

# EU Observer Mission Agreed Upon, as Pashinyan and Aliyev Meet in Prague

By Ani Avetisyan and Ismi Aghayev

The European Union (EU) will deploy a civilian observer mission to the Armenia–Azerbaijan border, less than a month after a deadly war between the two countries.

The agreement was reached at a meeting between Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, French President Emmanuel Macron, and EU Council President Charles Michel in Prague on Thursday, October 6.

According to Michel, the mission will be deployed for a maximum of two months and will be stationed on the Armenian side of the border.

On the sidelines of the EU Leaders Summit in Prague on Thursday, Pashinyan also held bilateral meetings with both Aliyev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It was the first meeting between an Armenian and Turkish leader since Erdoğan met Serzh Sargsyan in 2010 in Washington.



Pashinyan meeting Erdoğan in Prague on 6 October 2022. Official photo.



Council President Charles Michel, Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Prague on 6 October 2022. Photo: primeminister.am.

Following the meetings, Erdoğan said that as soon as Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a peace treaty, “we will open our borders, gates, air, roads and railways.”

Following the meetings, Ali-

yev also confirmed that Azerbaijani authorities were negotiating directly with the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh.

“We plan to intensify consultations within the framework of our foreign policy bloc, as well as to continue informal relations with the representatives of the Armenian population of Karabakh”, Aliyev said.

During Thursday’s meetings, both sides reportedly agreed to recognize each other’s territorial integrity.

## A U-turn for Azerbaijan

The deployment of the EU mission follows a 2-day war that broke out on September 13 when Azerbaijani forces launched attacks along much of their shared border, taking positions within Armenia and leaving around 300 dead.

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## Blinken Again Talks to Armenian, Azeri Leaders

WASHINGTON (Azatutyun) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken again praised Armenia and Azerbaijan for taking “positive steps” towards peace when he spoke with the leaders of the two states by phone on Monday, October 10.

Blinken phoned Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev four days after their latest talks held in Prague in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and European Union chief Charles Michel.

“Secretary Blinken expressed appreciation for the positive steps Azerbaijan and Armenia are taking towards reaching a sustainable peace agreement, including recent direct talks between the foreign ministers and leaders,” State Department Spokesman Ned Price said in a statement on his call with Aliyev.

“He underlined the importance of discussions about the rights and securities for the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh and the need for both sides to maintain the cease-fire and focus on a negotiated agreement as the only path to a lasting peace,” added Price.

According to the Armenian government, Blinken and Pashinyan discussed the results of the Prague summit and agreed on the importance of negotiating an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty based on recognition of each other’s territorial integrity.

Aliyev said in the Czech capital that the conflicting sides are inching closer to such a treaty. It could be signed before the end of this year, he said.

The United States has been at the forefront of international efforts to ease see BLINKEN, page 3



Prisoners doing calisthenics before a bust of Stalin in “Amerikatsi”

## Michael Goorjian’s ‘Amerikatsi’ Art Film Wryly Presents Message of Hope

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — A full-feature art film made in Armenia is a treat, as post-independence cinema suffered a decline from its status in the Soviet period. “Amerikatsi” (meaning “American” in Armenian) is a new trilingual film (with English, Russian and Armenian dialogue) that is the exception proving the rule. It is a nearly two-hour-long movie filmed in Armenia but with a cast drawn from around the world. It presents Soviet Armenia through the eyes of a fictional repatriate from the United States, an Armenian Genocide survivor as a child, in the late 1940s. He ends up in prison and views life unfolding outside only through a narrow hole in the prison wall.

Emmy-Award winning actor and director Michael Andranik Goorjian, based in San Francisco, wrote the script, directed the film, and starred in it as the main character, the repatriate Charlie. He said, “One of my main goals was to try to do see FILM, page 14

## Armenia’s Champion in World Court, Yeghishe Kirakosyan, Speaks in Massachusetts

By Harry Kezelian  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — On Thursday, September 22, the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) sponsored a talk by Dr. Yeghishe Kirakosyan about the current sustained attacks against Armenia.

Kirakosyan, who was introduced by his colleague Karnig Kerkonian, is the representative of the Republic of Armenia to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). As such he is the leader of a team of lawyers and experts who are representing Armenia in the arena of international law,



pursuing a legal case against Azerbaijan for human rights violations. Kerkonian is also a member of this team.

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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

## CoE Wants 'Precise Information' on Armenian POWs' Execution

STRASBOURG (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic Buric has sent a letter to Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, requesting to provide "detailed and precise information on the measures taken by the Azerbaijani authorities" regarding a video depicting the execution of Armenian POWs by the Azerbaijani military.

In a letter dated October 10, Buric weighed in on footage showing the murder of the Armenian servicemen who were taken captive during Azerbaijan's

"Considering the alarming and shocking reports received recently, I feel obliged to request from your Ministry detailed and precise information on the measures taken by the Azerbaijani authorities regarding allegations under Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights," the CoE Secretary General said in her letter. "I refer to recent video footage allegedly depicting extreme violence against Armenian prisoners of war, including extrajudicial killings."

## Yerevan to Host Global Forum against Genocide

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The fourth Global Forum Against the Crime titled "Prevention of genocide in the era of new technologies" will be held in Yerevan on December 12-13, the Foreign Ministry announced.

The forum focuses on the prevention of genocide in the era of new technologies. It will address the challenges, opportunities and perspectives of utilizing new technologies for the prevention of genocide.

## Human Rights Defender Office Publishes Report on Border Communities

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Conditioned by the vulnerable situation created for the residents of border communities in Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces as a result of the military attack by the Azerbaijani armed forces on September 27, 2020, the working groups led by the Human Rights Defender visited Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces in July-August 2022, the Office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia reported.

The results of the fact-finding activities as well as the recommendations of the Human Rights Defender were published this week.

The report should have been published at the end of September, but the attack on September 12-13 changed the situation, causing the need for more urgent response activities for the Defender's Office.

Despite this, the facts analyzed in different chapters of the Report, point out the use of lasting and continuous psychological pressures by the Azerbaijani armed forces against the residents of border communities and gross violations of the property rights of civilians, especially in the Gegharkunik province.

# Artsakh Foreign Minister Babayan Assesses US Trip as Positive

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN, MA — Foreign Minister of the Republic of Artsakh David Babayan completed a brief visit to the United States at the end of September, accompanied by Lernik Hovhannisyan, Artsakh Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and Robert Avetisyan, Artsakh Permanent Representative to the United States and Canada. During the visit, Babayan visited Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles.

Speaking before his return to Artsakh, he said that though some time was necessary to understand the long-term outcomes of the trip, "in general, the results are already really positive. We met with local Armenian compatriots and diasporan organizations. You know that the Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora trinity is at the heart of our state-building process and foreign policy. Within this context, it was a very important visit because we cemented our ties further and we think that such contacts are very important, especially taking into consideration the role of the Armenian-American community in the development of Artsakh and Armenia, and its active role in defending our national interests in the US and globally."

In addition to meeting American-Armenians, he said, "The second layer of the trip was relations with and interactions with US political, public and analytical circles. We consider this to be very expedient because we have to understand the current reality and see the reality as it is, not to look at it with rose-colored spectacles. We need to know what to expect, what to anticipate."

While Babayan was unwilling to reveal any specifics, proclaiming his slogan to be "Be quiet, work more," he did say that the trip allowed explaining the Artsakh position to American circles and pointing out the destructive policy of Turkey. He said,

at the expense of the other. It would be a catastrophe for us, not only geopolitical but internal. Look, we are a diasporic people. More Armenians live outside our historic lands than inside."

He continued that with such large Armenian communities in many countries, we do not want to cause problems for any of them, and Armenians must maintain unity. He said, "There are only two people who can afford to keep normal, very close fraternal relations with many countries which even have problems with each other. They are the Armenian and Jewish peoples. If we don't do this, it means that we lack either professionalism or patriotism. We should be very, very wise here not to become a battlefield of great powers, because we do not have the resources to even survive in this case."

Aside from maintaining close relations with these countries, he suggested that there must be some geopolitical "specialization" in the region. He explained: "For example, we can't envisage the future of Artsakh without Russian peacekeepers because they are the only component which can maintain relative peace and stability in the region and somehow contain Azerbaijan. This is the reality. If there are no Russian peacekeepers there will be no Artsakh. Consequently, anybody who is against Russia on the Armenian side, saying bad things about Russia, is actually doing the same thing against Artsakh and Armenia."

Similarly, he said that Artsakh would envision strong US involvement through the

the wrong signals to the Russians. He said, "Who is going to suffer from that? I don't think that the Azerbaijanis or Turks will suffer. We have to be really wise. Our country



Artsakh Foreign Minister David Babayan giving a speech at a September 19 Capitol Hill event Salute to Artsakh's Independence, cosponsored by the US Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of the US (Eastern Region)

is entering maybe the most difficult period of its history. I don't think that we have the right or luxury to target any country."

He concluded that in any case, "In the 2020 war, we were not defeated by Turks and Azerbaijanis. We were defeated by ourselves."

In connection with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's recent statements that it might be possible to have a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan not dealing with Artsakh, he declared, "We are not against any peace treaties, whether between Armenia and Azerbaijan, or Armenia and Turkey. Who can be against peace treaties? The problem is the price of such peace treaties. We think there could not be any peace treaty at the expense of recognizing Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan, or a peace treaty with Turkey refuting the 1915 genocide. It will lead to catastrophe and we will lose our statehood."

He stressed, "Artsakh has no future in Azerbaijan. It has only one future: destruction and genocide. After the destruction of Artsakh, there will be no Armenia. Do not cherish any hope that it could somehow guarantee security."

Babayan stressed that as a nation, not only military defense but a correct foreign policy are necessary. Meanwhile, he said, "We have to be both realists and optimists at the same time, because this is the basis for success. What we have to do now is to recover from this devastating war, to construct houses and apartments for refugees and internally displaced people, and to provide jobs. There are some very large-scale projects taking place in Artsakh, and hundreds of houses and apartments have already been constructed. The state adopted a project to finish that in maybe two or three years. After that, the social situation will somehow be stabilized. But we will also need to conduct very profound economic reforms in order to accommodate to the new situation."

He said that the assistance of the entire Armenian nation, in Armenia and diaspora, was needed for this effort. He singled out the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund as one of the most organized pan-Armenian structures. Despite some criticisms of it and difficulties, he said, "What we have to do is to make it very effective again, and cement the three parts of the world organization, Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora."



From left, Artsakh Permanent Representative to the US and Canada Robert Avetisyan, Artsakh Foreign Minister David Babayan, Congressman Adam Schiff, and Artsakh Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Lernik Hovhannisyan in a meeting on September 25 in Washington

"We also got a general impression, and to some extent even precise data – a picture of possible developments...meetings gave us answers to many, many questions."

When asked how he interpreted the recent indications of greater US involvement in the Caucasus, he replied: "Every great country has a role to play in the region, and they are playing it actually. But here I would like to underline one crucial point. We don't have to choose between the US and Russia, or any other country. We don't have to develop relations with one of them

containment of Turkey. He said, "There is only one country in the world that can still contain Turkey by political means, and that is the United States. This window of opportunity is narrowing at a really rapid pace. In 2-3 years, Turkey will be an independent geopolitical player." He compared Turkey with Hitler's Germany, tricking both the West and the Soviets, and turning into a major world danger.

Babayan added that those who consider Russia at fault in the 2020 war for not saving the Armenians were wrong and were giving





## ARMENIA

# TCA Board Member Meets Displaced Teachers from School in Berdzor

By Arto Manoukian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator/Abaka

YEREVAN — On October 1, Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Central Board member Arto Manoukian met with members of the administrative and teaching staff of the Tekeyan Berdzor School who after the evacuation of the town now are living in Yerevan at the TCA Center on Koghbatsi Street. The meeting was arranged by TCA Representative in Armenia Gayane Muratyan and former Berdzor School principal Anahit Kosakyan.

Manoukian spoke about the various TCA programs in the Republic of Armenia, including the aid to four schools through the Sponsor a Teacher program, the Tekeyan Awards in various fields of arts and culture, and book publications.

The seventeen female teachers spoke about their difficulties. They are asking for an increase in their pensions. The Ministry of Education has various administrative demands that appear to be obstructing their path to suitable employment in Armenia. The majority of the teachers remain unemployed and those who did find jobs after resettling in Armenia were not even able to pay the rent for their habitations because the rate of pay was so low.

The teachers spoke in a patriotic way about the program to repopulate Artsakh. They went to Berdzor and prepared talented students, but the 44-day war of 2020 forced them to return to Yerevan emptyhanded. They have been displaced twice. They ask for help in obtaining suitable employment.

The displaced students from Berdzor have their own



A group of teachers from the Tekeyan Berdzor School meeting with Arto Manoukian, standing at the back behind former Principal Anahit Kosakyan, with Gayane Muratyan at rear far right

difficulties. Due to a lack of income or scholarships, they are unable to obtain higher education and are forced to seek work. Four lives were also lost during the war from the school body.

There were two teachers present who taught Armenian language and literature in the school's renovated

first classroom, named after Saro Manoukian. This renovation in the school conducted by means of aid through TCA was followed by many others, and the Berdzor School had become one of the best schools in Artsakh. Now its former teachers and students only are left with the memories of its achievements.

## Azerbaijan's September Bombardment of Sotk Leaves Many Homeless

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SOTK, Armenia — The village of Sotk was bombarded from September 13 to 15 as part of a broader Azerbaijani attack on Armenian borders at the cities of Vardenis, Goris, Sotk and Jermuk. Six civilians and an unknown number of Armenian soldiers were wounded, while many buildings were damaged or destroyed.

### Historical Background

Sotk is located in the Vardenis region of the Gegharkunik Province of the Republic of Armenia, on the road leading to the ancient Armenian town of Karvachar. Located at an altitude of over 2,000 meters above sea level, this village had 1,118 registered residents in the 2001 census, and 824 registered residents in 2011, which is still quite a large number for the region. Most of the Armenians who live in the village were forcibly displaced from Soviet Azerbaijan in 1988 and lost all their possessions. A small number moved to Sotk from the neighboring city of Vardenis.

Despite the relatively recent settlement of Armenians in Sotk, historically it has been identified over several millennia with Armenian populations. Items from the Bronze Age have been found there. Historians identify the ancient city of Suta or Shuta mentioned in Hittite sources with

Sotk. Later, Sotk formed part of the Sotk district on the northwestern side of the Syunik region of Greater Hayk and was the seat of a ruler or prince.

The Holy Bethlehem Monastery in Sotk, was rebuilt in 1276 funded by one Baron Arakel and included the Holy Mother of God Church (Sourp Astvatsatsin). There are beautiful *khachkars* from the 13th century and later times found around the church. In the area of the village there are ruins of old settlements and buildings. Furthermore, to the east of the village is the Sotk gold mine, which was developed as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC.

Located near a gold mine, with fertile land, extensive pastures and a significant water supply, the village has developed rapidly over the past three decades and even managed to become an important center of tourism. People in the village were mainly engaged in cattle breeding and potato and grain cultivation, while some of them worked in the gold mine.

During the Artsakh Liberation War, the village was repeatedly subjected to the attacks of the Azerbaijani armed forces, being bombarded, shot at and shelled. During the 2020 Artsakh war, Azerbaijanis again began targeting Sotk along with the main battle fronts. After the Armenian surrender of Karvachar, the position of Sotk became more precarious. After May 12, 2021, when Azerbaijani armed forces advanced a kilometer from their positions of December 2020, as per the information of the Armenian Ministry of Defense, the Azerbaijanis were able to view everything in the village, including its school, kindergarten, roads, and municipal headquarters.

### September Attacks

Starting on September 13, 2022, at 12:05 p.m., the Azerbaijani occupation forces began to attack the city with mortars, Howitzers, reactive firing control systems, and drones.

Resident Manik Khojoyan declared: "It was a nightmare, chaos. We were all asleep when we heard the first shots. It was as if the sky was tumbling down. We all gathered quickly and ran to the car, but my fa-

ther-in-law had not gotten out of the house when the shell exploded and injured his head and arm. We didn't know what to do. Now we are all scared, especially the children. We won't take them back there."

Villager Gayane Vardanyan said: "Shooting, or rather shelling, started at 12:05 p.m.. Our house is located near the military unit. The first strike was on the military unit. In only a few more seconds, the second fell right next to the house. The windows were shattered. We already understood that they were attacked. We tried to get out with the children half-asleep and wrapped in blankets, but the blows were so strong and close that we could not go down to the basement. We tried to go through the house, but we couldn't open it. We tried to approach the front door. The balcony windows were broken. We got out and went to the basement."

The enemy shelled the village throughout the night, and this continued with partial breaks until September 15. On September 13, the women, children and the elderly were taken out of the village of about 1000 inhabitants, while the men remained in the village to defend it and their homeland. Sevak Khachatryan, the municipal head of Sotk, stated, "After the first blow, we realized that this is not an ordinary thing. We started organizing the evacuation of people. I took part in it myself. It was quite a difficult situation, but we did everything possible." It was done without state aid through the local means available.

Resident Hakob Avetyan later related: "In those days, there were almost no people left in the village. The women and children were evacuated, and the men were fighting. It was a terrible situation. Shells were exploding and pulverizing people's hard labor of thirty years. And more painfully, our shining boys who fell on the battlefield were permanent losses. They destroyed the military unit."

More than 60 inhabitable residences were damaged, many of which were completely destroyed or burnt. The municipal headquarters, the school, the kindergarten, the electric power station, and the warehouse of grains were attacked, and the only

asphalt road serving the village came under intense fire.

Villager Suren Galstyan testified: "At 12:05 p.m. shelling began. One of the first shells fell near the house. The explosion was very strong. The windows of the house were blown out. I got my family members out of the house at that time, and then, in the morning, I found out that our house has completely burnt. The enemy hit our house with a Grad MM21 rocket launcher. I am 22 years old. I have lived my entire life in this house, but today it has been turned completely into a pile of ashes."

The gas pipeline of the village has not been repaired to date. Until September 17, there was no electricity in the village. In Sotk alone, hundreds of children are deprived of the right to education.

Despite the relaxation of tension in the border situation, at this moment, the sounds of shooting are still heard from time to time on the line of contact, which creates a state of psychological terror for the remaining population of the village. At the moment, it is not clear how many people have returned to the village, but according to the information we have, many of them refuse to go back, because they have no guarantee that the enemy will not repeat the same terrorist attacks again. They had first gone to Vardenis and Martuni, and later dispersed further to Harzdan, Abovyan, Charentsavan, Yerevan and other places.

The fact that more than sixty residential houses were damaged and destroyed indicates that a significant part of the villagers is without homes. Therefore they cannot return, and some do not want to because they are worried about attacks.

On the other hand, Ruslan Kehvayan declared, "I am a resident of this village. I keep many cattle. The house is damaged, the pastures are occupied, but I don't want to leave this village. Tell me, how will this end?"

At this moment, the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia continue to defend the borders, freedom and sovereignty of the Republic in all possible and impossible ways.

## Blinken Again Talks to Armenian, Azeri Leaders

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tensions and facilitate a peaceful settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the September 13-14 fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border that killed at least 280 soldiers from both sides.

Blinken held a trilateral meeting with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in New York on September 19. He also spoke to them by phone in a trilateral format ahead of the Prague summit. He was reported to hail "positive steps" taken by the two sides.



## INTERNATIONAL

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German Parliamentarian  
On Prague Meeting

PRAGUE — Till Mansmann, Member of the German Bundestag (Parliament) and President of the German-Armenian Forum, issued the following statement regarding the meeting of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on October 6 in Prague:

“I welcome the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan to respect their existing borders and their call for EU support. The agreement brings hope that the further destabilization of the South Caucasus region, unleashed by the Azerbaijani attack on Armenia, may be handled diplomatically.

“Reports on the terrible human rights violations in connection with these hostilities must now be thoroughly investigated. ...

“The respect for the territorial sovereignty of every state as well as the primacy of non-aggression in international law must be implemented with emphasis.

“I thank French President Emmanuel Macron who intervened so rapidly and intensively to promote the agreement that has now been reached. As President of the German-Armenian Forum I call on the German government to join these activities and to actively support the peace process in the South Caucasus.”

(Translated by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach)

Georgia Offers Mediation  
To Armenia, Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Georgia is ready to provide a platform to its neighbors for conducting a calm and peaceful dialogue, to establish peace in the region, Georgian Foreign Minister Ilya Darchiashvili said on October 7.

“We enjoy special trust from our neighbors and in the future we are always ready for Georgia to become a place where our southern neighbors will be able to have a calm dialogue in order to achieve concrete results in the negotiations and establish peace,” he said.

Çavusoglu Tells Turks in  
France to ‘React against’  
Armenian Diaspora

STRASBOURG (Panorama) — Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu on October 9, met with the Turkish community here, telling them to “react against” the Armenian Diaspora.

“When it comes to Turkey, we need to show this unity a little more. We established the Turkish American steering committee in the US. They started very effective works to counter the slander of the Armenian Diaspora against our country,” the Turkish media quoted him as saying.

He said “unfortunately,” a part of the Armenian Diaspora in France is not “well-intentioned.”

“They also oppose the normalization between Turkey and Armenia, between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are talking about a diaspora with a hostile attitude toward establishing good relations. We expect you to react against this diaspora,” he said.

## EU Observer Mission Agreed Upon in Prague

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Western efforts to stabilize the situation increased further still following the publication of two videos appearing to show Azerbaijani forces committing war crimes during the war.

The agreement represents a U-turn for Azerbaijan, with EU High Representative Joseph Borrell stating as recently as Wednesday that Azerbaijan was refusing to agree to the mission.

The mission is set to support a border commission to delimitate and demarcate the borders between the two countries.

A question remains over whether the deployment of EU observers will mean Azerbaijani forces withdraw from positions they have taken in Armenia since 2020.

Armenia’s Ambassador-at-large, Edmon Marukyan, said the mission would ‘monitor Azerbaijan’s future aggression’ and would also provide confirmation of the ‘occupied part of Armenia’s sovereign territory’.

He added that after recognizing Armenia’s territorial integrity, ‘Azerbaijan can no longer make any territorial claim to the sovereign territory of Armenia in the process of delimitation, which also means that the Azerbaijani armed forces should leave the territories occupied so far’.

Many in Armenia, however, have expressed skepticism, with political analyst Tigran Grigoryan calling those believing Azerbaijan would leave these areas as a result of the meeting ‘irredeemable’.

## The fate of Nagorno-Karabakh

Speaking with journalists after the Prague meeting, Ilham Aliyev said that the issue of the “integration” of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians was “another issue” and would be discussed separately from a peace deal with Armenia.

“Armenians living in Karabakh are our citizens and we are not going to discuss their fate and future life with any country, including Armenia,” Aliyev said.

“This is our internal matter, and Armenians will have the same rights as the citizens of Azerbaijan. In any case, they can be sure that their life, integrated into the Azerbaijani society, will be much better than their current life.”

He also said that talks with the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh had been going on for “some time.”

‘I think this will lead to a full understanding with the main population still living in the area of responsibility of the Russian peacekeeping contingent.’

The authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh have already been seen negotiating with the Azerbaijani side without Armenia regarding issues like the Sarsang reservoir, the displacement of Armenians in Lachin and nearby villages, and the change in the route of the Lachin corridor.

The Armenian authorities have also been attempting to separate a peace deal and normalization of relations with Azerbaijan from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which Armenia describes as an “issue of rights,” including the right to self-determination, rather than a ‘territorial conflict’.

While Armenia appears to be ready to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, with guarantees for the rights of the local population, the authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh have insisted that no status under Azerbaijani control is acceptable and that such a decision would have devastating consequences for the local Armenian population.

Speaking on Thursday, Aliyev did little to assuage fears of displacement. ‘If anyone thinks that they can live as citizens of Azerbaijan, in my opinion, they will not regret it. But if for some reason this is not suitable for someone, they can choose another place of residence for themselves’, he said.

Natig Jafarli, an economist and executive secretary of the ReAl Party, said the meetings in Prague “give hope for peace and positive relations in the region” but warned that “the Kremlin is an obstacle to peace.”

“Since yesterday evening, Russian TV channels and media have been making statements that clearly question these agreements — they say with exceptional shamelessness that the decisive role in this matter, the only power that can influence the parties, is the Kremlin, and without the direct participation of official Moscow, peace in the region is impossible.”

On Friday, both Pashinyan and Aliyev visited Saint Petersburg for an informal meeting of the leaders of CIS countries. The meeting coincided with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s 70th birthday.

## Dr. Kantian Is Trying to Correct a Historic Misattribution

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT — Loss of life is the greatest cost of war, and in the continuing Azerbaijani aggression against Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia, casualties have been high. Along with destroying human lives, expelling Armenians and devastating their property, Azerbaijan has pursued a campaign to erase evidence of the physical and cultural existence of the Armenian people in the region. This includes destroying cultural and religious monuments, turning churches into mosques, and changing place names.

Raffi Kantian, chairman of the German-Armenian Society (DAG) and editor of their journal, *Armenian-German Correspondence* (ADK), has recently exposed a related case of mistaken cultural identity in an important venue in Germany. And, happily, his intervention should lead to a restoration of the truth.

## Pictures of an Exhibition

It all began, as documented on the DAG website (<https://www.deutscharmenischegesellschaft.de/>), in late summer, when two photos posted on Facebook made the rounds. The pictures are from the Archaeological Museum in Frankfurt (Main), and depict Urartian exhibits and a map. Kantian examined the images, then posed the question: “What does Urartu have to do with Azerbaijan?” In fact, the showcase was labelled “Azerbaijan.” Kantian also asked why the map accompanying the exhibit should also bear the name “Azerbaijan.”

It is well-known, he wrote, that the Baku regime has consistently tried to find Azerbaijani footprints everywhere, claiming that not only Yerevan and a Persian mosque

in the Armenian capital, were Azerbaijani, but also that southern Armenia itself had long been part of Azerbaijan. Perhaps, he noted, here was yet another attempt at the same falsification.

## What’s in a Name?

Dr. Kantian then laid out the historical facts of the matter. “The empire of Urartu, according to our current knowledge, collapsed in the 7th century B.C. At that time, there were no Turkic tribes, to whom today’s Azerbaijanis feel they are related. It was only centuries later that Turkic tribes migrated to these regions.” Kantian’s conclusion was that it is absurd to speak of ‘Azerbaijan’ when referring to a region around Lake Urmia on a historical map.

As he clarified further, the term “Azerbaijan” in use today is derived from the name of the satrap *Atropates*, (Old Persian *Atarepata*), in the 4th century B.C. Centuries later, the territory he governed would become known as *Āturpātākān* (Middle Persian). “That was a purely geographical designation for the region in north-western Iran and says nothing about the ethnic composition of the population there.” He added that the term “Azerbaijan” does not appear on any serious map of the period.

Continuing his historical account, Kantian notes that the term has become even more problematic since 1918, when on May 17, the founders of the so-called Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (DRA), from the Musavat Party, chose that name deliberately for political reasons, which had to do with the fact that neighboring Iran also had an Azerbaijan region. This led to confusion as well as political irritation.

For Kantian, this is also the problem raised by the exhibit in Frankfurt. “Which Azerbaijan is meant? The province in the Islamic Republic of Iran, today’s Republic

of Azerbaijan, or both?” He notes that the Baku government has abused such ambiguity for its own purposes, even with a view to suggesting that Iranians in that province should separate from the Islamic Republic. This is something that was discussed in the 1990s and even recently has been mooted on a website linked to the Azerbaijan presidency (“Die Zeit ist reif: Süd-Aserbaidschan sollte sich vom Iran abspalten,” August 26, 2022, *Caliber.az*, <https://bit.ly/3d5Q6wh>)

## Mistaken Identity

What do the Frankfurt Museum authorities say? Kantian sent them a summary account of the case, and requested that they correct the erroneous designation. In response, Dr. Wolfgang David, Director of the Archeological Museum, acknowledged the problem and agreed to make amends. “We regret that you were irritated by exhibited objects and their labelling in one of our showcases. The Urartu kingdom stretched out over many states, as you yourself write. The pieces in our exhibit however come from excavation sites in the current day Azerbaijan province of Iran around Lake Urmia. So, the label on the showcase could have led to the misunderstanding.”

The director explained furthermore that the exhibition had been organized in the 1980s and had not been updated since; there are plans to do so soon, and “in this context, we will certainly make changes which will also include the map,” he wrote. Though the museum would need time to make these and other changes, he assured Kantian in his letter that “in the meantime, we have removed the designation ‘Azerbaijan’ in the showcase, which in this concrete case referred to the origin of the exhibits from the north-western province of Iran and will also review the texts again.”





# Community News

## AAHPO Program Named for Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Aims To Help Karabakh Physicians

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

Among the horrific damage resulting from the war in Artsakh, both in 2020 and again this year, is the tremendous strain and destruction it has caused on the region's already fragile healthcare system. The treatment of Artsakh's civilian casualties and injured servicemen defending the territory is disproportionate to the number of trained medical professionals who are qualified to properly treat them. Fortunately, there is relief in sight.

Now in its 11th year, the recently renamed Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program has provided doctors in the rural regions of Artsakh with the training needed to master innovative approaches, methods and technologies from top healthcare providers in Yerevan, free of cost. The program also focuses on maintaining and developing knowledge, skills and relationships through month-long trainings for regional doctors to ensure competent practice in the future. To date, more than 250 Armenian healthcare providers have gained critical skills by earning Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits through the program. Their knowledge then spreads exponentially when graduates return to their rural villages and share their expertise with fellow physicians. Areas of study are wide-ranging and include critically needed areas such as cardiology, oncology, infectious diseases, children's illnesses, geriatrics, genitourinary, orthopedic and diabetes education. As a result, the quality of life and contemporary healthcare services available to Armenian citizens in Artsakh has greatly improved.

A fundraiser to support the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program will be held on October 16 at the New Jersey home of AAHPO President Lawrence Najarian, MD, to raise critical funds for the program. "Similar to the United States, CME is now required of all physicians by the government of Armenia so they receive yearly medical information," reports Najarian. "Our program offers these credits and living accommodations free of charge to eligible healthcare professionals, taking the financial burden off of their shoulders and enabling them to treat the citizens of Artsakh."

In 2011, AAHPO and the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), through the vision of the late Dr. Raffy A. Hovanessian, recognized the depth and urgency of the lack of up-to-date healthcare services and training for medical professionals in Armenia and Artsakh. Both organizations partnered to fund the CME Program, which is vital to training physicians and nurses as tens of thousands of Armenians in the region depend on their medical skills. Dr. Hovanessian's wife and daughter, Vicki Shoghag see AAHPO, page 7



Blair Dance Group at Armenian Academy (Photo – PUSD)

## Pasadena Unified's Armenian Academy Is First of Its Kind

PASADENA, Calif. (ColoradoBoulevard.net) — The Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) is not only celebrating Armenian independence this week [third week of September], they are celebrating the creation of exemplary Armenian world language programs.

It has been only two years since PUSD took a chance on creating the Armenian Academy at Blair High School, an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. This program is the first of its kind in the world, attracting students throughout Pasadena and beyond. What has happened during those two years has been nothing less than outstanding, as students from 17 different cities have flocked to the innovative and tuition-free program, growing the enrollment at an impressive pace.

David Ibarra, former principal of Blair, an IB World School, who welcomed the incorporation of the Armenian Academy and who now serves as the district coordinator for Dual Language and International Baccalaureate programs, couldn't be more pleased with the success.

"It has been extremely rewarding to see the Academy grow and expand so quickly. The Armenian Academy fits perfectly with Blair because of the International Baccalaureate program and alignment with the world school focus. I'm proud to say that the Armenian Academy is a staple of the fabric at Blair High School."

Armenian Academy Advisory Board Chair Maro Yacoubian, who worked closely with the district to help create the program, sees a bright future for the community and Blair: "Our team, from the first day, was striving to reach lofty goals while others were paralyzed by the pandemic. We set our sights on creating the first International Baccalaureate Course in Armenian Literature in the world outside of Armenia and we did it. This past May, our IB diploma candidates tested and scored very well, including one a student with a perfect exam result."

Norayr Daduryan, the lead teacher for the Armenian Academy, was instrumental in establishing the IB Armenian Literature Course. He worked to develop the curriculum and secure approval from the International Baccalaureate Organization and the University of California.



PUSD Superintendent, Dr. Brian McDonald, visiting Webster Elementary (Photo – PUSD)

Daduryan explained.

Webster Elementary is now offering the very first elementary Armenian world language program in PUSD. It provides one daily Armenian Language Arts class per grade level and the remainder of the student's instructional day will include classes conducted in English. All language immersion classes will be taught by fully-credentialed bilingual teachers who have additional preparation and expertise in teaching Armenian.

"We are excited about the possibilities for the program in serving not only the students of Armenian descent but students from different cultural backgrounds as well," stated PUSD Superintendent Brian McDonald. He added:

"I was heartened to see students of different ethnicities and backgrounds in our first cohort at Webster and the enthusiasm they displayed for learning the Armenian language. I am truly grateful to the administrators, teachers, and staff and to parent leaders such as Maro Yacoubian who have worked tirelessly to make this program a reality."

Families interested in learning more about the Armenian Academy (6th-12th) and joining a tour can fill out an application for the 2023-2024 school year at [ArmenianAcademy.org](http://ArmenianAcademy.org). Students from any city are welcome.

"The IB Armenian course has been a crossroads of cultures and places in two dynamic ways: the students study world classics (English, Spanish, Persian, French literature) in the Armenian language, and also assess and analyze pieces of Armenian literature from the perspective of global themes. The IB Armenian course has started to bring distant geographies and cultures together in Pasadena,"

## Edward and Janet Mardigian Sponsor Resurgence of Armenia's Berd Region to 'Save a Generation'

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — The recent attack and invasion of Armenia by Azerbaijan continues to place all Armenian border areas in great danger. Berd along with 17 rural communities, with a population of more than 30,000, and right on the northeastern border with Azerbaijan, is one of these regions. It is one of the poorest areas in Armenia, and a constant victim of Azeri shelling.

This is a picturesque area of soaring mountains, valleys with lush vegetation, ancient monuments and monasteries, and courageous Armenian people who have always fearlessly defended themselves against the enemy.

The Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) has set up a revolutionary program "to break the cycle of poverty" there, by the Edward and Janet Mardigian family for healthcare and nutrition, education and vocational training, family stabilization, elderly care, and economic and community development, said Margarit Piliposyan, FAR program director in Armenia recently.

The Mardigian family has donated \$10 million to FAR since 2013, and pledged more for this ambitious and crucial program.

"This is our largest and most challenging project. FAR was the pioneer organization to set up this multi-faceted program and have a permanent presence there. Ten years ago, the people in this area had no trust in themselves. Now, they can and do help themselves in so many ways. This is revolutionary," she stated with great emphasis.

She also stressed that "to make sustainable results, the program, which involves working directly with the people, requires longer time and persistence." She then delineated the advancements and accomplishments in the various areas.

In economic development, the population has been helped by the creation of businesses on the grassroots level, support of modern agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation, as well as roads in the mountains where animals are taken in the summer.

"Agro-machinery, technical literacy, financial support, training and coaching has significantly impacted Berd region communities with the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty." Farmers have gotten involved in more productive agriculture, operating small scale farms and greenhouses promoting self-sufficiency.

Village beekeeper Ashot Buldagharian has received new beehives, which he has since. New tractors were delivered to each of the 17 communities to help villagers in revitalizing hundreds of hectares of land, which had not been cultivated since independence. Water and irrigation see RESURGENCE, page 6





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Mardigians Sponsor Resurgence of Armenia's Berd Region to 'Save a Generation'

RESURGENCE, from page 5

systems were renovated, and more than 160 new small and medium size businesses were launched.

Metal worker Karo Avalyan reported that new machinery was made available to create new orchards. Villagers were hired for the important reason that they would continue to live and work in their areas, and not leave for other places. With ever-present danger lurking, Avalyan reported that at times, Azerbaijanis shelled areas where Armenian villagers were picking grapes.

"Economic activation is crucial and vital for border regions in Armenia," commented Piliposyan.

Healthcare and child nutrition have also advanced. There is continuing medical education, upgrading of medical facilities, and training of doctors and nurses programs in place. Supplies have dramatically increased with an upgrade of medical equipment, and assistance to hospitals.

Visits have increased to family doctors. Critical public health issues have been addressed with free training programs, said village doctor Adamyan, who also added that hospitals have been furnished with necessary equipment.

There has been an obvious improvement in the health of children with the kindergarten nutrition program. And in the villages, the birth rate has increased, as well as the number of children attending kindergarten.

There was widespread anemia and even stunted growth among children 10 years ago, Piliposyan continued. The anemia developed after the birth of the babies and continued until the children were 6, due to poverty, and bad nutrition. She noted, "We decided to cover the children's nutritional program for as many as 3,500 children until they reached the age of 6."

Not only was there a significant improvement in the quality of the food with a di-

versified menu of fresh food, a balanced diet delivered on time for the children, but also dining rooms were renovated and refurbished in all daycare centers of all villages. "This was a true achievement," she recounted with pride. The program was also extended to the families, including a project for younger mothers on how to bring up a child.



Ed and Janet Mardigian cutting the ribbon at the newly renovated daycare center in Tavush

Close to 500 families in Berd and surrounding villages have received direct help, and community training on family related issues, which has become a wide scale model. Approximately 40 percent of the families that received domestic animals and help to cultivate their lands reported that they have become economically successful being able to providing for their families and children.

Villager Elza Chobanyan received an incubator for the eggs from her free range chickens, and her business is booming now. And young mother Narine Dallakian now happily cooks different nutritional diets for

her children at home, including cabbage and casseroles.

Many schools and daycare centers were renovated and refurbished in the Berd region, some were built from scratch. In the second year of this project, there have been no school drop-outs in Berd and the adjacent villages.

This multi-faceted program included the

graduation and found a job here. She also revealed that two dozen educational institutions have been built or renovated in the nearby villages. Arts and craft programs, and sports competitions have been introduced, and more than 100 youngsters have been attending FAR Summer Camps annually in the Kotayk region.

One of the important activities has been the resurgence of the area's religious life — namely at St. Hovhannes Church, with Sunday schools, and church related activities.

Small activities have also been implemented between the elderly and children. Embroidery and cooking classes were introduced, as well as different social events, including New Year celebrations and other holidays.

For the last 10 years Berd has become a well-functioning town with many activities.

There is now local bus transportation established between Berd and the villages. Berd also hosts supermarkets, bed and breakfast institutions, as well as tourist establishments that feature tourist activities for visitors. And Berd has a well-functioning military hospital center, with several medical clinics.

The FAR office in Berd, located in the Edward and Janet Mardigian Humanitarian Center, is "a shining city upon a hill" in the region, noted Piliposyan.

"The FAR work in Berd has proven that with the right allocation of resources, dedication of people who are grounded in their humanitarian mission, with a smart dialogue with local people who need help, and with the right way of helping people, rather than just handing out goodies, things could dramatically improve in the entire communities. People would awaken to opportunities and become much more active in looking for ways of decent living, providing for their families and children. Our BCPP is a testimony to that," said Piliposyan proudly.

## OBITUARY

### Thelma (Melkonian) DerAvedisian

Dedicated to Armenian Causes

WATERTOWN — Thelma (Melkonian) DerAvedisian of Watertown died on October 8, 2022.

She was the wife of the late Jack DerAvedisian; daughter of Armenian Genocide survivors the late Vahan and Sirarpin (Arcenian) Melkonian of Van, Armenia; Sister to the late Suren, Hurire and Popken Melkonian. Sister-in-law of Virginia Melkonian; mother of Suren DerAvedisian and his wife Sharon Avakian and Christine Mardoian and her husband Jack; grandmother of Kirk and his wife Tamar, Alec and his wife Sarah, Adam, Melineh and her husband Kevork Chavoush and Adrineh and her husband Shahe. She is also survived by three great-grandchildren, Kaleb, Lukas and Karekin and many loving nieces, nephews and dear friends.

After her beloved husband's retirement from Star Market, she joined him in the business and together they opened their own grocery store chain, Jackson's Star, in the lakes region of New Hampshire and Omni Foods in Massachusetts.

During her lifetime, she was both dedicated and devoted to Armenian causes at the local, national and international level. Her local involvement included working with her husband and others to establish the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) in Watertown. At the national level, she was very supportive of Camp Haiastan in Franklin, Massachusetts and made numerous gifts to the Camp over the years to help strengthen and improve Camp



facilities and programs. Thelma supported the Armenian Prelacy's Pillars Program for many years and St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown. At the international level, she, like many others, sent money and supplies, including an ambulance, to Armenia during their time of need after the devastating earthquake of 1988.

Funeral service were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, on October 13. Interment followed at Ridgeland Cemetery, Watertown.

Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AAHPO Program Named for Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Aims to Help Karabakh Physicians

AAHPO, from page 5

Hovanessian and Ani Hovanessian, continue his legacy by funding programs like the AAHPO CME program to benefit the healthcare needs of Armenians in the homeland.

Although providing Armenians in Art-

sakh with vitally needed healthcare services is an important focus of the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program, it is worth noting that the patients are not the sole beneficiaries. Doctors and healthcare professionals who participate in the program gain a sense of personal

and professional accomplishment from helping their brethren in need. Dr. Anahit Petrosyan, a native of Stepanakert who has conducted bio analysis at Arevik Medical Center for Children in Artsakh, heard about many cases of children from remote regions who were not able to get medical help due to the lack of medical personnel and proper equipment. She was inspired to further to enhance her skills by joining the program this year, where she spent one month honing her skills in hematology and biochemistry by studying clinical cases at Muratsan Hospital Complex in Yerevan, with all education and housing expenses covered by the AAHPO program. “This was my first CME training and it more than met my expectations,” she said. “As specialists, we have to do our best to care for the children and their parents.” Dr. Petrosyan has decided to dedicate her life and work to the people of Artsakh.

Artsakh native Dr. Narine Beglaryan, a general pediatrician, pediatric and nephrologist from Stepanakert Children’s Hospital, is currently enrolled in the program for the third time. “The courses offered are specif-



Dr. Narine Danielyan

ic to my professional field and the practical and theoretical knowledge I’ve gained has enabled me to improve the medical service and care of my patients,” she said.

Another important program initiative has been held with National Institute of Health of Armenia and Stroke Initiative Group (SIATA). Recently, both organizations jointly started a six- month fellowship program for neurologists from Armenia and Artsakh with the purpose of establishing modern stroke centers in regions in those regions. The AAHPO CME program financially underwrites the participation of one of the first fellows selected for this course, Dr. Narine Danielyan, a neurologist from the Stepanakert Republican Hospital.

“The program’s trained and motivated healthcare professionals are a tremendous asset in their Communities,” reports Hambardzum Simonyan, MD, FAR Deputy Country Director/ Health Programs Director. “They ensure better quality healthcare service on a grassroots level that leads to decreased morbidity and mortality rates.”

For more information on supporting the AAHPO, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian Medical Education Program, including attending the October 16 charity fundraiser in New Jersey, email [info@aaipo.org](mailto:info@aaipo.org).



An orthopedic workshop in Gyurmi

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenia's Champion in World Court, Yeghishe Kirakosyan, Speaks in Massachusetts

LAW, from page 1

Kirakosyan, who received his LLB and PhD from Yerevan State University, has also received an LLM from Georgetown and a Master's from Stanford. He has been an advisor to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in various capacities and held teaching positions in various universities.

Kerkonian referenced the video circulated on social media of the Armenian woman soldier, Anush Apetyan, who was killed and subjected to gruesome treatment by Azerbaijani forces. "State-sponsored ethnic hatred against the Armenian people is what we are seeing again," said Kerkonian, "A century later, it remains a reality."

## Filing Claims Against Azerbaijan

Kirakosyan began his talk by summarizing the claims that have been filed by Armenia against Azerbaijan in two international courts: the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as "World Court," which is a part of the United Nations structure; and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which is administered under the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe is not to be confused with the European Union (EU); it has a larger membership, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, as well as countries such as Ukraine and the United Kingdom (but not Russia); and unlike the EU it operates merely as an organization of independent countries rather than a kind of international government.

Kirakosyan stated that in a matter of months after the war, he and his team filed the first ever interstate legal claim by Armenia, a claim against Azerbaijan filed at the ECHR. The application related to the massive violations of human rights, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other breaches of the Geneva Convention and other international instruments.

Two other applications to the ECHR were filed related to issues that took place after the war ended, said Kirakosyan. One was about the POWs and other Armenian captives who were undergoing sham trials. The other was related to events earlier this year in Artsakh, when the Armenian villagers of the Parukh and Karaglukh were forced to flee by Azerbaijani armed forces using recordings of intimidating messages and psychological pressure. Kirakosyan's team argued that this amounted to ethnic cleansing.

Kirakosyan and team have also filed interim measure requests, which is a request for the court to act immediately. They have filed such measures when they believe it is necessary to preserve the life of a person that finds themselves under the authority of the Azerbaijani forces, stressing that the court must act due to the high degree of hatred and animosity in Azerbaijan against ethnic Armenians. Kirakosyan stated that the ethnic hatred has been systematically structured by the Azerbaijani state authorities to what he termed a "ridiculous" level, further stating that this makes even the existence of ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan a life-threatening issue.

Kirakosyan stated that Azerbaijan is very often not in compliance with these rulings. Even after the court has made a decision, Azerbaijan will disregard it, and disregard it "gravely," Kirakosyan said, making reference to recent events such as the killing of Anush Apetyan.

There have even been cases of POWs and captives being killed, said Kirakosyan,

even when the team applied to the court based on clear and direct evidence that the person was in Azerbaijani captivity and when the court passed a decision and set a time limit for Azerbaijan to reply and provide information about whereabouts and conditions of the individual.

"This is cynical, I know, it sounds very cynical," said Kirakosyan. "That's the country, it's highly cynical, racist, autocracy, or a dictatorship more directly, that makes the enforcement of international law harder. In any case, we continue pursuing this path," he stated.

## International Court of Justice

In addition to the ECHR, Armenia has also filed claims in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the main judicial body of the United Nations. The application at the ICJ is based specifically on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Kirakosyan mentioned the hearings that have taken place at the Hague in relation to the case (see <https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/09/15/center-for-truth-and-justice-makes-armenias-case-against-azerbaijan-at-united-nations/>) and also pointed out the fact that his team filed a request for urgent provisional measures to preserve the rights of ethnic Armenians under the convention until the court can adjudicate the application.

The adjudication of the original application can take years, Kirakosyan said.

According to Kirakosyan, the highlight of this process were the hearings where his team presented their arguments underlying the original claim as well as the request for provisional measures. The primary issues included the treatment of POWs, the destruction of cultural heritage, the "Military Trophies Park" set up in Azerbaijan, and hate speech by public officials.

Kirakosyan noted in regard to the hate speech claim, that "when you follow the rhetoric [of] high ranking officials, it always has a racist and Armenophobic element in it. You can't see any speech that doesn't use some abusive words or statements," continuing that Azerbaijani officials were "trying to perpetuate that thread of hatred in society."

Fortunately, the evidentiary materials were of such a persuasive character, that the court granted most of the requests, including the requests on hate speech, destruction of cultural heritage, and rights of ethnic Armenians imprisoned in Azerbaijan.

The measure that the court can apply is to "oblige" both parties not to take any steps to further aggravate the dispute, according to Kirakosyan. He stated that since the decision on provisional measures was taken by the ICJ on December 7, 2021, his team has been following up and trying to observe how it's been implemented.

Azerbaijan has been in breach often, Kirakosyan stated, and his team notifies the court about that. He stated that "multiple times we have notified the court, and during the recent attack we witnessed again a repetition of the same trait, capturing of POWs, horrific treatment, war crimes, crimes against humanity."

Kirakosyan mentioned the acts by Azerbaijani military forces against Anush Apetyan and others as "the gruesome mutilation of deceased bodies, which is completely in contrast with any value set that international law provides today."

## A Crisis of Values

Kirakosyan suggested that "the problem with Azerbaijan, and globally too, and in the region, ... [is] we are witnessing a little bit of a crisis of values today, which also makes the enforcement application of international law even more challenging. Not only are values in crisis, but countries or dictatorships like Azerbaijan are far away from the value set that has been established by the international community."

He continued that, "I think it is partly also due to the fact that these countries also try to 'fake' that they are being good countries or law-abiding counties under international law, trying to mislead the international community."

Kirakosyan further stated that what Armenia is trying to do is to point out the existing principles and norms of international law, and how Azerbaijan is violating them. After the September 13 attack, his team submitted a request to the court to establish a 3-judge committee to observe the implementation of the order. He stated that his team had requested this in March and are reiterating the request in the wake of the recent attacks.

The team is also asking the court to amend the existing order to extend it to protect new captives, given the current situation.

He stated that his team hopes to hear from the court soon, as in the past week they had been providing all the evidentiary materials they could find to the court, including information from media sources and videos that have been made available publicly.

The focus on the raw, unsettling video footage has been a way for Kirakosyan's team to try to prove the urgency of the matter.

Kirakosyan states that he believes the legal proceedings are important in many respects, such as keeping a record and making Armenia's voice heard through the international community, especially when there are public oral hearings. Another hearing will be held next year in relation to the claim at the ECHR, he states, and public hearings are helping to focus the attention of the international community.

Such public hearings and increasing international awareness will "add and create an additional pressure mechanism" which may pressure Azerbaijan to comply with some of its commitments under international law.

## Azerbaijan Makes Claims Against Armenia

Kirakosyan added in a sidenote, that Azerbaijan has also made claims against Armenia. According to him, "the tactic that they are using is very simple, they are trying to mirror our claims, they are trying to mirror our steps and it's a way of defending their interests. They try to create an image of a victim, which sounds way too cynical for recent events."

Kirakosyan stated that he believes "there's a need for the Armenian side to very systematically work in this regard in a very diligent manner, because the country's attempts to falsify the facts are very well known," stating that Azerbaijan uses tactics such as "meticulously structured educational programs" with "very precise messages and images of ethnic Armenians as evil."

The advocate compared Azerbaijan's falsification of human rights claims against

Armenia to their tendency to engage in historical revisionism, in a way that bolsters their territorial claims. He stated that the attempts to "invent history, rewrite history, and falsify history," go back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that Azerbaijan is "trying diligently to erase any Armenian trace on the territories that they control," including the destruction of *khachkars*, cemeteries, and any Armenian cultural artifacts, as well as their falsification as "Caucasian Albanian."

Kirakosyan stated that the same tactics are present when dealing with the international arena, meaning that the work his team does is becoming even more challenging and difficult.

## Current Status and Importance of the Case

Kirakosyan stated that the proceedings "are now at the level where we are presenting our main submission which encompasses the arguments Armenia is making and most of the evidentiary materials that we will be presenting to the courts." He called the evidence "overwhelming."

The case is highly important, Kirakosyan says, calling it "existential for the entire nation, in many respects." That's why pursuing the case is vital for the country.

He stated that the legal proceedings are important for reinforcing Armenia's sovereignty, that Armenia is making its voice heard, and that it is making "a bold step for emphasizing its membership in the international community and its adherence to the values that have been created or should be governing the international community and should be governing relations between states."

On the topic of values, Kirakosyan continued that "unfortunately, many countries today are forgetting those values and trying to tilt them. But still I think we need to not forget, because those values are fundamental, and the convention that Armenia has brought the case based on, is fundamental in this respect because [the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination] is one the first human rights instruments adopted after the Second World War, in 1965."

Kirakosyan further stated that he believes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is tightly and logically connected with the Genocide Convention, because racist policies and racial hatred and animosity create a favorable atmosphere for the commission of the crime of genocide "and other heinous crimes against international law."

"The fruits that we see, being committed against Armenian soldiers and civilians are the direct fruits of decades long hate propaganda."

He added that, "I know that when countries go this far, it is very hard for them to change quickly. It's impossible in a day or two or a month or a year. You need to work diligently, but it's important for us to pressurize that because that makes [Armenia's] position stronger."

## Question and Answer Session

The speech was followed by a question-and-answer session.

One question asked about the implications of the rulings: What happens if the courts rule for Armenia?

Kirakosyan replied that the enforcement mechanism of the ECHR is the political *continued on next page*





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Carnegie Names New Catalyst Award for Vartan Gregorian

NEW YORK — The international family of Carnegie institutions named five philanthropists as recipients of the 2022 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in August in recognition of their extraordinary contributions toward addressing the challenges facing our world. The goal of the medal is to inspire a culture of giving by honoring innovative philanthropists and by elevating the importance and relevance of philanthropic contributions to our society.

The Carnegie institutions also announced a special Carnegie Catalyst Award, created to celebrate the transformative power of human kindness. It honors a nonprofit organization that has been exceptionally effective in catalyzing people's desire to help one another during times of crisis.

At a time when global giving stands at some \$485 billion annually, the 2022 honorees have been leading the field of philanthropy by example. The medal seeks to honor their vision and generosity and to encourage others to join them in making the world a better place for all. This year's honorees have had a significant and lasting impact on many of today's most pressing issues through their support of medical research in cancer and pediatric care; the advancement of women in STEM fields; the reduction of racial, gender, and economic inequities; the furtherance of early childhood literacy and K-12 education; and the improvement of the quality of life in African countries.

Among the most prestigious honors in the field, the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy has been awarded for more than two decades, since its establishment in 2001, by the family of Carnegie institutions — more than 20 organizations in the United States and Europe founded by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. To date, more than 65 philanthropists have been honored with the medal.

The 2022 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy Honorees are:

Manu Chandaria (Kenya) The Chandaria Foundation; Lyda Hill (U.S.) Lyda Hill Philanthropies; Dolly Parton (U.S.) The Dollywood Foundation; Lynn Schusterman and Stacy Schusterman (U.S.) Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies.

The 2022 Carnegie Catalyst Award Honoree: World Central Kitchen (U.S.)

Founded by chef José Andrés in 2010, the organization is recognized for mobilizing volunteers to provide meals in communities affected by humanitarian and natural disasters. World Central Kitchen has served more than 150 million meals in countries around the world, and the organization continues to build one of the largest food relief organizations in Ukraine during the current conflict.

The new Carnegie Catalyst Award was created in honor of the cofounder of the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, Vartan Gregorian, who died in April 2021. He served for 24 years as the beloved president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, leading the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in honoring 10 classes of medalists. Gregorian himself was a catalyst who believed in the transformational power of human kindness — and who led by example.

"The 2022 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy honorees have a wide range of important priorities, yet they share a common goal through their determination to have impact and create positive change," said Governor Thomas H. Kean, chairman of Carnegie Corporation of New York's board of trustees and former governor of New Jersey. "This year, the Carnegie Catalyst Award will expand on their example by celebrating the ability of an organization to inspire and mobilize others. The recipient, World Central Kitchen, is an outstanding model of how humankind can respond in times of dire need by activating the inherent goodness in others — an ideal that was embodied through the life and work of Vartan Gregorian."

Every two years, medalists are nominated by the family of Carnegie institutions — and a selection committee representing seven of those institutions makes the final selection. The recipients of the 2022 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy will be honored on Thursday, October 13, during a private ceremony in New York City. The event will be hosted by Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Judy Woodruff, anchor and managing editor of the PBS NewsHour, will serve as master of ceremonies.

from previous page

body of the Council of Europe, a council of ministers which holds regular meetings and to which Azerbaijan would be obliged to provide periodic updates. The execution of Cyprus v. Turkey judgement is quite old, but discussion still continues on this at the Council of Europe official meetings. Kirakosyan went on to state that although he is a realist and he knows that Turkey and Azerbaijan won't readily implement judgements, that the judgements can be used politically to add pressure. It will be easier to convince the international community to take action, he said.

Another question was about whether Artsakh has standing in international court.

The response was that although Artsakh does not, the Republic of Armenia has the standing to bring claims, even if those affected are living in Azerbaijan proper or in Artsakh. In fact, any country could bring claims against another country for mistreatment of ethnic minorities, he said.

Questions were asked about human rights agencies such as Amnesty International verifying the Armenian side's claims. It was stated that these agencies are very important because being objective non-Armenian organizations, the value of their reports is higher. The Red Cross (ICRC) is acting impartially and helping POWs to communicate with families.

In relation to a question about statements

made by the World Council of Churches at the behest of Bishop Vicken Aykazian and others, Kirakosyan stated that these statements were helpful, but the ICRC's data is more important because they have the primary source of information on the ground.

A question was asked about US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and how much she knows about the situation. Kirakosyan replied that he believes she has been very well briefed and that he also briefed her personally. He added that he was meeting with the Armenian Embassy in the US to update them as well.

He noted that one immediate impact had been the court asking Azerbaijan to close down the Military Trophies Park. Although it was not closed down, the fallen soldiers' helmets and some other things were removed, apparently.

Political scientist Professor Anna Ohanyan, who was present at the lecture, then commented that "there is ample evidence in political studies scholarship on small states, that small states should engage in normative entrepreneurship, which is exactly what you're doing," and asked Kirakosyan if he could comment on whether the war in Ukraine has affected his work and also what Armenia's policy was on the International Criminal Court.

Kirakosyan responded that he didn't think the Ukraine issue had any impact on the court case, unless it was negatively impacting it in some way since it takes away needed attention. He stated that ICJ reacted immediately to Ukraine based on the Genocide Convention, in contrast to the slow process with Armenia. He did note that the tendency of smaller or weaker states to use international law could "play the other way around" noting that the states currently doing this include Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia.

Kirakosyan responded in regard to the International Criminal Court (ICC), that the Constitutional Court of Armenia found in 2004 that it was unconstitutional for Armenia to ratify the ICC statute, though the country had done so back in 1999. However, the Constitution of Armenia has changed twice since that time, and he now believes the statute on the International Criminal Court can and should be ratified by Armenia as it would "add an extra layer

of protection."

Kirakosyan's response was that the tone of the international community is shifting, and that this means Armenia needs to be very careful, to build on that and not lose momentum. He stated that he also personally believes that the reason the world was silent during the 44-day war was that Armenians lost opportunities to work in this regard to prove that "our position was legally sound, or not baseless."

Finally, a question was asked about the process of Remedial Secession. Remedial Secession is a disputed and rather new concept, coined in the past couple of decades, and used for the first time in the context of Kosovo. It is important to note that the UK started to use the phrase, as well as Russia, Germany, and France, lending it credence as an emerging concept in international law.

Kirakosyan argued that the idea of external self-determination (or remedial secession) is rooted in the documents of the United Nations and in the 1970 Declaration of the Principles of International Law. He argued that "if you try to unpack it" it can be seen that the seeming contradiction between Territorial Integrity and Self-Determination is not actually a contradiction. Kirakosyan states that if a case for remedial secession (external self-determination) can be made, it also resolves the territorial integrity issue, because the principle of territorial integrity is an element of the non-use of force principle enshrined in Article 2.4 of the UN Charter. This legal tension was resolved in an advisory opinion by the court in the Kosovo case, Kirakosyan stated. The principle of territorial integrity creates obligations only for member states of the United Nations (like Armenia and Azerbaijan) not for seceding states (like Artsakh). His point was that Artsakh's secession from Azerbaijan does not infringe on "territorial integrity" because Artsakh does not (yet) have any obligation in regard to territorial integrity. Kirakosyan closed with a reference to a case on Quebec where a good example was given of the legal requirements needed to secede from another country under international law. According to Kirakosyan, one of the primary legal requirements is that an existential threat needs to be present.

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**EMCEES**  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Knights of Vartan's Back to the Homeland VI Mission Trip

YEREVAN — The Knights and Daughters of Vartan continued their “Back to the Homeland” Mission Trip for the sixth year. More than 20 Knights, Daughters, and friends joined the pilgrimage on September 18-24 to visit the homeland, their mission partners and projects in Armenia.

The Knights of Vartan fraternal organization has always paid special attention to the education of Armenians around the world. Numerous scholarships have been given to students in Armenian schools in the USA and Middle East as well as schools in Armenia. In addition, many of the schools in Armenia needed renovation and the Knights of Vartan began projects to make sure the environment in which the students received their education was brought up to date. The Back to the Homeland Mission Trip VI included visits to the schools that were renovated during this past fiscal year.

The first project visited by the group was at the Colonel Vladimir Karapetyan School #3 in Sevan. The Colonel, a grad-

Vartan projects are continuing for a second year. This year, with the sponsorship of the Armenian Artists Project, a Knights of Vartan partner, the wrestling room was renovated and a shower was built. The school has 150 students who attend from the town of Aparan and nearby villages. In particular, the Knights of Vartan members were excited to meet Mariam, a 12-year-old weightlifter. The group was confident that one day she will be responsible for the Armenian flag being raised at world competitions.

The Knights of Vartan, in cooperation with the Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF) supported the complete renovation of one of the kindergartens in Aparan in 2017. Since then the kindergarten has been renamed “Knights of Vartan”. In 2018, Gomidas Lodge donated more items for the school's operation. This year, a new gift was presented to this 110 pupil kindergarten, namely a five-piece new playground where the children can climb,



Delegation group photo with the students and teachers of Aparan Sports School



The Back to the Homeland delegation group photo with children and staff of Aparan Knights of Vartan Kindergarten

uate of the school, is a hero of the war in Artsakh who died on June 17, 1992 in the village of Madaghis in the Martakert Region while protecting 12,000 Armenians who were forcibly displaced from the Shumyan Region. The school building is more than 68 years old and has had very few repairs since its construction. This past year, Avak Sbarabed (Grand Commander) Hunan Arshakian renovated a classroom as the start of an ongoing project. This provided a good reason for everyone to visit the school, meet the faculty and discuss possible future projects.

On September 22 the group visited the Aparan Sports School where Knights of

swing and jump. This new project was implemented in cooperation with the Armenian Artists Project (sponsor of the project) and Focus on Children Now (local implementer and contributor).

The fourth school visited on September 23rd and supported by the organization was the Knights of Vartan Basic School #106 in Yerevan. Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge of Greater Detroit continues to make improvements at this School. During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Lodge provided funding to renovate the second floor of its lower school building, specifically, 7 classrooms, the hallway, restrooms and stairway. Since 2018 the Lodge has raised over



The opening of the renovated Auditorium at the #106 Basic School in Yerevan, L to R- Past Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian, Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian, past Commander Kazar Terterian

\$95,000 for various renovation projects at the school. The #106 Basic School is the educational home to over 1,000 students. The students, after graduation, enter universities in Armenia and overseas or continue their education at vocational schools. Most importantly, they become good citizens of Republic of Armenia.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held with the help of Arshakian of Gomidas Lodge, Past Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian and Past Commander Kazar Terterian both of Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge. The group toured all of the renovated classrooms one by one, enjoyed a performance in the auditorium presented by the students and Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge leaders promised that they will continue to renovate additional classrooms.

It is important to note that the Knights have been involved in school renovations

in Armenia since the 1990s. In partnership with Armenian Territorial Development Fund (ATDF) and other donors, 257 schools have benefitted. Since 2018 a new and direct partnership was started between the Knights of Vartan and the #106 Basic School. During the past four years, complete repair and renovations were implemented in the gymnasium with new windows, net and new sports equipment; complete renovation of the auditorium with leveling up the floor and new chairs; new windows and doors where needed; electric wires were changed in the entire school, electric fixtures were added and more. Some of these repairs such as the windows of the gymnasium or electric wires had not been updated since the school was built in the 1960s.

As in preceding years, the implementing partner has been the Paros Foundation; the school benefits greatly from the excellent



The Knights of Vartan delegation touring in the newly renovated classrooms





## COMMUNITY NEWS

work of the Foundation's skillful and experienced construction managers.

Another heartwarming project for the Knights and Daughters of Vartan is home-building with the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia (FCHA). Since 2015 over 30 families built or improved their housing through funding from the Knights of Vartan, one family at a time. The Gevorgyan family raised their three adorable daughters in a metal container (domik). By the end of 2021 they were selected as a partner of FCHA. They worked tirelessly and completed their new home toward the end of summer. Their fourth child, a baby boy, was born a few weeks after the family moved into the new house.

The week was extremely busy with additional excursions and making new acquaintances. The Knights of Vartan delegation visited Yerabloor Cemetery to pay respects to fallen heroes of the Artsakh wars. A warm meeting followed with a visit to the Armenian Wounded Heroes Rehabilitation Center arranged by Past Commander Tigran Sahakyan of Mamigonian Lodge. After meeting the soldiers, the delegation learned how they recover from their wounds and get back to a normal life. A substantial donation was made by the group for the center's ongoing operation.

The Back to the Homeland Mission Trip also included educational events, two of which took place on Saturday, September 24th. In the morning the group visited the headquarters of ArmEcon Bank to learn about the economic situation and banking system in Armenia. At noon the group members welcomed mountaineer and entrepreneur Gevorg Gasparyan to learn about his 20-time climb to the summit of Mt. Ararat and how anyone interested can join in the future.

The trip concluded with a farewell dinner on Saturday evening. Sixty people including delegation members, local partners, family and friends attended. Because of the recent conflict at the border of Armenia, no celebrations or festivities were conducted. This was the time to get together, talk from the heart, thank our partners and members and share blessings.

The banquet was held at the Megerian Restaurant and began by touring the extraordinary carpet museum and leaning about its history. Then the Armenian Artists Project presented their online charitable art gallery [armenianartistsproject.org](http://armenianartistsproject.org) and the philanthropic projects they have supported from the sales of art during past two years. Representatives of Tavush Schools from border villages were invited to present their students' entrepreneurship and sell their crafts. As you might expect, trip participants were excited to make purchases made by the young artisans to take back to the US for their family and friends.

During the banquet Arshakian presented awards to four long time partners of the Knights of Vartan and to a dedicated Knights of Vartan member: Marine Vardanyan, Principal of the Knights of Vartan #106 Basic School of Yerevan, Ashot Yeghiazaryan, Director of the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia, Artur Soghomonyan, Director of the Armenian Territorial Development Fund, Fr. Aram Mirzoyan, a priest from the Berd Community, and Past Commander Tigran Sahakyan, for his dedication and many years of organizing the Back to the Homeland Mission Trips.

"We are grateful to our members for joining the Back to the Homeland Mission Trip and for the endless support of many members not present, and to our partners for the dedicated work they do here for our people in Armenia. United, we can overcome all challenges" expressed Arshakian.



Meeting with heroes who are recovering at the Armenian Wounded Heroes, Sargis Stepanyan, on left, and Grand Commander Hunan Arshakian on right

This trip was extraordinary because a few days before its start a war broke out and uncertainty was ever present. Even with safety a grave concern, the brave participants of the Back to the Homeland Mis-

sion Trip VI took their flights to Armenia without hesitation.

For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>.



The Back to the Homeland delegation group photo with Gevorgyan Family in front of the new house



Sponsors and partners at the Aparan Kindergarten next to the playground poster



Sona Gevorgyan welcoming donors with bread and salt





# Arts & Culture

## Arpa Film Festival Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

HOLLYWOOD — Arpa International Film Festival, the longest running independent film festival in Hollywood, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, with a star-studded Gala at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, on November 20, 2022. The festival's longstanding mission has been to feature films that cultivate cultural understanding and global empathy.

This year's month long online festival streaming will continue to explore socially relevant themes such as diaspora, war, genocide, dual identity, exile and multi culturalism. The diverse tapestry of inspiring films to be featured from around the world will inspire our local and worldwide community to connect and advance progressive cinematic art.

Starting November 4, the festival will be streaming over 80 films from 26 different countries online, free of charge globally. The festival is very satisfied with the online screening, making the works of hard working independent filmmakers' stories to be viewed from around the world.

The Arpa International Film Festival will also screen in theater features and documentaries. The first one will be "Invisible Republic," a film by Garin Hovanissian and produced by Eric Eserailian, Serj Tankian, and Alec Mouhibian on November 3, with two screenings at 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., followed by Q & A with the filmmakers and Artsakh journalist Lika Zakaryan.

The highlight of the festival is the Silver Anniversary Gala on November 20, at the Beverly Hilton. Red Carpet, cocktails and silent auction at 5:30 followed by dinner and program. The festival is fortunate to have two dynamic individuals as our MCs. Gracing the stage will be, Fox 11's Emmy Award winning anchor of Good Day LA, Araksya Karapetyan and entertainment anchor Amanda Salas.

Awards will be presented to the winning filmmakers on the Gala night with the festival's awards honoring celebrities in the cinematic arena. Honorees this year will be, Diane Baker / Icon Award, Michael Madsen / Career Achievement Award, Aaron Ryder / Career Achievement Award in producing and Krys Marshall of "For All Mankind" on Apple TV +(fourth season) Breakthrough Artist Award.

The Gala will welcome Academy award winning producer Terry George and producer Mike Medavoy. The surprise Humanitarian awards will follow.

Arpa International Film Festival is honored to celebrate at the Gala, the 5 year tribute of the film "The Promise," which created global awareness making a powerful impact. Highlighting the tribute will be its visionary director Oscar winner Terry George, producers Mike Medavoy, Eric Eserailian, Emmy winning documentarian ("Intent to Destroy") Joe Berlinger with the cast and crew.

For tickets and information: [www.arpafilmfestival.com](http://www.arpafilmfestival.com) - Eventbrite and Itsmyseat.com



Oscar Tatosian speaks about Armenian carpets.

## Oscar Tatosian Shares Stories of Armenian Carpets

By David Lührssen

MILWAUKEE — Oscar Tatosian is a familiar name to Midwest Armenians. He was on the Eastern Diocese's Diocesan Council for many years and continues to sit on the boards of the Fund for Armenian Relief and the Armenian Assembly of America. He is also Honorary Consul of the Armenian Republic in Chicago. His "day job," as he puts it, is the family business established by his grandfather in 1920, Oscar Isberian Carpets, which he owns and operates with his brother, Sarkis.

On October 2, Tatosian gave a talk on Armenian carpets at St. John the Baptist Armenian Church in Milwaukee, illustrated by a display of carpets.

He admitted that in his business of buying and selling Oriental carpets, specifically Armenian carpets, are "a small niche but a big passion." Many of the carpets he displayed were in near perfect condition, despite their age. They were "treasures, cherished, often kept rolled up" when not in use.

Tatosian had a story for each of his rugs. Among the most unusual concerned his discovery of an Armenian rug in a hotel atrium in Lahore, Pakistan. The silk rug with a woven inscription in Armenian depicted the crucifixion as drawn in illuminated Armenian manuscripts. The Pakistani rug dealer had no idea of its meaning. Tatosian said it was probably woven in Kashmir by Armenians who settled there centuries ago.

Armenians were among the world's earliest carpet makers and the best carpets are works of art, woven embodiments of Armenian culture. Each village had its own patterns and designs, as distinct as the wines from different vineyards in France. Among the other carpets he displayed was a *kilim* woven in Aleppo, Syria from silk wool and linen with an almost Navajo design; a large "garden design" carpet by Persian Armenians whose geometric forms represent a family compound complete with individual houses, garden and irrigation canals; a carpet whose dragons symbolize wisdom; and a 1950s machine-woven carpet from Soviet Armenia. The Soviet carpets, he explained, replicated traditional Armenian designs "but look a little perfect — they don't have the character of traditional rugs," hand woven without electricity. "There was more whimsy and freedom in the antique rugs," Tatosian added.

Also in his collection was a carpet depicting horsemen and peacocks woven in Artsakh, dated 1904 and inscribed with the names of its original owners. One of his favorites, another discovery on one of his trips to Pakistan, is a circa 1900 rug depicting Mother Armenia amidst the ruins of Ani after the famous painting.

Tatosian travels annually to Armenia and creates jobs in the homeland, not only for weaving new carpets but repairing old ones for his customers in the US.

## Guillaume Toumanian

*Developing French-Armenian Artistic Links*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN / BORDEAUX, France — The Marseille-born painter Guillaume Toumanian, 48, studied plastic arts and sciences of art at Michel de Montaigne University, Bordeaux 3, in parallel attending the workshops at the School of Fine Arts of Bordeaux. In 1997, he obtained a master's degree in plastic arts, then started a teaching career in Toulouse. Here he meets the gallery owner Fabrice Galvani, who organized his first personal exhibition in 1999. For the past twenty years, Guillaume has dedicated himself entirely to painting. He has had personal exhibitions in major cities of France (Paris, Lyon, Montpellier, Bordeaux, Angoulême, Toulouse, Marseille), as well as in China, the US and Armenia.

"Guillaume Toumanian paints with conviction, as if, in this ancestral gesture and almost without age, the immemorial appearance of the visible was replayed: its violence or its break-in, its miracle renewed" (Dominique Rabaté, 2019).

**Guillaume, is it possible in today's France to make a living by painting only?**

Yes, the French art market is active, and Paris is once again one of the most important cities in the world for painting in particular. There are also private and public financing systems for buying works of art. However, it is difficult to live by painting, because there are many artists in France who come from all over the world to Paris. For my part, I live by painting since I stopped teaching arts five years ago after my art residence in China.

**Are people interested in obtaining classical paintings?**

There are also many collectors and figurative painting is very well represented in France. But it all depends on what you mean by classical painting. If we consider that the word "classic" means realistic or hyper realistic, then this is trendy in Paris at the moment.

**In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were many Armenian and Armenian-born artists in France. What about now?**

There have always been many Armenian artists and artists of Armenian origin in France. I know many of them and I recently organized an exhibition which brought together artists of Armenian origin. This is the MENK (We) project that I continue to develop in France and in Armenia. It is important to maintain this link between the two countries.

**You cooperated with veteran French-Armenian painter, Jansem (Jean Semerdjian) at the Museum of the Resistance of Toulouse for the exhibition "Armenia, Act of Memory." How do you evaluate your collaboration with him?**

*continued on next page*





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Books

## New Book by Shula Highlights Friendship Of Football Legends Yepremian and Swift

One of the most intriguing friendships in the National Football League (NFL) was that of Doug Swift and Garo Yepremian, who played together on the Miami Dolphins from 1970-1975. Doug was the starting strongside linebacker, Garo was the team's field goal kicker. It was during that time that head coach Don Shula took the Dolphins to three Super Bowls, won two rings, and in 1972, the Miami Dolphins became the only team in the history of the NFL never to lose or tie a game. Fifty years later, those '72 Dolphins are still the only NFL team ever to post a "Perfect Season."

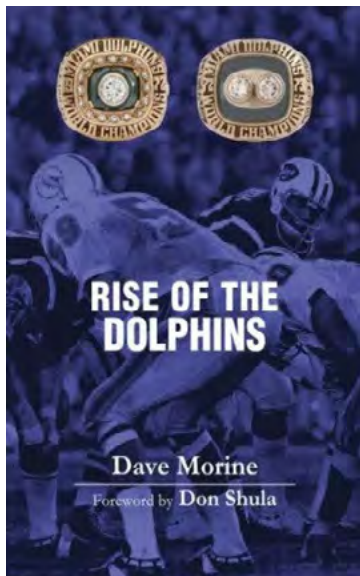
On paper, it would appear that neither Doug nor Garo had any business playing professional football. Neither of them had the right pedigree. Doug hadn't gone to a big-time football school like Alabama, Ohio State, Michigan, USC, or Texas. Instead, he'd graduated from little Amherst College in Massachusetts and with his long hair and rose-tinted glasses looked more like John Lennon of the Beatles than the typical professional football player.

Even though their backgrounds were much different – Doug being brought up in the suburbs of Syracuse and

Garo on the island of Cyprus – in some sense, the same unlikelihood of ever playing in the NFL could be said about Garo. Despite the fact that he was the leading scorer for the Dolphins in '71 and '72, Garo was seen by his teammates as a little foreigner who didn't know the first thing about football. Even President Lyndon Johnson held that opinion. After watching Garo on TV, the President told the press, "I don't like the fact that a little foreigner who'd never made a block or a tackle in his life could decide the outcome of a game hard-fought by American boys in the trenches."

So, how did these two oddball Dolphins do it? According to Doug, their success was due to a combination of discipline, determination, and doggedness. As Doug saw it, "To achieve perfection in football, or any sport, you have to be totally focused on the game. That's what made the Dolphins so great."

In *Rise of the Dolphins*, Dave Morine not only takes an interesting, informative, off-beat, and often humorous look at what made these two Dolphins and the rest of their teammates in the early '70s so successful, but he also explores how the game itself changed



Garo Yepremian kicking

during that period. Plus, how Pete Rozelle by teaming up with TV was able to lay the foundation for the NFL to build itself from being just a football league into becoming the huge entertainment business it is today. Given these insights, past and present Dolphins fans as well as anybody interested in the history of the NFL or just a look back at the '70s in general will enjoy this book and learn why, according to Morine, "There will never be another 'Perfect Season'."

The 425-page *Rise of the Dolphins*, including a foreword by Don Shula, may be obtained online at <https://store.bookbaby.com/book/rise-of-the-dolphins> in hardcover, paperback, or ebook formats.

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I was lucky to be chosen in 2003 to exhibit with Jansem at the Resistance Museum in Toulouse. Dr. Fernand Torossian, whom I respect highly, had done a lot for this exhibition organized by the Midi Pyrenees Region. It was not an Armenian diaspora project but there was this desire to talk about the Genocide with the great painter Jansem from the first generation and a young painter, from a third generation, which I was. I was very impressed with



"Presence III" by Guillaume Toumanian

this idea and at that time my work was very expressionist, I had shown red paintings, a series of "torsos" and "heads" in particular.

Unfortunately, I had not been able to meet the master Jansem, who was already very old and sick at the time of the exhibition in Toulouse. It was an honor for me to take part in this exhibition and to inform the public who did not know the history of

the Armenians.

**You bear an honorable Armenian surname. And you have a special connection with Lori region in the north of Armenia. Any family connection with the "Great Loretsi" - Hovhannes Toumanian?**

My grandparents come from Erzerum and Sivas and survived the Genocide. Unfortunately, we don't know much about our family because my grandfather, Hedayak Toumanian, was an orphan. They arrived in Marseille in 1924. Currently, I am conducting further research on my family. We have no connection with the region of Lori and the great Armenian poet.

**Your biography says your trip to Armenia in 2016 marked a "turning point in your painting." How?**

In 2016, I return to Armenia almost 10 years after my first trip to the country. I wanted to travel alone in the country to meet the people and discovering the magnificent landscapes, but also to study in Yerevan the Eastern Armenian landscape art movement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through good knowledge in the artistic world, I had the chance to regularly visit the National Gallery of Armenia and see the works of the masters up close. I was fascinated by "night paintings," and this influenced my

work on my return. I took a lot of notes and immersed myself in the atmospheres of major works of especially two eminent Armenian painters — the "night paintings" of Gevorg Bashindjaghian and storms of Ivan (Hovhannes) Aivazovski.

**Have art critics and viewers seen a link between your artistic style and your Armenian heritage?**



Guillaume Toumanian

Sometimes, journalists and art critics ask me if I think I am influenced by my Armenian origins. I always answer that there is necessarily something that shows through in my painting in the same way as my origins alongside my mother in the Landes (South West of France) and the representation of trees and forests in particular. I paint what I feel and what I am, so there is a connection, yes, and people who know and are interested in my work see connection in a certain way.

**In 2018 you had an exhibition in First International Print Biennale at NPAK Art Center in Yerevan. Do you have any plans to travel to Armenia again?**

In fact, it was an invitation from KulturDialog Armenien organization, which arranges this biennial. I only participated with a series of small monotype formats, but it was above all a work of artistic exchange that I had started to organize with an Armenian artist Tigran Sahakyan who came for a residency in Bordeaux in 2015. Since then, we have seen again in Switzerland and Germany and have always kept in touch. That's why in 2022, Tigran returned to France for a residency and exhibition with Arman Vahanyan as part of the MENK project. It is under development and we will definitely talk about it again if you are interested.





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Michael Goorjian's 'Amerikatsi' Art Film Wryly Presents Message of Hope

FILM, from page 1

something that would have a chance of reaching non-Armenians....All the terrible things in the past, yes, they are important and need to be talked about and dealt with, but we have so much art and culture and interesting things. These are the things that will help get the kind of attention you seek when you look to the rest of the world."

It took Goorjian a long time to come up with the right story. After his film "Illusion" came out in 2004, Armenians kept asking him when he would make a movie about Armenia. He said, "I have tried over the years. I have thought a lot about different things — maybe I could do this, maybe I could do that. That maybe was always there in the background, a longing to go and make a film there."

He went to Armenia for the first time in 2006 and screened "Illusion" at the Golden Apricot Film Festival. This was a turning point in his thinking.

## Rediscovering Armenia

He is Armenian on his father's side, and he explained that his paternal grandfather raised his father and uncle to be Americans, because his grandfather wanted to leave behind the bitter parts of the Armenian experience. His grandfather was from village called Palu, and as a child he used to steal the local pasha's horse for joy rides until the Turks came to the village and said they were looking for Manoog Goorjian in order to kill him in retribution. A Turkish family helped him hide and sneaked him out of town, and eventually he came to America, but the rest of his family were all killed in 1915. His wife, Michael's grandmother, was from Erzurum. She survived the deportations along with a few relatives and made it eventually to Toronto where she met Manoog.

Partly because of all of this, Goorjian did not go much to church growing up or have much contact with Armenians. He visited some cousins and went to a few bazaars now and then. He said, "I didn't really have any connection to anything Armenian until after college, even till my thirties. An Armenian producer named Anahid Nazarian cast me in a film that she helped produce ["Pomegranate"], and that got me exposed a little bit more to Armenians, but it really was my trip to Armenia in 2006 that changed things. Now, my son goes to an Armenian school, and the whole thing. I am working on learning the language too."

*Mirror-Spectator* correspondent Artsvi Bakhchinyan had served as Goorjian's guide in Armenia (see his own article of March 17, 2022) and helped arrange a screening of the film for the deputy minister of culture at the time, who happened to also share the surname Goorjian. "After watching the film," Michael related, "he said, we are related, and the rest of my time there I was taken to dinners, and everything was great."

## Writing the Script

"With the script itself, I actually started out with a story which had nothing to do with Armenians. The story is about a prisoner. It was based on a real story a friend of mine told me, about a guy he knew in prison who could see into an apartment. There was a man living there, and the guy vicariously survived learning about this man's life. To me that core story is both something poetic and universal," Goorjian said.

It can expose things about the human condition, and the longing to see another life one wants to live. Goorjian said that especially after the Covid experience, many people could relate to such a situation. At the same time, it allowed him through this device to present aspects of Armenian culture, including food and dance, through the

eyes of the prisoner to a broad audience in a non-didactic manner.

"I took that, and I learned about repatriation to Armenia and that period of history, and it fit with this story. On the surface it does look like, oh, this is a movie about a somewhat obscure period of modern Armenian history, but that is kind of the wrapping. The soul of the film is something quite different," he related.

Once he actually started writing, Goorjian said it became one of the fastest he has completed in the first draft because things seemed to converge for him. However, he said, "For me personally, all good writing is revising. I am sure I was up to at least 50-60 revisions. I was constantly revising and constantly learning too." He got input from both Armenians and non-Armenians

er with producer Arman Nshanian, who has not only made other films in Armenia but has helped bridge co-productions with people from other countries. Goorjian met with the Armenian Ministry of Culture and the National Cinema Center.

In the beginning, he related, there was some suspicion. The Armenians understood from experience that filmmaking at times can be a shady enterprise and you never know what you might end up with. In an early interview over Zoom, he was asked why the Russians are the bad guys. He said he explained that this is not anti-Russian but is a historic piece. In fact, he went out of his way to cast actual Russian actors from Russia to play the Russian roles.

In the end, the Ministry of Culture and the National Cinema Center agreed to help

that he screened the film for American actor Bill Murray, who is a friend, and the latter exclaimed, "Those actors are incredible. Down to the smallest role they were great." Goorjian said that there are so many good actors in Armenia, so he hoped his film would shed light on that.

Goorjian tried to be authentic as much as possible in the film in depicting life in Soviet Armenia, including sets, costumes and in general how things were done then. As much of the film took place in a prison cell, that made his task easier. He relied a lot on the film crew, whose older members had lived through the latter part of the Soviet era. For example, he said that he had blocked and staged all the scenes where a kitchen orderly brings the prisoners' meals and planned for him to actually come into

the cell with the food. However, the man playing that role declared, "I will not put my name on the film, unless the cell door has one of these [slots for trays of food]. Anyone who has lived in Soviet Armenia would know every cell had one." So Goorjian said he restaged this accordingly.

Language was not seen as a difficulty in this trilingual film. Although Goorjian



Michael Goorjian as Charlie Bakhchinyan, in the prison yard, in "Amerikatsi"

on the script. He said, "One of my concerns was that I did not want to wrongly portray what took place in a way that would offend people that were affected by it. I think that is why tonally this is not straight realism. It is running around with a stork egg in an earthquake."

In other words, Goorjian was not trying to recreate history with his film but has introduced a surrealistic element. As he describes it, "There is an absurdist side to it, which I think for me was important. As much as it is about things that took place, it is more of a fable. It is about the essence, not the reenactment of this guy's life."

That freedom from historicity allowed Goorjian to meld pieces from various stories and places. One example he gave is that of the guard Tigran in the movie, who turns out to be an artist censured by the Communist Party for painting churches. That was based on a true story, which befell the grandfather-in-law of one of the film's producers, Robert Patrick Malkassian.

When he wrote the script, he originally did not plan to cast himself in the main role. Goorjian said, "It just worked out that this was the best way to do the film." Early in his career, Goorjian said, he found that oftentimes he would work on projects that while fun, he wouldn't want to watch personally. "I think that is what started me into writing and trying to create my own projects," he said, which he could care about more. When asked whether directing a film in which he played the main character posed any problems, he simply responded, "I have done it before."

## Funding and Shooting the Film

Goorjian exclaimed, "From the get-go, I wanted as much as possible to have this film identified with Armenia and support Armenia, creating jobs there done by Armenians, whether from the diaspora or from Armenia. I wanted to get as many people on board as possible to identify with the film as theirs and feel ownership of it." Togeth-

finance the film. The film turned out to be probably the highest budget film ever shot in Armenia to date, Goorjian said. Financing also came from investors and some foundations.

As the film was being shot, Goorjian said, "Slowly, I think people realized that what we were trying to do authentically was a good thing... They saw that the team of people we put together were professionals and our intentions with our project were true in terms of wanting to make good art and wanting to inspire other filmmakers to also come to Armenia and make films there."

Unlike some filmmakers who bring their own crew from abroad to Armenia, the entire film crew except for Goorjian, the cinematographer, and the first assistant director were all based in Armenia, as was the composer Andranik Berberyan and of course the Armenian Philharmonic.

A number of diasporan Armenians also became involved. One person would introduce Goorjian to another, he related. Bakhchinyan introduced Goorjian to Nelli Uvarova, the Russian actress with an Armenian father who plays Sona in the film.

Filmmaker Karen Hovhannisyan introduced Goorjian to musician Serj Tankian, who became a producer of the film, and in turn connected him with others. Goorjian exclaimed: "This guy is awesome! He helped find tar player Miqayel Voskanyan, and wrote a few of the folk tunes in the film. He in a way supervised the music, but also as a producer, he is not just good in opening doors but really kind — any way that he could help, he helped."

Chance played a role at times. Finding Hovik Keuchkerian, the actor who played Tigran, took months of searches, until by chance he came across his photo on an Instagram page and realized this was the right person for the role.

However it happened, the final group of actors did a wonderful job. Goorjian said

wrote the original script in English, he had it translated into Armenian for the entire crew and cast. He said he relied a lot on his producer Nshanian and Artsvi Bakhchinyan to help translate for him on the set and also had interpreters to help him a lot of the time, especially as the character he portrays in the film over time learns more and more Armenian.

## Difficulties

There were, however, some difficulties while working in Armenia. The infrastructure for filmmaking there has some gaps. When Goorjian first started writing the film, he was forewarned by another filmmaker that he would have to bring his own sound department because they didn't do sound on sets there. This was a relic of the Soviet era, where films were shot silent and dubbed later.

However, he found out when he was ready to go there to shot that actually there were several teams of people excellent at recording sound, and other improvements took place even during the months he was in Armenia. For example, when he started, there was only one decent ARRI camera in the country and by the time he left there were three.

The preparation of "Amerikatsi" itself also helped improve the situation. The sound stage at Hay Studios was dilapidated and falling apart, according to Goorjian, but his team helped fix the roof as part of the deal for shooting there. The cinematographer told Goorjian that the key grip and gaffer was one of the best that he had ever worked with. However, he did not have direct access to new technical developments abroad, so when the cinematographer introduced him to new lights whose temperatures were easy to adjust, he exclaimed this is incredible. Now he can use this for future productions.

Perhaps the most immediate difficulties the film crew encountered was that when

*continued on next page*





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

**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/>

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@sthagop.com](mailto:info@sthagop.com) or visit [www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar](http://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](http://www.ArmenianFriendsOfAmerica.Org). Tickets will not be sold at the door.

OCTOBER 18 — Journey of An Armenian Family: Special Screening and Q&A with Filmmaker Roger Hagopian Tuesday, 7 PM Watertown Free Public Library, 123 Main Street, Watertown. Join local filmmaker Roger Hagopian in conversation after a special screening of his new 30-minute documentary that charts his family's journey from Ottoman Turkey to Watertown, from the perspective of his father, Hurire, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Watertown Free Public Library | 617-972-6436

OCTOBER 20 — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Boston. WELCOME RECEPTION FOR NEW CITIZENS following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall. Thursday at 2 p.m. For details, email [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

OCTOBER 22 — The Women's Guild of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, Chelmsford, will host a traditional Hey Jan Ghapama Dinner Dance to re-create the old tradition of serving Ghapama (a sumptuous stuffed pumpkin delicacy) on New Year's Eve and Weddings in Armenia. Losh Kebab Dinner and dancing to DJ Gabriel. Kazanjian Ballroom, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA. 6:30 p.m. Adults advanced reservation - \$40, \$50 at the door; Children, 6 – 16, \$25. Children under 6 – free. For reservations, please call or email Yn. Ann at 617-797-9015, [annakesabian10@gmail.com](mailto:annakesabian10@gmail.com); or Isabelle, 978-459-7315, [ihame@aol.com](mailto:ihame@aol.com).

OCTOBER 29 — A conversation with artists from “On the Edge: Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection” currently on display at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Featuring artists Laddie John Dill, Gregory Wiley Edwards, and Joe Fay. Artist panel 2 - 3:30 p.m. Reception 3:30 – 5 p.m. Suggested donation \$15, free for museum members and students. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/conversation-w-artists-from-on-the-edge-los-angeles-art-1970s-1990s-tickets-412385374757>

NOVEMBER 13 - Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION. Sunday at 2pm. Meet & Greet. Refreshments. Share the Warmth: Bring a winter hat, scarf or gloves. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

NOVEMBER 18 — St. James Armenian Church Presents A Classical Evening Featuring Armenian Composers. A Concert with Asatur Baljyn, Baritone and Levon Hovsepian, Piano. Friday, 7 p.m.. Doors Open; 7:30 p.m. Concert. Reception to follow. Open to the public; complimentary admission. St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural & Youth Center, Keljik Hall. 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA.

DECEMBER 11 – Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY. Sunday at 4:45pm. “Boston's Newest Holiday Tradition” Hot Chocolate & Festive Cookies. RSVP [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**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](mailto:rsvptaliab@gmail.com) or 917 238-3970) or Tamar Degirmenci ([ttiaa20@aol.com](mailto:ttiaa20@aol.com), or 201 315-6486).

**RHODE ISLAND**

OCTOBER 14-DECEMBER 9 — Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church presents:

•October 14 - “Mer Anoush Ayrenik” Grigor Haroutyunyan Conductor, Chorale of Ghazaraos Saryan Art School, Yerevan, Armenia, 7:30 p.m.

•October 23 - Spiritual Music Festival featuring the Choirs & Soloists of: St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church (Newport, RI), St. Mary and Mena Coptic Orthodox Church of RI (Cranston, RI), The Holy Family Coptic Orthodox Church (Attleboro, MA), Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church (Providence, RI) Sunday, October 23 at 5 p.m. at Church sanctuary. Donation gratefully received. Refreshments

•November 4 - Biblical music from the Louvre, Paris by Edouard Barseghian, Dr. of Philosophy (Musicology), 7:30 p.m.

•December 9 - Christmas concert at Church sanctuary, Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Armenian Cultural Hour: Whether or not you have a Facebook account, you can find the LIVESTREAM of the event through the parish's Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/armenianchurchprovidence/videos/>

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they were a week into shooting, the Covid epidemic first hit, and the crew worried about catching it and possibly dying. Hovik Keuchkerian, who plays the key role of Tigran, was from Madrid, where the epidemic was very severe, and his mother lived there. He had to go back before his parts were finished being shot, and then the Russian actors went back to Russia. Then a travel ban ensued.

Eventually, after some two months of lockdown, when shooting could finally resume, the government only allowed them to shoot the scenes where only one person, Goorjian acting as protagonist Charlie Bakhchinyan, was in his prison cell, as this only required the presence of a handful of people. Goorjian said, “Honestly, of all my years of working, that first day we got to go back to set was one of the best days of shooting I have ever experienced. Everybody was just so glad to be able to work.”

**Philosophy and Politics**

Goorjian observed that in this movie, which starts with a brief mention of the Armenian Genocide and includes other tragedies like the effects of Stalinism, also refer-

ences an earthquake. He said, “I remember somebody asking me, why do you have the earthquake in the movie. I answered, well, I wanted to throw everything possible at this guy, because that is what a lot of Armenians feel like – just throw something else at us, what else can we go through.”

However, Goorjian worked on the script during the 2018 Armenian “Velvet Revolution,” and perhaps that had an influence on him too. Goorjian said, “Tonally, the spirit of Armenia before the pandemic and before the war was a sense of euphoria and hope, which is the underlying message of my film. Despite all these horrible things, there is still hope for Armenians to thrive in this world.”

At the same time, there is no political message of the film. He said, “We specifically wanted to make a film that didn't have a political angle to it. If anything, there is just a call to humanity, especially to Armenians, to have faith in that. The original title which I had was not a great title, but it was “The New Armenian,” and it is from the William Saroyan quote about building a new Armenia any time that two Armenians get together. That is Charlie and

Tigran to me. You have to just go back to that foundation of humanity between two Armenians.”

Unexpectedly, the 2020 war broke out a month after the shooting wrapped out. Goorjian said it was tough, because there were both actors and crew that ended up on the front lines. He said, “That I have never experienced before, in Hollywood. I think that made for me the experience of what the film is a little different, as who knows what is going to happen in terms of Armenia.”

**Getting the Film Out There**

Right now, the film is only being shown in festivals, where it is beginning to receive some acclaim. It was the prestige opening film at the Golden Apricot International Film Festival in July. It won the grand jury prize for best feature narrative and best cinematography at the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Woodstock Film Festival in September in upstate New York. On October 8, it won the audience award at the Hamburg Film Festival in Germany. It will be at the Mystic Film Festival in Connecticut, where it will be screened on October 20 and 23, and after this at some festivals on the West Coast.

After the festival phase, Goorjian said, a

distribution deal for “Amerikatsi” will be reached with some version of theatrical release at least in the United States, where a lot of Armenians live, before moving on to streaming platforms down the road.

“How we reach our goal of bridging out beyond just our core audience of Armenians is through reaching out first to Armenians and saying, here, we have made this film. We hope you like it and we hope you like the intention of why we made it,” Goorjian said to Armenian readers. “Help us, be our advocate, and help us bridge over to the rest of the world.”

Armenians can support this film by seeing it at festivals and following it on Facebook, Instagram or other social media, since those metrics are significant to distributors. Goorjian concluded, “I tried to make a film that any Armenian can feel is theirs. If people still had DVDs, this would be the film I could see your Armenian grandmother buying a case of and putting copies in stocking stuffers. The ownership of the film being all Armenians in the diaspora, anybody can be proud of it and say, hey, do you want to learn about my culture? Well here, watch this movie.”





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Batchig Restaurant's Famous Za'atar Man'ouche

## Batchig Restaurant's Famous Za'atar Man'ouche

BEIRUT — “There has been an Armenian presence in Lebanon for centuries. Their daily kitchen routine has become an interesting blend of these two exceptional and rich culinary traditions,” says Aline Kamakian, owner of the highly successful Batchig, who works to continually celebrate this cultural mix with her creative and traditional food and menus. “Nested in the midst of a buzzing urban environment, Batchig gathers a variety of different people who seek enriching social outings and authentic culinary experiences that feel like a mind resetting voyage.”

Aline adds: “To me, Batchig is tradition, childhood, family gatherings. Batchig is a smile, a memory, a flavor. Batchig is a delicious meal rich with stories inspired by yesteryears, travels, and secrets. Batchig is a sweet kiss from your grandmother. Batchig is the creation of dedicated and talented grandmothers who have worked in the kitchen of Mayrig for many years. They have been cutting, peeling, kneading, spicing, mixing, cooking, baking, and sharing their ideas and experiences for years, each bringing a specialty with her. It is these grandmothers that have put together a bit of their stories to create an explosion of flavors. Every item on our menu is a story. A story that has been put together by all our grandmothers, by the people who have taken the rich Armenian heritage and enriched it with their own experiences along the way. Every item tells of a different adventure across lands, from Jordan, Syria, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, all the way to Marseilles and the lands of the Mediterranean.”

“Batchig’s menu is a bouquet of the region’s best flavors, infused with an Armenian inspiration. Batchig is, first and foremost, the fruit of one grandmother, who was the inspiration behind Mayrig. It then grew to envelop many other grandmothers, from different backgrounds and families, and in doing so, has created a new family of grandmothers cooking to their heart’s content. Just like Mayrig, Batchig is a family-run restaurant, and we are committed to tradition, taste, quality and excellence,” says Aline.

Batchig’s popular Delights Bar features a spectacular one of a kind brunch every weekend. This acclaimed restaurant serves everything from eggs and fowl to knefe and arisheh. Be sure to try their unique specialty, baked eggs over bread and their superb basterma and eggs.

“Our wood oven gives a rich, crispy touch to all our baked specialties from lahmajoun to Armenian pizzas. Our extensive mezze selection, rich salads and Lebanese-Armenian grill offer something for all tastes and for all occasions. We feature original daily dishes and deliver and cater to homes, businesses, special events, and all social occasions,” she adds.

Here’s Batchig’s savory flat bread recipe made with herbs and served warm with olives, tomatoes and mint or just as it is. Created using only a few ingredients, this delicious Man’ouche (Man’oushe or Manoushe as it’s also spelled) is a Lebanese street food, a very popular breakfast that is eaten on the go, crispy on the outside, slightly chewy on the inside, and topped with the most aromatic of spice blends -- za’atar. Za’atar spice blend is practically synonymous with Middle Eastern cuisine.

### Batchig’s Za’atar Man’ouche

Used as a marinade for vegetables and proteins, to top flatbreads – sprinkled over dips and <https://www.alphafoodie.com/rainbow-veggie-platter/> hummus, and sprinkled liberally over a whole variety of dishes – za’atar is an amazing addition to your meals. Za’atar is a blend of dried herbs including oregano, sumac, thyme with toasted sesame seeds and a touch of salt. The dried herbs are in powdered form. Aline says this dish is usually eaten as a breakfast next to fresh cucumbers, tomatoes, mint, and olives. Or next to labneh, olive oil or yogurt -- or you can serve it as an entree for lunch or dinner.

#### INGREDIENTS:

##### DOUGH:

1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
A pinch of salt  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1 teaspoon milk powder  
1/2 teaspoon yeast  
1/4 cup water

##### THYME MIX:

2 teaspoons dried thyme mixed with sesame seeds  
5 teaspoons olive oil, to taste

#### DOUGH PREPARATION:

Mix all dry ingredients together. Gradually add water until you have a smooth dough. Leave to rest for at least 30 minutes

#### PREPARATION:

Cover the counter top with a thin layer of flour. Stretch the dough making a circle of 25 cm (about 9 inches). Mix the thyme and olive oil well together. Spread the thyme mix over the dough. Mark the dough with your fingers.

Preheat oven to 350F. Place in the oven for around 3 minutes or until golden. Pull out of the oven, let rest for 30 seconds before folding in half and eating, or slice it and have it with a labneh spread and fresh vegetables.

Quantity: 1

Aline opened her first restaurant in Beirut called Mayrig, which means “mother” in Armenian, because she learned to cook from her mother. Today, she owns an international chain of Armenian restaurants. The walls are decorated with photos of Aline’s ancestors who miraculously escaped the Armenian Genocide, while the menu is full of traditional Western Armenian dishes. After graduating from university Kamakian became a prosperous financier. At the end of 1990s her brokerage office, IIC Sarl, was named one of Lebanon’s ten best. Aline’s insurance company, GM Insurance & Investment Consultant IIC, still turns a hefty profit. But her passion for cooking always burned within.

In 2010, she and her partner Serge opened a new restaurant in the city of Jeddah in western Saudi Arabia. In October 2013, another Mayrig restaurant opened in Dubai, right in the city center, not far from the famous Burj Khalifa skyscraper. In addition to this, Aline and Serge opened another Beirut-based chain of restaurants under the name of Batchig (a “kiss” in Armenian). They signed a contract to open a restaurant in Kuwait, and they are looking to expand to Riyadh, London, Los Angeles and Cairo. Aline says that the easiest way to interest a foreigner in your nation is to offer a delicious meal.

“This method is nothing new. My restaurants are an attempt to show all people that Armenians not only survived the Armenian Genocide, but retained the ability to enjoy life.”

#### ORDER TODAY:

With Barbara Drieskens, Aline is the co-author of *Armenian Cuisine*, a 130-recipe cookbook. Equal parts cookbook, photo essay, and oral history, the recently released hardcover is quickly finding its place on kitchen counters and coffee tables in homes around the world. It is packed with aromatic flavors and ingredients that are combined in clearly described recipes to make spicy and subtle, mouth-watering authentic dishes. Aline traveled with writer and anthropologist Barbara to her homeland Cilicia where many of these recipes originated. They gathered stories, recipes and vibrant images that add to the rich history of passing on, from mother to daughter, a whole culture through food. *Armenian Cuisine* is illustrated throughout and is peppered with anecdotes, history, and tips that make it more than just a cookbook.

To order, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Armenian-Cuisine-Kamakian-Drieskens-Barbara/dp/9953022011>

For menu and more information, go to: <https://www.batchig.com/menu>  
Lebanese entrepreneur and food passionate, Aline Kamakian, co-founded Mayrig and Batchig, two restaurants that celebrate her Armenian roots.

Photos and recipe courtesy of Aline Kamakian



Aline Kamakian and her beloved mother Vartouhie in Beirut





# THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932



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## COMMENTARY

# EDITORIAL

## What the Prague Summit Did and Did Not Deliver



By Edmond Y.  
Azadian

The European Political Community summit initiated by France took place in Prague on October 6, featured not only the heads of the European Union countries, but a host of others, including Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Demonstrably, Russia and Belarus were left out. Obviously, this gathering was another step by the West to emphasize Russia's isolation.

The summit was the kind of political bazaar where many countries discussed issues concerning their interests.

Although the meetings of the leaders of Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan were taking place along the sidelines of the forum, they drew much attention and involvement. Thus, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev met in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and European Union (EU) President Charles Michel. There was also a brief meeting between Pashinyan and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Prague meetings triggered a political whirlwind in Armenia and Karabakh with speculations flying everywhere.

Once the dust settles, we will find out that nothing tangible was achieved except a declaration of intent on principles outlined in a statement released after the summit. That statement reads in part: "Armenia and Azerbaijan confirmed their commitment to the charter of the United Nations and the Alma-Ata 1991 declarations [by former Soviet Republics] through which both recognize each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty." They continued that it would be the basis for the work of the border delimitation commission and that the next meeting of the commission tasked with settling the border issues would take place in Brussels by the end of October.

In view of Russia's isolation, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova had an angry outburst and stated that the Kremlin was offering a more comprehensive and balanced peace plan – but apparently it has no takers.

President Aliyev expressed hope that by the end of the year, a peace treaty could be signed, while Pashinyan stated that Armenia and Azerbaijan will recognize each other's territorial integrity but made no mention of Karabakh.

Right after the meeting, Aliyev's statements contradicted what the former had believed was achieved, namely the mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, when the Azerbaijani leader stated in an impromptu press conference: "It is not clear why they are not agreeing to give us a passage to Nakhichevan. This is certainly a violation of their obligations but we remain patient and show restraint. I am sure that we will achieve that as well. The sooner the better." As one can detect, there is an implied threat to the territorial integrity of Armenia, a country whose lands Azerbaijan is invading.

Aliyev knows that Armenia has offered three alternative passages through its territory to Nakhichevan, yet he ignores that offer, insisting on extraterritorial rights to trample on Armenia's territorial integrity.

Another achievement of the summit was the agreement to send a group of civilian monitors to the border between the two countries. Armenia agreed to host that delegation, while Azerbaijan said it would deal with the monitors to the extent of its needs.

The Pashinyan-Erdogan meeting yielded only a bland statement from the Turkish leader that Ankara will open its borders with Armenia and establish diplomatic relations only after Yerevan and Baku sign a comprehensive peace treaty.

This is no time for Mr. Erdogan to make controversial statements, as he intends to collect brownie points from the international community for his good behavior and to prop up his sagging popularity at home, especially in light of his disastrous economic policies, which have given rise to incredibly high inflation, before the 2023 elections. He may even engage in a charade of negotiating with the Kurdish opposition leadership as he has a habit of doing before any election and then send these leaders off to jail.

At this time, the Karabakh leadership is heading to Yerevan to find out what has been discussed about their fate, since rumors are rife that Pashinyan sold them out to Azerbaijan. Pashinyan in the meantime is trying to save his neck by encouraging Baku to negotiate with the Karabakh leadership about the fate of their enclave.

Aliyev, on the other hand, has made his position public that he will treat the people of Karabakh as citizens of Azerbaijan and nothing else. He has invited those who do not agree to be treated as such to leave. Mr. Aliyev is not even bothered by the fact that people in Karabakh hold either Armenian or Russian passports.

Aliyev has not yet bowed to the pressures of the West to withdraw from the occupied territories of Armenia nor has he relented in releasing Armenian POWs. He is intoxicated not only with his victory over Armenia, but by the status he has attained by the developments of regional politics. First, Azerbaijani energy supplies, no matter how limited, have bought political goodwill in Europe, even in the face of the videos disseminated and condemned widely showing Azerbaijani soldiers shooting Armenian soldiers or even violating, murdering and dismembering an Armenian female soldier.

But beyond that, the ambitions of major powers in the region



have made Azerbaijan an invaluable political asset.

First, Turkey's Turanic ambitions have assigned an important role to Azerbaijan to force the corridor issue to open the floodgates for Turkey. But above all, the Israeli-Iranian conflict has given a central role to Azerbaijan, even inspiring hopes that in case Iran is fragmented, a portion of its territory may join Azerbaijan. Already, an entity titled the National Assembly of Southern Azerbaijan has been formed in Ankara, and it is planning to rule Iranian Azerbaijan after that region is annexed from the Iranian territory.

The beneficiaries of the 44-Day War were not only Turkey and Azerbaijan, but also Israel, which received broader access to Iranian territory. Before the war, Armenians controlled 140 kilometers along the Iranian border. After the war, that was reduced to 35 kilometers. Today, Israel is investing heavily in the "liberated lands" of Azerbaijan, even building a military airport.

All this is not simply within the realm of speculation when we add some political facts; very recently, the Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz and his Turkish counterpart, Hulusi Akar, were in Baku, when "coincidentally," the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir visited the city. All these indications point to the fact that storm clouds are gathering over Iran as anti-Iranian forces meet for consultations.

Now that Iran's quasi-ally, Russia, is busy in Ukraine, something may be staged in Iran, and in that case, Armenia and Karabakh will be reduced to a side show, within the framework of the larger conflagrations.





COMMENTARY

# The Prague Statement: Implications and Possible Developments

By Benjamin Poghosyan

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

On October 6, 2022, within the framework of the first meeting of the European Political Community in Prague, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev held a meeting at the initiative of the president of France and the president of the European Council. After an hours-long discussion, they adopted a joint statement, according to which Armenia and Azerbaijan confirmed their commitment to the UN Charter and the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991, through which both sides recognized each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. They confirmed that this would serve as the basis for the work of the commissions on delimitation. Armenia agreed to facilitate the European Union (EU) civilian mission along the border with Azerbaijan. The mission will start work in October for a maximum period of two months.

The implications of this statement should be divided into two parts — implications for the Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) Republic and implications for Armenia. The reference to the Alma-Ata declaration of 1991 sent a clear message to all external players involved in South Caucasus geopolitics that the Armenian government recognizes Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that this is not something new for the current government. In his press conference on December 24, 2021, the Armenian prime minister stated that Nagorno Karabakh had no chance to be outside Azerbaijan. The same ideas were circulated during his January 2022 press conference, and his speech in parliament in April 2022, when he spoke about lowering the bar on Karabakh’s status. There was much domestic political infighting, as Pashinyan sought to prove that all previous Armenian leaders recognized Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, in this way trying to justify his current position.

The recognition by Armenia of Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan provides Baku with opportunities to reject any notion of independent Nagorno Karabakh. When Pashinyan hinted in April 2022 that Armenia was ready to discuss autonomy for Nagorno Karabakh within Azer-

baijan, he hoped that President Aliyev would abandon his claim that no Nagorno Karabakh existed after the second Karabakh war. However, Azerbaijan continued in its claims that there was no Nagorno Karabakh, and it was not going to discuss that issue with anyone.

Meanwhile, suppose Armenia and Azerbaijan will sign a peace agreement within the Prague statement’s framework with no mention of Nagorno Karabakh. In that case, it will mean that Armenia accepts Azerbaijan’s position that there is no Nagorno Karabakh as a territorial administrative unit. Recently, the Armenian government has spoken about the necessity of Azerbaijan – Nagorno Karabakh or Baku – Stepanakert talks within some special international mechanisms. However, if the Armenia – Azerbaijan peace treaty does not mention Nagorno Karabakh, it is implausible that Azerbaijan will agree to talk with Nagorno Karabakh as a political entity.

Azerbaijan may talk with Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh, but only as representatives of ethnic minorities living in Azerbaijan. These so-called talks will probably be conducted by state bodies, which are responsible for domestic political issues, or for dealing with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. Neither EU nor the US, France, or any other Western player will force Azerbaijan to start negotiations with Nagorno Karabakh as a de facto independent entity.

Many in Nagorno Karabakh believe that an Armenia – Azerbaijan peace treaty will have no concrete implications for Nagorno Karabakh. The Nagorno Karabakh Republic authorities will state that regardless of what the Armenian government thinks about the status or existence of Nagorno Karabakh, they will never be a part of Azerbaijan and will never take Azerbaijani passports. According to this narrative, as long as Russian peacekeepers are deployed in Karabakh, Azerbaijan will not have the capacity to invade Karabakh by force or use troops to force Karabakh Armenians to accept Azerbaijani passports or to leave. This logic has some right to exist. However, it might not function by the end of 2025. After a Armenia – Azerbaijan peace treaty with no mention of Nagorno Karabakh, it will be difficult for Russians to justify their presence in Karabakh after November 2025.

Furthermore, without Russian peacekeepers, Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh will face only two options – to accept Azerbaijani passports and live under Azerbaijani jurisdiction as ordinary Azerbaijani citizens or to leave Nagorno Karabakh. However, the problems for Nagorno Karabakh will start immediately after the signature of the Armenia – Azerbaijan peace treaty. Most probably, Azerbaijan will

demand that Armenia stop its financial assistance to Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan may establish a special fund for reconstructing the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. It may offer Armenia to transfer money to that fund if Armenia wants to take part in the reconstruction process. Immediately after the signature of the peace treaty, Azerbaijan may also demand a change of modalities in the Lachin corridor. Azerbaijan may claim that Azerbaijani checkpoints should be established in the corridor, which may work in parallel with Russian peacekeepers until November 2025.

The deployment of EU civilian mission in border regions of Armenia will significantly decrease the likelihood of another large-scale attack by Azerbaijan. However, the EU mission will not be able to prevent minor incidents. The EU deployed a civilian monitoring mission in Georgia in October 2008. However, during its 14 years of activities, the mission could not prevent incidents along Georgia – Abkhazia or Georgia – South Ossetia line of control. The mission’s duration is fixed for two months until the end of 2022. Probably, Azerbaijan will use this short timeframe as another tool to press Armenia to sign a peace treaty and agree on principles of border delimitation and demarcation until the end of 2022; otherwise, it will threaten Armenia with a new large-scale attack after the departure of the mission.

Meanwhile, there was absolutely nothing in the statement about restoring communications. During his speeches in parliament on September 14 and during the 2022 UN General Assembly, the Armenian prime minister emphasized the importance of securing the internationally recognized territories of Armenia within its 29,800 square km. He hinted that he was ready to make painful decisions to secure Armenia. Many understood these statements as a willingness to make significant concessions on Nagorno Karabakh to secure Armenia and make Azerbaijan drop its demands for the “Zangezur corridor.”

However, after the Prague summit, Pashinyan stated that Aliyev again rejected his offer to open communications based on the concept of each state’s complete control over routes in its territory. In his turn, Aliyev, after the summit, again accused Armenia of not providing a route to Nakhichevan and for breaching its obligations under the November 10, 2020, trilateral statement. Thus, while Armenia de facto accepted the Azerbaijani demand to recognize Nagorno Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan and may do it again if it signs a peace treaty with Azerbaijan with no mentions of Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan continues to demand the establishment of the “Zangezur corridor.”

# Visit as a Message in Itself

By Suren Sargsyan

*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

Since the establishment of US-Armenian diplomatic relations, there has been a noticeable intensification of relations at some stages, which was manifested by the activation of contacts and the visits of high-ranking US officials to Armenia. Some US secretaries visited the Republic of Armenia during various phases of intensified relations. The first high-level visit was in 1992, when US Secretary of State James Baker came to Armenia on the occasion of the establishment of US-Armenian diplomatic relations and the opening of the US Embassy in Yerevan. The second secretary of state who visited Armenia was Hillary Clinton. She visited Armenia twice, in 2010 and 2012. Throughout the history of US-Armenian relations, only one secretary of defense (Donald Rumsfeld, 2001), one secretary of the treasury (Jacob Lew, 2015) and one secretary of the navy (Ray Mabus, 2012) have visited Armenia.

In this context, the visit of Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, to Armenia on September 17-19, can be considered historic, as Pelosi became the highest-ranking US official to have ever visited this country. Pelosi enjoys great influence throughout the United States in both domestic and foreign affairs and is an independent political decision-maker. Being an ally of President Joe Biden, Pelosi, as an individual politician, is a heavyweight figure not only for the Democratic Party but also in the political Olympus, and often makes independent policy decisions.

Pelosi is a historical figure for the United States. She became the first woman to serve as the Speaker of the House upon her 2007 election to that post. Pelosi made history again in 2019 when she regained her position, becoming the first person to do so in more than six decades.

One of the key reasons for the Speaker’s visit to Armenia is her personal approach towards Armenia and Armenians. Pelosi has always been one of the close friends of Armenians in Washington and in California, and has always supported pro-Armenian initiatives. It is no coincidence that Pelosi’s delegation included the only two congresswomen of Armenian descent, along with Frank Pallone, as the three are the pioneers of Armenian interests in the United States. The fact that Pelosi did not cancel her visit to Armenia despite the Azerbaijani aggression days before her visit was due to her desire to support Armenians during such tough times for the country, and this is a message itself. Another message was the fact that she did not pay a regional visit but came only to Armenia, even avoiding visiting Azerbaijan, which would keep diplomatic protocol or balance.

### Main Messages of Nancy Pelosi’s Visit

About a month before her visit, I posted two statuses on my Facebook page about her upcoming visit. The information was not received with great enthusiasm until the offi-

cial announcement a day before the visit. During her visit to Armenia, Pelosi expressed her personal support for Armenians and Armenia, while at the same time sending several messages about the prospects for the further development of US-Armenian relations.

Without placing any pressure on Armenia to change its foreign policy orientation, in particular to leave the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Pelosi tried to stress that the Armenian side must first of all understand what it wants and then discuss it with the US leadership. This was one of the most important message of the visit, which Nancy Pelosi tried to convey to the Armenian authorities. In other words, the US expects suggestions or proposals from Armenia, within the framework of which deeper cooperation between the two countries can be implemented. In fact, this visit was a great opportunity for the Armenian side to come up with specific proposals. Even if Armenia is not ready to offer deep political cooperation to the US, there are much broader opportunities in the economic and business spheres with a considerable potential to deepen the relations of the two counties in this direction.

Among the messages Pelosi conveyed during her visit was the need to preserve democracy in Armenia. According to Pelosi, “America is committed to Armenia’s security, democracy and we stand with Armenia in a difficult time. It is a difficult time in the world. We are amidst a battle between democracy and autocracy...Armenia’s at the center of this debate between democracy and autocracy with its proximity to Russia...” Such an emphasis on preservation of democracy in Armenia is connected to the fact that even the United States is facing a crisis of democracy inside the country. Therefore, democracy becomes an important domestic and foreign policy issue for the United States.

In addition, Pelosi emphasized the issue of preserving democracy, as this is one of the most important directions of the Biden administration’s foreign policy, unlike that of President Trump, for whom democracy was not a priority. In December 2021, at the initiative of President Biden, the first Summit for Democracy was held online, which was attended by more than 100 heads of states, including the prime minister of Armenia. This year, the second Democracy Summit will be held in December, but this time it will be in person and all the representatives will be invited to the USA. In all probability, Armenia will also receive an invitation, within the framework of which it will be possible to organize a meeting between US President Biden and Prime Minister Pashinyan.

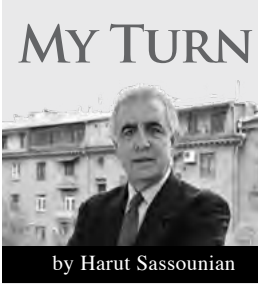
However, being a democratic country alone does not mean a close alliance with the US. In this sense, the foreign policy of the United States remains within the limits of pragmatism. The strategic interests of the United States always prevail. A vivid example of this is the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States, although all political and civil rights and freedoms are restricted in Saudi Arabia and it is meaningless to talk about democracy there. It turns out that US interests are enough to establish deep military-political relations and democracy cannot be a precondition for that.

In connection with Nancy Pelosi’s visit, many people expected that the United States see PELOSI, page 20





COMMENTARY



# Mayor of New York Eric Adams: ‘After I Retire, I’m Going to Live in Baku’

The US media in recent months published several articles covering New York City Mayor Eric Adams’ controversial statements, foreign travels, and fundraising activities.

Before becoming Mayor on January 1, 2022, the *Daily News* (NY) published an article on February 6, 2021 with the title: “NYC mayoral candidate Eric Adams accepted foreign travel to countries with a history of corruption.” The newspaper reported that “Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams has accepted thousands of dollars in travel and other perks from China, Turkey and Azerbaijan, three countries with a well-documented history of suppressing their citizens.”

Adams acknowledged that he has traveled to Turkey eight times. In August 2015, the Turkish government paid thousands of dollars for then Brooklyn Borough President Adams to visit Turkey for six days where he signed a sister city agreement with Istanbul’s Üsküdar district. The Turkish consulate paid up to \$4,999 for his airfare, hotel stay and ground transportation, according to Adams’ disclosure with the city’s Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB). An entity called the World Tourism Foundation, which hosted Adams in Antalya, Turkey, was listed as paying up to \$4,999 for travel expenses, the *Daily News* revealed.

In 2016, “Azerbaijan’s tourism ministry paid up to \$4,999 for Adams to visit its capital Baku for four days, according to the borough president’s COIB disclosure,” the *Daily News* reported. “I am honored to come to our sister city in Azerbaijan,” Adams said in a statement.

The New York City News Service disclosed that according to campaign funding records, “donations from individuals affiliated with organizations in the immigrant communities he wooed with these trips later went to the Adams mayoral campaign.”

In March 2018, just after forming his mayoral campaign committee, “Adams attended a party celebrating Nowruz, the Persian New Year, at Baku Palace restaurant in Sheepshead Bay [NY],” according to the NY City News Service. Adams told the cheering crowd of Azeris: “After I retire from government, I’m going to live in Baku.” He received \$7,000 in campaign contributions.

In July 2018, Adams held a fundraiser at the Ali Baba Turkish restaurant in Manhattan, raising \$16,000. Turkish businessman Murat Guzel gave Adams \$5,000 on July 12, 2018, and an additional \$5,100 the following month. However, the Adams campaign had to return \$8,100 back to Guzel as he had exceeded the \$2,000 campaign donation limit. Also in July, Behram Turan, chairman of the board of directors of the Turken Foundation, donated \$3,000 to Adams, NY City News Service reported.

The Turkish Anadolu Agency quoted Adams as saying: “Turkey has played a major role in shaping mankind... I am a friend of the Turkish people.”

Among Mayor Adams’ closest friends is Armenian restaurateur Zhan “Johnny” Petrosyants who has a checkered past. Politico reported that he “was charged in a money laundering case in federal court eight years ago. He and his twin brother, Robert, were indicted on 11 counts for taking part in a check-cashing scheme that involved medical billing companies. Johnny Petrosyants pleaded guilty to one of those counts and was sentenced to probation and community service, while his brother was sentenced to six months in federal prison. Together with another defendant, they had to forfeit nearly \$700,000.” The Petrosyants brothers and Mayor Adams are often seen together in private clubs and restaurants.

The *New York Times* published on August 22, 2022, a lengthy article with the title: “Eric Adams After Dark: A Private Table and Tarnished Friends.” The newspaper reported that the Mayor spent at least 14 evenings in June at the upscale Manhattan Restaurant, La Baia, managed by the Petrosyants brothers. Adams usually spends three to four hours a night there and leaves well after closing time. The NY Times wrote that if the Mayor did not pay for his meals, he would be violating the city’s ethics laws. Furthermore, “being granted access to private clubs without paying membership dues risks violating ethics rules, said [Richard] Briffault, the former Conflicts of Interest Board chair.”

La Baia restaurant’s liquor license is under the name of Marianna Shahmuradyan who has several children with Robert Petrosyants, according to the Times. In April 2018, Shahmuradyan contributed \$5,000 to Adams’ campaign, \$3,000 of which was returned to her for exceeding the \$2,000 donation limit.

Another one of the Mayor’s Armenian connections is Ronn Torossian who owns a PR firm in Manhattan. He is a controversial figure who did lobbying work for the government of Turkey, as I reported in 2017.

The *Daily Beast* published an article about Torossian under the title: “Why Is NYC Mayor Eric Adams Glued to This ‘Toxic’ PR Guru?” He was described as “an aggressive PR executive” who “is well-known for his street-brawler tactics.” He organized the Mayor’s election night lavish victory party at a private member-only club where Mayor Adams has repeatedly partied as Torossian’s personal guest. The Mayor and Torossian were introduced by Zhan Petrosyants, according to The *Daily Beast*. “Seven former staffers, who spoke with The *Daily Beast* anonymously out of fear of reprisals from Torossian, described him as a ‘toxic’ person from whom the incoming mayor of New York should maintain his distance.”

The *Times* wrote that “in his short time as mayor, Adams has occasionally waded into murky ethical waters. After pledging to pay his own way on a trip to Puerto Rico, he acknowledged flying on an entrepreneur’s private jet. He later said he paid for his seat but did not provide documentation.” Additionally, “the Conflicts of Interest Board ruled that Adams could not give his brother Bernard a \$210,000 job as head of the mayor’s security detail. Bernard Adams was then redirected to an adviser role with a \$1 salary.”

With his multiple ‘murky’ dealings, it remains to be seen if Mayor Adams will be able to complete his term in office and realize his dream of retiring in Baku!

## Prominent Canadians and Scholars Request Snap Meeting with Prime Minister J. Trudeau to Discuss Canada’s Action Plan to Address Azerbaijan’s Acts of Aggression against Armenia

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Honourable Mr. Prime Minister:

You may be aware that as of September 13, 2022, at 12:05 am local time, the Republic of Azerbaijan launched an unprovoked and unjustified large-scale military aggression in several directions from the eastern part of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, deep within the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. Using heavy artillery, Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, and combat Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Azerbaijani armed forces started intensive shelling of the cities of Goris, Jermuk, Vardenis, Kapan, Sotk, and nearby villages, deliberately targeting civilian populations and vital civilian infrastructure. Around 192 houses, 3 hotels, 2 schools, 1 medical facility, 7 electrical facilities, 5 water facilities, 3 gas pipelines, and 1 bridge were damaged. The number of victims and missing persons currently exceeds 207. No doubt, committing such unspeakable atrocities is a direct result of a decades long policy of implanting anti-Armenian hatred and animosity in the Azerbaijani society by political leadership.

It is critical to note that this was not a border clash. It was a direct, undeniable attack against the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Armenia, yet another flagrant violation by Azerbaijan of the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, and the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020. Azerbaijan’s latest aggression was also condemned and addressed during the latest UN Security Council meetings and beyond.

Armenian-Azerbaijani borders remain extremely tense, and the Republic of Armenia has been warning the international community about the possibility of renewed

aggression by Azerbaijan against Armenia and Artsakh. The actions of Azerbaijan and its supporters (Russia and Turkey) should have served as an early warning signal for the international community. Aggressive statements and actions by Azerbaijan, as well as claims made repeatedly against Armenia and its sovereign territory by Azerbaijan’s high-level officials, require a strong, clear, and unambiguous message from the international community stressing that any further armed aggression or similar action by Azerbaijan that could further escalate the already fragile situation in the region, will not be tolerated. If these actions continue, it is necessary for the Republic of Azerbaijan to face consequences for the use of force and for its violation of the UN Charter of Human Rights. This is an attack not only on sovereignty but also against the democracy of the Republic of Armenia and international law and order more broadly.

In this regard, and in the interest of regional stability, we, the members of the Zoryan Institute and the Canadian Armenian Community, request a snap meeting with you to discuss the Government of Canada’s action plan to address the Azerbaijan’s acts of aggression, threatening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democracy of the Republic of Armenia. We would also like to call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions:

Demand the withdrawal of Azerbaijani military forces from the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in accordance with norms and the principles of international law;

Launch an international observation mission to the Armenia-Azerbaijan bordering areas to help secure regional stability;

Support the secure and unhindered access of UN humanitarian agencies to Nagorno-Karabakh in order to assess the humanitarian and human rights situation and en-

sure protection of cultural heritage on the ground;

Help to ensure that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the independent factfinding mission of UNESCO has access to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone;

Help to ensure that the rights and the security of the Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh are addressed and guaranteed.

Mr. Prime Minister, Canada enjoys and prides itself for its long-standing reputation as a defender of universal human rights and international peace. It is only befitting that Canadian values have influence on these critical matters.

Respectfully,

**K.M. Greg Sarkissian, C.M.,**  
President of the Zoryan Institute  
**Dr. Noubar Afeyan,** Co-Founder of Moderna,  
Co-Founder of Aurora Prize  
**Dr. Atom Egoyan, C.C.,** Canadian Filmmaker  
**Prof. Doris Bergen,** Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe  
Professor of Holocaust Studies  
**Prof. Roger W. Smith,** Past President of the International  
Association of Genocide Scholars  
**Armine Yalnizyan,** Economist and Atkinson Fellow  
on the Future of Workers  
**Arsinée Khanjian,** Actress, Performer, Producer,  
and Civil Rights Activist  
**Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.,** Professor of Electrical  
Engineering, McGill University  
**Prof. Alan Whitehorn,** Professor Emeritus of  
Political Science  
**Vahan Kololian,** Entrepreneur, Investor,  
Co-Founder and Chairman of the Mosaic Institute





# Armenian-Turkish Rapprochement: What Is Old and What Is New?

By Suren Sargsyan  
*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

On October 6, a historical meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took place in Prague. The leaders of the two countries were in the Czech Republic to participate in the first European Political Community Summit. The meeting was historic, as it was the first meeting of the leaders of Armenia and Turkey in the past 13 years. The last one took place between Turkish president Abdullah Gul and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan within a frame of the so-called “football diplomacy” as initiated by newly elected president of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan.

Earlier, Pashinyan and Erdogan started a settlement process after the 44-day war, mentioning their intention to normalize relations without preconditions. But the reality is different. For the first time in its history, Armenia is making an attempt to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations, essentially having met the main Turkish preconditions.

So, what has changed now? In the past, while attempting to normalize Armenian-Turkish relations, the parties declared that relations should be established without

any preconditions from both parties. This meant that Turkey should not bring the Armenian Genocide issue into the agenda of negotiations, and in its turn, Armenia should not insist that Turkey should recognize the Armenian Genocide in order to establish normal relations with Ankara. This, with few differences, was the main logic behind any negotiation under the Ter-Petrosian, Kocharyan or Sargsyan administrations.

But now we live in a different reality. Today, Armenia, for the first time in its history, is negotiating to establish diplomatic relations and open the borders with Turkey, essentially meeting the main preconditions of Ankara. First, just a few days ago, Pashinyan declared that there is no possibility to give any status to Artsakh outside of Azerbaijan’s territory. Second, it is a well-known fact that the Armenian government is not even talking about the importance of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the international community. Moreover, it is obvious that Armenia has removed the issue of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide from its foreign policy agenda and exclusively uses this term, giving it a symbolic or even historic rather than a political or just meaning.

Back in the early 1990s, Turkey set as preconditions for the normalization of relations with Armenia, not only the handing over of Artsakh to Azerbaijan and closing the issue of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but also it brought forward “secondary” preconditions. In particular, Ankara suggested that Armenia make an unequivocal statement about not having any territorial claims against Turkey, and edit the declaration of independence of Armenia, in which the names of Eastern and Western Armenia are used.

In principle, the declaration of independence is the founding document of the Third Republic of Armenia and it cannot be edited or amended. However, if we take into account the fact that many political actors in Armenia are talking about the need to establish the Fourth Republic, then the picture becomes more complete and clear. Another precondition was the removal of the picture of Mount Ararat from the Armenian coat of arms as it was seen by Turkey as a territorial claim. There is no clear evidence that Armenia is going to satisfy this particular precondition yet, but taking into account that the main preconditions are met, this one would be easier to do for the Pashinyan administration.

## Hachigian Named To U.S. State Department Post

WASHINGTON — Ambassador Nina Hachigian is returning to the Department of State as the first Special Representative for Subnational Diplomacy. As Special Representative, Hachigian will also lead a newly established Unit for Subnational Diplomacy.



In an increasingly interconnected global environment, cities, municipalities, counties, and states across the United States are on the frontlines of many of the most pressing global issues, including climate change, economic justice, and democratic renewal. Hachigian will spearhead the Department’s efforts to engage local partners, foster connections among cities in the United States and abroad, develop solutions and partnerships to key issues facing local actors, and fundamentally strengthen the Department’s ties to our cities and communities.

As the Department continues to pursue the implementation of a foreign policy for all Americans, we recognize the importance of delivering benefits to local communities as well as integrating the ideas of our cities and communities into our policymaking. U.S. cities and states are incubators for innovative and novel ideas that tackle global challenges, and the Department should harness these solutions. Hachigian will also lead and coordinate the development of subnational diplomacy policy across the Department.

Before rejoining the Department, Hachigian served as the first Deputy Mayor for International Affairs for the City of Los Angeles. She previously served as the second resident U.S. Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in think tanks, and on the staff of the National Security Council during the Clinton Administration.

## Visit as a Message In Itself

PELOSI, from page 18  
would provide military or security assistance to Armenia, like it does to Azerbaijan, which receives millions of dollars in security aid from the United States. However, two important circumstances should be taken into account. First, Armenia is a member of the CSTO, which is under the auspices of Russia. Second, Azerbaijan receives military aid to serve US strategic interests. In particular, it receives military aid aimed at ensuring the protection of its border with Iran, which is the sea border of Azerbaijan and Iran through the Caspian Sea. In other words, it turns out that the aid provided to Azerbaijan is not directed against Armenia, but against Iran, as stated by the United States ambassador to Armenia. As for the sale of arms and ammunition to Armenia, it should be emphasized that the United States does not sell arms and ammunition to the conflicting parties.

A few days after Nancy Pelosi’s visit, the Armenian National Committee of America issued a statement saying that for the first time since 1991, Congress is discussing the issue of arms sales to Armenia. However, it is unknown whether this initiative will succeed and what consequences it will entail for Armenia. The fact is that the Speaker’s visit to Armenia was a message of support and friendship to Armenians in Armenia and constituents in the US during these difficult times for Armenia.



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