetings last week, one open and the other closed, to discuss Azerbaijan's attack on Armenia. Armenians had been unhappy that the world's attention was focused exclusively on the war in Ukraine, ignoring Armenia's plight. All 15 members of the UN Security Council (France, India, Albania, Gabon, Norway, Ireland, Kenya, China, Mexico, Ghana, Brazil, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, and Russia), in addition to Armenia and Azerbaijan, delivered remarks on the fighting. Only the United States and France described the situation as an attack inside Armenia's borders. The rest of the Council members urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to end their hostilities without naming Azerbaijan as the aggressor.

The other positive development was the surprise visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States to Armenia along with three other pro-Armenian members of Congress. Given the disappointment with the inaction of Russia and CSTO, Armenians welcomed the Speaker warmly who carried a very supportive message, condemning Azerbaijan for its attack on Armenia. Pelosi, the highest ranking U.S. official to ever visit Armenia, was seen with tears in her eyes at the Armenian Genocide Memorial. She also visited the Parliament, held a press conference, and met with the Defense Minister and Prime Minister Pashinyan.

It is a welcome development to expand Armenia's relations with as many supportive countries as possible. However, there is no substitute to Armenia being able to defend itself by strengthening its own military. No one else will do that for Armenia. Armenians have to give up the belief that an outside power, whether Russians or Americans, will save them. No one has and no one will.

Why Azerbaijan Launched a New War and What Armenia Should Do

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On September 13, Azerbaijan launched a new war against Armenia in multiple directions, shelling military and civilian infrastructure and seeking to advance into the Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and Gegharkunik regions. Everyone following the developments in Armenia – Azerbaijan relations expected the escalation; however, the scope of hostilities was unprecedented and went beyond that of the April 2016 four-day war. After two days of active hostilities, Armenia and Azerbaijan reached a ceasefire on September 14. Armenia applied to Russia, the US, France, the UN Security Council, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The UN Security Council held two meetings on the issue with both closed and open debates, while the CSTO sent a special mission to Armenia to assess the situation and prepare a special report for the heads of CSTO member states. There are conflicting narratives on which state played a decisive role in securing a ceasefire – Russia or the US. However, both were instrumental in seeking to end hostilities. According to Armenian official data, Azerbaijan made significant advances toward Jermuk, the resort city in the Vayots Dzor region, while its success in other directions were quite limited. As of the morning of September 17, Armenia confirmed 135 deaths among its soldiers, stating that the number would grow further. There were casualties among the civilian population too. Azerbaijan confirmed 77 deaths among its armed forces.

What was the reason behind the Azerbaijani decision to start a new war against Armenia? Just two weeks before this latest offensive, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders met in Brussels to discuss how to move forward toward the signature of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On August 30, the Armenia-Azerbaijan border delimitation and demarcation commission met in Moscow. Apparently, Azerbaijan was not satisfied with the results of the meeting and

decided to punish Armenia and force it to take some steps.

Azerbaijan has two main demands from Armenia — to accept the Azerbaijani position that no Nagorno Karabakh exists anymore and to provide a corridor via the Syunik region to reach Nakhichevan from Azerbaijan proper. Azerbaijan views the realization of the first demand through the signing of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty with no mention of Nagorno Karabakh. Thus, Azerbaijan does not demand Armenia drop any discussion about the autonomous status of Nagorno Karabakh within Azerbaijan. Baku wants Armenia to explicitly state that there is no territorial administrative unit named Nagorno Karabakh.

The external players involved in the geopolitics of the South Caucasus have different views on this issue. The European Union (EU) and the US support this vision and advise Armenia to sign a peace treaty without mentioning Nagorno Karabakh. They promise to work with Azerbaijan to secure the rights of the Armenian ethnic minority in Azerbaijan afterward and prevent the ethnic cleansing of Armenians. Simultaneously, they promise Armenia to protect its internationally recognized borders from further Azerbaijani attacks. However, the main driver behind this approach is the US and the EU's intention to push Russian peacekeepers from Nagorno Karabakh after the expiration of their mandate in November 2025. If Armenia agrees that no Nagorno Karabakh exists and establishes peace with Azerbaijan, it will be challenging for Russia to justify the deployment of its troops in Nagorno Karabakh. The US and the EU view the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Nagorno Karabakh as a necessary step toward decreasing Russian influence in the South Caucasus, which is a strategic priority for them given Russia-West ongoing war.

The Kremlin understands the potential dangers of a Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty not mentioning Nagorno Karabakh. Meanwhile, Russia is interested in regional stability and understands that a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan will contribute to normalizing the situation. As a possible solution, Russia proposed the inclusion of a special article on Nagorno Karabakh in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty, which will declare that this issue is not solved. It will note that it shall be solved during future negotiations without providing a concrete timeframe and modalities. Azerbaijan rejects this approach and demands a peace treaty without mentioning Nagorno Karabakh at all.

The second demand of Azerbaijan is the establishment of a corridor via the Syunik region with no Armenian control. Theoretically, Azerbaijan may agree to Russian control

over the routes, making routes via Syunik similar to the Lachin corridor which connects Armenia with Nagorno Karabakh. Armenia rejects this demand and insists that Armenia should implement border and customs control according to national laws.

In the corridor case, the US and the EU support the Armenian vision as they do not want Russia to have exclusive control over these routes. Let us not forget that these routes will not connect only Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan but also Azerbaijan with Turkey, Russia with Turkey, and even China with Europe via the middle corridor (China-Kazakhstan-Caspian Sea-Azerbaijan-Armenia-Turkey-Europe). Russia is interested in having these routes as an additional connection with Turkey. However, Russia does not want to see these routes as an alternative China – Europe connection circumventing Russia. Thus, Russia calls for the restoration of communications and wants to have control over them, either with Armenia or without. An Azerbaijan – Turkey corridor without any Russian control is detrimental to Russian interests.

In contrast, Russian control will give the Kremlin leverage over Azerbaijan and Turkey and the possibility of controlling the flow of goods. The November 10, 2020, trilateral statement envisages the Russian border troops' control over the traffic between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan. It gives Russia an advantage, as both Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the statement. Meanwhile, the US and the EU are interested in restoring communications, including routes from Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan via Syunik, but with no Russian involvement.

So, by launching the new war against Armenia, Azerbaijan would like to force Armenia to realize these two primary demands. The key for Armenia is the fact that both demands are strategically crucial for Azerbaijan. It will not drop its demand for a corridor if Armenia agrees to forget about Nagorno Karabakh and signs a peace treaty with Azerbaijan without mentioning Nagorno Karabakh. Armenia should be cautious not to put itself into that trap, hoping that satisfying Azerbaijan on the Karabakh issue will free Armenia of further problems related to establishing the corridor. The September 14 statement of the Armenian Prime Minister in Parliament that he might sign a document which would provide security for internationally recognized territories of Armenia, but many would call him a traitor, suggested that the Armenian government was ready to accept the Azerbaijani demand for a peace treaty. Probably, the Armenian

see WAR, page 20

Azadian Meets with Catholicos of All Armenians, Former President Ter Petrosyan In Armenia

YEREVAN — Edmond Y. Azadian, the president of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, who is also the senior editorial columnist for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, held several meetings last week while on a working visit to Armenia and discussed both cultural issues and the current situation in the country.

In a meeting which lasted more than one and a half hours with the first president of Armenia Levon Ter Petrosyan, Azadian asserted to Ter Petrosyan that history has finally come to justify his proposal concerning Artsakh. The former president replied: “I am not happy that today that plan has been justified. How satisfied and happy the Armenians of Artsakh and all Armenians in general would have been if that solution had been implemented in time!”

When Azadian met with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, the latter expressed his profound sadness over the recent losses, and expressed his willingness to place at the disposition of the authorities all the means of the Mother See in order to help solve the current crisis, although his desire has not been responded to.



Edmond Azadian with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II



Edmond Azadian, at left, seated with former president Levon Ter Petrosyan

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Condemns The Azerbaijani Attack

STATEMENT, from page 1

When the sovereignty of any country is in question, first of all, the UN and relevant bodies should counter the existing danger not only by supporting the victim in question, but also by maintaining their principles of the maintenance of harmony and peace between nations.

In this connection, we welcome the initiative of the French authorities to place this alarming incident on the agenda of the UN Security Council, and we also welcome the decision of the Security Council of Armenia to apply to the UN, the Russian Federation and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to halt this aggression.

Armenia, as a full member of the CSTO, has the right to make use of its membership, while the CSTO in turn, remaining faithful to its principles, must make a distinction between Armenia, its member, and the latter’s enemy.

Finally, it is time to create internal unity among the people of Armenia, as well as within state structures. The position of the parliamentary opposition, which does not join the majority in condemnation of the Azerbaijani attack, is both incomprehensible and reprehensible.

Compatriots and friends, when the sovereignty of Armenia is in danger, it means that the alarm bell has been sounded for pan-national mobilization.

Today, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party calls on all Armenians to unite in the spirit of Sardarabad and collectively face the Azerbaijani threat.

Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
Boston
September 13, 2022

Why Azerbaijan Launched a New War and What Armenia Should Do

WAR, from page 19

government hopes that Azerbaijan will drop its demands for the corridor or that the US and the EU will force Azerbaijan to do that. The negative reaction among society and the large-scale rally in front of parliament gathered immediately after the speech forced the prime minister to renounce his statement publicly.

As the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers are going to meet again by the end of September to discuss the peace treaty, the Armenian government thinks about accepting Azerbaijani demands on Karabakh, hoping to “save Armenia.” However, as already mentioned, implementing Azerbaijani demands on Karabakh and signing a peace treaty will not make Azerbaijan drop its demands for the corridor. This step will only accelerate the loss of Karabakh while making Azerbaijan bolder in its further demands on Armenia. The realistic way to save Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh is not a policy of appeasement. Instead, the Armenian government should concentrate its efforts on two primary issues — buying basic anti-drone capabilities and medium-range missiles. It will narrow the military power gap between Armenia and Azerbaijan and significantly reduce Azerbaijani possibilities to implement the strategy of coercive diplomacy. The dilemma that Armenia will lose either Nagorno Karabakh or Nagorno Karabakh plus Syunik, and therefore it should choose the first option and lose Karabakh, is false. Any strategy based on this narrative will lead Armenia to complete catastrophe and sooner or later transform Armenia into a client state of the Azerbaijan–Turkey alliance.



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